

Houston County Locality Guide (23 June 2023)

Geographic Area and County History



Houston County was named for Sam Houston. The county is located in the northwestern area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

The Tennessee General Assembly established Houston County on January 21, 1871, and named it in honor of Sam Houston, governor of Tennessee and hero of Texas. The people voted to establish the new county in 1871 because they were too far from their respective courthouses in Dickson, Humphreys, and Stewart Counties to properly conduct business. Even after Houston County formed, however, a kindred social, historical, and economic relationship remained between Houston and these parent counties.

Well's, Guise's, and Yellow Creeks of present Houston County attracted many settlers in the late eighteenth century. After Chickasaw land cessions, many residents were ready to cross the Tennessee ridge to divide and claim lands on White Oak, Cane, and Hurricane Creeks. There they had downhill access to both the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers for shipment of natural and manufactured products such as whiskey, tobacco, cotton, Indian hemp, and timber. Settlers also shipped iron products made at local forges on Well's Creek, Yellow Creek, and Hurricane Creek; an 1806 iron furnace on Well's Creek is the first mentioned in the area. A type of clay suitable for fire brick for furnaces was found on what is now Booster branch of Well's Creek (Byron Forge Creek), and the fire brick no longer had to be imported.

In the 1850s the railroad came to Houston County. The Clarksville and Louisville Railroad Company, chartered in 1852, began the section from Guthrie to Paris, and the Memphis and Ohio Railroad Company, chartered 1852, began the section from Memphis to Paris. While crews were blasting the railroad bed in the 1850s, a rock stratum was found at an angle rather than the typical flat formation. State Geologist James Safford studied and reported the find, which has received extensive analysis since. Safford named the site Well's Creek Basin. This place is circular and about two miles in diameter; it was core-drilled several miles deep to determine if its origin was volcanic or meteoric. The latest geological opinion defines it as meteoric.

By 1857 the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad had been built from Guthrie to near the Tennessee ridge, where a depot was built at a village later known as Erin Station, located about one-half mile east of the present town of Erin. Further construction stalled because of slides in the cuts of the trestle west of Tennessee Ridge, and the railroad to Paris was not completed until April 1861. Initially a ferry crossed the Tennessee River, until the bridge was completed in November 1861.

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The Civil War began just as the bridge was completed. Confederate General Simon Buckner took charge of the bridge and railroad to move Southern troops and supplies. When the Union army captured the area, Federal soldiers and supplies traveled in the opposite direction. In the course of the war, the bridge was damaged and rebuilt several times.

After the war, repairs to the railroad system helped launch an industrial boom. Danville became a rail and river port, moving farm products from the surrounding area and northern Alabama. Marketable products from Alabama arrived by steamboat and were reloaded at Danville. A spur line extended from Danville to Stribling and the LaGrange iron furnace. McKinnon built coke ovens to fuel the iron furnaces, and Stewart launched its lime industry, which spawned stave mills for making barrels to hold the lime. Tennessee Ridge acquired a railroad depot and a spur line to Carlisle and Bear Springs furnaces. Erin became a lime and timber manufacturing center, and Cumberland City (originally in Houston County) was a rail and river port for shipping farm products from the areas of Well's, Guise's, and Yellow Creeks.

Arlington was the first seat of government in Houston County. Its location on the grade of the Tennessee Ridge prevented trains from stopping there. Instead, they halted at the nearby village of Erin, near the spot where later the county seat was relocated. A favored legend has it that the Irish living there had a "wee too much to drink" and decided the area resembled their beloved Ireland, thus naming it Erin. Today, Erin celebrates its ethnic heritage with an annual Irish festival. A week of activities concludes with a parade on the third Saturday in March.

Recreation is a growth industry in Houston County. Erin features a two-mile greenbelt walking trail, a park, and the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad Memorial Pavilion along an abandoned stretch of the former L&N Railroad. The National Guard Armory at Tennessee Ridge offers ball fields, tennis courts, and a walking trail. There are three boat launches on the Tennessee River with nearby motels.

