

TENNESSEE COUNTY HISTORY SERIES

Benton County



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DEDICATED
TO
THE MEMORY OF
GEORGE BLANTON HOLLADAY
1873-1968
A foremost historian of Benton County

TO
JOHN DWIGHT MELTON
Friend, Colleague, and Benton County Historian, Emeritus

TO
RUTH PRIESTLEY LOCKHART
A foremost educator of Benton County

TO
THE REVEREND ROBERT L. MONTGOMERY
A foremost community leader

Acknowledgments

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J. K. T. S.
Ridley Hill
Benton County, Tennessee
December 24, 1978

Tennessee County History Series



BENTON County is located in West Tennessee. Its eastern border is formed by the Tennessee River; these 50 miles of shoreline are a part of the Kentucky Lake Reservoir. To the north, the county is bordered by Henry County and the Big Sandy and the Tennessee rivers; to the west is Carroll County; and to the south is Decatur County. There are about 400 square miles and some 250,816 acres of land, along with a population of approximately 13,100, within the borders of the county.

The county, which has a rectangular shape, lies partially in the western valley of the Tennessee River and partially in the plateau of West Tennessee. Its land surface is variable, with the formations on the surface of the western section consisting of unconsolidated clays and sands while the eastern section is hilly with small valleys. The northern-most section of the county is hilly with deep, broad valleys; many steep eastern bluffs overlook the Tennessee River. Near the village of Eva is one of the highest elevations in western Tennessee, at some 650 feet above sea level, known for generations as Pilot Knob. Otherwise, the county is generally rolling and heavily forested.

The most striking evidence of ancient geologic times in this county is that of the Devonian epoch, dating back at least 350,000,000 years. At that time, the county lay under a vast sea, which covered most of the southern portion of the United States.

Untold millions of simple marine life thrived in this sandy-bottom sea. Chert is composed of the fossils of those animals and of sand and clay. Because of its fine-grained, compact quartz quality, the local chert, or gravel, is novaculite which, when

exposed to the elements, has a yellowish chalk appearance. Well-formed fossils dating from the Devonian epoch have been found in such abundance in the local chert that the areas around Camden and Big Sandy, where it has been strip-mined, are reputed to be among the best exposed sections of Devonian deposits in North America. Limestone also is found in the southern section of the county, especially on Wolf Creek in the Birdsong Valley. For several years successful mining of this blue limestone has been in operation on this creek near old Chaseville.

As the Weston A. Goodspeed Company noted many years ago in its study of the county, "There is no county in Tennessee which is better watered than Benton." The first settlers of Benton County, as well as their Indian predecessors, built their habitations along these many creeks. Much of the county's folklore deals with the creeks and springs, which have meant so much to the people for generations. Eagle Creek rises in the southern portion of the county, near the Decatur County line, and Birdsong Creek rises near the Carroll County line. Both creeks range northeast and empty into the Tennessee River. Sycamore and Wolf creeks are both tributaries of Birdsong Creek and range north. Seventeen Mile Creek, another tributary of Birdsong Creek, rises in the south and ranges to the southeast. Like Birdsong Creek, Cypress Creek rises near Carroll County, ranges northeast, and empties into the Tennessee River.

Cane Creek, a tributary of Cypress, is divided into two branches; one branch rises southwest of Camden and the other rises northeast. The two join near Camden and flow into Cypress Creek. Burnside Creek, another Cypress tributary, rises north of Camden and ranges to the southeast. Beaverdam Creek was once a tributary of the Cypress, but since the formation of the Kentucky Lake Reservoir, it has emptied into the river itself. Rushing's Creek, ranging northwest, and Ramble Creek, ranging west, both rise in the county and empty into the Big Sandy River. Sugar Creek, a smaller county stream, is also a tributary of the Big Sandy. Harmon, Sulphur, Crooked, and Lick creeks rise in the county, range northeast, and empty into the Tennessee River.

Numerous springs feed all these streams and furnish a bountiful supply of water for stock throughout the year. The beds of those streams which empty into the Tennessee River, except Cypress Creek, are generally covered with flinty rock, while those emptying into the Big Sandy River have sandy, gravelly bottoms. Cypress Creek is a sluggish stream and also has a sandy bottom.



Western Tennessee River bluffs at Cuba Landing.

There always has been a generous amount of timber available in the county. The most abundant trees have been the red, post, and white oaks. The easily worked yellow poplar, now locally extinct, once was valued for its endurance as a building material. Cypress, blackgum, walnut, sycamore, and pine have been used variously by the people for domestic purposes and by various industries.

The first major county industry was the cutting, preparation, and sale of local timber. In May of 1865, John H. Wyly of Reynoldsburg formed a partnership with two Ohio businessmen to build a sawmill on his land at Eva, in the Tennessee River bottoms, where the hardwood trees grew in abundance. This small sawmill made wood shingles.

George B. Holladay of Camden was knowledgeable about the local timber industry. In an article for the *Camden Chronicle* of September 20, 1955, Holladay reported that the first timber product exported from the county was tanbark peeled at sap time from large mountain oaks. If the logs were not used for rails or fuel, they were left to rot. Large yellow poplar trees were common throughout the county and were sold in domestic as well as foreign markets.

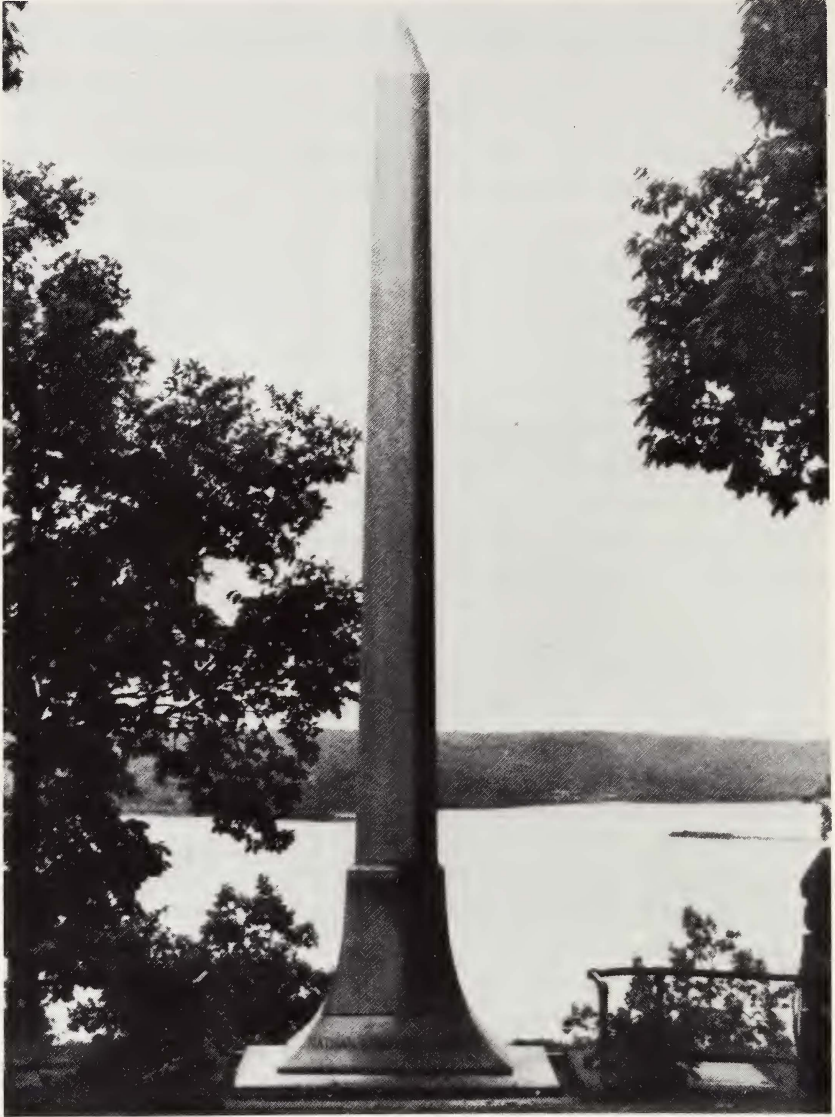
The first market demand for white oak occurred from 1875 to 1885 when these logs were shipped by barge to New Orleans for export. Local yellow post oak ties were used by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. About 1895 the Gray Tie and Lumber Company began a cross-tie job on its 3700-acre tract near Rockport, cutting a reported 185,000 post and white oak ties from this location. It also had a 2000-acre tract near Pt. Mason. Holladay stated that other companies entered this area, handling millions of ties from Burton Landing almost to Rockport Landing. For many years Nickey Brothers controlled a large timberland reserve in the northern part of the county, but it was sold to WestVaCo in 1973. In 1976 this company owned 18,000 acres of land in the county. This preserve is one of several owned by the company throughout the South.

Farm woodland was neglected for many years. It was cut and cleared without regard for conservation. Large stands were allowed to burn through human carelessness and indifference. However, as agriculture specialist John B. Sharp recently noted, "Times have changed. Now forest owners, wood-using industries of all kinds, many county courts, and the public generally are all working to restore our timberlands to full productivity."

The county once abounded with wild game, including the shaggy bison, turkey, panther, fox, wolf, and deer. The latter animal is still hunted in season, particularly near the Natchez Trace State Park in the southern section of the county and the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge several miles north of Big Sandy in the northern section of the county. Fish also continue to thrive in area waters; among the many species are the spotted bass, blue catfish, black buffalo, white bass, gar, and river herring. A small mussel industry has been in operation for many years along the Tennessee River shoreline.

Benton County is in the temperate climate zone, with an average annual temperature of 62.1 degrees and an average rainfall of 49.73 inches per year. The first killing frost occurs about the middle of October. The most unpredictable weather occurs in the winter months and occasionally in the spring, with tornadoes and high winds.

There have been both mild and bitter winters during the last 150 years. The deepest snowfall since its first settlement came during the first week in February of 1886, blanketing the earth with as much as 20 inches. The worst winter in local history, however, began on December 6, 1917, when the county was covered in many places with snow as deep as 12 inches. The Tennessee River was frozen for days. The mercury reportedly reached 20 degrees below zero one night. People thought their thermometers were inaccurate until the weather pushed other events off the front pages of the newspapers. This winter lasted through March of 1918.



Nathan Bedford Forrest Memorial on Pilot Knob,
overlooking the Tennessee River.

Indian Heritage

The Indian heritage of Benton County is interesting and important. For several thousand years aborigines lived in small enclaves along the Tennessee River and its tributaries. From September through November of 1940, several years before the flooding of the old county shoreline for the impoundment of the Kentucky Lake Reservoir, several archaeologists from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with their teams of excavators and researchers, made numerous excavations of sites occupied by the ancient Indians of the county.

These archaeologists excavated a site on Cypress Creek, just south of Eva, but now on the west bank of the Tennessee River. This location was first occupied about 6000 B.C. and continued to be so for almost seven millennia. The Eva Culture, as it is called, was represented at this site by a constantly small settlement. These people lived on river clams and abundant game from the nearby forests and used simple flint tools and implements. The occasional floods, particularly in the spring, caused them to abandon their huts, take their meager belongings, and move temporarily to high ground beyond the creek. When the water subsided, they returned to their village. Overlooking this settlement to the northeast was a forested eminence which later would be called Pilot Knob. Cypress Creek wound lazily around the foot of this rugged crest and emptied just beyond it into the Tennessee. The sediment was deposited below its mouth in the main river and made the water shallower at that point—and more easily forded. Human habitations and later river ferries frequently sprang up at such places. The Indians were wary in moving their canoes through the treacherous “shute” of water where the creek waters emptied into the river below Pilot Knob. An islet, later called Reynoldsburg Island, was formed from the sediment at this point and had created a sandy shoal where canoes were sometimes stuck or caught in the swift waters, thereby dashing them against the steep west bank of the river.

Affiliate groups of the Eva Culture lived in other small settlements in this general locality along the Tennessee River.



A stone projectile (Eva component drill) used by ancient Indians.
It was found in the Cypress Valley area by William Lemuel
Thompson in the late nineteenth century.

Perhaps as early as 1000 B.C., other Indians more highly skilled and better organized than their predecessors moved into the county. These groups are known as the Woodland Indians because evidences of their culture have been found in the ancient woodland areas of the eastern United States. These Indians cultivated corn, used pottery readily, and resided in bark wigwams. They lived for hundreds of years in the lower Tennessee River Valley. Their remains have been discovered in abundance in Benton and adjoining counties. At Sycamore Landing, just south of the confluence of the Duck River with the Tennessee, skeletal remains of many of these Indians have been found at the edge of the Kentucky Lake Reservoir.

About 1000 A.D., the so-called Mississippian Indians assimilated or displaced the older Indian stock. Like their successors, the Chickasaws, they were of the Muskogean language group. This agricultural people left lasting memorials to their labor and an indication of a firm belief in their hereafter in the form of mounds. Their immediate predecessors had built burial mounds, but the Mississippians erected huge earthen mounds as sites for temples or community houses. There are numerous mounds in the county's creek valleys raised by these and possibly the Woodland Indians. An Indian mound of particularly large dimensions was razed in recent years in Birdsong Valley near Mt. Moriah.

The Mississippians lived in and roamed over the local countryside for several hundred years. One of their largest settlements was located on Duck River, now directly across the Tennessee River from southern Benton County. Early in 1936, some University of Tennessee archaeologists excavated this site in Humphreys County and other nearby village sites on the bluffs overlooking the meandering Duck River. These sites were occupied around 1400 A.D., almost a century prior to the beginning of European exploration in the New World.

Near these locations, close to where the Duck River empties into the Tennessee and just across from several old boat landings, is the so-called Link Site. Late in 1894 a cache of extraordinary man-made flint work was discovered there. In the cache were flint tools, sun discs, maces, and turtle images. These priceless flint items are now at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.



Duck River sculptured male image, as found in 1895
at the so-called Link Site.

