Geographic Area and County History



Washington County was named for George Washington, Founding Father who served as the 1st president of the United States from 1789 to 1797. The county is located in the northeastern area of the state. (FamilySearch Wiki)

Established by the North Carolina legislature in November 1777, Washington County came from western territory known as the Washington District. This first county included the whole territory within the boundaries of what would become Tennessee.

Jonesborough, the first town in Tennessee, was selected as county seat, and in 1779, construction began on a log courthouse covered with clapboards.

Hunters came early to Washington County. Daniel Boone left tangible evidence of his hunting forays in the Boones Creek area, where settlers found a tree that bore the inscription, "D Boon cilled a bar on tree 1760." William Bean and his family became the first permanent white settlers in Tennessee in 1768-69. Jacob Brown, who migrated from South Carolina to trade with the Cherokee Indians, later bought from the Indians thousands of acres of land on the Nolichucky River in 1775.

Following North Carolina's cession of western lands in June 1784, settlers west of the Appalachians found themselves without government. They remedied the situation by organizing the State of Franklin at Jonesborough in August 1784. John Sevier became the governor of this "Lost State," which continued until 1788. Not everyone recognized the legal authority of the new state, and a long-lived, bitter political rivalry emerged between Sevier and John Tipton, who supported the jurisdiction of North Carolina.

Early settlers quickly organized religious congregations and founded educational institutions. Tidence Lane organized Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church in 1779, the first church in Washington County. In 1780 Samuel Doak founded Martin Academy, now Washington College Academy, and established Salem Presbyterian Church in the same year. In 1789 William Nelson built on Knob Creek Road the first Methodist church, known as Nelson's Chapel, where Bishop Francis Asbury was a frequent visitor on his circuits through the region. The Quakers located their first meeting house near Telford, probably around 1800. German settlers on Knob Creek organized the first Church of the Brethren at the home of Deacon Joseph Bowman in 1799. The Immanuel Lutheran Church near Cherokee Creek and the Lamar community were established between 1800 and 1805. A revival meeting conducted by James Miller resulted in the founding of the Boones Creek Christian Church in 1825.

Washington County attracted several men associated with later state and national history. Andrew Jackson crossed the mountains and settled in Jonesborough briefly, living in the home of Christopher Taylor in 1788. While living in Jonesborough, Jackson passed the bar exam before migrating westward to the Cumberland settlement. Quaker settlers Thomas Embree and his son Elihu became well-known advocates of the abolition of slavery. In 1819, while living in Jonesborough, Elihu Embree published the first abolitionist journal in the United States. First called the Manumission Intelligencer, its name was changed to the Emancipator in 1820.

To improve transportation, Dr. Samuel Blair Cunningham of Jonesborough actively sought the completion of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, which was accomplished in 1857-58. Recognizing the potential for development along the railroad, Henry Johnson purchased a half acre of land along the right-of-way in 1854, where he constructed a station and a water tower. Settlement around the station led to the chartering of the town of Johnson City by the State of Tennessee in 1869.

Like other northeastern counties in Civil War Tennessee, Washington County was Unionist. A number of skirmishes were fought in the county, and Jonesborough served as headquarters for both Union and Confederate troops. Evidence of the residents' divided sentiments is readily available. The Bell-Herrin House, with its trapdoors and tunnels, is thought to have been a station along the Underground Railroad. Confederate General A. E. Jackson made his home in Jonesborough and is buried in the old cemetery. Landon Carter Haynes, a Confederate senator, lived in the former home of Colonel John Tipton. The Tipton-Haynes farm is now a state historic site near Johnson City.

After the war, both blacks and whites worked to rebuild the region. Hezekiah Hankal, a former slave, became a respected physician and teacher as well as the organizer of many Christian Churches. In the 1880s northern industrialists invested in ventures at Johnson City. General John Wilder, a former Union general in the Civil War, built a furnace to process iron ore from the Cranberry Mines in North Carolina. The ore was transported via the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad, completed in 1882. In the early twentieth century, capitalist George L. Carter constructed the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway, and in 1911 he donated 120 acres in Johnson City for the location of a normal school, now East Tennessee State University. In 1974 the state established the Quillen College of Medicine at the university. In 1901 U.S. Representative Walter P. Brownlow was instrumental in securing for Johnson City one of the first National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. Now the Veterans Administration at Mountain Home, this complex is situated on 200 acres of land and occupies fifty buildings including a historic Carnegie Library and the Quillen VA Medical Center.

