

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Geographic Area and County History



Weakley County was named for Colonel Robert Weakley, a member of the House of Representatives, a speaker of the State Senate, and the man commissioned to the treaty with the Chickasaw. The county is located in the northwestern area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

Weakley County is located on the Plateau Slope of West Tennessee. The north, middle, and south forks of the Obion River and its tributaries drain the land westward to the Mississippi River. It is bounded on the north by the state of Kentucky, on the east by Henry County, on the south by Carroll and Gibson counties, and on the west by Obion County. Weakley County covers 576 square miles, having lost some of its land to Gibson County in 1837 and to Obion County in 1870.

Weakley County was established October 23, 1823, and named for Robert Weakley II, Speaker of the Tennessee Senate. By early 1825 the organization of the county was completed, and the town of Dresden had been surveyed and platted by Mears Warner to contain a public square and ninety lots. In 1835 the general assembly divided the county into twelve voting districts to elect justices of the peace and constables. By 1843 two new districts had been added.

The first circuit court was held in a log house on the courtyard. It was replaced in 1827 by a brick courthouse. When that structure became too small, it was replaced by a two-story brick structure in 1852. This building was destroyed by fire in 1948 and replaced in 1950 with a four-story building, including basement, constructed of Alabama limestone, designed by the Nashville firm Marr and Holman.

Weakley County's first agricultural crop was corn, and by 1880 it was the state's largest corn-producing county. An abundance of corn led to increased production of cattle and hogs. Pioneer farmers engaged in cotton production as soon as the land was cleared, but county farmers steadily reduced the cotton acreage in the late nineteenth century. Since 1960 soybeans have taken the place of cotton in agricultural production and now rank as the county's leading crop. The first tobacco crop was planted in 1832. In 1980 Weakley County farmers planted 138 acres of type-22 western dark-fired tobacco. Sweet potatoes had become a major crop by 1850, with 45,180 bushels produced. Almost a century later, in 1944, Weakley County ranked tenth in national production. In the early settlement of the county, farmers grew enough wheat, rye, and oats to supply their family and livestock needs. Today farmers grow more wheat in a three-way rotation between wheat, soybeans, and corn. By the 1950s, modern dairying had become one of the major agricultural activities, but pressure on pasture land as it is converted to soybean production has resulted in the decline of dairying, although the county continues to be one of the top swine producers in the state.

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Weakley County has five incorporated towns: Dresden, Martin, Greenfield, Sharon, and Gleason. Dresden, the county seat, was incorporated in 1827 and reported a 2000 population of 2,855. The town's first major industries were Bay Bee Shoe Company, established in 1948, and Dresden Manufacturing Company (1949). Dresden is the home of the forty-sixth governor of Tennessee, the Honorable Ned R. McWherter.

Martin recorded a 2000 population of 10,515. It was incorporated in 1874, and has long sustained a reputation for its educational facilities. In addition to public schools, the town was the home to two denominational academies, McFerrin and Hall-Moody, the latter evolving into the University of Tennessee at Martin by 1967. Fifteen industries have manufacturing plants in Martin, including MTD Products, Hubbell Lighting Company, Martin Manufacturing Company, and Martin Brothers Container and Timber Corporation.

Incorporated in 1880, Greenfield had a 1990 population of 2,208. It presently has twelve industries, the largest employers being Kellwood Company, Parker Hannifin Corporation, and Greenfield Products Company. Sharon was incorporated in 1901 and now has a population of over 1,000 residents. Nine industries operate in Sharon, the largest of which is WSW Company, a manufacturer of children's wear.

Gleason, incorporated in 1871, reported a 2000 population of 1,463. It has eleven industries, the largest employers being H. C. Spinks Clay Company and Gleason Brick Company. Known as "Tater Town" because of the large shipments of sweet potatoes that once originated there, the town post office has a New Deal period mural depicting the sweet potato industry. The town is now the ball clay mining center of the world. Five major companies ship clay used for china, brick, and tile.

In 1857 the Nashville and Northwestern became the first railroad to cross the county. In 1872 the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis took over the east-west line and in 1880 it merged with the Louisville and Nashville. Today the remnants of this line, now CSX, still serve Dresden and Gleason. Most of the tracks have been abandoned or removed. The first north-south railroad that crossed the county was the Mississippi Central in 1872. It was soon bought by the Illinois Central Railroad, which merged with GM&O in 1972, forming the Illinois Central-Gulf. Today the railroad belongs to the Norfolk-Southern Railroad Company.