In March of 1895, further exploration below the flint cache revealed the presence of two sculptured stone images, a male figure weighing about 80 pounds and standing 27 inches and a female figure weighing about 50 pounds and standing 24 inches high. The male was depicted in a squatting position. The ancient mound-building cultures were spread widely across West Tennessee. One of their largest ceremonial centers was in Henry County near the head of Obion River. Traces ran from this location to other parts of the region, including Benton County, and to the amazing Pinson Mound complex located on the south fork of the Forked Deer River, ten miles south of Jackson in Madison County. The Chickasaws had gained sovereignty of western Tennessee and Kentucky by the sixteenth century. They were formidable Indians, a hardy, stocky people of the Muskhogean family. Largely self-governing, they were divided into clans led by chiefs. The men were warriors and hunters, while the women farmed and did household duties. When the Spanish first encountered them, about 1540 during Hernando de Soto's celebrated expedition, they lived in scattered settlements around Old Fields at the headwaters of the Tombigbee River in northern Mississippi.

The Chickasaws traded among other Indians and, from late in the seventeenth century, with the British, whose fast allies they soon became and firm friends they remained. English and Scots traders sometimes intermarried with Chickasaw women, and their families gradually became the leading element among these Indians. They were bitter enemies of the French, who also were early traders in the Mississippi River Valley. Because of their frequent wars with the French and their Choctaw allies, the Chickasaws settled on the black prairie in and near Tupelo, Mississippi, about 1720. They remained concentrated there until about 1795 when it became safer to move to farm locations throughout the region.

The British kept a superintendent among the Chickasaws from 1763 through the American Revolution, and the Indians remained loyal to the British during that war. However, they had little contact with the Americans at the time. Because of his

friendship with Americans, Chickasaw Chief Piomingo, called the Mountain Leader, was encouraged to meet in council in Nashville in order to effect an alliance between these two peoples. From this meeting in November of 1783 the Chickasaws and Americans became allies.

The Chickasaws successfully claimed western Kentucky and Tennessee, having won the right to it in armed conflicts with other Indians. They did not settle this region but kept it as a vast hunting range. Various tracts of their domain were ceded to the Americans beginning in 1786, but they held firmly to this open territory for many years. The white men who made hunting expeditions at those times into what is now West Tennessee seldom encountered Indians.

Middle Tennessee had been settled permanently by whites in 1779. Under the determined leadership of General James Robertson, a large company of men moved overland from East into Middle Tennessee that year to the site of Nashville. Theirs was an arduous trek over high mountains and hill country, valleys, and swift streams. The womenfolk of these men and their children, along with other men, emigrated by flatboat on the Tennessee River to Nashville. Under the leadership of Colonel John Donelson they set out for their destination in December of 1779.

Beset by Cherokees in East Tennessee and with difficulties in river navigation, this hardy group of pioneers moved downriver on the western branch of the Tennessee River. Sometime in mid-March of 1780, Colonel Donelson's flotilla passed through the shallows of the Tennessee River at the base of Pilot Knob on their way north. Among these people was Rachel Donelson who later became the wife of Andrew Jackson. They moved on peaceably and reached the Ohio River, then the Cumberland, and arrived in Nashville in late April.

The next several years were exciting for those who settled this area. Although North Carolina had claimed this territory since colonial times, the Indians actually held it, and only by purchase, usually under considerable duress, was it gained from them. In 1789 North Carolina ceded its western territory to the United

States, which cession was accepted by the national government and President George Washington in April of 1790. Congress then organized these lands as the Territory South of the River Ohio. In 1794, this territory was further organized and then, having met the requirements for statehood, the State of Tennessee was admitted into the Federal Union on June 1, 1796.

Stewart County was created in 1803 to provide government for the people in the northwestern section of what then was West Tennessee. In a few years its southern area became so populated that the state legislature created from it the new county of Humphreys in October of 1809. The county seat for this new county was Reynoldsburg, located on the east bank of the Tennessee River directly east of Pilot Knob.

Americans soon came into conflict with Great Britain in the War of 1812. That spring a party of Creek Indians, led by Hillaubee, returned from a rally in the north where they had been stirred by anti-American sentiments. They attacked the household of Captain John Crawley on Duck River and killed several people. The Chickasaws remained loyal to the Americans and made no protests when rangers moved up and down the Tennessee River during those perilous times, stopping frequently in what is now Benton County.

One provision of the peace treaty made in 1814 with the Indians was that the Americans could open roads, or traces, through their territory. The old Natchez Trace had run from Nashville south through Middle Tennessee into Alabama and Mississippi and on to Natchez on the Mississippi River. In December of 1815, Secretary of War William H. Crawford appointed Thomas Johnson and Michael Dickson, who lived in the Dickson County area, as commissioners to mark out a road 129 miles long, beginning opposite Reynoldsburg and ending at Chickasaw Old Town, about seven miles north of Tupelo, Mississippi.

This military road at places followed the ancient Lower Harpeth and West Tennessee Trail or Trace so that it was conveniently surveyed by these commissioners with the assistance of James Brown and Chigcuttah, who represented the Chickasaws.

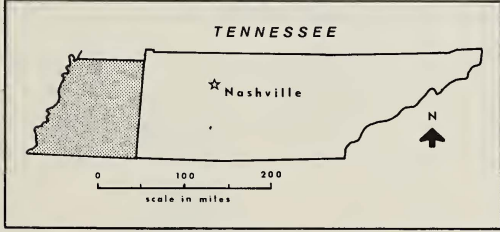
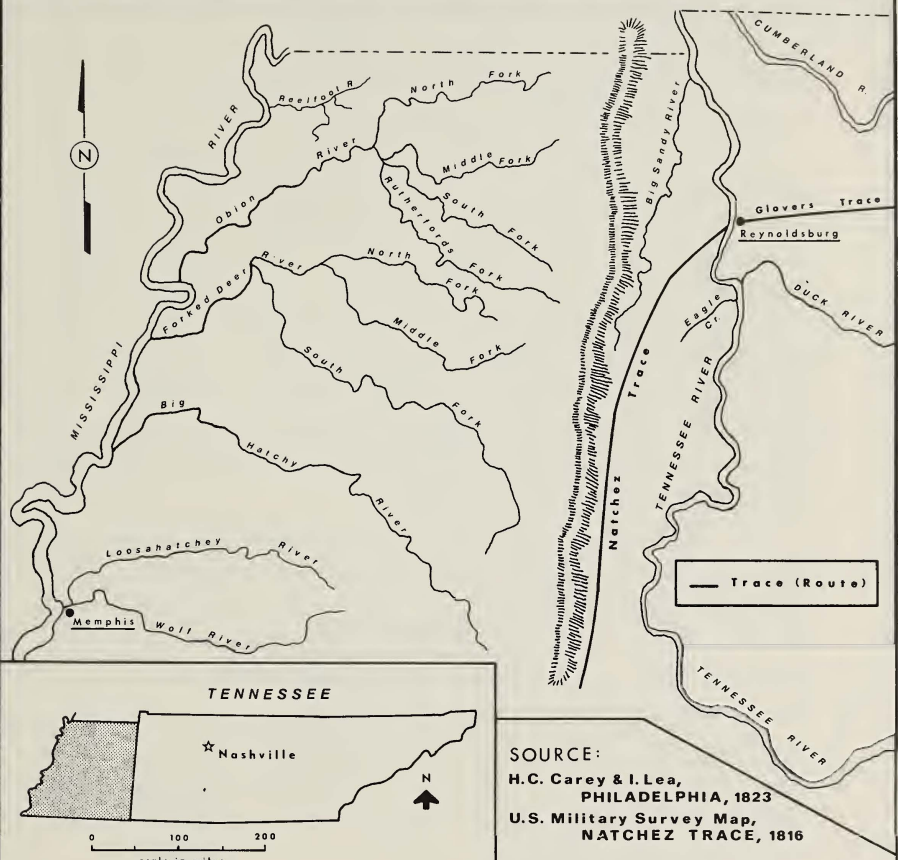
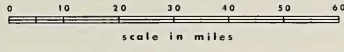
This survey was completed by May of 1816. They had run the road on high and dry ground as best they could. In Benton County the Natchez Trace—or, as it was more familiarly known, the Notchey—ran from the base of Pilot Knob due southwest over Cypress Creek and the hills just beyond. It passed through the Chalk Level community, from which it ran due southwest, then proceeded through the Natchez Trace State Park and Forest, and then moved into eastern Henderson County. The commissioners reported that there were no Indians living in the vicinity of this road except for the last 24 miles at its southern terminus. Although much of this route was abandoned in a few years, the portion that ran through Benton County was used for many years. Little of it remains today except as deep ruts in the landscape through which it once wound.

The other branch of the trace rounded the base of Pilot Knob and wound its way through what is now Eva, crossed the Beaverdam, Burnside, and Charlie creeks, and passed the site of Camden. On the present Camden-Eva Road, just two blocks east of the public square in Camden, a steep incline can be seen in the road. In old times this was called Glover's Gap, named for William Glover, a prominent Chickasaw chief. This road, after 1823, led further into the Western District. The most detailed map showing this road and other routes and topographical points in the middle and western sections of the state was published in 1823 by H. C. Carey and I. Lea of Philadelphia in *The American Atlas of North and South America*.

Early Settlement

In 1782 the North Carolina legislature set aside a military reservation in what is now upper Middle Tennessee, much of it the Cumberland country. Land grants were made there for Revolutionary War veterans as compensation for their military services. When he served out his enlistment, a soldier was issued a certificate testifying to his service and honorable discharge or he had to wait and make claim for his service years after the war. He could be rewarded with a grant of land in the western territories. The amount of acreage allotted was determined by military rank.

MAP OF WEST TENNESSEE - 1823



SOURCE:
H.C. Carey & I. Lea,
PHILADELPHIA, 1823
U.S. Military Survey Map,
NATCHEZ TRACE, 1816

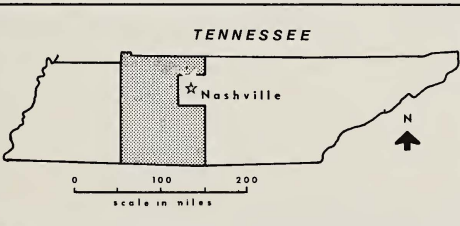
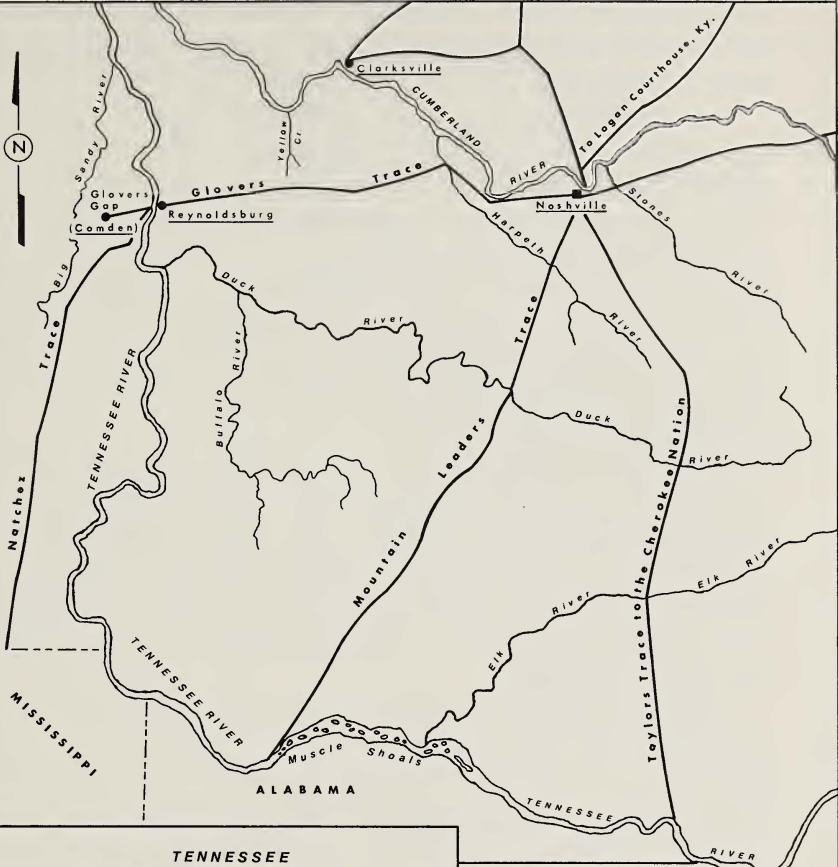
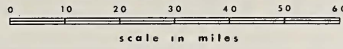
According to the Land Act of 1782, no claims could be entered before October 20, 1783. Within a few months, astute Eastern land speculators had sent out surveyors to lay off the best land for themselves, buying military warrants from veterans to convert into land claims. Getting land legally processed was tedious and expensive. An entry had to be made for the amount of land due the claimant and the survey with a plat drawn. It then was submitted to the secretary of state, who was authorized to issue a grant after it received the signature of the governor. The land office closed in Hillsboro, North Carolina, in May of 1784, after operating only seven months and processing some four million acres of Tennessee land.

Even after North Carolina had ceded its western territory to the national government in 1790, the state retained the right to satisfy land grants for military service there. Then in 1796, when Tennessee was admitted into the Union, the two states agreed to work together in settling land claims. Although the Chickasaws had more or less agreed to relinquish their claim to land in Middle Tennessee, General James Robertson and Silas Dinsmoor signed a treaty of cession in July of 1805 with them for the east and north sections of the Congressional Reservation. In April of 1806, the United States agreed to turn over jurisdiction of all land grants to the state of Tennessee.

An important provision of the federal legislation of 1806 regarding the Congressional Reservation was that should there be insufficient land in that reservation then the land south and west of it could be entered. This country became known as the Western District. The United States laid claim to all land east of the Mississippi River based on the Royal Charter of 1663 when the English monarch laid theoretical claim to the eastern and transmontane lands in the south. However, in reality, the state and national governments treated with the various Indian tribes for this vast domain.