As Washington County approaches the twenty-first century, it embraces its heritage and displays a pioneering progress. In 1969 Jonesborough became the first historic district in Tennessee. In 1973 the Jonesborough Civic Trust sponsored a storytelling festival that has developed into an annual event of national importance. Politically, the county has established a number of "firsts": in 1961 May Ross McDowell was the first woman to be elected mayor of Johnson City; she was followed in 1976 by Grace Haws, the first woman to become mayor of Jonesborough, and in 1988 Kevin McKinney became the first African American mayor of Jonesborough. (Tennessee Encyclopedia)

Washington County Chamber of Commerce

Record Loss - Washington County (Family Search)

1839 Fire damaged courthouse records.

Lost censuses: 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820

FamilySearch Washington County Catalog

TnGenWeb Project - Washington County

Contact - Betty Jane Hylton

Jonesborough Genealogy Society

Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	Tennessee Vital	Keeps for 100 years then they are
	Records Office	sent to <u>TSLA</u>
	<u>TnGenWeb</u>	Baptismal Records
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1787
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <u>TSLA</u>
	TNGenWeb	Washington County Marriage Records Index
Divorce	Chancery Court Clerk	
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	TSLA
Deaths	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	Tennessee Vital	Keeps for 50 years then they are
	Records Office	sent to <u>TSLA</u>
	TSLA	1908-1912
		1914-1933
	TNGenWeb	<u>Obituaries</u>
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1778
Lana Decas	County Posistor	, ,
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
	TNGenWeb	Miscellaneous Deeds
List of Microfilmed Washington 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 1778
	<u>TnGenWeb</u>	Probate Court Books 1795-1927
		Index to Wills & Estates
Tennessee Enumeration	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male
of Male Voters		<u>Voters</u>
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State	Research Collection
	Archives & Library	

County Repositories

Washington County Public Library - Genealogy Washington County Library Virtual Archive Jonesborough Genealogy Society

Washington County, Tennessee Department of Records Management & Archives

Current Area Information

Washington County Chamber of Commerce Washington County Government

Resources

General

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

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

<u>Check Online Catalog for Washington Co. Newspaper "W" Details & Dates Held.</u> We do not necessarily hold all published issues of the newspapers.

Newspaper.com

	1	
The Chalk Line	Johnson City, TN	1923 – 1938
The Comet	Johnson City, TN	1884 – 1918
The Comet	Johnson City, TN	1891 – 1893
The Comet	Johnson City, TN	1917 – 1918
ETSU Collegian	Johnson City, TN	1938 – 1966
<u>Herald and Tribune</u>	Jonesborough, TN	1869 – 1921
Johnson City Chronicle	Johnson City, TN	1922 – 1943
The Johnson City Comet	Johnson City, TN	1910 – 1918
Johnson City Press	Johnson City, TN	1934 – 2017
The Johnson City Staff	Johnson City, TN	1904 – 1924
Johnson City Staff-News	Johnson City, TN	1924 – 1934
The Jonesborough Whig	Jonesborough, TN	1841 – 1842
The Jonesborough Whig and	Janaahanawah TNI	10/2 10/0
Independent Journal	Jonesborough, TN	1842 – 1849
The Union Flag	Jonesborough, TN	1865 – 1871
The Whig	Jonesborough, TN	1840 – 1841

Genealogybank.com

Johnson City Press	06/30/2011 - Current
Comet	03/15/1884 - 01/13/1916
Comet	07/19/1917 - 10/05/1918
Johnson City comet	01/20/1916 - 07/12/1917
Johnson City comet	02/07/1918 - 02/07/1918
East Tennessean: East Tennessee State University	11/30/2011 - Current
Union flag	08/25/1865 - 01/13/1871
Herald & Tribune	02/01/2010 - Current
Herald and tribune	08/26/1869 – 12/29/1897