Notable citizens, in addition to former governor McWherter, include U.S. Congressman and State Senator Emerson Etheridge (1819-1902) and Finis J. Garrett (1875-1956), editor, educator, congressman, and chief justice of U.S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

[Weakley County Chamber of Commerce](#)

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Record Loss – Weakley County ([Family Search](#))

1948 Fire damaged courthouse records. At the 1948 fire, a large number of chancery and circuit court files were discarded. They passed into the keeping of a private citizen, and in 1995 the files were given to the University of Tennessee at Martin, where they constitute MS 4 and MS 2, respectively. [Special Collections](#). Both collections have since been filmed by the [FS Library](#).

- Lack of marriage records: 1825 to 1842
- Lost probate records: 1825 to 1827

FamilySearch Weakley County [Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [Weakley County](#)

Contact – [MaryCarol](#)

[Weakley County Tennessee Historical & Genealogy Society](#)

County Historian – [Mike Rea \(eMail\)](#)

County Archivist – [Greg Roach \(eMail\)](#)

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 1852
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
	TNGenWeb	Marriages
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
	TNGenWeb	Obits

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1808
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
	TNGenWeb	Land Records
List of Microfilmed Weakley 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 1827
	TnGenWeb	Wills
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Research Collection (1)

County Repositories

[C.E. Weldon Public Library](#)
[C.E. Weldon Public Library-Genealogy Library](#)
[Weakley County Tennessee Historical & Genealogy Society](#)
[Weakley County Archives](#)
[Weakley Co. TN Genealogy Chat](#)
[Genealogy Trails Weakley County, Tennessee](#)

Current Area Information

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

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Resources

General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – Weakley County](#)
[Weakley County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)
[Linkpendium – Weakley County](#)
[Tennessee State Library & Archives – Weakley County Facts Sheet](#)
[TLSA Name Index – Weakley County \(Acts of Tennessee 1796-1850\)](#)
[TNGenWeb – Weakley County](#)
[USGenWeb Archives – Weakley County Tennessee](#)
[Tennessee Law, The Early Days](#)

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

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

Newspaper.com – The Dresden Enterprise (1914-1921)

Genealogybank.com – The Dresden Enterprise (1914-1921)

Chronicling America –

1. [The county times. \(Martin, Tenn.\) 1937-1942](#)
2. [The flag. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 18??-18??](#)
3. [The Greenfield gazette. \(Greenfield, Tenn.\) 1???-196?](#)
4. [The Greenfield sentinel. \(Greenfield, Tenn.\) 1880-18??](#)
5. [The Greenfield times. \(Greenfield, Tenn.\) 189?-19??](#)
6. [Baptist builder. \(Martin, Tenn.\) 1903-1920](#)
7. [The Dresden democrat. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 1879-188?](#)
8. [Dresden enterprise and Sharon tribune. \[online resource\] 1907-1997](#)
9. [Dresden enterprise and Sharon tribune. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 1907-1997](#)
10. [The Dresden enterprise. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 18??-1907](#)
11. [Dresden enterprise. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 1997-current](#)
12. [The Dresden gossip. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 1866-1866](#)
13. [Dresden weekly democrat. \[volume\] \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 187?-187?](#)
14. [The Republican. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 188?-189?](#)
15. [The Primitive Baptist. \[volume\] \(Fulton, Ky.\) 1886-current](#)
16. [The Primitive Baptist. \(Martin, Tenn.\) 1885-19??](#)
17. [The Jacksonian. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 1840-18??](#)
18. [The Martin mail. \[volume\] \(Martin, Tenn.\) 188?-1921](#)
19. [Pacer. \(Martin, Tenn.\) 1971-current](#)
20. [Our country. \(Dresden, Tenn.\) 187?-188?](#)

