

# Hancock County Locality Guide (27 Dec 2021)

## Geographic Area

Hancock County is a county located in the U.S. state of Tennessee. The County was named for the Revolutionary War patriot John Hancock. The County is located in the northeast area of the state.



([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

One of the earliest settlement areas in Tennessee is Hancock County. In a 1673 letter to John Richard of London, Abraham Wood reported James Needham and Gabriel Arthur's journey into the area: "Eight dayes jorny down this river lives a white people which have long beards and whiskers and weares clothing, and on some ye other rivers lives a hairey people." In 1784 John Sevier recorded in his journal that his party encountered white men

in the same region and that they had been living there for some time. The word used to describe these people was "Melungeon," initially thought to be derived from the French word "melange," meaning mixture (as in mixed breed). The Melungeons spoke broken English and possessed English surnames but claimed to be Portuguese. Despite their insistence on their origins, the Scots-Irish settlers declared them "persons of color" and quickly confiscated their land. Denied access to legal recourse, education, or other advantages of citizenship, the Melungeons withdrew to the most isolated, least desirable mountain locales. Today, thousands of Appalachian people trace their ancestry to the Melungeons. The names most frequently associated with the Melungeons are Collins, Mullins, Goins, Gibson, Denham, Bowlin, and Sexton.

As Anglo-Europeans arrived in the area, the first settlers included Joseph Lamb, Jonas Lockmiller, John Ray, Enos Matthais, William McCully, and Daniel Slavins. The first settlers were joined by families with the following surnames: Greene, Purkey, Bray, Cantwell, Trent, Mitchell, Amis, Boulden, Anderson, Bryant, Campbell, McGhee, Mills, Ramsey, Winkler, Wilder, Jarvis, and Wallen. The earliest ministers were John Givens, Moses Williams, and Zachariah Seal. Initial settlement occurred in the area surrounding Greasy Rock, a large stone that protruded into a creek that ran into the Clinch River. The rock acquired its name because it was used by hunters to clean game.

At one time, Hancock County was part of Hawkins County, North Carolina, which later became Hawkins County, Tennessee. During the brief rule of the State of Franklin, Hancock was part of Spencer County. The creation of Hancock County in Tennessee was a complicated process. The 1844 act creating the county from parts of Hawkins and Claiborne Counties violated some provisions of the state constitution. A second act passed in 1846, and commissioners were appointed to organize the county and fix boundary lines. When some Hawkins County residents filed a bill enjoining commissioners from further action, all county business was suspended from 1846 to 1848, when the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of Hancock County. W. H. Sneed, a Knoxville attorney, represented Hancock County in the court action, and commissioners named the new county seat (at the site of Greasy Rock) Sneedville in his honor. The county name honored John Hancock, the Revolutionary War patriot. The first court was held at the house of

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Alexander Campbell and afterward at the old Union Church until 1850, when a small brick courthouse was built.

Sneedville, with a population of approximately 1,400, is the only incorporated town in the county. WSJK-TV, Channel 2, at Sneedville was the first state-owned public television station to sign on the air in Tennessee. Other communities in the county include Mulberry Gap, Kyles Ford, Treadway, and Vardy. At one time Hancock County had at least fifty-seven post offices, but today most mail is delivered through Sneedville.

Hancock County reported a 2000 population of 6,786 in 230 square miles. Traditionally, its economy has been based on agriculture and small businesses. In the 1950s zinc was discovered at Treadway. Mining operations continued until 1971, and at its peak, the mine employed more than 220 men. Present industries include a furniture factory, a laminated desktop factory, a roof truss factory, an electric motor plant, a concrete plant, and a wholesale craft manufacturer. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

Hancock County is nestled in Central Appalachia and provides residents and visitors with a beautiful rural atmosphere year-round. Whether blooming with the promise of spring or set ablaze with the colors of fall, the mountains and ridges that make up our county are a sight to behold and are full of natural wonders to be discovered. The tranquil Clinch and Powell Rivers take winding courses through the county, creating lush valleys and plenty of opportunities for outdoor entertainment. A peaceful small-town atmosphere offers a haven from the hustle and bustle of contemporary life, and the sense of community here is as old and strong as the land itself.

