

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

History and Geographic Area



Original map copyright 2005 digital-topo-maps.com

McNairy County was named Judge John McNairy, judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Tennessee. The county is located in the southwestern area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

McNairy County was created on October 8, 1823, McNairy County was formed from a part of Hardin County and named in honor of John McNairy, whom President George Washington had appointed as one of the three judges of the Southwest Territory. The first courts were held in the home of Abel V. Maury until a log courthouse could be constructed. The first county seat was named Purdy in honor of John Purdy, the government surveyor who laid out the town lots. Located on the stage road that ran from Nashville to Mississippi, Purdy developed a reputation as a beautiful town. Benjamin Wright, a veteran of the Creek Indian Wars, soon emerged as the driving force behind the economic development of Purdy. In 1831 the county built a new courthouse, where both Davy Crockett and James K. Polk made political speeches.

In 1855 the citizens of Purdy refused to raise the one hundred thousand dollars in subscriptions for the Mobile and Ohio Railroad to route its line through the town. The decision resulted in the gradual decline of Purdy, and in 1870 an effort began to move the county seat to a location near the rail line. In 1890, when P. H. Thrasher, an Alabama investor, built a courthouse and donated it to the county at Selmer, voters agreed to move the county seat to the railroad town, where it remains. In addition to Purdy and Selmer, McNairy County has eight other incorporated towns: Adamsville, Bethel Springs, Michie, Milledgeville, Finger, Ramer, Eastview, Stantonville, and Guys.

During the 1861 secession crisis, McNairy County divided along political lines, with some one thousand voting for secession and eight hundred against. McNairy Countians living north of an invisible line running east to west remained pro-Union (and later supported the Republican Party), while those living south of the line supported secession, the Confederacy, and the Democratic Party. Military Governor Andrew Johnson chose McNairy County slaveholder Fielding Hurst to head up the Sixth Cavalry of the Army of the Tennessee (Union). McNairy County was the scene of looting and burning throughout the war years.

In the postwar years, McNairy Countians returned to agriculture, producing cotton, corn, and hogs. By 1920 the county population totaled 18,350 people, most of whom tilled the 3,263 farms. Selmer had a population of 546, three banks, a newspaper, and various commercial establishments. The county had six high schools and 109 elementary schools.

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

Cheap power from the Tennessee Valley Authority promoted McNairy County's economic growth in the mid-twentieth century. In 1945 Brown Shoe Company and Myrna Mills, a textile manufacturer, became the first industries to locate in the county. These industries encouraged other textile manufacturers to build plants in McNairy County and utilize the female work force. In the 1970s E. B. Blasingame founded Aqua Glass, which quickly emerged as the county's largest employer, with approximately 1,100 employees. The next three largest manufacturers were the General Electric Corporation (350 workers), Diversified Refrigeration (225 workers), and Reitter & Schefenacker USA (200 workers).

McNairy County's Adamsville was the home of Tennessee Governor Ray Blanton (1975-79). McNairy County sheriff Buford Pusser's career in combating lawlessness and illegal whiskey was chronicled in three best-selling books by W. R. Morris, three blockbuster movies, and a short-lived television series. A museum in his hometown of Adamsville recognizes his law enforcement career. Other famous residents of McNairy County include Marcus J. Wright and his brother John V. Wright, both of whom served as Confederate generals. Marcus Wright also served as military governor of Columbus, Kentucky, early in the Civil War. After the war the U.S. government hired him to compile the "Official Records of the Rebellion," an effort that required thirty-three years and resulted in the creation of the most important single primary document about the war. Dew Wilson, a former Confederate army officer, served under President Grover Cleveland as commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Oklahoma Territory. T. Wash Scott was counsel general to Mexico in the 1850s.

