

Obion County Locality Guide (2 December 2022)

Geographic Area



Obion County was named for the Obion River and is located in the northwestern area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

Created on October 24, 1823, and organized on January 19, 1824, Obion County included what is now Lake County until 1870. The county took its name from the Obion River; the word Obion is thought to be an Indian word meaning “many forks.” Situated in the rolling hills of northwest Tennessee, Obion County has earned the nickname “Land of Green Pastures.”

Many early settlers were Scots-Irish from the Carolinas and Virginia. The first known white settler was Elisha Parker, who arrived in the area in 1819. In 1820 Colonel W. M. Wilson settled three miles southwest of the future town of Troy; organization of Obion County took place in his cabin. Davy Crockett was among those present on March 16, 1825, when the county seat of Troy was laid out. Crockett’s association with the history of Obion County is well known; he served the area in the U.S. House of Representatives, and his claim of a record kill of 103 bears was made in Obion County.

The history of Union City, the present county seat, was tied to the railroads. Laid out in 1854 by General George Gibbs on land he received in 1829, the town derived its name from the intersection of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad with the Mobile and Ohio Railroad.

Historically Obion County has been a region of small farms; in 1860 most farms ranged in size from twenty to fifty acres. Tobacco, corn, and wheat were the principal crops. The population of Obion County increased rapidly in the antebellum years; in 1830 the population numbered just over 2,000, increasing to 12,800 by 1860.

Obion County experienced its share of action during the Civil War. In the early months of 1861 Camp Brown, which housed up to ten thousand Confederate soldiers, was established one mile north of Union City in preparation for General Leonidas Polk’s invasion of Kentucky and occupation of Columbus in September 1861. The last important engagement in Obion County pitted the U.S. Seventh Tennessee Cavalry under the command of Colonel Isaac Hawkins against Nathan Bedford Forrest’s Seventh Cavalry under the command of Colonel Duckworth. Unable to take the Federal stronghold at Union City by storm, the Confederates devised a “Quaker cannon” from a black painted log and wagon wheels and successfully demanded unconditional surrender in Forrest’s name.

Rebuilding and recovery occupied the years following the war. Business and manufacturing had revived by the early 1880s, and the rail lines soon made Union City a commercial center, shipping the products of the county’s furniture factories and sawmills to eastern markets.

Along with the commercial vitality of Union City came demands to move the county seat from Troy. Following a lengthy public debate and court battle, Union City won a hotly contested referendum, and the county records were moved to the new courthouse in July 1890. As the county seat, Union City grew rapidly, a period of expansion now marked by several National

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Register properties, including the Washington-Florida Avenues historic district; the East Main Historic District; and the Mt. Zion C.M.E. Church.

In the early 1900s trouble loomed at Reelfoot Lake. Fishermen felt they had a natural right to fish the lake. However, lands beneath the lake's shallow waters had been claimed under the 1783 grants made prior to the earthquakes of 1811-12 that created the lake. In the meantime, settlers profited from the lake's bounty of fish and migrant waterfowl unmindful of previous claims. In the 1870s John Burdick established a dock and wholesale fish business at the lake.

In the 1890s James Harris of Tiptonville became interested in exploiting the timber and agricultural possibilities of the lake. Buying up most of the old land grants, Harris announced in 1899 that he would drain the lake. Opposed by Burdick and the fishermen, Harris's son won the initial legal battle when the lake was declared not navigable and thus subject to private ownership.

In 1907 Harris joined forces with the West Tennessee Land Company, which had acquired the remaining grants. Under pressure from the land company, Burdick chose to lease his property and obtained sole rights to purchase all lake fish, a move that embittered some of the fishermen.

Emotions among some lake residents shifted toward a more violent solution to the dispute as they lost faith in legal remedies. Soon men wearing masks and gowns and calling themselves Night Riders, made vigilante raids around the lake, terrorizing those who opposed them and burning Burdick's dock.

On the night of October 19, 1908, Robert Z. Taylor and Quentin Rankin, attorneys for the land company, were taken from Ward's Hotel at Walnut Log by the Night Riders. When they refused demands to reopen the lake to fishing, Rankin was killed, and Taylor escaped into the water of the lake, surviving to tell the story.

Captured by the state militia, eight men were tried in Union City, and six of them were sentenced to hang, but the Tennessee Supreme Court overturned the verdict on several technicalities. The lake was later ruled navigable and incapable of private ownership. Today it is a part of Tennessee's park system, and its fish, game, and the winter presence of American bald eagles attract many visitors.