The timber industry remains a vibrant part of the county economy with five large mills and processing plants. Trinity Hospital was the first hospital built from the ground up by Hospital Corporation of America (HCA). The county has a state-of-the-art nursing home with adjoining assisted-living apartments. Southern Gage found Houston County in the 1950s, and now many manufacturing companies call the county home. Stewart-Houston Industrial Park contains three manufacturing facilities, with four additional facilities in the planning stages. Erin's water plant, which supplies the county, was named the number-one water plant in Tennessee in 1996. Violent crime is a rarity, and churches of most faiths are spread throughout the county. Born into a history of industrial success, the progress of Houston County is as rich as the surrounding hills. Its 2000 population was 8,088. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

[Houston County Chamber of Commerce](#) (Website under construction)

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Record Loss – Houston County (Family Search)

There is no known history of courthouse disasters in this county.

FamilySearch [Houston County Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [Houston County](#)

Contact – [Melissa Barker](#)

[Houston County Historical Society \(Facebook\)](#)

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 1871 |
| | 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 |
| | Tennessee Vital Records Office | Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA |
| | TSLA | 1908-1912 |
| | | 1914-1933 |
| | | |
| Land Deeds | | County Registrations began 1871 |
| | County Register | County Register of Deeds |
| | | |
| List of Microfilmed Houston County Records | TSLA-PDF | Download PDF |
| | | |
| Pension Applications | Tennessee State Archives & Library | County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications |
| | | |

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Probate Records | Chancery Court | County Registrations began 1869 |
| Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters | Ancestry.com (\$) | Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters |
| World War I Veterans | Tennessee State Archives & Library | Research Collection |
| | | |

County Repositories

[Houston County Public Library](#)

[Houston County TN Archives & Museum \(FB\)](#)

[Houston County Archives](#)

Current Area Information

[Houston County Chamber of Commerce](#) (Website under construction)

[Houston County Government](#)

Resources

General

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

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

[Linkpendium – Houston County](#)

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

[TNGenWeb – Houston County](#)

[USGenWeb Archives – Houston County Tennessee](#)

[Rootwalker – Genealogical Pages for Northern Middle TN](#)

[Tennessee Law, The Early Days](#)

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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

Newspaper.com

Houston County Herald (2019-2022)

Houston County Locality Guide (23 June 2023)

Genealogybank.com

No titles for this county

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Arlington, Cumberland City, Erin, Tennessee, and the Wells Creek Valley (Lovelady, 1989) *[name index]*
- Early Newspapers in Houston County [Vol. 1 *Houston County Review* and *Erin Review* 1878-1882] (Finley, 1996)*
- Early Newspapers in Houston County [Vol. 2 *Houston County Review* and *Erin Review* 1882-1887] (Finley, 1996) *[surname index]**
- Early Newspapers in Houston County [Vol. 3 *The News* and *Houston County News* 1888-1890-1891, 1918-1923] (Finley, 1996) *[surname index]**
- Erin Area of Houston County, Pre-1880 (Finley, 2004) *[surname index]**
- History of Houston County (McClain, 1966) *[name index]**
- History of Houston County, Tennessee, 1871-1996: History and Families (1995)
- History of Tennessee From the Earliest Time to the Present: Together With a Historical and a Biographical Sketch of Montgomery, Robertson, Humphreys, Stewart, Dickson, Cheatham, Houston [counties] (Goodspeed, 1979)*
- Houston County Area: Excerpts from the Goodspeed Histories of Montgomery, Robertson, Humphreys, Stewart, Dickson, Cheatham and Houston Counties of Tennessee (Friends of the Houston County Library, 19??) *[surname index]*
- In the Beginning: An Early History of Wells and Guices Creek (Finley, 19??)
- In the Beginning: An Early History of White Oak, Cane & Hurricane Creeks (Finley, 19??)*
- Magnolia (Hinson, 2001)
- Reflections From Our Past: A Pictorial History of Houston County, Tennessee (Houston County Historical Society, 2001) *[surname index]*
- Roads of Houston County, 1871 to 1899 (Finley, 1996) *[name index]*
- Speech in Erin, August 25, 1874, by Jo. C. Guild, from *Old Times in Tennessee*, Published 1878: and, Excerpts from Clarksville, TN Newspapers (1818-1870) (Friends of the Houston County Library, 19??)
- Tennessee Ridge: How Tennessee Ridge and the Scandinavians Built the City of Tennessee Ridge (Finley, 2010) *[surname index]*

Published Local Records

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- 1850 Census of Houston County Area (Finley, 1996) *[surname index]*
- 1860 Census of Houston County Area (Finley, 1996) *[surname index]*
- 1870 Census of Houston County Area (Finley, 1996) *[surname index]*
- 1880 Agricultural Census, Houston County, Tennessee (Finley, 1996)