Today, McNairy County's 560 square miles of rolling hills and flatlands are dotted with homes, pastures, fields, and well-groomed towns. The Indian trail that became Davy Crockett Highway (U.S. Highway 64) is undergoing transformation into a four-lane scenic highway that will traverse the Volunteer State. The county's 2000 population was 24,653. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

[McNairy County Chamber of Commerce](#)

Record Loss – McNairy County (Family Search)

1881 Fire damaged courthouse records.

Lost marriage records: 1823 to 1860

Lost probate records: 1823 to 1871

FamilySearch McNairy County [Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [McNairy County](#) Contact – [Jeff Kemp](#)

[McNairy County Historical Society](#)

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1881
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to TSLA
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1861
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
Divorce	Chancery Court Clerk	
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	TSLA
Deaths	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1925
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
	TSLA	1908-1912
		1914-1933
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1823
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
List of Microfilmed McNairy County Records	TSLA-PDF	Download PDF
Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications
Probate Records	Chancery Court Clerk	County Registrations began 1857
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Research Collection

County Repositories

[McNairy County Public Library](#)
[McNairy County Archives](#)

Current Area Information

[McNairy County Chamber of Commerce](#)
[McNairy County Government](#)

Resources

General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – McNairy County](#)
[McNairy County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)
[McNairy County Archives](#)
[McNairy County Historical Society](#)
[McNairy Co. Genealogy Chat \(FB\)](#)
[Genealogy Trails – McNairy County](#)
[Linkpendium – McNairy County](#)
[Tennessee State Library & Archives – McNairy County Facts Sheet](#)
[TNGenWeb – McNairy County](#)
[USGenWeb Archives – McNairy County Tennessee](#)
[Tennessee Law, The Early Days](#)
[West Tennessee Historical Society](#)

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

[Check Online Catalog for McNairy Newspaper Details & Dates Held \(M\)](#). We do not necessarily hold all published issues of the newspapers.

Newspaper.com - McNairy County Independent (1913-122)

Genealogybank.com – No County Specific Titles (Memphis or Jackson, TN)

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- 150 Years of Growth and Progress in McNairy County; A Pictorial History of McNairy County, Tennessee (Whitlow & Wright, 1973) [*name index*]*
- 1890's: A Documentation of McNairy County, Tennessee (Kennedy, 1995) [*surname index*]
- History of Adamsville, McNairy County, Tennessee (Scott, 2012)
- History of Tennessee From the Earliest Time to the Present; Together with a Historical and a Biographical Sketch of Henderson, Chester, McNairy (Goodspeed, 1978)
- McNairy County Blue Book for 1986 (Houston, 1986)
- Old Purdy, the History of the First County Seat of McNairy County, Tennessee (Adams, 1952)
- Purdy and Her People, 1825-1891 (Wagoner, 1986)
- Reflections: A History of McNairy County, Tennessee, 1823 - 1996 (Reflections Committee, McNairy, Tenn., 1996) [*surname index*]
- Reminiscences of the Early Settlement and Early Settlers of McNairy County, Tennessee (Wright, 1968) [*name index*]*
- Reminiscences of the Early Settlement and Early Settlers of McNairy County Tennessee (Wright, 2012) [*name index*]

Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Edmondson Family Papers, 1848-1885
- Florence (Abernathy) Hockaday Scrapbooks, ca. 1880-ca. 1910 (Microfilm Manuscript #194, 1 reel)*
- McNairy County Death Records, 1920-1936 (Microfilm Manuscript #1899, 1 reel)
- Thomas Earl Wade Genealogical Papers (Microfilm Manuscript #1608, 10 reels)*
- William Riley Thacker Ledger/Journal, ca. 1905-ca. 1919 (Microfilm Manuscript #1718, 1 reel)*

Published Local Records

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- 1830 & 1840 Census Index, McNairy County, Tennessee (Brown, 1994) [*alphabetical*]*
- 1835, 1840, & 1883 Pensioners Indexes, McNairy County, Tennessee (Brown, 1989) [*alphabetical*]*
- 1880 Census, McNairy County, Tennessee (Sistler, 2002) [*alphabetical by head of household*]*

