Geographic Area and County History



Dickson County was named for William Dickson, a Nashville physician then serving in the United States Congress. The county is located in the central area of the state. (FamilySearch Wiki).

The Tennessee General Assembly formed Dickson County on October 25, 1803, from the counties of Montgomery and Robertson and named it in honor of Congressman William Dickson, a Nashville physician. An industrial county from its inception, Dickson County was part of the frontier until 1818. The first court justices included

several well-known Tennesseans: Montgomery Bell, William Doak, William Russell, Sterling Brewer, Gabriel Allen, Lemuel Harvey, Jesse Craft, Richard C. Napier, and William Teas. They organized the county on March 19, 1804, at the home of Robert Nesbitt on Barton's Creek. Later sessions of the court met at the homes of Colonel John Nesbitt and John Spencer until the courthouse was completed in 1810.

The county seat of Charlotte, named for James Robertson's wife, was built on 50 acres purchased from Charles Stewart for five thousand dollars. On May 30, 1830, a tornado devastated the town, destroying most of the businesses and homes, as well as the jail and courthouse, along with many county records. A new brick courthouse was completed in 1832 and is now the oldest courthouse in the state.

As a part of the Military Reserve, Dickson County was attractive to many settlers, who established farms along the rich bottom lands of the Cumberland, Piney, and Harpeth Rivers, as well as Jones, Turnbull, Bartons, and Yellow Creeks. Although the soil and climate of Dickson County were not conducive to the production of cotton, early farmers raised the crop to take advantage of the high cotton prices. In 1807 Robert Jarman began operating his own cotton gin, which he claimed was superior to all others due to its "hollow neck teeth saw" design. By 1860 wheat, rye, oats, corn, and tobacco had overtaken cotton in economic importance.

During the antebellum years, Dickson County was one of the leading iron producers in Tennessee. In 1796 James Robertson began manufacturing the first iron products west of Tennessee's Allegheny Mountains from his Cumberland Iron Works at Cumberland Furnace. In 1804 Robertson sold his furnace to Montgomery Bell, who became the state's wealthiest capitalist and industrialist. Other important iron manufacturers included Anthony and Bernard Van Leer and George F. and Richard C. Napier. Much of the iron production was accomplished with slave labor, and throughout the antebellum period iron makers held approximately one-fourth of the slaves in Dickson County. Although iron production declined in importance in the post-Civil War period, the furnace was still in production in the early 1940s.

Dickson County played a pivotal role in the development of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Influenced by the religious fervor associated with the Second Great Awakening, some members of the Presbyterian Church chafed under the Calvinist doctrines and church rules regarding ordination of ministers. On February 4, 1810, Samuel King, Finis Ewing, and Ephraim McLean met at the home of Samuel McAdow on Acorn Creek (now in Montgomery Bell State Park) to discuss the conflict. After a night of prayer, they organized the Cumberland Presbytery, the foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Although a school board was appointed in 1807, public education received little support during the nineteenth century. The first four-year high school was established in 1919. From the 1820s to the 1920s private secondary schools and colleges followed the fortunes of ministers and professors who moved into the county. Included among those early schools were Tracy Academy, Charlotte Female School, Alexander Campbell School, Edgewood Academy and Normal College, Dickson Academy, Dickson Normal School, Glenwylde Academy, and Ruskin Cave College.

On June 8, 1861, the county voted overwhelmingly to join the Confederacy. Dickson County supplied six infantry companies and an artillery battery to the Southern cause. Yellow Creek and Cumberland Furnace were favorite rendezvous areas for guerrilla forces. No major skirmishes took place, but frequent attacks occurred along the railroad constructed by the Union army.

After the war the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad (on the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis main line), which traversed the southern portion of the county, became a magnet for migrants from the North, who settled in the new railroad towns of Dickson (originally called Smeedville), Tennessee City, White Bluff, and Burns. With two railroad branch lines terminating in Dickson, the town became the county's railroad "hub," and by the early 1900s was the financial and commercial center of the county. The growth of Dickson produced bitter conflict with Charlotte, the economic fortunes of which were in decline, over the best location for the county seat.

