

Genealogical Research in Tennessee

Goals of the Presentation

- Provide tips and resources to help you find your Tennessee ancestors and learn more about their lives



Presentation Organized by Time Period

Using the Tennessee Ancestry Certificate Settlement Periods

- Colonial -- prior to 1 June 1796
- Territorial -- prior to 15 June 1836
- Antebellum -- prior to 6 May 1861
- Civil War -- 1861-1865 or applied for TN Confederate War Pension
- Nineteenth Century -- prior to 31 Dec 1900

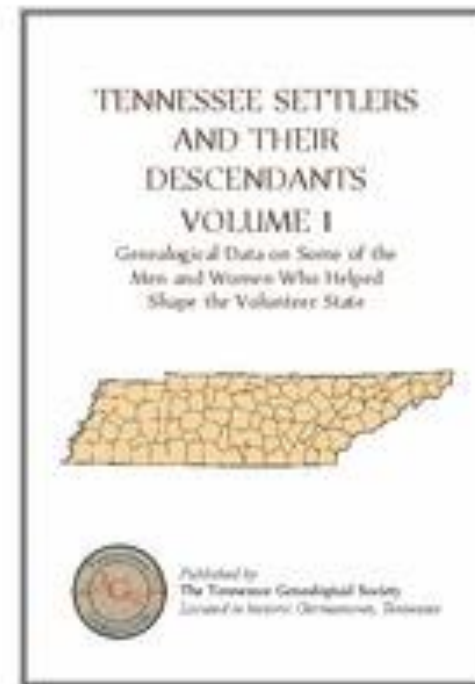
Lastly

- Twentieth Century



Tennessee Ancestry Certificates Program Overview

- PROVIDE proof you have an ancestor who lived in Tennessee during one of the 5 Settlement Periods
- RECEIVE
 - Certificate suitable for framing
 - Inclusion in the next Tennessee Settlers book
- CONTACT Sylvia Harris, Director of Certificates, for more information