Chronicling America

The advance. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1911-19??
Union Flag and commercial advertiser. (Jonesborough,	
Tenn.)	1871-1873
The Union Flag. [online resource] (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1865-187?
The Union Flag. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1865-187?
Washington County Democrat. (Jonesborough, Ten[n].)	1851-18??
Washington County news. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1912-19??
Washington Republican & farmers journal. [Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1832-1836
Washington Republican and Jonesborough advertiser. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1837-18??
The weekly Johnson City staff. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1892-19??
The woman's appeal. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1887-18??
The Whig. (Jonesborough, Ten. [Tenn.])	1840-1841
The Sunday Chronicle. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1921-1923
The Tennessee patriot. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	187?-18??
Tennessee reformer. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1848-18??
The Tennessee republican. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1906-19??
Tennessee sentinel. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1835-1845
Rail road journal. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1850-1851
Rail-road journal and family visitor. (Jonesborough,	
Tenn.)	1851-18??
Johnson City advance. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1890-1???
Johnson City beacon. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1935-19??
Johnson City chronicle. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1922-1943
The Johnson City comet. [online resource] (Johnson City, Tennessee)	1916-1917
Johnson City comet. [online resource] (Johnson City,	
Tennessee)	1918-19??
The Johnson City comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1910-1911
The Johnson City comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1916-1917
Johnson City comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1918-19??
Johnson City enterprise. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1883-18??
Johnson City press and staff-news. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1935-1940
Johnson City press-chronicle. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1943-1985
Johnson City press-chronicle. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1943-1985
Johnson City press. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1934-1935
Johnson City press. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1985-current
Johnson City press. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1940-1943
Johnson City staff-news. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1924-1935
The Johnson City staff. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1???-191?

The Johnson City staff. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1910-1924
Johnson City star. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1986-198?
The Johnson City times. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1874-18??
The Johnson City times. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1939-19??
The Jonesboro Courier. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1884-18??
The Jonesboro Echo. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1884-1???
The Jonesboro times. (Jonesboro, Tenn.)	1877-18??
Jonesborough express. (Jonesborough, Tenn.) The Jonesborough Journal. [volume] (Jonesborough,	1860-1863
Tenn.)	1875-1884
The Jonesborough Union. (Jonesborough, Ten[n].)	1860-1862
The Jonesborough Whig, and independent journal.	1000-1002
(Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1842-1849
The Jonesborough Whig. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1841-1842
Daily telegraph. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1863-18??
Old Hickory. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1846-1846
The Mountain Branch vet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1925-19??
Newspaper and Washington advertiser. (Jonesborough,	
Tenn.)	1801-1804
Our County farm journal. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1887-18??
The rural searchlight. (Limestone, Tenn.)	190?-19??
The comet. [online resource] (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1884-1916
The comet. [online resource] (Johnson City, Tennessee)	1917-19??
The comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1884-1916
The comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1891-1893
The comet. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1917-19??
Farmer's journal. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1825-1832
The evening news. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1924-1924
Limestone enterprise. (Limestone, Tenn.)	1910-191?
Herald and tribune. [online resource] (Jonesborough,	
Tennessee)	1869-current
Herald and tribune. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1869-current
Hickory State herald. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1846-18??
The east Tennessean. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1933-19??
East Tennessee echo. (Jonesborough, Tenn.)	1873-1???
The East Tennessee times. (Johnson City, Tenn.)	1969-19??
East-Tennessee patriot. (Jonesborough [Tenn.])	1819-182?
Manumission intelligencer. (Jonesborough, Ten[n].)	1819-18??

Maps

TDOT Map of Washington County Washington County circa 1800 Washington County 1814

Washington County Election District - 1815
Washington County District Map - 1843
Washington County - 1888
TnGenWeb Project - Maps Our Ancestors Followed

Cemeteries

Washington County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave
Washington County Cemeteries - USGenWeb
Washington County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails
Washington County Cemeteries - TNGenWeb (Cemetery)

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Ford Coulder of World States On the Tree	To a self-control of the first of Control of the
Early Settlers of Washington County, Tennessee	Jonesborough Genealogical Society,
	2014)
History of the Philadelphia Cumberland Presbyterian	(Rowan & Reeser, 1985) [name
Church, Limestone, Tennessee, 1847-1985	index]
History of Washington County, Tennessee	(Cox, 2001)* [name index]
History of Washington County, Tennessee, 1988	(Watauga Association of
	GenealogistsUpper East
	Tennessee, 1988)* [name index]
Johnson City	(Haskins, 2005)
Johnson City, Tennessee [compiled in 1909]	(Lewis, 1989)
Jonesborough: The First Century of Tennessee's First	(Fink, 1989)
Town, 1776-1876	
Some Historic Landmarks of Upper East Tennessee	(Association for the Preservation of
	Tennessee Antiquities. Washington
	County Chapter, 1963)
Washington County Court, 1796-1836	(Finchum, 1959)
Washington County Historical Association Speeches,	(Kozsuch, 1993) [name index]
1987-1988	
Town, 1776-1876 Some Historic Landmarks of Upper East Tennessee Washington County Court, 1796-1836 Washington County Historical Association Speeches,	(Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. Washington County Chapter, 1963) (Finchum, 1959)