Economic development in the twentieth century rested on manufacturing. In 1923 Brown Shoe Company joined the Canvas Duck Decoy Company and Child's Specialty House (children's clothing) as the major industries located in Union City. In 1934 Salant & Salant established shirt manufacturing in that city. In 1968 Goodyear Tire, employing 3,000 workers, came to Union City. The newest industry to locate in Obion County is Tyson Foods, which established a processing plant in 1996. In addition to rail service, Obion County is served by Everett-Stewart Airport, originally a World War II aviation training field.

Agriculture remains a key economic contributor. In 1986 the state designated twenty-seven Tennessee Century Farms in Obion County and these properties produced cotton, soybeans, livestock, honey, corn, and wheat.

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Obion County's rich history has been carefully preserved. The first monument ever erected in memory of unknown Confederate dead was dedicated in Union City on October 21, 1869. Nearby is the Obion County Museum. On Highway 51 is Turner Kirkland's Dixie Gun Works, the world's largest supplier of antique guns and parts. The Obion County Courthouse, built by the Public Works Administration in 1939-40, and the Park's covered bridge near Trimble are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1997 Main Street Union City sponsored a multiple property National Register nomination which listed over one hundred additional properties in Union City, including the Capitol Theater, Central School, and the Union City Armory. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

[Obion County Chamber of Commerce](#)

Record Loss – Obion County (Family Search)

County Clerk has marriage records from 1824 and probate records from 1833.

Circuit and Chancery Court has divorce records.

Circuit and General Sessions Court has court records.

Register of Deeds has land records

1842 An earthquake damaged courthouse records (Lost probate records: 1823 to 1834).

FamilySearch [Obion County Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [Obion County](#)

Contact – [Jake Underwood](#)

Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1841
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to TSLA
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1824
	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 1881

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	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
	TSLA	1908-1912
		1914-1933
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1820
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
List of Microfilmed Obion County Records	TSLA-PDF	
Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications
Probate Records	Chancery Court	County Registrations began 1833
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Research Collection

County Repositories

[Obion County Public Library](#)

[Obion County Historical Society](#) (Website Archived 2006)

[West Tennessee Heritage Study Center](#)

[Obion County, Tennessee Genealogy and History](#) (Genealogical Trails)

Current Area Information

[Obion County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Obion County Government](#)

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Resources

General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – Obion County](#)
[Obion County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)
[Linkpendium – Obion County](#)
[Tennessee State Library & Archives – Obion County Facts Sheet](#)
[TNGenWeb – Obion County](#)
[USGenWeb Archives - Obion County Tennessee](#)

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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

Newspaper.com

The Commercial Courier – Union City

Genealogybank.com

The Commercial Courier – Union City

Chronicling America

[Daily herald. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 18??-1???](#)
[The daily Cumberland Presbyterian. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1890-1890](#)
[The Fulton daily leader. \[volume\] \(Fulton, Ky.\) 1910-1989](#)
[The Fulton leader. \[volume\] \(Fulton, Ky.\) 1898-1910](#)
[The Fulton leader. \(Fulton, Ky.\) 1989-current](#)
[The commercial courier. \[online resource\] \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1897-190?](#)
[The commercial courier. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1897-190?](#)
[The commercial. \[online resource\] \(Union City, Tenn.\) 190?-193?](#)
[The commercial. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 190?-193?](#)
[The independent. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1895-1???](#)
[The news-banner. \(Troy, Tenn.\) 18??-1924](#)
[The reveille. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1874-1876](#)
[Messenger. \[volume\] \(Union City, Tenn.\) 1996-current](#)
[The press-news. \(Kenton, Tenn.\) 1930-19??](#)
[The Obion chronicle. \(Obion, Tenn.\) 189?-190?](#)
[Obion County commercial. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 193?-19??](#)
[The Obion County herald. \(Obion, Tenn.\) 192?-19??](#)
[Obion County news. \(Troy, Tenn.\) 1873-1875](#)
[The Obion democrat. \(Union City, Tenn.\) 18??-19??](#)
[Obion independent. \(Obion, Obion County, Tenn.\) 1887-18??](#)

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Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Doing Our Job: Obion Countians in World War II: An Oral History (Forrester & Threlkeld, 1997)

Glory and Tears, Obion County, Tennessee, 1860-1870 (Forrester, 1966)*

History of Obion County: Towns and Communities, Churches, Schools, Farming, Factories, Social and Political (Marshall, 1970)*