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Cary Lawn: A Special Place	Vaughan, 1991
Historical Address Delivered by Col. John A. Gardner, on the Early Times in Weakley County	Gardner & Bolling, 1876
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
Life and Times of Greenfield, Tennessee with Sketches of Weakley County	Prins, 1965
Weakley County (Vaughan, 1983
Weakley County Bank: Since 1887	Freeman, 1987
Weakley County, Tennessee: History & Families, 1823-1998	Weakley Co. G.S., 1999

Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

Archelaus Hughes Diaries, 1847-1893	Microfilm Manuscript #1258, 1 reel*
Archelaus Madison Hughes Diary, 1867-1884	M-film Manuscript #414, 1 reel*
Bondurant Family Papers. Weakley County, 1734-1978	M-film Manuscript #914, 7 reels*
Conner Family Papers, 1817-1940	M-film Manuscript #1176, 1 reel*
First Presbyterian Church Records. Weakley County, 1868-1962	M-film Manuscript #783, 1 reel*
First Baptist Church of Dresden Records. Weakley County, 1910-1983	M-film Manuscript #807, 2 reels*
Galloway Family Papers, 1832-1889	M-film Manuscript #1117, 1 reel*
Gardner Family Papers, 1809-1975	M-film Manuscript #571, 1 reel*
Gardner Family Records, ca. 1800-ca. 1950	M-film Manuscript #638, 1 reel*
Hickory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church, South Records. Weakley County, 1866-1928	M-film Manuscript #846, 1 reel*
Jolley Springs Missionary Baptist Church Records. Weakley County, 1888-1983	M-film Manuscript #750, 1 reel*
Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church Records. Martin, 1824-1969	M-film Manuscript #288, 1 reel*
Martin Church of Christ Records. Weakley County, 1874-1899	M-film Manuscript #756, 1 reel*
Mt. Moriah Methodist Church Records. Weakley County, 1913-1958	M-film Manuscript #966, 1 reel*
New Hope Methodist Church Records. Weakley County, 1831-1983	M-film Manuscript #733, 1 reel*
New Salem Cumberland Presbyterian Church Records. Weakley County, 1874-1978	M-film Manuscript #728, 1 reel*
Olivet United Methodist Church Records. Weakley County, 1887-1982	M-film Manuscript #766, 1 reel*
Thomas Elbert Reavis Diaries, 1908 - 1958	M-film Manuscript #903, 1 reel*
Thompson Creek Baptist Church Records. Weakley and Henry Counties, 1831-1982	M-film Manuscript #732, 1 reel*
Weakley County Cemetery Records, 1939	M-film Manuscript #820, 1 reel
West Tennessee Funeral Home Records: Benton, Carroll, Gibson, Henry, and Weakley Counties	M-film Manuscript #1786, 86 reels*