FOR ONLY \$30



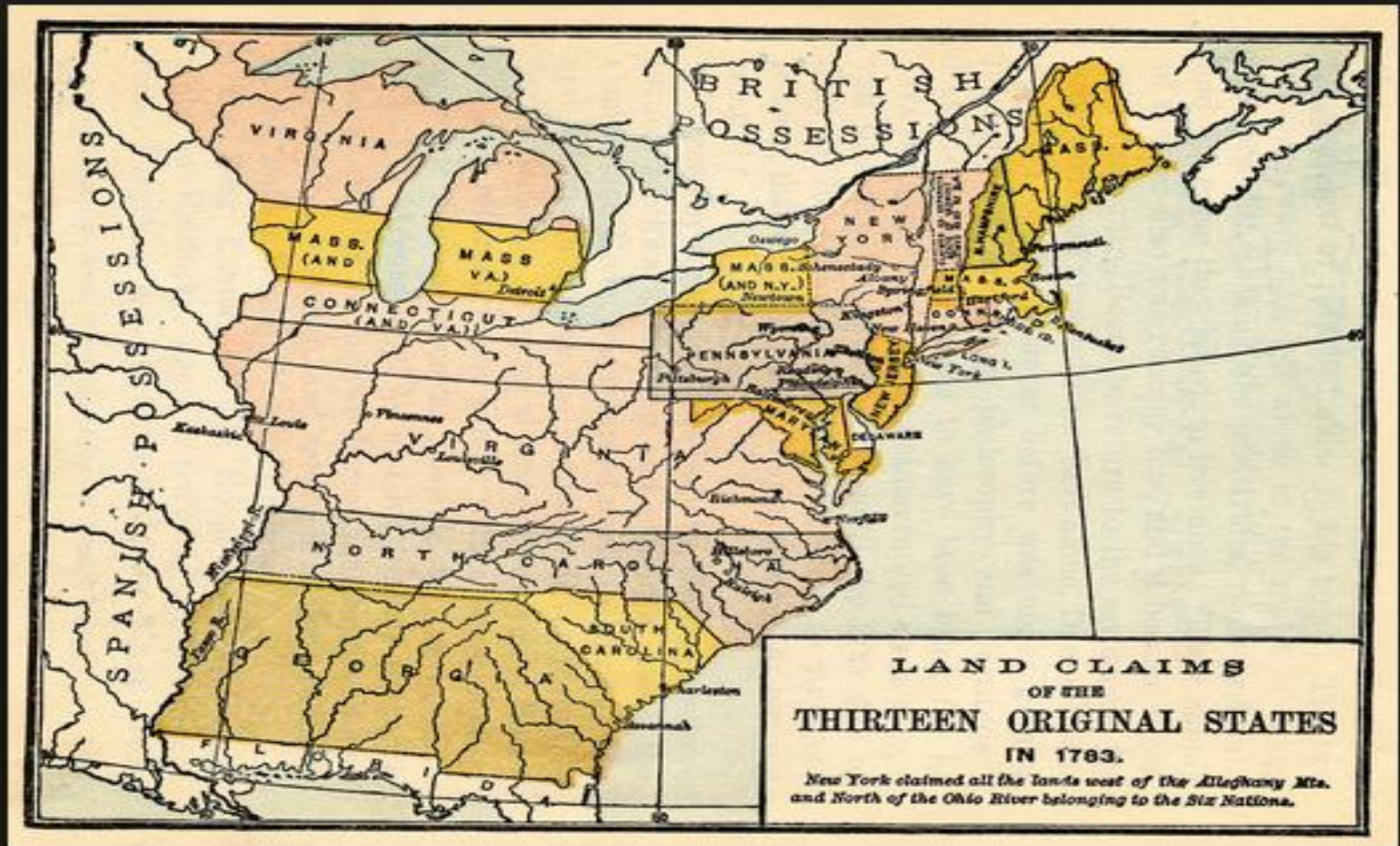
Colonial-prior to 1 June 1796

Key Dates and Events

- 1763: Britain takes control of French land east of the Mississippi after the French & Indian War. King George forbids settlement.
- 1768: Permanent white settlement begins along Watauga River (William Bean of Virginia).
- 1775: Upper East Tennessee became Washington District, North Carolina.
- 1776 – 1781: Revolutionary War.
 - 1780: Battle of Kings Mountain



North Carolina Land Claim 1783



Colonial-prior to 1 June 1796

Key Dates and Events con't

- 1779: Fort Nashborough established.
- 1784: State of Franklin (only till 1788).
- 1789: North Carolina ceded it's claim to the Federal government, reserving the right to issue Revolutionary War Bounty Land.
- 1790: Congress created the "Territory South of the Ohio River", aka the Southwest Territory, capital at Knoxville.
- 1791: *The Knoxville Gazette* became Tennessee's first newspaper.