History of Tennessee From the Earliest Times to the Present: Together with a Historical and a Biographical Sketch of Gibson, Obion, Dyer, Weakley and Lake Counties (Goodspeed, 1978)*

History of Walnut Log (Summers, 1995)

Marks on the Land: The Story of Obion (Glover, 1975)*

Obion County History, Union City, Tennessee [2 vols.] (Obion County Historical Society, 1981)*

Once Upon a Time in Rives: A History of Rives, Obion County, Tennessee (Allen, 1969?)*

Pictorial History of Obion County, Tennessee (Threlkeld., 994)*

Roads Less Traveled: Self-guided Tours to Historic Sites & Scenic Areas in Obion County (Forrester & Threlkeld, 1996)

Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Cane Creek Regular Primitive Baptist Church of Christ Records. Obion County, 1842-1873, 1884-1906 (Microfilm Manuscript #776, 1 reel)*

Elbridge (New Chapel) United Methodist Church (Elbridge, Tenn.) Records, 1886-2008 (Microfilm Manuscript #1950, 2 reels)

James Strong Moffatt Account Books. Troy, Obion County, 1848-1928 (Microfilm Manuscript #1174, 29 reels)*

Josephine (Westmoreland) Casey Memoirs, 1910 (Microfilm Manuscript #45, 1 reel)*

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church Records. Obion County, ca. 1845-1984 (Microfilm Manuscript #856, 2 reels)*

Pleasant Valley Methodist Episcopal Church, South Records. Union City, Obion County, 1875-1975 (Microfilm Manuscript #795, 1 reel)*

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Republican Grove Baptist Church Records. Obion County, 1838-1860 (Microfilm Manuscript #198, 1 reel)*

Sabin Photographic Collection, 1870-1972 (Microfilm Manuscript #1503, 9 reels)*

Smoot collection, 1854-1939 *

Union Station Methodist Episcopal Church, South Records. Obion County, 1870-1892 (Microfilm Manuscript #796, 1 reel)*

Obion County – Tax List

Tax Years on Microfilm (Pre 1900) : 1825-1844, 1894-1872, 1874-1900

Published Indexes: none

[Reels Available for Interlibrary Loan](#): Early TN Tax Lists > Reel 7 (Obion County 1837)

Maps

[TDOT Map of Obion County](#)

[Obion County – 1823 County Districts](#)

[Northern West Tennessee - 1832](#)

[Map of Obion County - 1834](#)

[Map of Obion County Civil Districts-1870](#)

[Gray's West Tennessee Map - 1876](#)

[Obion County - 1888](#)

Cemeteries

[Obion County Cemeteries – Find-a Grave](#)

[Obion County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)

[Obion County Cemeteries – Genealogy Trails](#)

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

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Bibliography

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

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL
A time returned: a pictorial history of Obion County, TN. VA Beach, Donning Co., 1994. 192 pp.	Threlkeld, Bill & Charlene, 1994	Y		
Glory and tears; Obion County, Tennessee, 1860-1870 [by] Rebel C. Forrester.			Y	
Goodspeed Publishing Company. History of Tennessee: from the earliest times to the present; together with an historical and a biographical sketch of Gibson, Obion, Dyer, Weakley and Lake Counties; besides a valuable fund of notes, reminiscences, observations, etc., etc. Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, ©1978.	Goodspeed, 1978		Y	
Goodspeed's history of TN (Obion County, pp. 816-831, 932-983). Goodspeed, 1887.	Goodspeed, 1887	Y		
Historical sketch of Obion Avalanche, Company H, Ninth TN Infantry, CSA. Union City, Commercial, 1922. 52 pp.	Cavanaugh, John. 1922	Y		
History of Obion County: towns & communities, churches, schools, farming, factories, social & political. Union City, Daily	Marshall, E.H., ed.	Y		
History of Obion County: towns and communities, churches, schools, farming, factories, social and political. Union City, Tennessee: H. A. Lanzer Co., 1970.	Marshall, E.H., 1970		Y	
History of the Turnpike Levee. Original drawings by Thel Taylor. Union City, Daily Messenger, 1978. N.p.	Green, Haywood, 1978	Y		
Huffstutter family: settled in Obion County, Tennessee in the 1840s. Marietta, GA: Ray F. Huffstutter, 1997.	Huffstutter, Ray F., 1997		Y	
Indexes, First circuit court minute book, volume 1 : Knox County Tennessee, February 1810 - August 1817 ; Union City, Tennessee, court minutes, October 1849 - May 1856 / compiled by Knoxville Chapter, Union City Chapter.	Daughters of the American Colonists. Knoxville Chapter (Tenn.)		Y	
Lake County Historical Society 1988-89 yearbook. [Tiptonville, TN]: [Lake County Historical Society], 1989?.	OCHS, 1989		Y	