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- 1880 Census of Houston County (Finley, 1996) [*surname index*]
- 1880 Census, Houston County, Tennessee (Sistler, 2000) [*alphabetical by head of household*]
- 1900 Census of Houston County (Finley, 1996) [*surname index*]
- Enumeration of Male Inhabitants of Twenty-one Years of Age ... [Houston County] (Reed, 1989)
- Houston County Marriages [vol.1 1871-1896; vol. 2 1897-1910] (Finley, 1996) [*surname index*]*
- Houston County Tax Rolls [vol. 1 1873-1881; vol. 2 1882-1889; vol. 3 1890-1895; vol. 4 1896-1900] (Finley, 19??) [*vol. 1 alphabetical by year; vol. 2 - 4 surname indexes*]*
- Houston County, Tenn. Newspaper Abstracts [Houston County Review 10/19/1878 - 12/7/1888] (Willis, 2001) [*surname index*]
- Houston County Wills and Inventory [vol. 1 1871-1881; vol. 2 1881-1910] (Finley, 1997?)
- In the Beginning: An Early History of Yellow Creek (deeds prior to 1871) (Finley, 199?)
- In the Beginning: Yellow Creek (Pre-1870): Roads [sic] Orders, Wills, Marriages, Slave Index, Agricultural Census (Finley, 199?)
- Newspaper Clipping Collection From the Attic of Mr. and Mrs. James T. Brigham (Finley, 1996) [*surname index*]
- Primal families of the Yellow Creek Valley: A Chronicle of the Pioneer Families of the Regions of Dickson, Houston, and Montgomery Counties in Middle Tenn (Nesbitt, 1985) [*name index*]

Maps

[TDOT Map of Houston County](#)
[Houston County 1931](#)
[Houston County - 1888](#)
[TnGenWeb Project = Maps Our Ancestors Followed](#)

Cemeteries

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

Bibliography

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

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| Library Titles | Author / Date | TSLA | GRH&GC | MPL |
|---|---|------|--------|-----|
| A history of Houston County, TN | McClain, Iris H., 1966 | Y | | |
| A manual of public service agencies in Houston [& other] counties. | Seeber, R. Clifford, 1942 | Y | | |
| A walk in the spring rain, & The orchard children. | Maddux, Rachel, 1992 | Y | | |
| Arlington, Cumberland City, Erin, TN, & the Wells Creek Valley. | Lovelady, Joyce & Charles, 1989 | Y | | |
| Biographical directory, TN General Assembly, 1796-1969 | 1973 | Y | | |
| Geology of the Wells Creek structure, TN. Nashville, TN Div. Geol., 1968. 236 pp. | Wilson, Charles W. | Y | | |
| Goodspeed's history of TN (Houston County, pp. 974-998, 1388-1402). Goodspeed, 1886. | Goodspeed, 1886 | Y | Y | Y |
| History of Houston County, Tennessee, 1871-1996: history and families. | Houston Co Hist. Soc, 1995 | | Y | |
| Houston County cemetery directory, 1810-1988. | Houston Co Hist. Soc, 1995 | | | Y |
| Houston County, TN Chamber of Commerce. Opportunity knocks in Houston County. | | Y | | |
| Kentucky Lake Reservoir cemeteries (in Tennessee). | Douthat, James L., 1988 | | Y | |
| Land grant genealogy: North Carolina warrants, surveys & surveyor plats. | Masters, Jack, 2012 | | Y | |
| Land utilization in Houston County, TN. UT thesis, 1949. 39 pp. | Irwin, David. | Y | | |
| Obituaries: connections to Stewart, Houston, Montgomery Co., Tenn. & surrounding areas. | Horn, Estelle. | | Y | |
| Reflections from our past: a pictorial history of Houston County, Tennessee. | Houston County Historical Society, 2001 | | Y | |
| Rural relief & rehabilitation possibilities in Houston County, TN. | Allred, Charles E., 1935 | Y | | |
| Speech of Judge Jo C. Guild, on Tuesday, August 25, 1874, at Erin, Houston County, TN. | Guild, Josephus C. | Y | | |
| Stewart - Houston times [scrapbook]. | Cogdell, Wilma Sutton, 1984 | | Y | |
| Stewart County, Tennessee circuit court minutes. | Long, Jim, 2019 | | Y | |
| The Houston Family and Relatives. | Houston, Curtis A., 1984 | | Y | |
| The river counties quarterly. | Garrett, Jill K., 1972-1985 | | Y | |