In 1806, Tennessee established two land offices, one with headquarters in Knoxville for East Tennessee, and one in

MAP OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE - 1823



Trace (Road/Route)

SOURCE:
H.C. Carey & I. Lea,
PHILADELPHIA, 1823
U.S. Military Survey Map
NATCHEZ TRACE, 1816
j.a.s., 2/79

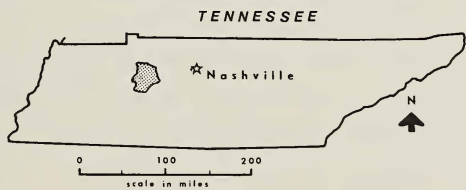
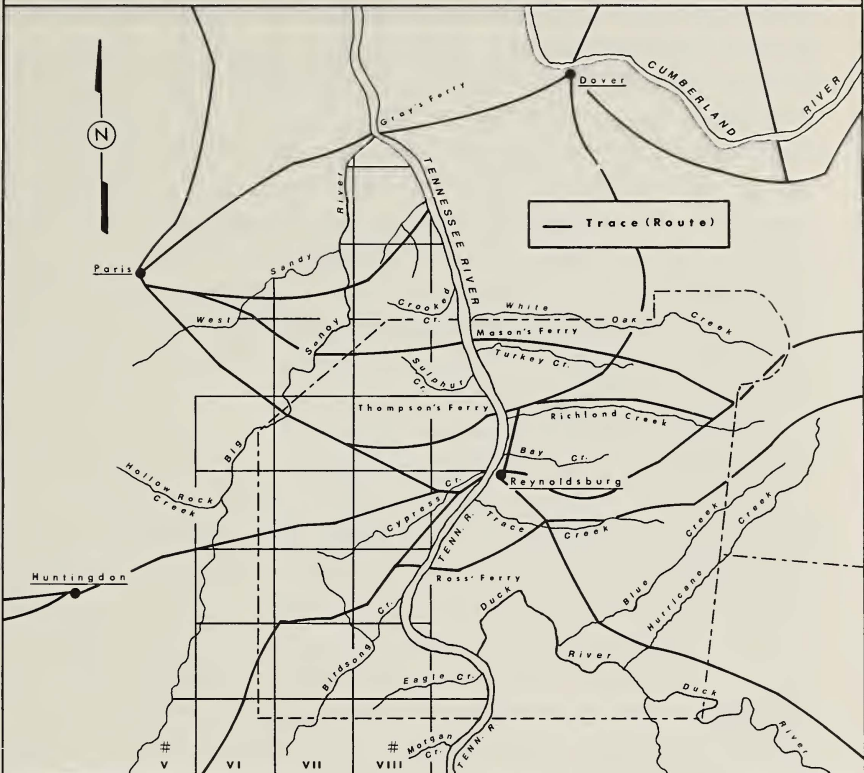
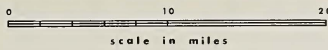
Nashville for West (now Middle) Tennessee. Each office was supervised by a register, who was qualified by law to issue land grants. Complicating an already overloaded system, the state legislature established a Board of Commissioners for East and West Tennessee in 1807, whose members also could evaluate land claims and issue certificates for land grants. For years, the two registers and the commissioners acted jointly to issue warrants or certificates for the state's public lands.

For an individual to acquire public land legally by gaining a title, he first had to secure a warrant or certificate from a land register or land commissioner for that specific acreage. Then he had to locate his land, have it entered upon an entrybook kept by an official entry-taker, who could record this entry so that it might then be laid out by an official surveyor. This process completed, the claimant then submitted survey and plot to the secretary of state. The secretary of state attached a permanent number to the land grant. This prevented duplications of numbers and overlapping of some land claims.

By 1838 North Carolinians had claimed some 8,500,000 acres out of approximately 24 million acres originally allotted to them in Middle and West Tennessee. For many years settlers had "squatted" on tracts of land, usually the less desirable. These people generally were allowed to purchase their land reasonably by what was known as "squatters' rights" or, more properly, occupant right claims.

Acting in the interest of the United States, the governments of Tennessee and North Carolina and Commissioners Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby made a treaty of cession with the Chickasaws for all their lands in West Tennessee and western Kentucky. Naturally, this followed the authorization by Congress in April of 1818 for Tennessee, rather than North Carolina, to "issue grants and perfect titles to lands south and west of the Congressional Line in settlement of these claims." As explained, the whites theoretically claimed West Tennessee but actually had to gain title to this region by means of purchase from the traditional Indian owners, the Chickasaws.

TENNESSEE HUMPHREYS COUNTY - 1834



Numbered Ranges in Surveyor's District Twelve.

SOURCE:
Rhea, Matthew.
MAP OF TENNESSEE, 1832.

The Jackson Purchase was made on October 19, 1818, and ceded West Tennessee. The treaty of cession was accepted by the national government and ratified when it was signed by President James Monroe on January 7, 1819. The Tennessee legislature convened in October that year and accepted the cession, expressed its intention to honor old North Carolina land grants, and established land offices to distribute the land effectively.

On October 23, 1819, the state legislature divided the Western District into seven surveyors' districts. These then were divided into ranges that ran north and south in five mile squares, called sections. Benton County was located in Surveyor's District 12. Dover, Stewart County's seat, located on the Cumberland River, was headquarters for this and the thirteenth district. Robert E. C. Daugherty was appointed the chief surveyor of Surveyor's District 12, with numerous deputy surveyors who did the actual fieldwork. It was necessary for North Carolina grants to be cleared by October 1, 1820, to enable Tennessee purchasers and others holding occupant claims to make entry for their lands.

By historic legislative action on November 15, 1819, ranges 7, 8, 9, and the eastern extreme of 6 of Surveyor's District 12 were created as western Humphreys County, extending "to the top of the ridge dividing the waters of Sandy River from the waters of the Tennessee." This portion of Humphreys County legally became Benton County on January 1, 1836.

The legislature in 1821 authorized that all the northeastern part of the Western District previously not specifically taken into an older county or created into a new one should be governed by Stewart County. The northernmost boundary of western Humphreys County ran almost due west from Little Crooked Creek at Pt. Mason to a short distance east of Big Sandy, where the boundary turned sharply to the southwest, taking in the mouths of Ramble and Rushing's creeks. Everything north of that became Stewart County from 1819 through 1821 and then Henry County from 1821 through 1836.

As indicated previously, all North Carolina claims for land in the Western District were to have been entered by October 1, 1820. Then on the first Wednesday of the December following,

the general public was allowed to enter lands. Under the law, the surveyors were allowed to receive entries for less than but not more than 160 acres. Several settlers on the new land in western Humphreys County entered their land as soon as they legally could do so. The first entry for land in what later became Benton County was made by Daniel Buchanan on November 28, 1820. This was for 160 acres in range 7, section 6, off Big Sandy River, for some of the land on which the town of Big Sandy now stands.

These modest land claims were the first of literally thousands that were made over the next 80 years. After January of 1825, the land dealings for the Western District were processed through the land office in Jackson. Then in February of 1836 the state legislature abolished the surveyor's office for Surveyor's District 12, and a land office was established in each county receiving entries on vacant county land. An entry-taker and surveyor were appointed by the county court for four-year terms.

The county's first white settlement was made in 1818 by Willis, Dennis, and Abel Rushing six miles north of Camden on the creek which now bears their surname. Having hunted in the area for several years, these men moved with their families from Stewart County to this location. Willis Rushing apparently occupied an abandoned Indian cabin for a time. Abel Rushing moved to a tract just west of his cousin where he built the first dwelling erected by a white man in the county. Several of the Rushing family from Stewart County moved to the Rushing's Creek vicinity in the early 1820s.

The Rushing family was prominent, with several successful tobacco growers. Willis Crawford Rushing (1826-1916) for many years was a leading farmer and Presbyterian in the county. His father, Willis Rushing, built a brick dwelling on his place facing the stage road that ran from Reynoldsburg to Paris in nearby Henry County. He kept a tavern, called the Brick House, for the benefit of travelers. Holden Rushing (1825-1887) became a well-known merchant, and his large brick warehouse at Pt. Mason on the Tennessee River was a landmark for many years.

Josiah Turner Florence (1809-1881) and his wife, Avis, moved to the Rushing settlement in Pleasant Valley in 1836. A native of

Caswell County, North Carolina, Florence had a better-than-average formal education that enabled him to teach for more than 30 years at a school near his residence. Elisha Herrin from Franklin County, Tennessee, settled in the Rushing's Creek area about 1823; his brother, Elder Lemuel Herrin, accompanied him. Elder Herrin was pastor of Rushing's Creek Baptist Church for several years; later he moved to eastern Texas, where he helped establish several churches. Abimeleck and Beverly Herrin settled near these Herrins.

Their neighbor was one of the county's outstanding citizens, Jacob Browning, D. D. (1779-1841). A native of North Carolina, Elder Browning emigrated to Middle Tennessee as a young man and lived for many years in Rutherford County. He was reared a Presbyterian, but later became a Baptist. Like many people before and after him, he wrestled with his conscience before he was "reborn in the waters of baptism." He devoted much of his life to propagation of the Christian gospel—as he understood it. Unlike many frontier ministers who were venomous in their sectarian interests, Elder Browning had a benevolent Christianity which earned him lasting gratitude among his fellow men. For years he rode as a missionary for the Philadelphia Baptist Association, even preaching among the county's mixed-blood Indians in the early 1820s.

Elder Browning was instrumental in organizing the first association of his denomination, the Western District Baptist Association, in July of 1823, at Spring Creek in Henry County. From the mid-1830s, he became a leading advocate of the missionary faction of the Baptist Church. He was responsible for founding several of the area's earliest Baptist congregations, among them the historic Hollow Rock Primitive Baptist Church in July of 1823. After 1824 he and his family lived on a small farm off Ebenezer Branch of Rushing's Creek. There he built a comfortable log house where Pleasant Valley lay in a soft roll. His remains and those of some of his family lie buried in a nearby family graveyard.

One of Benton County's earliest settlers and an astute politician, Ephraim Perkins, acquired a large farm on Burnside Creek, about two miles north of Camden. A veteran of the War of 1812, he was chairman of the county court several times, a local land entry-taker, and a land speculator. Perkins' neighbors were Edward Gwin Hudson (1790-1836), whose descendants are still in the county, and his brother, Dawsey Philemon Hudson (1785-1866), who was county court clerk of Humphreys County, 1810-1836, and first circuit court clerk of Benton County, 1836-1848. He died while serving as clerk and master of chancery. About 1828 he built the county's first cotton gin on his Burnside Creek farm.

Several miles west of Camden, near the Carroll County border, lived one of the county's oldest settlers, Julius Joseph Cole (1802-1891), a North Carolinian who settled on his farmland in 1829. The Presson family settled several miles northwest of Camden at an early date. They were proud of their York County, Virginia, and Anson County, North Carolina, origins. Most of them came from North Carolina in the 1830s. Allen Columbus Presson (1806-1896) was one of the county's first teachers and in due course a county sheriff, surveyor, and county court clerk. His kinsman, James Freeman Presson (1824-1895), a Camden merchant, served as a county magistrate for some 43 years and filled other responsible local offices. Both men literally helped to mold the county's early political structure.

Christopher K. Wyly (1807-1891) was the most successful nineteenth century merchant in the county. Born in East Tennessee and reared in Alabama, he moved to Reynoldsburg in 1826 where his older brother, Major Thomas K. Wyly, had a thriving mercantile business. In 1838 he moved to Camden where he established a general goods store on the public square in partnership with another brother, James Wyly. In time he bought out his brother's interest in the business. He also had several farms in the county which were worked by slaves, and he accumulated a considerable fortune by the time of the Civil War, during which he lost heavily. C. K. Wyly was one of the county's outstanding citizens and pioneers.

James Wylly (1799-1857) was a prosperous farmer and ferry owner who lived in the Chalk Level community. He represented Humphreys County in the state House of Representatives in 1837-1839 and Benton County in 1843 and 1847-1849. He was a firm supporter of Andrew Jackson and a leading citizen of the county for many years. The Wylly family owned more land than any other family has ever owned in the county, some 30,000 acres before 1860.

Stephen Congo Pavatt (1808-1863) was a native of Sumner County who was educated and trained in law, which he practiced in Waverly and Huntingdon before moving to Camden in 1846. He served in the state House of Representatives 1833-1837, the state Senate 1851-1853, and chancellor of the Sixth Chancery District 1854-1861. He was a man who cherished the classics and was credited with naming Waverly, based on Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels. Waverly became the county seat of Humphreys County in 1838. Pavatt was said to have been a man of great dignity of bearing and possessed unusual legal talents. The Pavatts lived for many years on their large farm at the confluence of Eagle Creek with the Tennessee River, long called Pavatt's Landing.

Colonel William Pitts Morris (1817-1893), also a native of Sumner County, clerked as a young man before moving to Camden. He served as county court clerk, 1843-1852; in the state House of Representatives 1861-1862, 1879; in the state Senate 1883-1884, and was a successful merchant. An active Mason and Methodist, Colonel Morris was a leading citizen of Camden for many years.

Among other settlers in the valley of Beaverdam Creek were John Sarrett, a Revolutionary War veteran, Daniel Settle, John and William Pafford, Burwell Lashlee, James S. Sayles, John Penick, Wyatt Arnold and his sons, John B. Carson, Cooper Melton, David and Margaret Cuff, and Americus Vespucci Vick. Settlers in the valley of Cypress Creek were Benjamin Holland, William Thompson, James Lee, Rhubin Bridges, Joseph Cowell, Moses Jordan, Joshua House, Captain Lilly Crocker, Charles Williams, Lewis and Zachariah Barker, Colonel Thomas Jones, Jacob Hicks, and Alexander Bivens.

Settlers in the vicinity of Camden were William Woods, John Jackson, John B. and Irvin B. Carns, Hugh M. Brown, Hillory Capps, Royal Morehouse Hawley, James Gordon, John C. McDaniel, William Martin McAuley, Henry Sawyer, William Hill, George and Hegwood Francisco, Captain Robert Washington Ayres, Henry C. Camp, Dr. Jephtha Williams, and Winston K. Aden.

