

# Chester County Locality Guide (17 July 2023)

## Geographic Area and County History



Chester County was named for Colonel Robert I. Chester, a quartermaster in the War of 1812, an early postmaster in Jackson, and a federal marshal. The county is located in the southwestern area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

The last county formed in Tennessee was Chester County, created by the Tennessee General Assembly from parts of neighboring Hardeman, Henderson, McNairy, and Madison Counties. In 1875 this land was used to create a county named Wisdom County, but

Wisdom County was never organized, and in March 1879 the general assembly repealed this act and created Chester County out of the same land. Litigation brought on behalf of opponents of the new county delayed formal organization until 1882.

Chester County was named for Colonel Robert I. Chester, a quartermaster in the War of 1812, an early postmaster in Jackson, and a federal marshal for the Western District. The county seat, Henderson, was founded along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad line in the late 1850s and first known as Dayton. In 1860 Polk Bray opened the town's first store. The town name was later changed to Henderson Station and then Henderson shortly after the Civil War to honor Colonel James Henderson, a veteran of the War of 1812. Incorporated in 1901, Henderson is home to two twentieth-century county landmarks: the Classical Revival-style Chester County Courthouse (1913), which was used in scenes in the movie *Walking Tall* about McNairy County sheriff Buford Pusser and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and Freed-Hardeman University. In 1907 local businessmen asked educators A. G. Freed and N. B. Hardeman, who had taught at the earlier Georgie Robertson Christian College, to head a new school named the National Teachers' Normal and Business College. In 1919 the name changed to Freed-Hardeman College, and in 1990 this Church of Christ institution acquired university status.

Chester County villages include Mifflin, established in 1833 by Colonel John Purdy; Jacks Creek, which was established in the 1820s and was the home of J. M. Stone, later a governor of Mississippi; and Enville.

Scattered military activity took place in what is now Chester County during the Civil War. In October 1862 a Confederate force under the command of Major N. N. Cox attacked a Union occupying force in Henderson guarding the railroad line. Cox and his soldiers destroyed the train station, fired the railroad bridge, and tore up track. In December 1863 General Nathan B. Forrest's cavalry fought an all-day engagement with Union forces at Jacks Creek. Chester County also was a stronghold for Unionists, often described as members of the "Hurst Nation," under the loose command of Colonel Fielding Hurst of the Sixth Tennessee Cavalry.

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A survey of Tennessee in 1923 noted that public education had been established in Chester County; the Julius Rosenwald Fund supported the construction of modern African American schools in Henderson in 1921-22 and later at the Gibson community in 1927-28. The survey also described Chester County as a largely agricultural landscape, with 1,667 farms producing many types of crops and cotton as the largest cash crop. But hard use of the land and little practice of soil conservation left the county's sandy soil in poor shape. During the New Deal era of the 1930s a large portion of the western end of Chester County became part of the Chickasaw State Park and Forest project of the Farm Security Administration. Originally, planners wanted to include 35,000 acres in the reclamation project but settled for a park and forest project of over 13,000 acres. The Civilian Conservation Corps performed initial work in 1934 before the project came under the control of the Resettlement Administration. The present Chickasaw State Park and Forest contains 1,280 acres for recreation and 13,104 acres of protected timberland.

Famous natives of Chester County include vocalist and television performer Eddy Arnold and women's rights activist Sue Shelton White. In 2000 the county's population was 15,540 and the largest employer was Grinnell Corporation, which manufactures metal stampings, at a 315-employee factory in Henderson. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

### [Chester County Chamber of Commerce](#)

#### Record Loss – Chester County (Family Search)

1910 Courthouse burned and many records were damaged.

1933 Courthouse burned (TSLA)

#### FamilySearch Chester County [Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [Chester County](#)

Contact – [Tom Childers](#)

#### Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1890
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
	TNGenWeb	<a href="#">Marriages Extracted from Newspapers</a>