Among the new arrivals to Dickson County was Julius Augustus Wayland, who founded the Ruskin Cooperative Association in August 1894. The cooperative was first located at Tennessee City, but soon moved to the great cave (since named Ruskin) on Yellow Creek. Internal disagreements led to the dissolution of the colony in 1899.

Montgomery Bell State Park, the county's major recreation area, was established as a project of the National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps during the New Deal. After World War II administration of the 3,782-acre park was transferred to the state. Montgomery Bell offers camping, hiking, boating, fishing, and golf to park visitors. The state completed a major resort facility at the park in 1998.

Frank Goad Clement, three-term governor of Tennessee, was born in Dickson at the Halbrook Hotel, which is listed in the National Register. Clement's administration in the 1950s and 1960s oversaw a pivotal time in the state's political life, as he dealt with the changes brought about by urbanization and desegregation. He drew national attention when he delivered the keynote address at the 1956 Democratic National Convention.

The old county court system, composed of magistrates from each of the civil districts, was phased out in the 1950s when the General Sessions Court was established. Presently, the county is administered by an elected county executive and two commissioners elected from each of the twelve representative districts.

The northern section of the county remains primarily rural. Modern highways and an industrial park have further urbanized southern Dickson County, with the town of Dickson as the retail and industrial center. Dickson is also home to the Renaissance Center, a multimedia arts and educational center established by the Jackson Foundation. In addition to Dickson and Charlotte, other incorporated towns are Burns, White Bluff, Vanleer, and Slayden. Between 1990 and 2000 county population grew by 23 percent to 43,156 residents. (Tennessee Encyclopedia)

Dickson County Chamber of Commerce

Record Loss - Dickson County (Family Search)

1830: Tornado damaged county courthouse records

1810: Lost censuses

1803-1816: Marriages recorded between 1803 and 1816 are lost

FamilySearch Dickson County Catalog

FamilySearch Digital Books - Search Term Dickson County Tennessee

TnGenWeb Project - <u>Dickson County</u> Contact - <u>Melissa Barker</u>

Dickson County Tennessee History & Genealogy

Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1859
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to TSLA
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908

	Tennessee Vital	Keeps for 50 years then they are
	Records Office	sent to TSLA
	TNGenWeb	1836 marriages
		1838 marriages
		1839 marriages
		<u>1841 marriages</u>
		Black Marriages of Dickson County: 1865–1881
	Ancestry	<u>Dickson County TN Marriages</u> 1859-1870
Divorce	Chancery Court Clerk	
	Tennessee Vital	TSLA
	Records Office	
	Ancestry	Tennessee Divorce Records (1800-1965) Select Dickson County
Deaths	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1817
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <u>TSLA</u>
	TSLA	<u>1908-1912</u>
		<u>1914-1933</u>
	TNGenWeb	List of Dickson County Obituaries
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1804
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
List of Microfilmed Dickson County Records	TSLA-PDF	Download PDF
Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications
Probate Records	Chancery Court	County Registrations began 1804
	FamilySearch - <u>Tenn.</u> Probate Court Books 1795-1927	Dickson County Probate Records

Tax List	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Microfilm: 1831-1836, 1839, 1841- 1845, 1847-1856, 1858-1862, 1865- 1871, 1880-1900. Published Index: <i>Dickson County,</i> <i>Tennessee 1836 Civil Districts</i> 1839 Tax listing
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Research Collection