We have friendly, hardworking residents who are proud of their heritage while looking toward the future with hope and initiative. Whether you are looking for a scenic place to visit, a hometown in which to raise a family or a willing community in which to locate a business, you are welcome in Hancock County, Home of the Melungeons. Take a scenic drive across our mountain roads where we are sure you will enjoy the trip. ([Hancock County Chamber of Commerce](#))

Record Loss -

1885 and 1930 Fires damaged courthouse records.

Lost marriage records: 1844 to 1930

Lost probate records: 1844 to 1924

[FamilySearch On-Line Hancock County Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project - [Hancock County](#)

Contact - [Mrs. Betty T. Miller](#)

[Hancock County Historical and Genealogical Society](#)

[Hancock County TN Genealogy Chat](#)

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Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	<a href="#">County Clerk Office</a>	County Registrations began 1914
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
Marriages	<a href="#">County Clerk Office</a>	County Registrations began 1930
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
Divorce	<a href="#">Chancery Court Clerk</a>	
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	<a href="#">TSLA</a>
Deaths	<a href="#">County Clerk Office</a>	County Registrations began 1914
	<a href="#">Tennessee Vital Records Office</a>	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to <a href="#">TSLA</a>
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1875
	County Register	<a href="#">County Register of Deeds</a>
	TNGenWeb	<a href="#">Index to Deeds (1879-1894)</a>
List of Microfilmed Hancock County Records	<a href="#">TSLA-PDF</a>	
Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	<a href="#">County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications</a>
Probate Records	<a href="#">Chancery Court</a>	County Registrations began 1823
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>

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## County Repositories

[Hancock County Public Library](#)

## Current Area Information

[Hancock County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Hancock County Government](#)

## Resources

### General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – Hancock County](#)

[Hancock County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)

[Linkpendium – Hancock County](#)

[Melungeon Heritage Association](#)

[Melungeons – FamilySearch Wiki](#)

[Tennessee State Library & Archives – Hancock County Facts Sheet](#)

[TNGenWeb – Hancock County](#)

[USGenWeb Archives - Hancock County Tennessee](#)

### Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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

Newspaper.com

[Hancock County News 1896-1963](#)

[The Sneedville News 1913-1922](#)

Genealogybank.com

[Sneedville News](#)

### Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Hancock County, Tennessee Pictorial History (HCHGS, 2001)

Hancock County, Tennessee, and Its People (HCHGS 1990-1995)

Vol. 1 1844-1989

Vol. 2 1844-1994

Vol. 3 1844-2003]

Lest We Forget--: The Melungeon Colony of Newman's Ridge (Callahan, 2000)

My Melungeon Heritage: A Story of Life on Newman's Ridge (Johnson, 1997)

Windows on the Past: The Cultural Heritage of Vardy, Hancock County, Tennessee (Overbay, 2005)

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## Selected Manuscripts Material

### Tennessee State Archives & Library

Chris Davis Livesay, 1761-1973 (Microfilm Manuscript #500, 1 reel)\*

Confederate Veterans Association of Upper East Tennessee Records, 1861-ca. 1895 (Microfilm Manuscript #167, 1 reel)\*

Eastern District Association of Primitive Baptists Records, 1904-1913 (Microfilm Manuscript #702, 1 reel)\*

Mulberry Gap Association of Missionary Baptists Records, 1865-1898 and 1951-1975 (Microfilm Manuscript #701, 1 reel)\*

Mulberry Gap Association of the Baptist Church, Records, 1880-1954; 1974-1980 (Microfilm Manuscript #712, 2 reels)\*

Providence Baptist Church Records. Hancock County, 1845-1897 (Microfilm Manuscript #823, 1 reel)\*

William Paul Grohse Papers, 1610-1974 (Microfilm Manuscript #501, 4 reels)\*

## Maps

[TDOT Map of Hancock County  
Hancock County - 1888](#)