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Published Local Records

Tennessee State Archives & Library

1880 Census of Weakley County, Tennessee [2 vols] (Weakley County Genealogical Society, 1982) <i>[surname index in each volume]*</i>
Family Bible Records, Weakley County, Tennessee Families <i>[name index]</i>
Guide to the Weakley County Court Records: Held by the University of Tennessee at Martin, Special Collections Department (Weakley County Genealogical Society, 1999) <i>[name index]*</i>
Minutes of the County Court of Weakley County, 1827-1846, 1853-1857 [3 vols. in 7 pts.] (WPA, 1941-1942) <i>[name index in vol. 1, pt. 1 and vol. 3, pt. 1]</i>
Neighbors in Weakley County, Tennessee: A Land ownership Map, 1827-1833 (Vowell, 1986) <i>[name index]*</i>
Private Acts of Weakley County, Tennessee (McIntyre, 1994)
They Served the Flag: The Second World War Veterans of Weakley County, Tennessee (Saunders & Downing, 2001) <i>[name index]*</i>
Weakley County Obituaries [1967-2011 -- each volume covers one year] [combined index for 1965-2009] (Weakley County Genealogical Society) <i>[name index in each volume]</i>
Weakley County, Tenn. Census of 1860 (Willis & Sellers, 1999) <i>[surname index]</i>
Weakley County, Tenn. Tax Lists, 1828-29-30-31-32 (Simmons & Willis, 1996) <i>[arranged by year, then by first letter of surname]</i>
Weakley County, Tenn., Wills & Administrations [vol 1. 1828-1853; vol. 2 1851-1875; vol. 3 1875-1889; vol. 4 1889-1900] (Willis, 1996-) <i>[surname index in vols. 1 & 2; name index in vols. 3 & 4]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee: 1850 Census (Porch, 1973?) <i>[surname index]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, 1880 Census (Sistler, 2001) <i>[alphabetical by head of household]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee Cemetery Listings [2 vols.] (Daughters of the American Revolution. James Buckley Chapter, 1980) <i>[surname index in each volume]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee Deed Book [1822-1833] (Crumpton, 2003) <i>[name index]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Grant Book, 1794-1844 (WPA, 1941) <i>[name index]</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Marriage Book, no. 1, 1843-53, no. 2, 1846-54 (WPA, 1939) <i>[name index]</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Marriage Records [vol. 1 1843-1854; vol. 2 1854-1865; vol. 3 1866-1873; vol. 4 1873-1880] (Martin & Willis, 1996-) <i>[v. 1 name index for grooms; v. 2 surname index for bride & groom; v. 3 surname index for groom; v. 4 surname index for groom, surname index for bride]</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Marriage Records [vol. 1 1843-Sept. 4, 1863; vol. 2 Sept. 4, 1863-1878] (Weakley County Genealogical Society, 1980) <i>[both volumes alphabetical by groom with bride index]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Marriage Records [vol. 4 1873-1880; vol. 5 1880-1886*] (Willis & Griffith, 1997-) <i>[name index for groom, name index for bride]</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee Marriages: July 9, 1878-November 20, 1886 (Smith, 1998) <i>[alphabetical by groom, alphabetical by bride]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee Miscellaneous Records [includes James Harrell's Civil War diary, history of Weakley County, cemetery records, muster roll of 2nd Regiment of TN Cavalry, Companies H & I](Hays, 1996) <i>[name index]</i>
Weakley County Tennessee Record and Will Book B, 1840-1861 (WPA, 1938) <i>[name index]</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Record of Occupant Entry, 1827-1833 (WPA, 1941) <i>[name index]</i>

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Weakley County, Tennessee, Register Survey Books, 1784-1857 [2 vols.] (Willis, 1995-) <i>[surname index in each volume]*</i>
Weakley County, Tennessee, Vital Statistics, 1908-1912 (Willis, 1997) <i>[surname index]</i>
Weakley Remembered (Weakley County, Tennessee) [4 vols. : vol. 1 grants 1794-1844, tax list 1828, 1843, will books 1828-1861, Guardian Book A; vol. 2 Bible & family records; vol. 3 County Court minutes 1827-1835 & 1853-1857, occupant entry books 1827-33, partial land entry claims 1838-1885, and 1850 mortality schedules; vol. 4 Bible & family records] (Baker, 1981)*
Will & Record book, 1828-1842 (WPA, 1938) <i>[name index]</i>
Wills from Weakley County Will and Record Book, 1828-42 (Daughters of the American Colonists. Isaac Dawson Chapter, 1979) <i>[name index]</i>

Maps

- [TDOT Map of Weakley County](#)
- [Weakley County 1880 - District Map](#)
- [Weakley County - 1888](#)
- [TnGenWeb Project - Maps Our Ancestors Followed](#)

Cemeteries

- [Weakley County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave](#)
- [Weakley County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)
- [Weakley County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails](#)

Bibliography

- [The Land Laws of Tennessee \(Whitney, 1891\) Google Books](#)
- [Guide to Public Vital Statistics in Tennessee \(WPA 1941\)](#)

TSLA = Tennessee State Library & Archives
GRH&GC = Germantown Regional History & Genealogical Center
MPL = Memphis Public Library

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL
"Early times in Weakley County: an address."	Gardner, John A., WTHSP 17 (1963)	Y		
"The Killgore killing."	Coppock, Paul R., WTHSP 15 (1961)	Y		
1880 census of Weakley County	WCGS, 1988		Y	
1880 census of Weakley County, Tennessee	WCGS, 1987			Y
A history of Weakley County, TN, through 1861. UT thesis, 1970. 75 pp.	Carmichael, Claudia J.	Y		
Biographical directory, TN General Assembly, 1796-1969 (Weakley County, Preliminary # 39). Nashville, TSLA, 1973. 30 pp.		Y		
Churches of Weakley County	Martin Kiwanis Club, 1980.	Y		