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

- 1890 Tax Record of McNairy County, Tennessee (Brown, 1994) *[alphabetical]**
- Cemeteries, McNairy County, Tennessee, 1824-1984 (Brown, 1993) *[alphabetical]**
- Funeral Records from McNairy County, Tenn. / Copied from the Funeral Records at the Shackelford Funeral Home, Selmer (Brown, 1993) *[alphabetical]**
- History of Liberty Church and School (Brown, 1993) *[surname index]*
- Index to Deed Book "A" 1824-18381 (Brown, 1994) *[alphabetical]*
- Index to McNairy Co. TN Guardians Settlements: Jul. 1866 - Jul. 1902 (Brown, 1994) *[alphabetical]**
- Index to the 1870 Census, McNairy County, Tennessee (Brown, 1994) *[alphabetical]**
- Land Grant, 1823-1851, McNairy County (Brown, 1992) *[name index]**
- McNairy Co., Tn., 1880 Census (Brown, 1993) *[name index for head of household]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee, 1850 Census (Porch, 1975) *[surname index]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee, 1860 Census (Brown, 1994) *[name index for head of household]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee Administrators Record Index, Dec. 1865 - Sep. 1896 (Brown, 1994) *[alphabetical]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee Deed Book [*vol. 1 1823-1838; vol. 2 1838-1845; *vol. 3 1845-1851] (Crumpton, 2003) *[name index in each volume]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee, Deed Book A, 1823-1838 (WPA, 1938) *[name index]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee, Deed Book "B", 1838-1845 (WPA, 1942)
- McNairy County, Tennessee, Marriage Books B-D, 1861-1869 (WPA, 1939) *[name index]*
- McNairy County, Tennessee, Minutes of Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian, 1869-99 (WPA, 1938) *[name index]*
- Marriages, McNairy Co., Tenn., 1861-1881 (Brown, 1993) *[alphabetical by bride & groom]**
- Mt. Zion Cemetery of Enville, Tennessee (Wade, 1984)
- Sacred High Place: A History of Mount Carmel Cemetery & Meetinghouse, McNairy County, Tennessee (Talbot, 2013) *[alphabetical listings in Chapter 4]*
- Tennessee DAR Genealogical Records Committee Report. Miscellaneous Tennessee records [O'Neal Cemetery records, v.2, pp. 31-40] (Daughters of the American Revolution, 1993) *[alphabetical for section]*
- Voters in the 26 Jul 1890 Election, McNairy Co., Tennessee (Brown, 1988) *[name index]**
- Will Index, 1858-1967, from Court Minute Books & Will Books (Brown, 1993) *[name index]*
- Willbook Abstracts of McNairy County, Tennessee (Kennedy, 1994) *[name index]*

Maps

[TDOT Map of McNairy County](#)

[McNairy County - 1888](#)

[McNairy County Map \(Modern\)](#)

[McNairy County Municipalities Map](#)

[TnGenWeb Project - Maps Our Ancestors Followed](#)

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

Cemeteries

[McNairy County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave](#)

[McNairy County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)

[McNairy County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails](#)

[McNairy County Cemeteries - TNGenWeb \(Cemetery\)](#)

Bibliography

[The Land Laws of Tennessee \(Whitney, 1891\) Google Books](#)

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL
150 years of growth & progress in McNairy County.	Whitlow, Charles & Myrlee Wright, 1973	Y		
150 years of growth and progress in McNairy County: a pictorial history of McNairy County, Tennessee.	Whitlow, Charles, 1973		Y	
1900 census and index [McNairy County, Tennessee], Brown, Albert, 1998				Y
1910 census and index [McNairy County, Tennessee], Brown, Albert, 1998				Y
Administrators records, index, 1865-1896, Brown, Albert.				Y
Birth book D :1881-1882.	Smith, Dorothy		Y	
Cemeteries 1824-1984 [McNairy County, Tennessee] Albert Brown, 1994				Y
Cemeteries McNairy County Tennessee, Albert Brown 198?	Brown, Albert, 198?			Y
Cemeteries west McNairy Co., TN.	1987		Y	
Cemetery south east and north east. Selmer, TN: Albert Brown, 1986.	Brown, Albert, 1986		Y	
Clear Creek Missionary Baptist Church; minutes 1827-1874.	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow		Y	
Confederate guerrillas terrorized McNairy County: also excerpts Narcissa Black diary, circuit court records.	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow		Y	
Confederate veterans and widows pension applications, index, Brown, Albert.				Y
Death book A, 1908-1912. [McNairy County, TN]?: McNairy County Records Commission?, 2002.	Kennedy, Nancy, 2002		Y	
"Divided loyalties: sectionalism in Civil War McNairy County, TN." THQ 47 (1988), pp. 169-177.	Lufkin, Charles L. 1988	Y		