Settlers in the valleys of Sulphur and Harmon Creek were George Washington Farmer, William and Charles J. Wheatley, Samuel and David Benton, Sion and Joseph Melton, Katherine Parker, John Phifer, James and Richard Holland.

Settlers among Big Sandy River and its tributaries were Edward Lindsey, John Pierce, Daniel Buchanan, William and Levin Cottingham, David Watson, John Graham, Aaron Clement, Malcomb McKenzie, Nicholas and Lewis Brewer, Isham Jones, Hezekiah Greer, William Warmack, George McDaniel, and James Craig.

Settlers in the valley of Eagle Creek were William Hubbs (who owned one of the first Tennessee River ferries in the county), Joseph Fry, John Barnett, Caswell Matlock, and James White. In the valley of Birdsong Creek and near Chalk Level were the Hatleys (Sherwood, Edwards, Hardy and Mark), Charles Oatsvall, Anderson Lynch, Molton Merrick, Cullen Luper, William Walker, Joseph Townsend, the Utleys (Abel, Seth and Burwell), George Camp, Elder Obediah Hardin, and John Anderson.

Settlers in the vicinity of Holladay were Wesley King, Joseph Randolph Mathews, George Wood, Samuel Oxford, Green Flowers, Francis Baber, Redden Hollowell, James Madison Camp, and Nancy Barnett, widow of Samuel Harrison.

Political Heritage

Most of Benton County was part of Humphreys County from 1819 until 1836. For many years Reynoldsburg was the county seat at which area residents traded, transacted legal business, and attended militia musters. The town of Reynoldsburg was laid out

in 1812, although it began as a blockhouse on the east bank of the Tennessee River some half dozen years earlier. Captain Alexander Brevard of Lincoln County, North Carolina, entered a large tract of land on the river for his Revolutionary War service and received his grant for this land in March of 1786. Fortunately for him, the Reynoldsburg blockhouse was later located on a small section of this land grant. An ancient Indian trace crossed this tract.

After Humphreys County was created in 1809, the county commissioners who had been appointed by the state legislature to locate the county's seat of justice decided that the river crossing where the blockhouse was located would be the most suitable location. Brevard was contacted and a deal arranged whereby the town site was deeded to the commissioners of Reynoldsburg with the understanding that "all profits, privileges and benefits of a ferry or ferries" at this place would be secured by the Brevards.

A brick two-story courthouse was erected during 1812-1813 on the court square. The village grew quickly as people bought lots and built small houses and stores. A big boarding house accommodated visitors to the town. The streets were wide and nearly always full of people on horseback and in oxcarts going by ferry across the Tennessee River on their westward migration. Several years after it was established, Reynoldsburg was described as being 73 miles from Nashville, located on the east bank of the Tennessee River, "on a beautiful level, rising from the margin of the river of about fifteen feet elevation and entirely above high water mark." Reynoldsburg was the seat of the western branch of the state's supreme court from 1827 until 1833 and one of its judges, John Catron, was appointed to the U. S. Supreme Court in 1837.

Major Thomas K. Wyly (1795-1857) was an enterprising boat captain who decided to open a general store in Reynoldsburg. A good manager, he was able to purchase the ferry rights in April of 1832 for \$6000 from the Brevards. He leased the rights to the western bank from Joshua Williams two years later. Major Wyly eventually acquired the Williams ferry and settlement, a motley group of buildings called West Reynoldsburg. This ferry was



Humphreys County Courthouse (1812-1838),
Reynoldsburg.

reported to have taken in some \$8000 from travelers during 1828-1831, helping Wylly become wealthy from his mercantile trade and his land investments.

The first stage line from Memphis to Nashville, via Jackson, was established in 1831. The U.S. Mail was carried along with the passengers in huge stagecoaches of the period which passed through tiny posts and villages all the way. Major Wylly's son, James J. Wylly, once owned the main coach line that ran its stages over this route. He had a contract with the federal government to transport the public mails. Shortly before 1848, he built a levee

road opposite Reynoldsburg to raise the public travelway from the river bottoms there beneath Pilot Knob. Parts of this levee may now be seen in times of low water. Several years after the Civil War the Wyly stage line was displaced by the railroad; however, a ferry was operated for local traffic until after World War I.

Reynoldsburg remained the county seat for Humphreys County until 1838. After Benton was created, the county government was moved to Waverly. Major Wyly then bought the courthouse for \$125, which he and his family used as a residence for three generations. The old courthouse, derelict and forsaken, finally burned in 1940.

In 1858 John G. Lucas, son-in-law of Major Wyly, acquired a landing which became known as Johnsonville. As steamboat traffic made its way there, people abandoned Reynoldsburg for the most part and moved three miles south to Johnsonville. In time the Reynoldsburg site reverted to nature but it has been reclaimed in recent years by several local industries that have obliterated most traces of the ghost town that had been so important to the early Benton Countians.

One story about Reynoldsburg that never died concerned General Andrew Jackson. Early in October of 1840, Jackson was principal guest at a barbecue rally held in Jackson for the Democrats and their presidential candidate, Martin Van Buren. He had succeeded Jackson as president in 1837 and was then running (unsuccessfully) for reelection. Felix Grundy is reported to have accompanied General Jackson on this jaunt.

They stopped for a night in West Reynoldsburg at an inn operated by a strong Whig who let Jackson know he was not sympathetic with Van Buren. Traveling with two carriages, four horses, servants, and several men in his party, Jackson calculated the bill at only eight dollars. The next morning when Jackson and Grundy were making settlement with the proprietor for their night's lodging they were informed that their entire bill was 12 dollars. When asked the reason for the extra charge, the Whig hesitated, then stumbled out with, "That was for raising hell in general!"

In 1835 a local move arose to create a new county from the western section of Humphreys County. Petitions were signed and legislators were prodded to vote for the new county. The state legislature finally passed an act creating Benton County on December 19, 1835, noting that as of January 1, 1836, "the county of Humphreys shall be and the same is hereby declared divided, making the Tennessee River the dividing line of said county." The act provided that George Camp, Sr., Green Flowers, Ephraim Perkins, Lewis Brewer, and John F. Johnston serve as commissioners to locate the county seat to be called Camden. Until its location could be determined the county and circuit courts were to be held at Samuel Halliburton's house on Cypress Creek. This was the post called Tranquility, established September 28, 1835, located on the Reynoldsburg-Huntingdon stage road.

By early January the first eight civil districts of the county had been laid out. Benton County was organized at Tranquility on February 7, 1836, and four days later the state legislature took from Henry County a small portion and added it to Benton to be its northernmost and ninth civil district. The first county court, constituted of those magistrates called justices of the peace, convened at the same place that following April. The southern panhandle of the county that encompasses the Morgan Creek communities was detached from Decatur County by legislative act in March of 1883.

Initially, the county was named for Thomas Hart Benton, one of the most colorful politicians of the antebellum period. Benton was born in Orange County, North Carolina, in 1782. He moved with his family to Middle Tennessee where he was educated as a lawyer. He eagerly entered politics.

Unfortunately for Benton, he disagreed strongly with Andrew Jackson concerning his military service during the War of 1812. This complicated fact, coupled with an ambition to establish a reputation elsewhere, prompted Benton to move to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1815, where he rapidly gained a lucrative law practice, political prominence, and position as editor of the *Missouri Enquirer*.

Benton was elected to the United States Senate in 1821 and served there for three decades. He settled his differences with Jackson and later became one of his most ardent supporters during Jackson's presidency. Like Jackson, he fought against the national bank and was largely responsible for the successful veto of the act which would have rechartered the institution. He championed "hard money," in opposition to extravagantly printed paper currency and came to be known as "Old Bullion." He also became famous for working towards helping the common man to purchase public lands at nominal fees. His popularity was paramount when the new Tennessee county was created and named in his honor.

Benton was essentially a conservative and gradually reached the conclusion that slavery was an economic and moral wrong. His strong views met opposition in much of the South, including Benton County. Because of his avowed stand on slavery and especially for his strong nationalistic stance, Benton was denounced by many southerners. There were locally prominent men who opposed Benton, even though he was a fellow Democrat, and they regretted that their county had been named for him. Under the leadership of Stephen C. Pavatt of Camden, the state legislature voted on February 4, 1852, "That the county of Benton retain its original name in honor of David Benton, an old and respected citizen of said county." Therefore, the county since that date has been named for a local worthy rather than a national statesman. Defeated in 1850, Benton wrote his political autobiography, *Thirty Years View*. Several years later he was elected to one term in the U.S. House of Representatives. He died in 1858 in Washington, D. C.

David Benton (1779-1860), a native of South Carolina, moved as a young man to Middle Tennessee where he enlisted in a militia company during the War of 1812. He served against the Creek Indians, and he was then honorably discharged. Following this war, Benton lived in Jackson County, Alabama, but shortly before February of 1825, he and his family settled on a Harmon Creek farm in western Humphreys County. His brother, Samuel, had lived at this location for several years. Benton was active in

promoting the division of Humphreys County, served as a magistrate on the new county's first quarterly court, and remained a respected yeoman farmer for many years. Beside a small clear stream where Methodist camp meetings were held for years, Benton and other members of his family are buried. In September of 1974, a commemorative monument for David Benton was erected on the southwest corner of the courthouse lawn in Camden. It was a gift of the late James D. Langdon of Boston, Massachusetts, to the people of Benton County.

The county seat was located one mile east of Tranquility, at a high point where several of the main and local roads converged. Samuel Halliburton built a "jury room" which served as the first county courthouse next to his own dwelling in the summer of 1836. It was a plain log building, 18 feet by 20 feet. During the summer of 1837 the Camden courthouse was built by Samuel Ingram. It was a modest brick building, 30 feet by 36 feet, two stories high, with the county offices located on the first floor and the courtroom located on the second floor. It was first occupied in August of 1837.

Early in January of 1845, a half-acre of ground was enclosed by rail fence on Camden's public square as the courthouse yard. Colonel Irvin B. Carns demolished the old courthouse and erected a new brick two-story courthouse on the same site in 1854. This was the courthouse which served as temporary headquarters for federal soldiers during the Civil War. Fortunately, the officials and their records were not molested at that time, and Benton County has some of the most complete public records to be found in Tennessee.

This courthouse was declared unsafe and a new one built in 1877 on the same site. Perhaps the loveliest of all the county's courthouses, it was a two-story structure, in mellow brick with long and narrow windows, stone foundations, and cupola. It was demolished early in 1915 and replaced by a large courthouse, dedicated August 14, 1915. The principal speaker on that occasion was Governor Thomas C. Rye, a Camden native. Although formally dedicated it was, due to extended construction, October of 1916 before the two-story brick courthouse could be occupied.

Benton County Courthouses.



(1877-1915)



(1915-1972)

This courthouse was torn away in 1972, and its successor—a modern building costing about half a million dollars—was first occupied in 1974. All but the first of Benton County's six courthouses have occupied the same site on the courthouse yard in Camden.



(1974-)

The first county jail was erected in 1837, but it was replaced by a sturdier structure in 1847. This building was heavily damaged by fire and was replaced in 1866. Its successor stood until 1883 when a \$6000 brick jail replaced it. This building was in turn demolished and its successor was built in 1949, a modern \$68,000 jail. Each of these five buildings has been erected on the same lot in Camden, facing Rosemary Avenue, south.

Through the years the number of county civil districts increased to 16, but in February of 1969 the county court reduced their number to 12. The magistrates who composed the county court have been elected from these various districts. These courts were held quarterly, in January, April, July, and October of each year. Later they met once a month to conduct business and continue to do so today. The county court conducts the business of the county and draws its membership from almost every strata of local society. Since the constitutional reform in March of 1978, the members of the county court constitute a board of county commissioners. Their traditional term of address, squire, has thus been relinquished.

From 1836 through 1889 the magistrates of the county court elected from their number a person to serve as chairman for a one-year term. Through state legislation, the county elected a judge from 1856 until 1857. As a result of legislative action, Governor Robert L. Taylor appointed a county judge to assume office in January of 1890. B. C. Scruggs thus served until the regular election the following August. In 1978 the magistrates became county commissioners and the judge became their chairman.

Chairmen and Judges of the Benton County Court

George Washington Farmer	1836-1837
James S. Sayles	1838
Edward W. Lynch	1839
Records missing	1840-1841

Dawsey Philemon Hudson	1842
Ephraim Perkins	1843
Dawsey P. Hudson	1844-1845
Ephraim Perkins	1846
Elijah Alsup	1847
John W. Davidson	1848
Elijah Alsup	1849
James C. Crews	1850
Pleasant Mullenicks	1851
Josiah Turner Florence	1852
William Harvy Clark	1853
David Washington Benton	1854-1855
Ichabod Farmer	1856 (part)
William A. Steele	1856-1857
Josiah T. Florence	1858
Ichabod Farmer	1859-1860
Isaac Anderson	1861
Josiah T. Florence	1862
Isaac Curd Yarbrough	1863
Josiah T. Florence	1864-1866
John Harmon Farmer	1866-1868
Berry W. Whitley, J. H. Farmer	1869
John H. Farmer	1870-1871
James Ross Childress	1872
John Phifer	1873-1874
Josiah T. Florence	1875-1876
James Freeman Presson	1877-1878
John H. Farmer	1879
James F. Presson	1880
J. F. Presson, Burwell L. Utley	1881
James F. Presson	1882
James Knox Wheatley	1883
John H. Farmer	1884
J. K. Wheatley	1885-1886
J. F. Presson	1887
James H. Combs	1888

Lucas Eldridge Davis	1889
B. C. Scruggs	1890-1894
Lucas E. Davis	1894-1902
William Thompson Morris	1902-1909
Lucas E. Davis	1909-1918
Stephen Alse Clement	1918-1926
George Milton Leslie	1926-1935
John C. Herrin	1936-1942
J. Abner Odle	1942-1948
John M. Holladay	1948-1950
W. Curtis Johnson	1950-1958
William A. Derington	1958-1966
Everett Smith	1966-1974
Joe Edward Wright (Incumbent)	1974-

Magistrate courts were usually held at the residences of the magistrates in the county periodically until other courts assumed their duties. The J. P. court system in Benton County was finally suspended in 1960 when the general sessions court assumed the handling of misdemeanors and preliminary hearings for felonies. The judge of sessions is also the county's juvenile judge.