Published Local Records

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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Abstracts of Death and Obituary Notices Garnered from Herald-Tribune [vol. 1-2 1869-1875 & 1875-1896; vol. 3-4 1896-1902 & 1902-1907]	(Burns, 1967-)
Carter Co., Tennessee, Greene Co., Tennessee, Hawkins Co., Tennessee, Johnson Co., Tennessee, Sullivan Co., Tennessee, Unicoi Co., Tennessee, Washington Co.	[1891 enumeration of male voters] (Reed, 1992)

East Tennessee tax records index [vol. 1 1778–1821; vol.	(Rasmussen, 2005)
2 1822-1839; vol. 3 1840-1850]	, ,
Inventories of Estates, 1779-1843 [3 vols. 1779-1843]	(WPA, 1938-39)
Marriage Record of Washington County, Tennessee, 1787-1840	(Grammer & Mullins, 1973)*
Marriage Records, Volume no.1, 1838 to 1846	(WPA, 1937)
Minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions [11 vols. 1787-1799, 1802-1817, 1819-1837]	(WPA, 1937-41)
Minutes of the Superior Court of Law & Equity of Washington County, 1791-1799	(WPA, 1941)
Superior Court Minutes, 1791-1815 [3 vols. 1791-1815]	(WPA, 1938)
Tennesseans Before 1800: Washington County	(Fischer, 1996)*
Tennessee Land Entries: Washington County, 1778-1796	
[3 vols.]	(Pruitt, 1997)*
Tombstone Records	(WPA, 19??)
Washington County Court, 1796-1836	(Finchum, 1959)
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Washington County, Tennessee, Court Minutes [2 vols. 1837-1847]	(WPA, 1941)
Washington County, Tennessee, Death Record Abstracts, 1908-1916	(Nikazy, 1994)*
Washington County, Tennessee Death Records, 1925- 1936	(Houghland & Hylton, 2009)*
Washington County, Tennessee Deeds [vol. 1 1775-1800; vol. 2 1779-1817]	(Rae, 1991-)
Washington County, Tennessee, District Superior Court Minutes, 1793-95	(WPA, 1936)
Washington County, Tennessee, General Index to Deeds and Mortgages, vol. 1, 1779–1866	(WPA, 1940)
Washington County, Tennessee, Marriage Records, 1787-1859	(WPA, 1937)
Washington County, Tennessee Marriages, 1780-1870	(Burgner, 1985)*
Washington County, Tennessee, Marriages and Wills [1778-1820]	(Stuart & Huffine, 1961)
Washington County, Tennessee, Records [list of taxables, 1778–1801, Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions 1778–1801]	(McCown, 1964)*
Washington County, Tennessee, Settlements of Estates [vol. 1 1790-1841; vol. 2 1841-1860]	(WPA, 1939)
Washington County, Tennessee Settlements of Estates, 1790–1841	(Lucas & Sheffield, 1999)*
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Washington County, Tennessee, Superior Court Minute Book, 1800–03, Superior Court Minute 1804–08	(WPA, 1936

Washington County, Tennessee, Tax List, 1814-1819	(WPA, 1937)
Washington County, Tennessee 1890 Tax List	(Dougherty & Hougland, 2022)
Washington County, Tennessee Tombstone	
Inscriptions, Plus Genealogical Notes [3 vols.]	(Bennett, 1977-)
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Records	(Douthat, 1992)
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Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Manuscript Titles	Microfilm Manuscript
Antioch Baptist Church (Washington County) Records, 1919-2008	(#2003, 1 reel)
Boone's Creek Academy Records. Washington County, 1854-1881	(#169, 1 reel)*
Boone's Creek Church of Christ Records. Washington County, 1834-1892	(#48, 1 reel)*
Records of Cumberland District, Davidson and Washington Counties, 1779-1806	(#224, 1 reels)*
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"A study of some developing interpretations of the history of revolutionary TN."	Young, Carol F., ETHSP 25 (1953)	Y		
"An early nineteenth century log structure [the Boyd House] in Washington County, TN."	Boyd, Donna C. & Clifford Boyd, Jr., TN Anthrop. 10 (1985)	Y		

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"Appalachia becomes mainstream: from down-home baseball to the rookie league in Johnson City, TN	Tedesco, Marie, J. East TN Hist. 64 (1992)	Υ	
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"Ezekiel Birdseye & the free state of Frankland."	Swint, Henry L. , THQ 3 (1944)	Υ	
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"Jonesboro's Chester Inn."	Fink, Paul M, ETHSP 27 (1955)	Υ	
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