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Divorce	Chancery Court Clerk	
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	<a href="#">TSLA</a>
Deaths	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
	TSLA	<a href="#">1908-1912</a>
		<a href="#">1914-1933</a>
	TnGenWeb	<a href="#">1914-1933 Chester County Death Certificate Index</a>
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1891
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
List of Microfilmed Chester County Records	TSLA-PDF	<a href="#">Download PDF</a>
Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	<a href="#">County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications</a>
Probate Records	Chancery Court	County Registrations began 1890
	TnGenWeb	
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	<a href="#">Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters</a>
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	<a href="#">Research Collection</a>

### County Repositories

[Chester County Public Library](#)  
[Chester County Historical Society \(FB\)](#) / [Chester County Museum](#)  
[West Tennessee Heritage Study Center](#) (Paul Meek Library)  
[Yesterday's Chester County](#)

### Current Area Information

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

## Resources

### General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – Chester County](#)  
[Chester County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)  
[Linkpendium – Chester County](#)  
[Tennessee State Library & Archives – Chester County Facts Sheet](#)  
[TNGenWeb – Chester County](#)  
[USGenWeb Archives – Chester County Tennessee](#)  
[Tennessee Law, The Early Days](#)

### Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

[Check Online Catalog for Chester County Newspaper Details & Dates Held.](#)

We do not necessarily hold all published issues of the newspapers.

Newspaper.com - No Chester County Issues

Genealogybank.com - No Chester County Issues

Chronicling America

[The Bell tower \(Henderson, Tenn.\) 1972-current](#)

[Chester County independent. \(Henderson, Tenn.\) 19??-current](#)

[Henderson headlight. \(Henderson, Tenn.\) 1902-190?](#)

[Madison County herald. \(Henderson, Tenn.\) 187?-18??](#)

[The New edition. \(Henderson, TN\) 1972-1972](#)

[The new era. \(Henderson, Tenn.\) 188?-189?](#)

[Sky-rocket. \(Henderson, Tenn\) 1923-1971](#)

### Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Brief History of Chester County, Tennessee, Then and Now: An Historical Comparison, Facts of the Past and Present Which the Future Will Want to Remember (Reid, 1967)\*
- Chester County, Tennessee, 1882-1995, History and Families (Chester County Historical Society, 1995) [*surname index*]\*

# Chester County Locality Guide (17 July 2023)

- Chester County, Tennessee, 1882-2001: Pictorial History, Volume II (Chester County Historical Society, 2001) *[name index]\**
- Goodspeed's Chester County History (1990) *[name index]*
- History of Tennessee From the Earliest Time to the Present; Together with a Historical and a Biographical Sketch of Henderson, Chester, McNairy (Goodspeed, 1978) *[name index]*
- History of the Friendship Community of Chester County, Tennessee (King, 1996)
- Reflections (Williams, 1979)

## Published Local Records

### Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Burial Locations for Confederate Soldiers in Chester County, Tennessee (Barnes, 1989)
- Cemeteries in Chester County, Tennessee (Jones, 1982) *[name index]*
- Chester County, Tennessee, Tombstone Records (WPA, 1938)
- Private Acts of Chester County, Tennessee (Lobertini, 1995)
- Service Record Book of Men and Women of Henderson, Tennessee and Community [WWI & WWII] (19??)
- Tombstone Inscriptions, Et Cetera, From the Black Cemeteries of Chester County, Tennessee (Smith, 2000) *[surname index]*

## Maps

[TDOT Map of Chester County](#)

[Chester County - 1888](#)

[Creation Of Chester County, Tennessee \(TnGenWeb\)](#)

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

## Cemeteries

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

[Chester County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)

[Chester County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails](#)

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

## Bibliography

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

[Guide to Public Vital Statistics in Tennessee \(WPA 1941\)](#)