The circuit court is "the court of general original jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases." Benton County is located in the 22nd judicial district of the state, presided over by the circuit judge. The jurors of the circuit court have been appointed by the county court. Records of this court are kept by the circuit court clerk. The chancery court has been generally a court of appeal from the lower courts, handling civil cases. The records of this court are kept by the county's clerk and master. The county and circuit court clerk, register of deeds, clerk and master, trustee (finance officer of the county), tax assessor, and the school superintendent all have offices in the courthouse. The sheriff has an office in the county jail. This official was elected for two-year terms until September of 1978 when the four-year term was initiated.

Although other political parties have been present throughout the years—principally the Republican party since the 1860s, Benton County has almost always been overwhelmingly Democratic. The county's allegiance to the "Democracy," as the Democratic party has been termed familiarly, during the early settlement and through 1860 must be ascribed to the fact that most Benton Countians were farmers of modest material means to whom the ideals of a representative democracy appealed strongly. These people rallied around Andrew Jackson, whose public image was that of a backwoodsman and soldier. Some of these early settlers had fought under his command during the War of 1812. This was a politician with whom they could identify whatever the merits of their view might be.

The popularity of General Jackson in the county amounted almost to veneration but he was not without ardent political opposition. Whereas the Jeffersonian Democrats had claimed to hold the government in trust for the people in the formative years of the republic, the Jacksonian Democrats of General Jackson turned it over to them. The denouncing of special privileges and the direct election of most public officials were two leading features of Jacksonian Democracy. After Jackson's death at the Hermitage near Nashville in June of 1845, James Wyly and other local admirers of the former President convened a public meeting at the Camden courthouse on July 7, 1845, to draft resolutions of regret at the death of "Old Hickory." They also resolved "to wear the usual badge of mourning for 30 days."

There was not a single vote cast in Benton County for Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate in the presidential election of 1860. The Republican party, organized nationally in 1854, had no vocal supporters in the county before the war years, for it was viewed as the anti-slavery and anti-secession party. During the war, most of the local unionists became Republicans, and throughout the five years of Reconstruction thereafter they ruled the county through the local public offices. Captain Lilly Crocker, who had suffered at the hands of partisans, held the influential office of election commissioner. Many local people

thought that the Civil War was a struggle between the Democrats and the "Black" Republicans. The oppressive policies of the state's reconstruction government after the war persuaded the majority of voters to retain their strong Democratic Party affiliation. This was a commitment which was to hold through the next three generations.

The first prominent local Republican, David Brewer, was elected several times county sheriff. When Henry H. Marable was expelled from the House of Representatives late in 1866, Brewer was elected to finish that term in the 34th General Assembly. He was thereafter elected to the 35th General Assembly, 1867-1869. Also in 1869, Acting Governor D. W. C. Senter issued an order to the election commissioners in each county to allow all male citizens of legal age to vote in that year's general election. The result was that the state's Democrats and conservative Republicans united to elect Senter as governor and conservative men to the state legislature. Thus was state government returned to the majority of the people. The Democrats resumed their political dominance in Benton County at this time, a role never since relinquished.

The most noted Republican in the county's history was James Jeffreys (1853-1908), a native of Clinton County, Kentucky, who settled in this county as a young man. Here he farmed, had a general store, published and managed the county's only Republican newspaper, *The Vidette*. He became vitally active in the state proceedings of his party and served in the state Senate from 1895 until 1897. He was appointed Surveyor of Customs at Memphis and served in this capacity continuously from 1902 until the time of his death. Through his influence, numerous young men from the county successfully found permanent employment in various fields in Memphis, which helped to account for the considerable settlement in that city during that period of time by Benton Countians.

The underlying Democratic sentiment of many local people made them receptive to Woodrow Wilson, whose presidency in the second decade of this century appealed to the reformers and idealists of that era. Even in May of 1932, during the darkest

period of The Great Depression, the local Democrats convened at the courthouse and passed the following resolution:

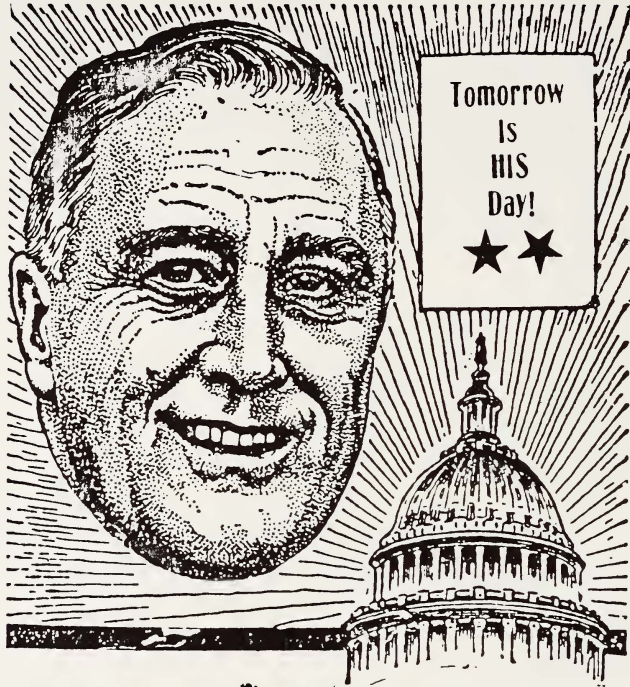
Be it resolved, that we, the Democratic men and women of Benton County in mass convention assembled, reaffirm our faith in and pledge anew our allegiance to the fundamentals of democracy as outlined and applied to the solution of questions of public interest and policy by those great Americans and Democrats, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Grover Cleveland, and Woodrow Wilson, believing they are not only essential to the welfare, happiness and prosperity of the American people but absolutely necessary to the perpetuity of this Republic.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's affirmative political action during the 1930s reaffirmed the belief of many residents that through his vigor and his administration's public policies F.D.R. had helped to save the nation from political and economic anarchy. In each of his four presidential campaigns, Roosevelt carried the county and the state with a comfortable lead at the polls. The Democratic presidential candidates have carried every local election since 1836, except in 1972 when Richard M. Nixon, Republican, won 2614 votes to George McGovern's 1479 votes. George Wallace, an independent Democrat, had carried the county in 1968.

Gubernatorial elections reflected this Democratic sentiment of Benton Countians. During the exciting gubernatorial campaign of 1841 between James K. Polk and James C. "Lean Jimmy" Jones, Polk exhibited a better grasp of events and more intelligence. Jones, however, had a knack for humor and sarcasm. It was customary, during those years for the candidates to appear together during most speaking engagements. The Polk-Jones canvass smacked much of burlesque and influenced Benton Countians to vote in August of 1841 for Polk 331 to 258 votes. Jones, however, carried the state. This county had always had a fine regard for Polk, and even when he lost his home state in his presidential bid in 1844, he did receive 481 local Democratic

CAMDEN, TENN. MARCH 3, 1933

"ON THE BROADWAY OF AMERICA"



A NEW leader takes over the reins of our great nation tomorrow March 4th. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT. May Good Fortune attend his administration - may it be the beginning of a new era of sound Prosperity . . . of Progress toward a brighter future than our wonderful country has ever known.

Yes . . . President Roosevelt . . . you have our sincerest congratulations and best wishes tomorrow as you step into the highest office any man can attain!

THE CAMDEN CHRONICLE

votes to Henry Clay's 292 Whig votes. Polk carried the country, however, and became the 11th president.

The second gubernatorial campaign ever to begin in the county was that of Democrat Thomas C. Rye on September 12, 1914. A Camden native, Rye successfully carried his home county and the state over his Republican opponent, Ben Hooper. He was a great favorite in the county and was given a rousing reception on November 4, 1914, when his train, bound from Paris for Nashville, stopped in South Camden. He won this state office again in 1916. Rye is known as the "war governor" as he served throughout World War I.

Thomas Clarke Rye was born in 1863 in a log house a short distance north of the Camden courthouse, the town in which he received most of his early education at the old brick academy. Early aspirations led him to the career of an attorney and to study law with his uncle, Thomas C. Morris, at Charlotte. He studied the law diligently and was admitted to the Camden bar in 1884. Rye practiced law in Camden for several years and continued to gain in reputation. He has been described as having an appealing manner of speech, using the choicest words to arrange and express his thoughts well.

Rye was a leader in the local prohibition movement, even when it was unpopular in some places to take such a public stand. He was a political idealist and his pilgrimage in June of 1891 to Monticello, former home of Thomas Jefferson, was an important event in the life of this young Democrat who sought political preferment. After deciding not to move to Texas, he served as editor of the *Benton County Enterprise*, the local newspaper at Camden, from March until September of 1888. In the summer of 1889, he was elected clerk and master of the county's chancery court, which position he held until his appointment in 1893 as a departmental chief of the Pension Bureau in Washington, D. C.

Rye and his family returned to Camden in 1897, where he resumed his law practice. In 1900 he was elected mayor of Camden, an office he held two terms. He moved his family to Paris in 1903 and established a larger law practice. In 1909 he was elected attorney general for the state. Although especially active



Pictured in 1892, left to right, are: Romie C. Rogers, druggist;
Thomas C. Rye, attorney; James J. Wyly, merchant.



Thomas Clarke Rye (1863-1953)
Governor of Tennessee (1915-1919)

in Liberty Bond campaigns during World War I, the lasting memorials of his two terms were established in the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute at Cookeville and in various state reformatories built so that youthful offenders could be provided with worthwhile training.

Following an unsuccessful bid for the United States Senate in 1918, Rye resumed his Paris law practice with Scott P. Fitzhugh. In 1922 he was elected chancellor of the 8th state Chancery Division, the position he held for 20 years until his retirement. Rye died in 1953 in Paris, and his remains were buried in the town's Maplewood Cemetery. The *Commercial Appeal* paid tribute to his memory on September 14, 1953, when it stated that Tom Rye had remained "a dignified and respected representative of the old school of public servants."

For several years before World War I, a considerable woman's suffrage movement had been underway in both Tennessee and the nation. With the splendid effort put forth by women during that war at home, in Europe, and elsewhere, legislatures throughout the country began to provide the voting franchise for women. This led to the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution which was ratified August 26, 1920, providing that the right to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any State on account of sex." The Tennessee legislature was among the southern vanguard of states to provide women over the age of 21 with this right. It was a great crusade which met with victory when Governor Albert H. Roberts signed the suffrage bill into law on April 17, 1919.

The first woman ever to cast her vote in any political election in Tennessee was Mary Cordelia Hudson, nee Beasley (1851-1920). She voted in the Camden municipal election on Tuesday, April 22, 1919, and reported that she had voted for the winner in that race for mayor, Allie V. Bowles, and for the slate of aldermen that ran with him. Cordelia Hudson was a strong-willed Camden matron, wife and mother, who firmly espoused the cause for women's rights. She pressed her interest by making sure that she was the first woman in line on that spring day to vote in Camden.

The first women ever to serve in an official capacity for the county were Mary Byrd Holladay and Grace Paschall Hicks, who were appointed members of the Camden Board of Education in June of 1916. The first woman in the county to achieve the distinction of being elected to a public office was Blondell Smith Cochran who was elected county court clerk in 1942, in which post she served creditably for two terms.

Benton County is now in the 23rd senatorial district and the 74th representative district of the state. Some 29 persons have gone to the state legislature from the county. Five of these were members of the Lashlee family, prominent in local politics for more than a century.

Anderson Priest Lashlee served in the House from 1899 until 1901 and his brother, John Paton Lashlee, served in the House from 1885 until 1887 and from 1891 until 1893. The latter's grandson, John Wylie Lashlee, served in the House from 1935 until 1937 and from 1939 until 1941 and in the Senate from 1943 until 1945. His widow, Mildred Jolly Lashlee, served in the Senate from 1945 until 1947, and their son, Frank Priestly Lashlee, has represented the district in the House since 1972.



Mary Cordelia Beasley Hudson.

Folkways

The early available census records reveal that the county's pioneer element had come from the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama. They were almost entirely of Anglo-Celtic and African racial stocks. Almost without exception most of the whites were of what was commonly termed "the southern yeomanry." This group usually were landowning farmers and herds-men, with a small minority who engaged in other occupations. They were an independent rural middle class, who simply thought of themselves as "plain folks."

According to Ella Molloy-Langford of Benton County, whenever an early emigrant appeared at a place of settlement, his

first thought was to find some level acres of land near a spring of water, if possible, on which to build his home and grow his crops. With a virgin forest everywhere, he had not far to go to find logs with which to build his cabin. These logs were usually hewn, or in other words, cut so that they were flat on four sides. The large fireplaces were inside of chimneys of considerable proportions. Sometimes the early chimneys were built up by stacking small logs in a square, slightly shaped, to make the flue, and then covering the whole with mud, usually made from clay.

A class conflict did not exist between local slave and nonslave owners during antebellum times. Even the prosperous Wyllys were of yeoman stock from the western valley of Virginia and had few pretensions above the ordinary. What animosities that were present originated from personal, political, or religious differences rather than from strictly economic difference. "Respectability" was the social jewel attained by almost any family or individual of reasonably industrious ways.

This pattern continued for many years following the Civil War. Occasionally there was jealousy between the city and country dweller. There is now a smaller number of business and

professional people whom most sociologists would consider with the same means and demeanor of a reasonably comfortable middle class.

The early settlers frequently used Elizabethan, Chaucerian, or pre-Chaucerian English terms in their speech, such as *afore*, *atwixt*, *awar*, *heap o'folks*, *pert*, *up and done it*, and *usen*. Users of such picturesque language can still be found. The language is often lyrical when unaffected. Local people then spoke with a mild southern hill dialect which has been largely retained.