## Cemeteries

[Hancock County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave](#)  
[Hancock County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)  
[Hancock County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails](#)  
[Hancock County Cemeteries - TNGenWeb \(Foley Cemetery\)](#)

## Bibliography

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

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL
Abstracts of Obituaries Published in the Mulberry Gap Association of Missionary Baptists	Cook / 2006	Y		
Abstracts of Obituaries from the Holston Valley Baptist Association Minutes	Cook / 2006	Y		
Blue and Gray from Hawkins County (includes Hancock County) Tennessee, 1861-1865 [3 vols.]	Johnston / 1995	Y		
Hancock County, Tennessee, Marriage Records: As Recorded in the papers of William Paul Grohse	Groshe & Rather / 1998	Y		
Hancock County, Tennessee, Vital Statistics, 1914 through 1925	Wiefering / 1993	Y		Y
Goodspeed's History of East TN (Hancock County, pp. 871-872, 1216-1225)	Goodspeed / 1887	Y		

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Hancock County, TN & its people, 1844-1989	HCHGS / 1990	Y	Y	
"Two petitions to VA of the north of Holston men, 1776, 1777." Price, Prentiss Ed.	ETHSP / 1949	Y		
"Introduction to Melungeon bibliography." <i>TN Folklore Soc. Bull.</i> 55 (1991), pp. 122-157	Allen, Lee A	Y		
God bless the devil: liar's bench tales	Aswell, James R / 1940	Y		
The Melungeons: notes on the origin of a race. (rev. ed.)	Ball. B. / 1992	Y		
The Melungeons: their origin & kin	Ball. B. / 1969	Y		
A bibliography of TN anthropology, including Cherokee, Chickasaw, & Melungeon studies	Ball D./ 1976	Y		
The Melungeons of Newman's Ridge. ETSU Thesis	Barr / 1965			
Melungeons yesterday & today	Bible / 1975			
The treatment of the Melungeon in general literature & belletristic works. TTU Thesis.	Burks / 1972			
"The Melungeons of upper east TN: persisting social identity." TN Anthropol. 6	Cavendar / 1981			
"The mystery of the Melungeons." <i>TN Valley Hist. Rev.</i> 1	Davis / 1972			
"The Melungeon tree & its four branches." <i>The Arena</i> 3	Dromgoole / 1891			
"The Melungeons." <i>The Arena</i> 3	Dromgoole / 1891			
Melungeons: Examining An Appalachian Legend	Elder / 1999			
<i>A history of Tennessee &amp; Tennesseans, v. 1, pp. 179-186</i> "The Melungeons of east TN."	Hale / 1913			
The hawk's done gone, & other stories	Haun / 1941			
From Newman Ridge, TN, to southeastern KY highlands: trail of the Portuguese, Indian & English mixed clans	Isaac / 1983			
Oral, printed & popular culture traditions related to the Melungeons of Hancock County, TN. Indiana U. dissertation	Ivey / 1976			Y
The Melungeons: the resurrection of a proud people: an untold story of ethnic cleansing in America	Kennedy / 1994			
"The Melungeons: a mixed-blood strain of the southern Appalachians." <i>Geog. Rev.</i> 41	Price / 1951			
Melungeons, the vanishing colony of Newman's Ridge	HCD A / 1971			
"Romantic account of the celebrated 'Melungeon case.'" <i>Watson's Mag.</i> 17	Shepard / 1913			
The mysterious Melungeons: a critique of the mythical image. U. KY dissertation	Sovine / 1982			Y
Daughters of the legend ( <i>novel of Melungeon life</i> )	Stuart / 1965			
Studies in folklore & ethnicity. CA Folklore Soc.	Danielson / 1978			
The Melungeons: an interstitial racial category of the southern Appalachians. U. GA thesis	Werner / 1973			
"Sons of the legend." <i>Sat. Evening Post</i> 220	Worden / 1947			
My Melungeon Heritage: A Story of Life on Newman's Ridge	Johnson / 1997		Y	Y