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL

## Chester County Locality Guide (17 July 2023)

"I remember, I remember." TN Folklore Soc. Bull. 32 (1966), pp. 121-128.	Hilliand, Addie S., 1966	Y		
"On swallowing punkin seed." TN Folklore Soc. Bull. 40 (1974), pp. 119-121.	Hilliand, Addie S., 1974	Y		
"Shakespearean proverbs in Chester County, TN." NC Folklore J. 22 (1974), pp. 63-74.	Hilliand, Addie S., 1974	Y		
"What'll we give to the baby-o?" TN Folklore Soc. Bull. 40 (1974), pp. 41-46.	Hilliand, Addie S., 1974	Y		
A brief history of Chester County, Tennessee, then and now; an historical comparison, facts of the past and present which the future will want to remember, by S.E. Reid.	Reid, S. E.	Y	Y	
A brief history of Chester County, TN: then & now;	Reid, Samuel E., 1924	Y		
Burial locations for Confederate soldiers in Chester County, TN.	Barnes, Bobby, 1989	Y		
Cemeteries in Chester County.	Jones, Lewis P.			Y
Cemeteries in Chester County.	Jones, Lewis P., 1995		Y	
Cemeteries west McNairy Co., TN.	1987		Y	
Cemetery south east and north east. Selmer, TN	Brown, Albert, 1986		Y	
Chester chancery court minutes [microform] : v. 3. Sep. 1891-Sep. 1902.				Y
Chester circuit court minutes, civil [microform].				Y
Chester circuit court minutes, civil [microform]. Rolls No. 2-3.				Y
Chester circuit court minutes, criminal [microform]. Rolls No. A-2770.				Y
Chester County : History of Tennessee.			Y	
Chester county clerk marriages [microform] : v. 2-4. Apr. 1891-Dec. 1916.				Y
Chester county clerk minutes [microform].				Y
Chester county clerk minutes [microform]. Rolls No. 6-7, A-2775				Y
Chester County history: War Years		Y		
Chester County, Tennessee tombstone records.	WPA, 2011.		Y	
Chester County, TN, 1882-1982.	Chester County Centennial Committee, 1982	Y		

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Chester probate records (county or chancery court) wills ; bonds and letters ... Rolls No. A-2788. [microform].				Y
Chester register of deeds: trust deeds [microform]. Rolls No. 10-11.				Y
Chester register of deeds: trust deeds [microform]. Rolls No. 8-9				Y
Chester trustee, tax books [microform]. Roll 12				Y
Community information, Henderson-Chester County, TN.	Chester County Chamber of Commerce,1988	Y		
Goodspeed's history of TN (Chester County, pp. 806-813, 862-869)	Goodspeed Pub, 1887	Y		
Henderson centennial celebration commemorating 100 years of progress	Henderson (TN) Area Centennial,1960	Y		
History & families of Chester County, TN.	Chester County Hist. Soc., 1995.	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	Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1978		Y	
History of the Methodist Church at Henderson, TN.	Matlock, J.W.L., 1960	Y		
Index of Chester Co., TN cemeteries.	Brown, Albert, 1993		Y	
Mt. Zion Cemetery of Enville, Tennessee.	Wade, Thomas Earl, Sr, 1984		Y	
Reflections. Henderson, First State Bank	First State Bank, Henderson, TN., 1979	Y		
Religious history of Chester County, area home demonstration clubs, other area clubs. Henderson, TN	Chester County Roots Committee, 1985.	Y		
The Goodspeed's history of Chester County, Tennessee / a selected reading list by Robert E. Dalton ; an index compiled by Lynette H. Dalton.	Goodspeed Pub, 1886		Y	
The Weavers beginning with Adam: the Davidsons and other allied lines.	Williams, Helen W, 1990		Y	
The West Tennessee Historical Society papers.	West Tennessee		Y	

## Chester County Locality Guide (17 July 2023)

	Historical Society, 1947			
Tombstone inscriptions, et cetera from the black cemeteries of Chester County, Tennessee / by Jonathan Kennon Thompson Smith.	Smith, Jonathan K.T., 2000			Y
Unity Baptist Church: a patchwork of history & humor.	Tilley, Nancy H. & W. Clyde Tilley, 1976	Y		
			Y	