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

DAR. James Buckley Chapter (Sharon, TN). Weakley County, Tennessee cemetery listings.	1980		Y	
Folk miscellany of Weakley County, TN: commemorating the Martin, TN centennial 1873-1973.	Payne, Midred Y. & James E. Spears, 1973	Y		
Goodspeed's history of TN (Weakley County, pp. 831-842, 985-1024).	Goodspeed, 1887.	Y	Y	Y
Historical address delivered by Col. John A. Gardner, on the early times in Weakley County.	Gardner, John A., 1876	Y		
Home in the wilderness.	Maiden, Effie Meek, 2003		Y	
Marriage book no. 2, 1846-1854.	WC-Tn Hist. Records Survey, 1938			Y
Memories.	Jones, Lockie Victoria, 2005		Y	
Mt. Vernon Methodist Church	1985		Y	
Neighbors in Weakley County, TN: a land ownership map, 1827-1833.	Vowell, Mary K., 1985	Y	Y	Y
Record and will book "B", 1840-1861.	WC-Tn Hist. Records Survey, 1938			Y
Sharon: the last 100 years	Roberts, Martha Jim, 1986		Y	
Tennessee, Weakley County, Weakley County will & record book, 1828-1842.	US=WPA, 1938		Y	
The land holdings of Colonel David Crockett in West Tennessee.	Smith, Jonathan Kennon Thompson, 2004		Y	
The life and times of Greenfield, Tennessee with sketches of Weakley County.	Prins, Dixie Eldridge, 1965		Y	
The West Tennessee Historical Society papers.	WTHS, 1947		Y	
They served the flag: the Second World War veterans of Weakley County, Tennessee.	Saunders, Richard L., 2001		Y	
Weakley County	Vaughan, Virginia C., 1983	Y		
Weakley County Bank: since 1887. Dresden, Weakley County Bank, 1987. 88 pp.	Freeman, Mary E.	Y		
Weakley County Bicentennial Comm. at Martin, TN. Oral history tapes series. Recorded July-Aug., 1995. Sound cassettes. (a series of oral interview recordings on the subjects of family, events & development of Weakley County, TN)		Y		
Weakley County, Tenn. marriage records.	Willis, Laura, 1997		Y	
Weakley County, Tenn. newspaper abstracts.	Willis, Laura, 1998		Y	
Weakley County, Tenn. tax lists, 1828-29-30-31-32.	Simmons, Don, 1996		Y	
Weakley County, Tenn. vital statistics, 1908-1912.	Willis, Laura, 1997		Y	
Weakley County, Tenn. wills & administrations.	Willis, Laura, 1996		Y	
Weakley County, Tenn., occupant entry records, 1827-1833.	US=WPA, 2005		Y	

Weakley County Locality Guide (27 October 2023)

Weakley County, Tennessee cemetery listings	DAR, 1980			Y
Weakley County, Tennessee deed book, A-B, 1822-1833.	Crompton, Barbara, 2003		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee marriage records - 1843-1878	WCGS, 1980			Y
Weakley County, Tennessee marriage records.	WCGS, 1984		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee miscellaneous records	Hays, Sallie, 1996			Y
Weakley County, Tennessee miscellaneous records.	Hays, Sallie, 1996		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee register survey books 1784-1857.	Willis, Laura, 1995		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee will book.	Willis, Laura, 2004		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee, deeds [microform] 1825-1876				Y
Weakley County, Tennessee, Genealogical Society, 1982-1988	WCGS, 1988		Y	
Weakley County, Tennessee, wills [microform] Births, deaths, Wills 1908-1912				Y
Weakley County, Tennessee: 1850 census	Pooch, Deane, 1973			Y
Weakley County, Tennessee: history & families, 1823 - 1998	WCGS, 1999			Y
Weakley County.	Vaughan, Virginia C., 1983		Y	
Weakley remembered, Weakley County, TN. Pansy N. Baker, Charlotte S. Reynolds, 1981.	Pansy N. Baker, Charlotte S. Reynolds, 1981.	Y	Y	Y
Weakley County, Tennessee: history & families, 1823-1998.	Weakley Co. G.S., 1999			
West Tennessee death records.	Hays, Tony, 1987		Y	