

TENNESSEE

HISTORY

Cherokee and Chickasaw nations, pioneers, farmers and dam builders each helped build Tennessee. It became the 16th state in 1796.

The First Peoples

People have lived in Tennessee for at least 12,000 years. Later, Native farmers grew corn, beans and squash and built earth mounds. By the 1700s, the Cherokee lived in towns in the eastern valleys. The Chickasaw held the west. Both nations hunted in the middle of the land. They traded deer skins with British and French traders.



Over the Mountains

Around 1770, settlers from Virginia and North Carolina built farms along the Watauga River. In 1775, a land company bought a large area from Cherokee leaders at Sycamore Shoals. The Cherokee leader Dragging Canoe spoke against the sale. By 1780, James Robertson and John Donelson had led settlers to the Cumberland River. They built Fort Nashborough, which grew into Nashville.

War on the Frontier

Dragging Canoe and his followers sided with Britain in the American Revolution. In 1776, they attacked the Watauga settlements, but the settlers held Fort Watauga. Soldiers from Virginia and the Carolinas then burned many Cherokee towns. In 1780, the Overmountain Men, a frontier **militia**, crossed the mountains. They beat a Loyalist army at Kings Mountain. Cherokee fighters and settlers kept raiding each other's towns until 1794.

The Sixteenth State

In 1790, the land became the Southwest **Territory** of the United States. Knoxville became its capital. Tennessee became the 16th state on June 1, 1796. John Sevier was the first governor. In 1818, the Chickasaw sold West Tennessee to the United States in a **treaty**. Memphis was founded the next year. In 1838, the U.S. Army moved most Cherokee people west to Indian Territory. Native people live in Tennessee today.

A Divided State

Farmers in Middle and West Tennessee grew cotton, tobacco and corn. Enslaved people did much of the work on the large farms. In 1861, Tennessee voted to **secede**, or leave the Union, and joined the South. Many people in East Tennessee stayed loyal to the Union. Big battles were fought at Shiloh, Stones River, Chattanooga and Franklin. Slavery ended in Tennessee in 1865. In 1866, Tennessee became the first Southern state to rejoin the Union.



Building Tennessee

Railroads linked the big cities. In 1933, the United States created the Tennessee Valley Authority, or TVA. It built dams on the Tennessee River and its streams. The dams stopped floods, made electricity and helped boats travel. Norris Dam, the first, was finished in 1936. Cheap power brought factories and the Oak Ridge lab.

TENNESSEE THROUGH TIME

1775	1780	1790	1796	1818	1838	1862	1866	1936
Land sale at Sycamore Shoals	Nashville is founded	Southwest Territory is formed	Tennessee becomes the 16th state	The Chickasaw sell West Tennessee	Most Cherokee are moved west	Battle of Shiloh	Tennessee rejoins the Union	Norris Dam is finished

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Nancy Ward	Cherokee Beloved Woman who worked for peace with settlers.
Davy Crockett	Frontier hunter and congressman from East Tennessee.
Andrew Jackson	Won at New Orleans in 1815. The 7th president.
Wilma Rudolph	Clarksville runner. Three gold medals in 1960.
Dolly Parton	Singer and songwriter from the Smoky Mountains.

WORDS TO KNOW

militia	citizens who train to fight when needed
territory	U.S. land that is not yet a state
treaty	a written agreement between nations
secede	to leave a country and form a new one