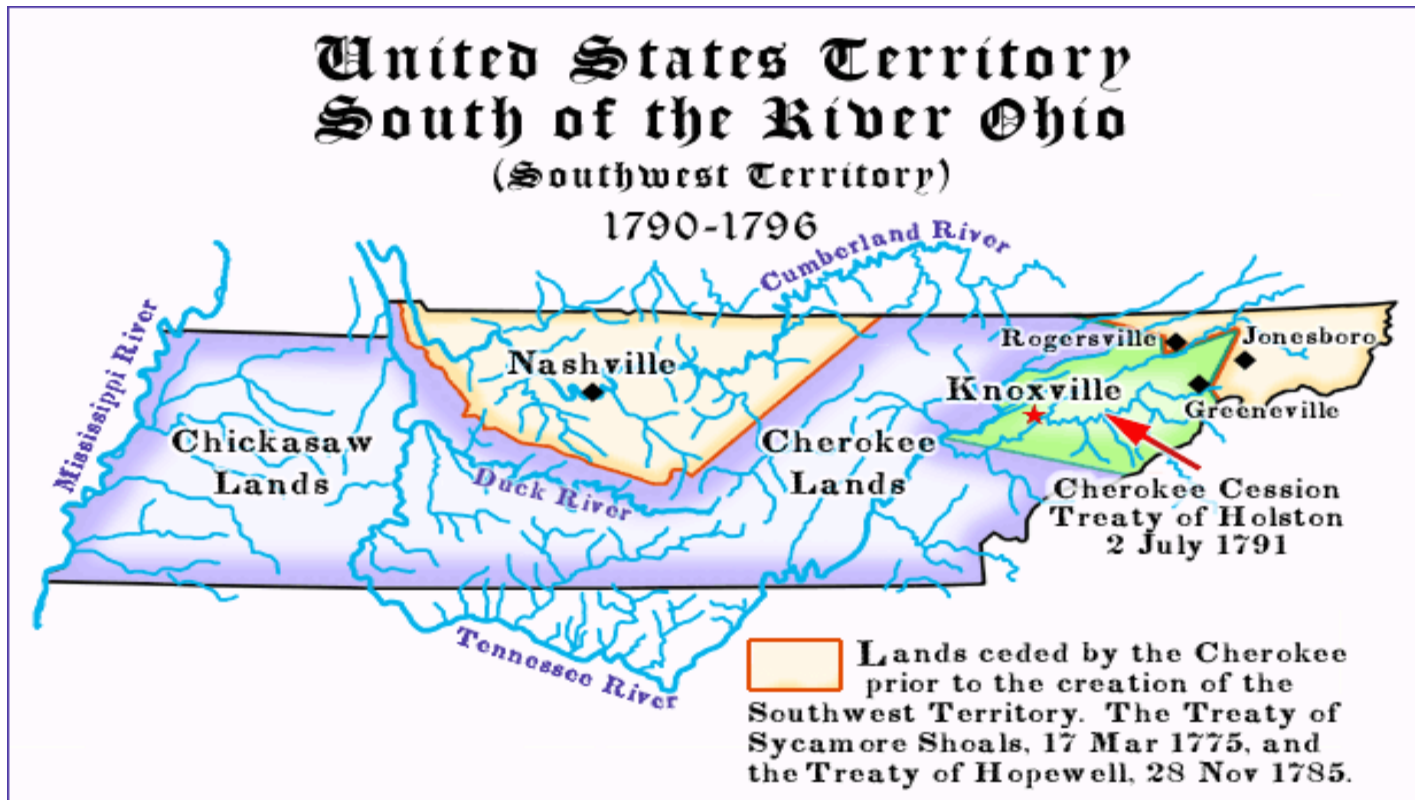
US Territorial Map 1790



1790



Southwest Territory (from TNGenWeb)



Colonial-prior to 1 June 1796 Genealogical Resources

- The record you are looking for may be in North Carolina.
 - Or someone born before 1796 in North Carolina, might have been born in present day Tennessee.
- 1790 Census of the Southwest Territory – lost
 - Substitutes available
- Revolutionary War
 - Revolutionary War Pension Records
 - DAR and SAR records
 - Revolutionary War Bounty Land
 - Patriot Paths at TSLA
- Land Records



Colonial-prior to 1 June 1796 Genealogical Resources

- Tax Lists – potentially place an ancestor in a certain county at a certain time.
 - Earliest – Washington County, NC 1778
- Draper Manuscripts
- Vital Records
 - Don't exist, except for Marriage Records in some counties.
 - Look for Bible Records, Cemetery Records, Newspapers, etc. for birth, death and marriage information.
 - Various published extracts from newspapers, court records, etc.



Territorial-prior to 15 June 1836

Key Dates and Events

- 1812: *The Tennessean* begins publication.
- War of 1812.
- 1818: US purchased land between the Tennessee River and the Mississippi River from the Chickasaw.
- 1835: Act creating civil districts within counties for the purpose of electing Justices of the Peace and Constables.
- 1836: Counties began sending tax lists to the state.