There are few buildings standing in the county that date from the early settlement period. Single room cabins with lofts were often expanded to make two log chambers with roughly hewn walls forming a breezeway through the center. This simple and basic type of construction proved serviceable for several generations of Americans and was popular in Tennessee. Commonly called a dog trot design, this type of dwelling was typical in the county until late in the nineteenth century. Frame and some brick houses were built first in towns of the county.

The remnant of a cabin built in 1819 by William Thompson was placed on the *National Register of Historic Places* in May of 1976. The Thompson cabin is located in Cypress Valley, just south of Camden, and is an authentic example of the double-pen dog trot style. This cabin was described as being

built of hand adzed timbers, square and joined at the corners in the dove-tail design. The main rooms are located on either side of the open hall. Main entrances to these rooms are located in the open hallway. An interior stairway leads to a loft area which extends the length of the structure and above the open hall. Free-standing chimneys are built adjacent to the two gable end walls.

Most of the furniture in these humble dwellings was home-made. Furniture stores were opened in Camden late in the nineteenth century so that people could purchase industry-made furnishings. For most homes, household necessities consisted of a

table or two, some cane-bottom chairs, and several bedsteads which had springs made from interwoven strands of rope topped with straw mattresses supported by the feather bed. Hand-pieced quilts of various colors and handmade woolen blankets covered the beds. Artistically designed counterpanes of that period also were used.



Thompson Cabin in Cypress Valley.

There were mirrors or "looking glasses," which were common items in old estate inventories, as were bureaus and candlestands. Candles were the sole means of artificial light, other than that reflected from the fireplace. It was 1826 before kerosene began to be used in lamps, and it took time to reach back settlements and generally to be accepted. Other items found inside the cabins were clocks, trunks, spinning wheels and looms, buckets, churns and churn-dashers, brooms made from home-grown broom corn, cupboards, chamberpots which were often called "slop jars," and sausage and coffee grinders.

The menfolk kept their guns on pegs nailed into an interior wall, from which the firearms hung horizontally. Clothes being worn daily also were hung from pegs when not in use. It was customary to make a small shelf to hang on a wall in the open breezeway where men would put their shaving mug and brush, along with a small mirror into which they could look to shave. Men took pride in their razors and the leather strap with which razors were sharpened.

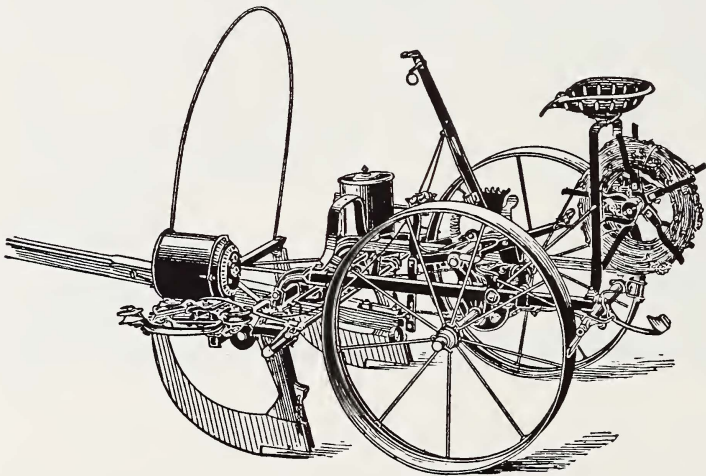
Much of family life centered around the hearth, for it was there that most of the cooking was done. Inside the fireplace were large hooks that hung from a fastening in the flue of the kitchen fireplace and from which the pots would swing. The homemaker also had a skillet with four little legs and a heavy iron lid that was used for baking bread. In the cold months, families would gather at their hearths to enjoy the heat from the fireplace until after dark, at which time they would retire to their featherbeds, keeping warm under heavy "comfortables."



Drawing of man's dressing stand, 14 by 6½ inches, brought from northern Virginia in 1827 by Daniel Settle, Sr.

Phosphorous-type matches were not discovered until 1834, and even then it was a long time before they were used in rural areas. Live coals from fireplace ashes furnished the means for lighting a fire or a candle. If the ashes were "stone cold," then a spark fire could be started by using a flint or borrowing live coals from neighbors.

Around the cabin were located log barns and cribs for storing corn and other harvested crops. Later, privies were built nearby where the family members could go to take their ease. Agricultural implements commonly used on the old farms included the harrow, used for breaking the field earth; the broad axe, used to cut logs into square beams; the foot adze, used for smoothing down hewn surfaces; the auger, used for drilling holes for pegs; the froe, used for splitting rails; grub and weed hoes; the plow, usually used with a cast-iron moldboard; the shovel and hand-saw; the pitchfork; the scythe and drawknife; the ox-yoke; and the swingle-tree, in common parlance the single-tree used to maintain balance between oxen when they were yoked together. Later in the nineteenth century cotton-planters, cultivators, and reapers were used—predecessors to the heavy farm machinery of today.



Drawing of the type of corn planter used locally during this era.

The womenfolk made most of the family clothing, much of it from cloth woven on looms. Local stores stocked a few necessities and luxuries, such as clothing made by hand, as were all garments in that age because Elias Howe did not patent his first complete sewing machine until 1846. Linsey was all wool, mill-made dress goods. Cotton check was a cheap cloth, but the calicos were variegated and beautiful. Every woman was delighted to own a calico frock. There were some cashmeres. Silks and velvets were bought in small quantities and used generally for trimmings; however, there were some silk dresses. There were no cosmetic articles on sale in those stores. The belles of that age owned a small jar or tin of home-rendered tallow for chapped hands and lips and a store-bought box of "whitening" or "chalk" for their complexions.

Before grist mills came, wheat and corn were ground or pestled out by hand, the corn into meal and the wheat into flour, sieving out the bran. This whole wheat flour was almost a balanced ration. Because there was little sale for stock, most of it was butchered, put into the smokehouse, salted and smoked with hickory or sassafras chips, and the surplus sold to those needing it. Many years later stock buyers came and purchased the surplus stock and shipped it to the stock markets. In a few more years came the butcher shop and many quit putting up their own meat.

Social activities centered around the community meeting houses; there public and subscription schools were held, as well as quiltings, log-rollings, barn dances, weddings, revivals, funerals, and occasional political meetings. Many people liked to sing the old ballads and the Christian hymns of their faith. Song-leaders held days-long songfests, well attended by the local people.

Alcoholism was a regrettable social problem. There were also occasional homicides, usually prompted by angry response to some real or imagined slight. Some of the bloodiest and most unfortunate fights ever held in the county occurred on the courthouse grounds when tempers were riled and issues defended ardently. Only three "lynchings" are known to have occurred in the county, and two of those happened in the nineteenth century.

The last and most notorious such event was the Hartley lynching at Camden in 1922.

John Hartley and his son, Connie, early on the morning of February 20, 1922, were cutting wood ties near Harmon Creek when they were ambushed. His son was killed instantly, and John Hartley was seriously wounded. Near death, he accused his brother, Ed Hartley, and Ed's sons, George and Void, along with Bill Conley. The accused were arrested for their alleged crime amid great community outrage. The first trial in July ended in a mistrial. The second in September concluded with Ed and George Hartley being sentenced to light prison terms for voluntary manslaughter. Then, on October 20, 1922, a few minutes past midnight, from the direction of Harmon Creek, about 25 masked men rode up to the jail, brushed aside the sheriff who tried to reason with them, dragged the two Hartleys from the jail to the hollow behind the Camden school, and riddled them with bullets. A jury of inquest found that the Hartleys had been killed by parties unknown.

Agriculture and Industry

Benton County has always been a predominantly rural county. Its early farmers claimed land and eventually paid for enough to assure a good living for the industrious. Few families owned slaves, and in most instances whites worked in the fields alongside their servants. Prior to 1850, the principal crops raised in the county were Indian corn, wheat, and oats. Little cotton was raised, even though it was the primary commercial staple then produced locally. During the 1850s the cultivation of tobacco accelerated so that by 1860, it was the county's leading commercial crop. In 1883 the *Camden Herald* reflected that, "many of the older citizens of this county inform us that before the late war between the states, tobacco was the great money crop then raised and that there were but few farmers that did not raise more or less of it and that money was plentiful and times were easy." With this prosperity came the unfortunate increase in local slaveholding as more workers were needed to raise this tobacco.

In 1850 William Pickett and William P. Morris erected a frame building in Camden on a site now occupied by the Hall Hardware store and operated a modest tobacco factory for the next decade there. Their specialty was chewing tobacco. By 1870 Indian corn and oats had regained ascendancy in local crop production. However, tobacco cultivation steadily regained its importance, given impetus by Captain Robert W. Ayres' efforts. The most successful tobacco factory was owned and operated by Captain Ayres (1828-1896), a native North Carolinian who had settled in the county about 1856. He espoused the Confederate cause and raised a company of cavalymen who served actively as a home guard early in the war. He was later taken prisoner by the federals. When he returned to his home about four miles northwest of Camden, he started his tobacco factory. His manufactured plug tobacco was sold in wagon loads at the Brownsport Furnace Commissary, south of Decaturville, and at Gravelly Springs, Alabama.

Captain "Bob" Ayres, as he was known, became prosperous. A leader in the Benton County Farmers' Alliance, he continued an active, sincere Methodist ministry. He was instrumental in organizing the Confederate veterans of the county and served as the first president of the local group in 1889. The next year he ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the 18th Congressional District. In the 1880s, Captain Ayres built on his farm near Liberty Methodist Church the most elegant dwelling ever constructed locally before the turn of the century. It was a two-story frame house that stood until accidentally burned in 1907.

The Ayres business was eventually acquired by G. B. Holladay who formed a partnership with A. H. Gibson in 1902 and opened a small tobacco factory in South Camden. Twist and smoking tobacco were their specialties until they closed after World War I. Irvin William Gibson also operated a tobacco factory that produced plug tobacco in South Camden from the 1880s until his death in 1913. Cultivation of this crop diminished until only a few patches were raised for home use.

Peanuts were raised for many years and there was a good demand for them on the market. Livestock production increased



Captain Robert W. Ayres Residence

in the last decade of the nineteenth century, due to the widespread use of alfalfa—of which was said, “For filling a milk cow, an alfalfa-fed cow is equal to a handy pump. Cattle love it, hogs fatten on it and a hungry horse wants nothing else.”

Local markets were in Nashville, Louisville, Memphis, and Evansville, Indiana. Crops were shipped to these places by steamboats or rail after the Civil War. There were numerous steamboat landings along the Tennessee River from which goods were exported. Later the railroads transported the bulk of the staples exported as well as those imported for county consumption. Steam packets plied the Tennessee water carrying passengers, mail, and goods until the early 1930s.

Early in this century, agricultural specialists of one state agricultural agency or another sent their representatives into Benton and its sister counties. These men helped to effect a quiet revolution in farming. Since the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 that initiated federal funding in this area, there have been county agricultural agents to encourage sound and scientific practices.

During World War I, many local farmers had their first experience in making enough profit from their labors to get out of debt and to make home improvements. Mechanized farm equipment also relieved some drudgery of farm labor. The first tractor bought and used in the county was in the old tenth civil district in 1918.

James Virgil Travis, editor of the *Camden Chronicle*, had encouraged development and maintenance of good roads through his editorial commentaries. The benefits to farmers of such transportation improvements was emphasized frequently but to little avail. In 1911, Camden was placed on the proposed route of the Memphis-Bristol Highway, later known as Tennessee Highway I or as U.S. Highway 70, the "Broadway of America." World War I halted construction of this roadway, but this good macadam road was finally laid through the Camden area in 1921-1925. Asphalt and concrete highways came during another decade. The first road map of Benton County was prepared and published in 1922 by Professor E. S. Perry of the University of Louisville.

There had long been two trunklines of rail track in the county. The first laid was through northern Benton County and was opened in 1861 by the Memphis and Ohio Railroad Company. The second line was laid in 1867 from Johnsonville on the Tennessee River through Eva and Camden into West Tennessee. Both of these lines were later acquired by the NC&StL Railroad, now the Louisville and Nashville Railway. Their presence literally established the towns of Big Sandy and Eva and the development of South Camden.

Another local improvement of this period was the establishment of the Benton County Fair, which was first held mid-October of 1927 in Camden. It has continued to have a loyal following and is considered to be one of the major business activities each year. The fairgrounds are now located in South Camden, near the Benton County Farm Bureau building.

With the collapse of the speculative stock market in October of 1929, an era of extravagance came to a grinding halt in the United States. The beginnings of the Great Depression were

barely felt locally. The county was predominantly rural, and the majority of its people were accustomed to living on small incomes. Most people raised and canned foodstuffs and made their clothing. Taxes were moderate and food prices were nominal. Most people still used coal oil for lighting. Those with telephones had small bills. Some people who had left the county to find jobs in northern industries returned home when they were laid-off or their jobs were terminated. At home, most had access to land from which they could derive a subsistence living. Benton Countians felt the Depression become worse in 1930 and 1931. The American Red Cross, through its local agents, sent free foodstuffs for those who experienced a need. One of the worst economic calamities ever experienced in the county was the collapse and liquidation of the Peoples Union Bank and Trust Company of Camden in October of 1930. However, with local support and the fundamental belief in the American economy, the Bank of Camden was organized and opened in March of 1931. This institution has grown considerably and is one of the two banks currently operating in the county. The other bank is the Commerce Union Bank of Camden. Their sister financial institution, the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Camden was opened in 1967.

People in the southern section of the county were appalled when the Bank of Holladay failed late in 1932. Organized in the more settled times of 1910, this bank could not withstand the stringencies of the economic depression. There was a widespread feeling that the economy had hit rock-bottom in 1932. There was reflected in the local newspaper the sentiment that President Herbert Hoover's economic recovery programs had been dismal failures.

In the historic presidential election of 1932, the Democratic candidate, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, polled 22,821,857 popular votes and 472 electoral votes as compared to President Hoover's 15,761,841 popular votes and 59 electoral votes; local votes cast were 1540 for Roosevelt and 455 for Hoover. Voter apathy was reflected in these small numbers, not as much from indifference as from confusion and a growing sense of helplessness that little or nothing could stay the crisis.