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

FBI codename Tennpar: TN's Ray Blanton years.	Hillin, Hank, 1985	Y		
Funeral records 1947-1957 : McNairy Co., TN.	Brown, Albert, 1994			Y
Funeral records 1958-1968 : McNairy Co., TN.	Brown, Albert, 1995			Y
Funeral records from : McNairy County, Tenn, Brown, Albert.				Y
Goodspeed's history of TN (McNairy County, pp. 819-828, 870-880).	Goodspeed, 1887.	Y		
History & genealogy newsletter McNairy County, Tennessee.	Brown, Albert, 1988		Y	
History of Adamsville: McNairy County, Tennessee.	Scott, T. Wash		Y	
History of Bethesda Presbyterian Church, McNairy County, near Selmer, Tennessee.	Baker, B. W., 1988		Y	
History of Tennessee: from the earliest time to the present; together with an historical and a biographical sketch of Henderson, Chester, McNairy, Decatur, and Hardin counties, besides a valuable fund of notes, original observations, reminiscences, etc.	Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1978		Y	
History of Tennessee: from the earliest time to the present; together with an historical and a biographical sketch of Henderson, Chester, McNairy, Decatur, and Hardin counties, besides a valuable fund of notes, original observations, reminiscences, etc., Goodspeed, Publishers, 1978.				Y
Illustrated account of the Mt. Vinson-Shiloh cyclone, October 14, 1909.	1909	Y		
Index of divorces in the Chancery Court minute book's 1866-1882, McNairy Co., TN.	Morton, Bernice, 1990		Y	
Index to deed book "A", 1824-1838, Brown, Albert.				Y
Index to guardians settlements, 1866-1902, Brown, Albert.				Y
Index to McNairy Co., TN deed books.	1994		Y	
Index to the 1880 McNairy Co., TN census.	Brown, Albert, 1990		Y	
Marriage book, vol., Tennessee Historical Records Survey.				Y
Marriages of McNairy County, Tennessee, 1861-1911, Cox, R. Harold, 1989				Y
Marriages of McNairy County, Tennessee, 1911-1926	McNairy County GS			Y
Marriages, McNairy County Tennessee, 1861 to 1881, Brown, Albert, 198?				Y
McNairy chancery court (loose records project) ... [microform] : 1855-1915.				Y

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

McNairy chancery court (loose records project) loose records cases [microform], 1867-1901.				Y
McNairy chancery court (loose records project) rule dockets [microform].				Y
McNairy chancery court minutes [microform], 1866-1928.				Y
McNairy circuit court minutes [microform]; 1856-1927.				Y
McNairy County blue book for 1986. Selmer, McNairy County Hist. Soc.	Houston, Leslie, 1986	Y		
McNairy county clerk (loose records project) loose rec. (name list) ... [microform].				Y
McNairy county clerk (loose records project) loose rec. [microform] : 1855-1915.				Y
McNairy county clerk (loose records project) marriage licenses [microform] : v. Ab-Re. 1896-1950.				Y
McNairy county clerk marriages Roll 11: 1861-1920. [microform].				Y
McNairy county clerk minutes 1858-1902. [microform].				Y
McNairy county clerk minutes, quarterly [microform] : v. 1-2. Oct. 1909-Apr. 1929.				Y
McNairy County Genealogical Society, [1993?]				Y
McNairy County, Tennessee deed record books A-R, 1828-1881.	Brown, Albert.		Y	
McNairy County, Tennessee, 1850 census, Deane Porch, 1975				Y
McNairy County, Tennessee, Deed index 1835-1901 [microform]				Y
McNairy County, Tennessee, probate court records. [microform]				Y
McNairy County, Tennessee, wills 1872-1936. [microform]				Y
McNairy County, Tennessee: guardian settlements, Jul. 1866-Jul. 1902.	Brown, Albert, 1990		Y	
McNairy County, TN deed books A-U (partial): with a few Davidson County, TN and DeSoto County, MS deed records, 1827-1905.	Brown, Albert.		Y	
McNairy County, TN. land grant book	Brown, Albert, 1992.			Y
McNairy County, Tennessee land and real estate.	Brown, Albert.		Y	
McNairy probate court (loose records project) adm. bonds/inv. & settl. file ... [microform]. Adm. bonds/inv. & settl. file:				Y
McNairy probate court (loose records project) adm. bonds/inv. & settl. file [microform]				Y
McNairy probate court (loose records project) apprentice bonds with index ... [microform].				Y