County Repositories

Dickson Public Library
Dickson County Historical Society

Current Area Information

Dickson County Chamber of Commerce
Dickson County Government

Resources

General

Tennessee County Database (TNGS) - Dickson County
Dickson County Wiki (Family Search)
Dickson County TN - Genealogy Trails
Linkpendium - Dickson County
Tennessee State Library & Archives - Dickson County Facts Sheet
TLSA Name Index - Dickson County (Acts of Tennessee 1796-1850)
TNGenWeb - Dickson County
USGenWeb Archives - Dickson County Tennessee
Tennessee Law, The Early Days
Dickson Couty Historical & Genealogical Society (FB)

Dickson County Archives
4 Court Square
Charlotte TN 37036
(615) 789-7012
Pam Edwards (Archivist) pedwards@dicksoncountytn.gov

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

<u>Check Online Catalog for Dickson County Newspaper Details & Dates Held.</u>
Scroll down to Dickson County. We do not necessarily hold all published issues of the newspapers.

Newspaper.com - The Dickson Herald (1913-2024)

Genealogybank.com - The Dickson Herald (1913-1922)

Chronicling America -

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- 2. The new idea. (Burns, Tenn.) 190?-193?
- 3. The coming nation. [volume] (Greensburg, Ind.) 1893-1913
- 4. The critic. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1893-189?
- 5. The home enterprise. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1891-19??
- 6. The highland review. (White Bluff, Tenn.) 1978-19??
- 7. Charlotte news-banner. (Charlotte, Tenn.) 1930-193?
- 8. Dickson County free press. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1976-1984
- 9. The Dickson County herald. [online resource] (Dickson, Tennessee) 1907-1979
- 10. The Dickson County herald. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1907-1979
- 11. Dickson County independent. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1878-18??
- 12. Dickson County independent. (Charlotte, Tenn.) 1893-189?
- 13. The Dickson County press. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1881-189?
- 14. The Dickson County press. (Charlotte, Tenn.) 1898-19??
- 15. The Dickson County times. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1984-1985
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- 17. Dickson free press. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1970-1976
- 18. The Dickson herald. [volume] (Dickson, Tenn.) 1979-current
- 19. The Dickson news. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1895-189?
- 20. The Dickson press. (Dickson, Tenn.) 1896-189?

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Bellsburg, Dickson County, Tennessee (Fults, 1976)
- Dickson County, Tennessee 1803-2003: Two Hundred Years of Family (Hollis, 2003) [surname index]
- Goodspeed Histories of Montgomery, Robertson, Humphreys, Stewart, Dickson, Cheatham, Houston Counties of Tennessee (Goodspeed, 1972) [name index]*
- Goodspeed's Dickson County History (1990) [name index]
- Heritage of Dickson County, Tennessee, 1803-2006 (Dickson County Heritage Book Committee, 2007) [name index]*

- History of Dickson County, Tennessee (Corlew, 1956) [name index]*
- History of Dickson County, Tennessee (Corlew, 2013) [name index]
- Over Eighty Club (Canady, 2006?) [name index]
- Pictorial History of Dickson County, Tennessee 1803-2013 (Dickson County Historical and Genealogical Society, 2013)
- Those Who Served: World War II News Reported in The Dickson County Herald [Vol. 1 Sept 1940 Dec 1943; Vol. 3 April 1945 Dec 1946] (Baker, 2013) [name index in each volume]

Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- 1850 Census for Dickson County, Tennessee, with Index (Baker, 2001) [name index]*
- 1860 Census for Dickson County, Tennessee with Index (Baker, 1999) [name index]*
- 1870 Census for Dickson County, Tennessee, with Index (Baker, 2000) [name index]*
- 1880 Census for Dickson County, Tennessee, with Index (Baker, 2000) [name index]*
- Bible Records of Dickson County, Tennessee (Dickson County Historical Society, 1984?) [surname index]
- Cheatham County, Tennessee, Dickson County, Tennessee, Hickman County, Tennessee, Humphreys County, Tennessee, Lawrence County, Tennessee [1891 enumeration of male voters] (Reed, 1992) [name index]
- Confederate Burials in Dickson County, Tennessee (McCauley, 2003) [alphabetical listing]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee 1836 Civil Districts 1839 Tax Listing (Douthat, 2012) [name index]
- Dickson County Handbook (Garrett, 1984) [name index]*
- Dickson County in World War I (Baker, 2018)
- Dickson County Marriages ... [vol. 1 1817–1900; vol. 2 1901–1935; vol. 3 1936–1977; vol. 4 1978–1992] (Baker, 2002) [alphabetical by bride and groom]*
- Dickson County, Tenn. Deeds [6 vols., 1804–1823] (Willis & Sellers, 1998) [name index in each volume]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee, 1880 Census (Sistler, 1993) [alphabetical by head of household]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee Cemetery Records [2 vols.] (Garrett & Hopkins, 1991) [name index]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee, Cemetery Records [2 vols.] (Garrett & McClain, 1969-70) [name index]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee, Circuit Court Minute Book, 1839-45 (WPA, 1939) [name index]

- Dickson County, Tennessee, County and Circuit Court Minutes, 1816–1828 and Witness Docket (Wells, 1993) [name index]*
- Dickson County Tennessee: Index to Marriage Licenses and Bonds 1817-1847 (Kilgore, 1983) [name index]
- Dickson County Tennessee: Index to Marriage Licenses and Bonds 1848-1856 (Kilgore, 1983) [alphabetical by groom]
- Dickson County, Tennessee, Marriage Records (Negro), 1865-1881 (WPA, 1938) [name index]
- Dickson County, Tennessee Marriages, 1817–1856 (Kilgore, 1987?) [alphabetical by bride and groom]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee Marriages, 1857-1870 (Sistler, 1988) [alphabetical by bride and groom]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee, Minute Book [vol. 1 1804-1807; vol. 2 1810-1815]
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- Dickson County, Tennessee, Newspaper Abstracts (Willis, 1998) [name index]*
- Dickson County, Tennessee, Will Book A, 1804–1856 (Loggins & Binkley, 1998) [name index]*
- Dickson Herald Death Notices [6 vols. 1981-1987] (Luke, 1986) /surname index/
- Down "On Piney": Excerpts from Early Dickson Newspapers and the Dickson County Herald, 1883-1916 (Baker [ed], 2004) [name index]*
- Index to Dickson County, Tennessee Marriage Records, 1859–1876 (Mayo & Hickman, 1980?) [alphabetical by bride and groom]
- Pioneers of Dickson County, Tennessee: A Genealogical Abstract of the Earliest Minute Books, March 1804-January 1807, January 1812-January 1814, July 1816 (Wells, 1988) [name index]*
- Primal Families of the Yellow Creek Valley: A Chronicle of the Pioneer Families of the Regions of Dickson, Houston, and Montgomery Counties in Middle Tenn (Nesbitt, 1985)
- Private Acts of Dickson County, Tennessee (McIntyre, 1994)
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Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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- Collier Family Account Books, 1825-1906 (Microfilm Manuscript #631, 7 reels)
- Dr. J. W. Brake Medical Ledgers. Dickson County, 1888-1950 (Microfilm Manuscript #882, 2 reels)
- McAdoo Memorial Cumberland Presbyterian Church Records. Dickson County, 1890-1940 (Microfilm Manuscript #168, 1 reel)

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- Tolbert Slayden's Country Store Account Book. Dickson County, 1892–1897 (Microfilm Manuscript #884, 1 reel)
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School Census

Tennessee State Archives & Library

1905-1907 Microfilm #12922 (no index)

Maps

TDOT Map of Dickson County

<u>Dickson County - 1888</u>

Dickson County 1923

Dickson County ~1832

Dickson County, Tennessee, showing civil districts (1836)

TnGenWeb Project - Maps Our Ancestors Followed

Cemeteries

Dickson County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave

Dickson County Cemeteries - USGenWeb

<u>Dickson County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails</u>

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