On assuming office, Roosevelt initiated a program of economic recovery, endorsed with great approbation by the Congress in the first stages. For a while that month, all U.S. banks were closed to stabilize their operation. After this brief moratorium, the banks were reopened. The currency which had been held back during this so-called bank holiday was redeposited and the banks were soon operating on their usual basis. The president's decisive action had restored the people's faith in the ability of the banks to run their affairs.

There was a plethora of anti-depression activities sponsored in the New Deal of the Roosevelt era. Local farmers became familiar with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) which attempted to stabilize the farm economy and farming practices. The county was fortunate that this administration's local agent, B. T. Scruggs, was an expert in soil management and animal husbandry. This hard worker helped to improve farming operations in the county during the 1930s. Home demonstration agents, acting under the direction of the University of Tennessee, carried out reforms and improvements among the women of the farm families. There have been several worthwhile agents in Benton County. The Benton County Farm Bureau, an agency of the state, was organized in 1930 and has served since in promoting scientific farming practices and sound management among farmers. The 4-H programs have been important from this era to the present day for the youth of the country. The federal government allocated funds through various agencies for many local improvements. Through an assortment of activities, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) alone had accounted for a local expenditure of \$125,000 in the three year period, 1935-1938. The Camden leadership tried for several years to get a sewage and waterworks for the town, and finally with federal funding this became a reality in 1935.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was organized to help young men support themselves and their families. In May of 1933, 27 local men left for preliminary training at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, after which they were assigned to different

camps in the Smoky Mountain National Park for reforestation works. Later, in July of 1935, the first group of "CCC boys" arrived to work in Benton County, with barracks on Washington Avenue in Camden where the elementary school now is located. These young men were from northern areas of the country and their customs, language, and habits made it difficult for them to be assimilated. Soon, a new group of Southerners were brought in. These young men were assigned to work on eroded lands and reforestation projects. Some of them built the large rock observation building on the peak of Pilot Knob, which stood until its demolition in 1978.

Local teachers, like many of their colleagues across the state, were paid with warrants in 1931-1932. These were essentially promissory notes to be used as currency. They were made good when money became available and they could be cashed. Finally in 1933, through the sale of \$10 million worth of bonds by the state, teachers were paid their salaries. The banking institutions across the state made it possible for this to happen by the purchase of the bonds. The Commerce Union Bank purchased some of the bonds locally so that early in August of 1933, the county received \$52,000 in currency from the state to pay its teachers.

Construction began in 1938 on a new dam in the TVA complex at Gilbertsville, Kentucky. When in full operation this dam created a reservoir more than 184 miles long. The impounded Kentucky Lake in 1944 produced one of the world's largest man-made lakes. When this lake was formed much of the counties' shorelines along the Tennessee River were inundated. Benton County's shoreline was altered considerably when more than 30,000 acres were flooded. TVA still compensates the county each year by paying a stipend for the land on which it would have realized the benefits of taxation. The TVA surveyors mapped county land that would be purchased from the residents at current land values. The major local purchases were made during 1941, with most of these transactions ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Some 35 miles of roads close to the river had to be abandoned and rerouted. New bridges were built over creeks which had swollen as the lake waters backed up for

miles. A total of \$1,257,749.45 was spent by the TVA on these relocations and improvements of the county roads.

In 1944-1945 the county's railroad bridges over the Tennessee River were elevated to accommodate the new water level. The first bridge for automobile traffic was erected and opened in 1931 at Trotter's landing, several miles southeast of Camden, replacing the old ferry system. In 1966, the Cuba Landing Bridge serving Interstate 40 was opened for traffic in the southern section of the county.

Several years before 1940, local electrical power had been distributed by a private company, the Tennessee Light and Power Company. It sold out its interest in 1940 to Benton County for \$52,000. There were only 38 miles of power lines in the county then, serving about 500 customers. In the spring of 1940 by a unanimous vote of its elected magistrates, the Benton County Power Board, now the Public Utilities, contracted for power with TVA. Monday, April 22, 1940, the local consumers of electrical power began to receive these services at reduced TVA rates. Within a decade, electricity for lighting, radios, cooking, and a multiplicity of gadgetries, was a reality for most local people. By April of 1950, the county was 98 per cent "electrified." Today the people enjoy an extensive electrical power distribution from Benton County Public Utilities.

Local agriculture, as well as industry, has been blessed by the presence of the TVA. About 75 per cent of the county's population still lives in rural areas. In recent decades emphasis has been placed upon conservation farming, putting land to its proper use and treating it according to its needs. The Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District helps to disseminate information on proper soil care. Official action and a healthy market demand have encouraged a fuller use of county land for the raising of beef cattle. This innovation has brought numerous changes, including the clearing of scrubby, wooded landscapes.

Within the last decade, there has been an increase in the improved farm residences scattered throughout the county. Reasonably stable agricultural market prices for produce and cattle have helped many families achieve more secure economic

lives. Some of the breadwinners have jobs in local industry enabling them to spend more on consumer goods. Established in 1930 near Camden, the Hardy Sand Company is one of the largest producers of natural bonded sand in the world. This product is used in making bathtubs and glass.

Soon after World War II there was a Congressional move to appropriate funds for construction of a steamplant facility at New Johnsonville. This was a new town in Humphreys County that had grown up during the war. President Harry S. Truman gave his support to this proposal so that finally in February of 1949, Congress approved by a vote of 567-19 the \$2 million needed to begin this project.

The New Johnsonville facility went into operation in October of 1951. This plant produces up to eight billion kilowatts of electricity annually. The region's use of electricity has increased sixfold since 1949. Due to the increased availability of electrical power and the relatively low tax requirements in Benton and Humphreys counties, numerous industries have located their plants there.

After World War II, county business leaders organized themselves as the Benton County Development Association. Under the leadership of Judge John M. Holladay, Fred H. Saunders, Crayton Holland, C. T. Vick, and Ira L. Presson of Benton County and Camden representatives, Mayor Wyly C. Lockhart, George R. Bain, Lester Melton, Wayne Sparks, Murray Robison, and J. V. Walker, the move to build a local factory materialized in 1949. In the summer of that year, the General Shoe Corporation leased this factory located just west of College Hill in Camden. It opened early in January of 1950. Since that time, a considerable industrial community has developed, including Genesco, Romar, Molloy Timers, and the United Founders Corporation.

What has been the effect of this increased local industrial development? Louis D. Rubin, Jr., aptly answered this question in *The Lasting South*, which he co-edited with James J. Kilpatrick in 1957:

Incomes go up, new inhabitants arrive by the droves, townfolk get well-paying jobs, marginal farmers leave the farm to work at the plants. Property values rise; chain stores expand, the demand for consumer goods grows mightily. The factory payroll vastly increases the cash money in circulation and this affects the entire economy of the town and the surrounding countryside.

So it has been and will continue to be in Benton County. Local society is changing and not altogether agreeably. Increased security and advantages brought on by industrialism also have caused a diminution in that rather unhurried, individualistic pace of life traditionally known for generations of county residents. In 1946 the money economy of Benton County was approximately \$1.5 million. In June of 1979 it had grown to over \$100 million.

In 1874, Joseph B. Killebrew shrewdly remarked about Benton Countians of his day in his classic economic study of Tennessee, *Resources of Tennessee*:

As a general rule, the people are very law-abiding and work well, but they are not the thriftiest people in the world. In fact, they might do much better, but as a class they seem satisfied to work and make just enough to live on comfortably. There seems to be less disposition to get rich among the farmers than is usually seen in Tennessee; indeed, they are the most contented and the most easily satisfied people in West Tennessee, if not in the South.

Hopefully a century hence a historian will be able to reflect that while Benton Countians will have become more cosmopolitan, better educated, and able to enjoy more secure socio-economic roles, they will also have preserved something of their old regard for individuality and relaxed living.

Social Services

For several years there was relatively little legal business in Benton County. Alvin Hawkins began his law practice there in 1843. Two years later he moved to Huntingdon where he gained a solid reputation as an able lawyer and later entered state politics, eventually to serve as governor of Tennessee from 1881-1883.

Colonel William F. Doherty (1801-1876), a native Kentuckian, began his legal practice in Camden soon after the county was established. He had the reputation of being a good speaker with "a fine vein of humor." For many years, he was the county's leading attorney. He was elected as the delegate from Benton and Humphreys counties to serve in the state constitutional convention which met at Nashville in January and February of 1870. He put in a perfect attendance there, giving inconspicuous but conscientious deliberation on the issues brought before the convention.

John W. Davidson, sometime clerk of the circuit court, studied law and practiced a while in the county. Stephen C. Pavatt (1808-1863) was one of the brightest men ever to have practiced law in the county. He served in the State Senate and was for several years chancellor of the sixth chancery district. He was the only Benton Countian who had a classical library in the antebellum period. Theophilus A. Henry also practiced law in Camden from about 1866 until he moved to Texas in 1882. Being a methodical advocate, he preferred the chancery practice and enjoyed a good local reputation. Captain William F. Maiden, Andrew J. Farmer, Joseph E. Jones, Walter S. Ayres, Thomas C. Rye and Travis Davidson represented the local bar at the close of the 19th century.

Sidney Lee Peeler (1865-1946) moved as a young lawyer to Camden in 1889 where he practiced law for decades. He had a reputation for giving strict care for his cases. In 1908 Christopher Napoleon Frazier (1881-1970) and Joseph Fry Odle (1880-1965) began their local law practice. The former was the dean of the Camden bar for many years. He, his son, A. Bradley Frazier, and

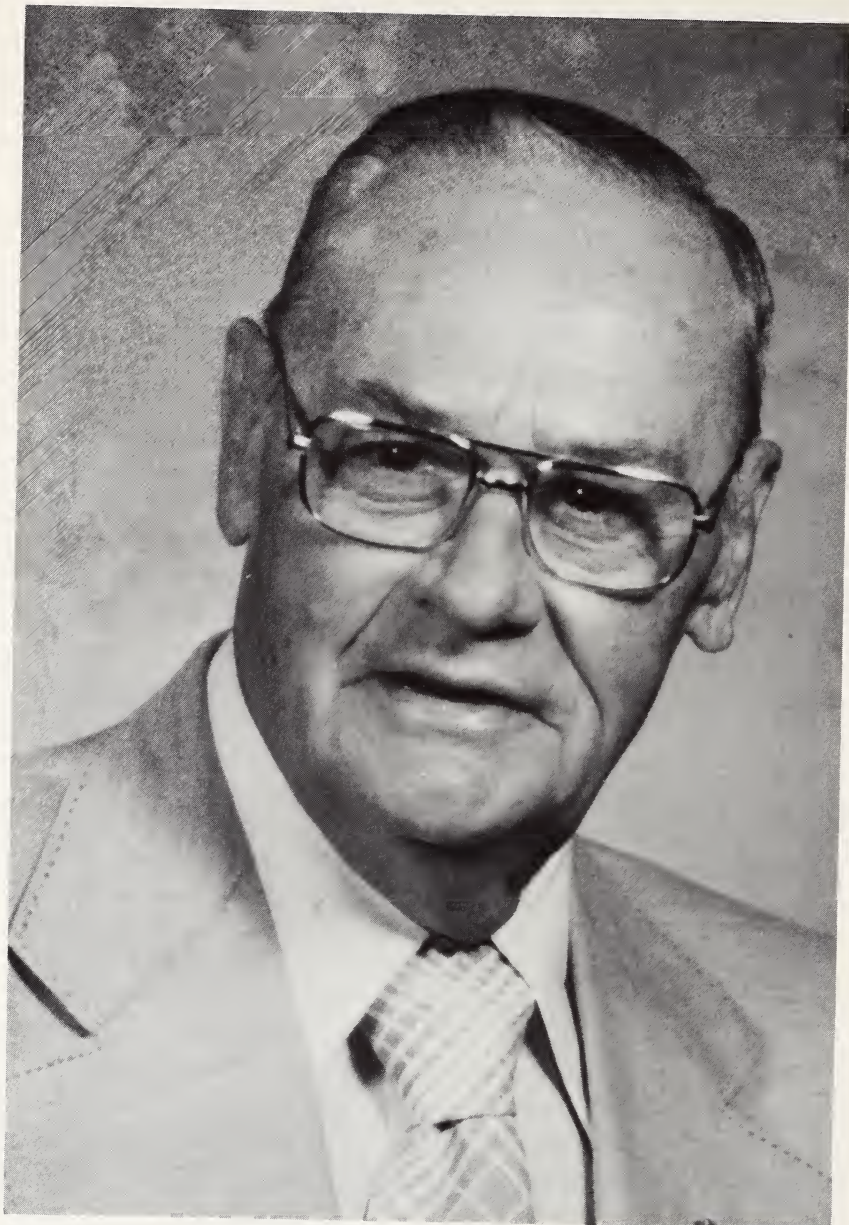
grandson, Andrew B. Frazier, have had the oldest continuous law firm in the county.

The people of Benton County have had numerous doctors. Dr. Jephtha L. Williams located in Camden where he died in 1844. Dr. Milton L. Travis (1822-1878) was for 30 years the leading physician of the county. Early in 1843, he moved from the southern section of the county to Camden. Other local doctors in the nineteenth century were J. Maclin Driver, Francis C. Whitfield, James Moses, James R. Young, William T. Faucett, Sanmartin Barnett, Felix Grundy Hudson, Hugh Leslie, and David C. Dickey.

Among the twentieth century physicians who have practiced in Benton County and have been trained at medical universities have been Robert Bruce Travis, William T. Hubbs, William P. McGill, Francis M. Capps, James Max Smyth, John B. Bradley, Bird B. Barnett, James E. Luter, Nevin Wireback, Garvin P. Hicks, Robert L. Barker, James M. Bailey, Arthur T. Perry, J. S. Butterworth, Robert I. Bourne, Jr., William Blackburn, and John H. Overall, Jr.