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

McNairy probate court (loose records project) guard. bonds & settl. file [microform] : 1857-1915.				Y
McNairy probate court (loose records project) names in guard. bonds/settl. ... [microform] : 1857-1915.				Y
McNairy probate records (County or Chancery Court) estates, administrative ... [microform].				Y
McNairy probate records (County or Chancery Court) estates, insolvent ... [microform].				Y
McNairy register of deeds, deeds [microform], 1823-1896.				Y
McNairy register of deeds, land grants ; deeds [microform]. 1823-1851 1895-1903.				Y
McNairy register of deeds, military discharges [microform] : v. 1-3. Jul. 1919-Oct. 1946.				Y
McNairy school board (school register books) ... [microform].				Y
McNairy trustee, tax books [microform], 1867-1903.				Y
Miscellaneous records of McNairy County, Tennessee, Albert Brown, 1987				Y
Mt. Vernon Cumberland Presbyterian Church, membership roll from 1850-1931.	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow		Y	
Mt. Zion Cemetery of Enville, Tennessee, Wade, Thomas Earl.				Y
Mt. Zion Cemetery of Enville, Tennessee.	Wade, Thomas Earl, Sr, 1984		Y	
"Muddy roads, bureaucrats & politics: the trials & tribulations of a rural TN school superintendent in the 1920s." WTHSP 32 (1978), pp. 84-102.	Majors, William R, 1978	Y		
Occupant land grants McNairy County, TN : starting with 1824.				Y
Old Purdy, the history of the first county seat of McNairy county, Tennessee	Adams, J. Louis; 1952.			Y
Old Purdy, the history of the first county seat of McNairy County, TN. (reprinted in WTHSP 6 (1952), pp. 5-33)	Adams, J. Louis, 1952	Y		
Old Purdy.	Hamilton, Judy.		Y	
Owners & tenants of small farms in the life of a selected community [McNairy County]: a cultural analysis. Vanderbilt U. dissertation	Alexander, Frank D, 1938	Y		
Pensioners index, 1835, 1840, 1883, Brown, Albert.				Y
Pleasant Sight Missionary Baptist Church minutes May 1876-July 1896; McNairy County, Tennessee.	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow		Y	
Purdy and her people, 1825-1891.	Wagoner, Bill, 1986		Y	
Reflections : a history of McNairy County, Tennessee, 1823-1996, Reflections Committee				Y

McNairy County Locality Guide (21 April 2023)

Reflections Committee for the Tennessee 200 Bicentennial Celebration (McNairy County, TN).	1996		Y	
Rejected or suspended pensions, 1832-1850, Brown, Albert.				Y
Reminiscences of the early settlement & early settlers of McNairy County, TN. Washington, D.C., Commercial, 1882. 96 pp. (various reprints available)	Wright, Marcus J.	Y		
Reminiscences of the early settlement and early settlers of McNairy County, Tennessee and early history of Hardin County, Tennessee.	Wright, Marcus J., 1968		Y	
Reminiscences of the early settlement and early settlers of McNairy County, Tennessee,				Y
Stories about Shiloh & the TN Valley area.	Wagoner, Bill, 1994	Y		
The 1890's : a documentation of McNairy County, Tennessee	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow.			Y
The 1891 numeration of males age 21 and older in McNairy County, Tennessee; January 1, 1891.	Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow		Y	
The Locke family history of Rowan County, N.C. and McNairy County, Locke, Bryan D. 1982	Gen. Marcus J. Wright.			Y
TN General Assembly, 1796-1969 (McNairy County, Preliminary #18). Nashville, TSLA, 1970. 43 pp.		Y		
Will index, 1858-1967, Brown, Albert.				Y
Will book abstracts of McNairy County, Tennessee, Kennedy, Nancy Wardlow, 1995				Y
Wills found in McNairy Co., TN court minutes.			Y	