Territorial-prior to 15 June 1836 Genealogy Resources

- Census
 - 1800 Census – Lost.
 - 1810 Census – Only Grainger and Rutherford Counties survive.
 - Substitutes
 - 1820 Census – Only 26 counties from the Western (Nashville) district survive.
 - 1830 Census – heads of households.

- War of 1812 Military Records



Territorial-prior to 15 June 1836

Genealogy Resources

- Draper Manuscripts
- Tax Lists
- Land Records
- Vital Records
 - Still don't exist, except for Marriage Records in some counties.
 - Look for Bible Records, Cemetery Records, Newspapers, etc. for birth, death and marriage information.
 - Various published extracts from newspapers, court records, etc.



Antebellum-prior to 6 May 1861

Key Dates and Events

- 1837-1838: Trail of Tears.
- 1838: Counties were required to keep marriage records in bound books.
- 1859: Final survey of boundary between Kentucky and Tennessee. For people who lived near the border, records may be in either state.



Antebellum-prior to 6 May 1861 Genealogical Resources

- Census
 - 1840 Census – heads of households.
 - 1850 Census – lists everyone in household, but no relationships identified.
 - Mortality schedules
 - Slave schedules
 - 1860 Census – enumerators given printed instructions.
 - Mortality schedules
 - Slave schedules
- City Directories start being published.
 - Memphis (earliest 1849)
 - Nashville (earliest 1853/54)
 - Knoxville (earliest 1859)



Antebellum-prior to 6 May 1861 Genealogical Resources

- Vital Records
 - County Marriage Records more common.
 - State Birth and Death records still don't exist.
 - Look for Bible Records, Cemetery Records, Newspapers, etc. for birth, death and marriage information.
 - Various published extracts from newspapers, court records, etc.
- Tax Lists



Civil War (1861-1865)

Key Dates and Events

- 1861: Tennessee is the last of the southern states to secede from the Union.
- 1865: Formation of the Freedman's Bureau.
- 1866: Tennessee is the first state readmitted to the Union.



Civil War (1861-1865) Genealogical Records

- Compiled Service Records
 - Union Soldiers
 - Confederate Soldiers
- Confederate Pension Applications
- Confederate Widow Pension Applications
- Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires



Nineteenth Century-prior to 31 Dec 1900

Key Dates

- 1865 - 1872: Freedman's Bureau.
- 1878: Yellow Fever Epidemic.
- 1883: Ida B. Wells challenges "separate but equal" railroad laws.
- 1896: Shiloh National Military Park created.
- 1897: Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition in Nashville.



Nineteenth Century-prior to 31 Dec 1900

Genealogical Records

- Census
 - 1870 Census
 - 1880 Census – provides relationships
 - Mortality schedules
 - 1890 Census – most records LOST
 - 1890 Special Census of Union Civil War Veterans
 - 1900 Census – lots of details including birth month & year; years married; for women, # children & # children living.

- 1891 Enumeration of Male Voters



Nineteenth Century-prior to 31 Dec 1900

Genealogical Records

- City Directories are even more common.
 - Chattanooga (earliest 1871/72)
- Local Histories and Vanity Biographies
 - Formation of many county and state historical societies.
 - Goodspeed's History of Tennessee.



Twentieth Century

Key Dates

- 1908: Birth (released after 100 years) and Death Records (released after 50 years) statewide, except 1913. Spotty early adoption.
- World War I
- 1929: Great Depression
- 1933: Tennessee Valley Authority formed.
- 1935: Social Security began.
- World War II
- 1945: Statewide Registration of Marriages (released after 50 years).



Twentieth Century Genealogical Resources

- Census
 - 1910 Census
 - 1920 Census
 - 1930 Census
 - 1940 Census – Identifies person providing information
 - 1950 Census – COMING SOON (April 2022)
- Great Depression
 - WPA put people to work transcribing many records.
- Military Records
- Vital Records
 - Delayed Certificates of Birth (to apply for Social Security).



A Final Reminder

Take Time to Get to Know
Your County History





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Creating and maintaining an organization and a society
for the study and investigation of genealogical history
and genealogical records.

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Website: www.tngs.org