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Marriage records. by Obion County (Tenn.)	Obion County (Tenn.) Tennessee Historical Records Survey.		Y	
Minute book.	Tennessee. Circuit Court. 14th District.		Y	
Newspaper clippings from the tri-city reporter, Dyer, Rutherford & Kenton cos. Memphis, TN: Betty Key, [Date of publication not identified].	Key, Betty		Y	
Obion Co TN - County Clerk Minutes (Oct 1849-Sep 1861), Roll #28. Tn St Lib & Archives.	TSLA		Y	
Obion County Genealogical Society. Cemeteries of Obion County, Tennessee. [Place of publication not identified]: Obion County Genealogical Society, 1986, 1990.	TSLA		Y	
Obion County Genealogical Society. Obion origins. Union City, TN: Obion County Genealogical Society, 1983.	TSLA		Y	
Obion County Hist. Society. Obion County history, Union City, TN. Dallas, TX, Taylor, 1981. 23 pp.	OCHS. 1981	Y		
Obion County Historical Society (TN). Obion County history: Union City, Tennessee. Union City, Tennessee: Obion County Historical Society, ©1981, ©1985.	OCHS, 1985		Y	
Obion County, Tenn. marriage records 1824 to 1860. Paducah, KY: Steve Birchfield, 1995.	WPA, 1995		Y	
Obion County, Tennessee court of pleas & quarter session, 1834-1836. Signal Mountain, Tennessee: Mountain Press, [Date of publication not identified].	WPA		Y	
Obion County, Tennessee deed book A-B, 1824-1834. Duncan, OK: Creative Copies, ©2003.	Crumpton, Barbara, 2003		Y	
Obion County, Tennessee will book. Mayfield, KY: Simmons Historical Publications, 2001-2003, 2005.	Willis, Luara, 2005		Y	
Obion County, Tennessee, court records [microform] Marriage records, 1824-1877 / compiled by Grace Dietzel Gary and Carolyn West Stricklin.			Y	
Obion County, Tennessee, deeds [microform] Deed index 1824-1884.			Y	
Obion County, Tennessee, marriage records, 1824-1877 / compiled by Grace Dietzel Gary and Carolyn West Stricklin.	Reelfoot Chapter DAR, 1978.		Y	

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Obion County, Tennessee, marriage records, 1824-1877. Union City, Tennessee: Reelfoot Chapter DAR, 1978.	Gary, Grace Dietzel, 1978		Y	
Obion County, Tennessee: 1836 civil districts, 1837 Obion tax listing. Signal Mountain, Tennessee: Mountain Press, 2012.	Douthat, James L., 2012		Y	
Paessler, Jane P. Obion County, Tenn., court minutes, October 1849 - September 1861. Brunswick, TN: Tennessee Genealogical Society, 2000.	Paessler, Jane O, 2000		Y	
Sabin, a time returned, 1919-1924: photographs by Verne & Nonie Sabin in Obion County, TN 1919-1924. Union City, Obion County-Union City Museum, 1986. 33 pp.	Sabin, Verne & Nonie, 1986	Y		
The Goodspeed's history of Obion County, Tennessee / an introduction by Nathan K. Moran ; a selected reading list by Robert E. Dalton ; an index compiled by Lynette H. Dalton.			Y	
The Goodspeed's history of Obion County, Tennessee / an introduction by Nathan K. Moran ; a selected reading list by Robert E. Dalton ; an index compiled by Lynette H. Dalton.	Serviceberry Press, c2004		Y	
The Hogue/Hogg/Hoge family in Obion County, Tennessee: abstracts of court records, index to transactions and related cemetery records. Millington, TN: River City NSDAR, 2003.	Stricklin, Carolyn West, 2003		Y	
The West Tennessee Historical Society papers. Memphis, Tennessee: West Tennessee Historical Society, 1947-.	WTHS, 1947		Y	
West Tennessee death records. Chattanooga, TN: Kitchen Table Press, ©1987.	Hays, Tony, 1978		Y	