The dean of the county physicians is Dr. Alvin Thornton Hicks, a native of Talledega County, Alabama. His pre-medical degree was from the University of Tennessee, Memphis, in 1930. After that he located in Camden. Besides giving excellent and constant medical service to the people of his adopted county, Dr. Hicks has served in numerous professional posts. He was county physician for 25 years and for decades served on the Benton County Health Board which he helped to organize in 1948. He continues an active medical practice at his clinic in Camden.

Dr. Lew Wallace Daugherty and his namesake son have given constant medical service as dentists in Camden since 1915. Other dentists have been E. M. McAuley, Roy C. Malladay, Robert L. Horton, Jr., and Robert L. Walker. In recent years, James W. Robinson and William H. McConnell have practiced optometry in Camden. There have been several small doctors' clinics located there, but it was only in 1967 that the county's general hospital was opened. In 1975 a nursing-convalescent home was erected adjacent to the hospital, called the Care Inn.



Dr. Alvin Thornton Hicks (1906-)

Colonel William F. Doherty published the county's first newspaper, *The Central Democrat*, at Camden for two years, beginning in 1852. For years after that, the county was without a resident newspaper. *The Benton Banner* was established by Captain W. F. Maiden in 1875; operations were suspended in 1879. *The Camden Herald* was established in 1881. This was an interesting and well-organized newspaper, but it suspended operation late in 1887. Its immediate successor, *The Benton County Enterprise* went into operation in March of 1888 and suspended operation in March of 1890.

The Camden Chronicle, known simply as the *Chronicle*, began operation on April 15, 1890, and is still the county newspaper with offices in Camden. The Travis family owned it and served as its editors for 50 years. Sallie Bradley, nee Norris, was owner and editor from 1939 until 1961, when Robert C. and Rose Johnson bought the newspaper. The editors of *The Camden Chronicle* have almost always been in the forefront of progressive developments in the lives of the county's residents. It is the leading proponent of Benton County and the Magic Valley, as the Tennessee River Valley is called locally.

Other newspapers published briefly in the county have been *The Benton County News* (1928), *Big Sandy News* (1891), *Benton County New Will* (1905), *The Vidette* (1888), *The Benton Countian* (1916-17), and *The Camden Citizen* (1909-1914).

The Benton County Library was organized in 1942 when the county court provided for its modest funding. Located then in the basement of the courthouse at Camden, it opened its doors to the public on March 27, 1942. It was variously located until April of 1957, when it moved to its present site on West Walnut Street in Camden. In 1979, the library gained use of the entire county building at this location for its operation.

There have been several librarians. Virginia Lockhart Whitworth is now serving as librarian. Chairpersons of the Benton County Library Board have been Mrs. J. R. Barrett (1943); Ida McCullough (1943-1945); Ruth P. Lockhart (1945-1975); and Wayne L. Hall, Jr. (1975-1978); and Harry Warner Groot is the current chairman.



Ruth Priestley Lockhart

Ruth Priestley Lockhart (born in 1906), native of Weakley County and wife of the prominent county businessman and politician Wylly Crawford Lockhart, rendered invaluable service to the library board for three decades. She frequently went before the county court to make her reports, requesting monies for the library's operation. The court solely provided funds for the library until 1953 when the municipality of Camden made its first appropriation to this facility from which its citizens benefited highly. Mrs. Lockhart saw the library grow from a few shelves of books to a strong county library, with audio-visual offerings and a historical collection of major local importance known as the

Tennessee Room. Besides her major interest in the local library, Ruth P. Lockhart was supervisor of the county school system from 1928 until her retirement in 1971. Although she has traveled extensively in recent years, she has continued to be an active member of the Tennessee Retired Teachers Association, serving on its local legislative committee and as president of the local unit for two years. She has numerous interests, lending to the cultural benefit of the county.

Benton County has had its share of fraternal orders, chief among them being the Masonic Order. The most venerable lodge in the county is that of Camden Lodge 179, Free and Accepted Masons, chartered first in October of 1849. It has an attractive lodge hall in Camden. Big Sandy Lodge 754 was chartered in March of 1954 and dedicated their new lodge building in 1979. Several other lodges have been chartered in the county and have served their purpose and then expired.

The Camden Eastern Star was chartered in January of 1913, and the Big Sandy Eastern Star gained their charter in July of 1912. Among the other local social orders have been the Knights of Pythias, Knights of Honor, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Woodmen of the World, and numerous women's organizations, one of the latest being the Glover's Trace Chapter of the DAR organized in April of 1968 at Camden.

The county once had several fine carpenters who were house builders. Some of their beautiful work remains in the form of older residences scattered over the county. Skilled craftsmen made lovely articles of furniture, some of which remain in county homes and elsewhere. Among the better known cabinet-makers of the county in the last century was William Elijah Bivens (1836-1906), who made plain, substantial furniture. Justifiably, he was locally renowned for his beautiful scroll and cabinet-work. He also was a coffin maker and opened the county's first funeral home, which continued in his family long after his death. Today, Stockdale-Malin, established in 1946, is the only mortuary service available in the county.

The best known native artist of Benton County is James Edward Furr, visiting artist and professor in the Department of

Fine Arts at Texas A & I University. Selections of his work are in the permanent collections of the Gallery of Contemporary Art, Winston Salem, North Carolina; the Illinois State University; the Tennessee Fine Arts Commission; and the Dulin Gallery of Art. Tim Pafford, another native, opened the Lakeside Art Studio at Eva in the spring of 1978 so that the work of area artists could be exhibited and sold. Local musical appreciation almost strictly has been for the ballad and country music. Local people had the benefit of the first visiting fine music group, the Memphis Symphony, at their performance at Camden in October of 1978. The future for fine arts appreciation in the county appears considerable.

Black Heritage

The black people of Benton County have never been numerous, for slavery was locally an indifferent institution and the county provided little attraction for them. Census figures show that even at the present time the blacks constitute less than two percent of the county's total population. Most of the black pioneers came as slaves although a few were mulatto freedmen. There were 244 slaves reported in the 1840 county census. Most of these people lived singly or in small family units on white farms. Only Ann Peacock and James Wyly claimed more than 20 bondsmen that year, and only 59 heads of households were slave-owners out of a population of 5000 people.

James Wyly was a well-to-do farmer who owned several thousand acres of land near Chalk Level. Much of the acreage was in woodlands where cattle and hogs grazed; it was planted in Indian corn, some tobacco, and other farm staples. Wyly needed a large work force, and before his death in 1857, had acquired a large number of blacks. He carefully entered the births and deaths of these people in his own family Bible. As was also the case in much of the South, children were born to black women almost without regard to their paternity. Here and there, a master would keep his slaves in male and female partner units with their offspring. Such men as James Wyly were paternalistic with their

slaves, and, while their condition of servitude was unfortunate, the blacks were generally treated with kindness and due regard for their feelings. *The Tennessee American*, a Nashville newspaper, noted in its May 12, 1857, obituary for James Wyly that, "His slaves found in him a father, not a master."

Time and again, Dr. Milton L. Travis of Camden was called upon to give medical treatment to local slaves. Most slaveowners saw that their slaves received better attention than most members of their own families, for sound business, as well as humanitarian, reasons.

Most local yeomen farmers acquired their first slaves during the period from 1845-1860. There were places in the county, like the Pierce farm near Crossroads Baptist Church, where slaves occasionally were sold. Period deed records indicated that the natural increase of slaves during this period was due to births. Few slaves were imported from elsewhere. In 1860 there were approximately 434 slaves in the county, of whom only 38 were more than 50 years old; the majority of these blacks were young, ostensibly natives of the county. The free blacks were a minority in the county, numbering eight persons in 1840, 21 persons in 1850, and 11 persons in 1860. These were mostly the members of the families of Stephen and Noel Blackwell, early county pioneers.

Due to racial problems between blacks and whites in recent years, it has been almost customary to exaggerate the ill-will these people had for one another in the antebellum period and for years afterward. Except for "an occasional owner of irascible disposition and an occasional black of incorrigible tendencies, good will prevailed and often deep attachments were formed between persons of these two races." There are some older county citizens who remember vividly how close the ties once were between many blacks and whites.

Miss Easter Wyly (1850-1917) was one of the Wyly slaves. At the close of the Civil War, she was in need of a home and the family of Isaac C. Yarbrough, a Camden merchant and later station master of the railway in South Camden, provided for her. She was not only a domestic servant, but was a beloved member



Miss Easter Wylie of Camden.

of the household and nurse to two generations of the Yarbrough children. She predeceased her white employer, Mary Ann Yarbrough, making the request of her that her own remains be buried in the Yarbrough lot in the Camden cemetery. She was buried there with the people she had loved and who had loved her. Local residents remembered Miss Wyly as a vigorous worker and a lively talker.

Jefferson Ealey (1819-1907) came to Benton County as a servant for the Bartlett family before 1860. It was said of him that when "it came to barbecuing, he was a past grand master and that for fifty years or so a barbecue was not considered successful unless 'Uncle Jeff' prepared the meats." Respected blacks who lived to an old age were addressed affectionately as aunt and uncle, as were respected aged whites. These few blacks were representative of their race in the county, but of course not all relationships between black and white had been as cordial as these.

In 1870, several years after their emancipation, there were 454 blacks living in Benton County, mostly single persons working on local farms as tenant farmers or young couples with families. Although there were pockets of freedmen in various parts of central and southern Benton County, they were chiefly centered in the Camden area. When the railroad was laid through South Camden in 1867, many of the black men took jobs with the railroad company. Several of them, including Peter Strickland (one of the Williams freedmen), built modest dwellings on the ridge overlooking Cane Creek and the depot in that part of town. This area was called Tin Cup for a similar settlement near Nashville. The major Christian congregation for local blacks, Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, was organized there in 1869. Its minister for many years, Robert L. Montgomery, was ordained in 1922, and is today a respected Benton Countian and a leader among his people. Several black families still live on this ridge. The county's other black congregation, Moore's Chapel near McIllwain, is a Methodist church. Its site was donated by John L. Moore, a black who moved into the county a few years after the Civil War.

Shortly before 1880, Willis Thompson agreed to a black settlement on his farm on the Perryville road, about a mile and a half south of Camden. This settlement was called Edgefield. This settlement broke up about 1890 and its members moved to Tin Cup or into Black Center.

The largest black settlement was made in the northeast section of Camden, just east of Charlie Creek, on Wren Avenue and is called Black Center. Its pioneer families were those of Joshua Simons (1822-1904) and Arthur Towles (1848-1887). The most important black school in the county, Towles' (Tolls) Chapel School, was located in Black Center and is now the site of the newest black cemetery, Calvary. The blacks had a largely self-contained community, with their own religious and social activities, a pattern repeated throughout the county. Their population rose in the last two decades of the nineteenth century but declined gradually to only 245 persons by 1930. Since then, their numbers have steadily risen so that in 1970 there were 360 blacks in the county.

January 23, 1965, is a date with historic significance for black Benton Countians. On that day in a special meeting of the county board of education, members voted 13-1 to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which declared that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity" sponsored or funded by the United States government. The dual school system ended, bringing school segregation to an end in the county. Another significant milestone for local blacks was the swearing in of Robert Harris as deputy with the Benton County law enforcement agency by Sheriff Jerry Phifer early in 1975.

Religious Heritage

The Baptists established the first denomination in Benton County. The oldest congregation in the county was that organized by the Primitive Baptists early in 1823 under Pastors George Turner and Levi Kirkland. This congregation met in a

small log house on the Thompson farm located about a mile southwest of Camden.

In the summer of 1823, several of the Baptist leaders in the Western District met together to organize an association for their congregations. In September of 1823, the first West Tennessee Baptist association was organized as the Western District Association at Bird's Creek Meetinghouse in Henry County. They held to the strict Calvinism of the Regular Baptists, as they were called.

Ramble Creek congregation was organized in June of 1823 by Elder Jacob Browning. Through Isham Jones, one of its charter members, Ramble Creek received a land grant for ten acres on which it was seated in April of 1848. The present brick church was built and dedicated in 1959 on the approximate site of its simpler log-frame predecessors.

On May 7, 1825, under the guidance of Elders Jacob Browning and John Horn, the people of the Rushing's Creek area organized a congregation. They built a log meeting house on Abel Rushing's farm. Its present brick house was erected in 1952-1953 on the site of its predecessors. The county's first settlement centennial celebration, scheduled for 1918, was postponed due to the war then raging. The Benton County Homecoming was held on May 7, 1925, at Rushing's Creek Baptist Church in conjunction with this congregation's centenary. It was a grand success; a day remembered in local history.

In September of 1828, the Western District Association met in the Clark's River meeting house with delegates from 30 congregations present. On September 15th, these delegates divided amicably over the issue of "atonement." The more Calvinistic congregations organized the Obion Association, while the Western District Association "went missionary," according to its early historian Lewis Edgar.

There was a "long season of lukewarmness in the association," but in the summer of 1834, Elder Browning held a local revival during which there were numerous earnest conversions. A correspondent of the association, T. B. Altom, wrote late in 1834, "We have lately formed a Missionary Society in the Western District Association, entitled the Western District Missionary



Mt. Zion Meetinghouse.

Association." Tradition avers that the local missionary movement began in Ramble Creek church.

The Cypress Creek congregation remained firm in the primitive or Calvinistic faith and later moved further southwest in Cypress Valley. They disbanded eventually. The only Primitive congregation now in the county is Shady Grove, several miles north of Camden.

On a high, wooded ridge above Sulphur Creek, about five miles southeast of the town of Big Sandy, is Mt. Zion Meetinghouse, the oldest church structure in Benton County. In October of 1973, it was entered in *The National Register Of Historic Places*. It was built there for the Baptist congregation organized by Elder Bennett S. Browning. Mathias Neighbors and others also helped to erect this building about 1850. It is a rough hewn, oak log house, 18 feet by 24 feet, resting upon large native sandstone

foundations. It was laboriously built with hand adzed logs, square and joined at the corners in the dove-tail design.

Other Baptist congregations in Benton County include Pleasant Hill, organized in 1845; Chalk Level, which had been a Primitive congregation for some time before it became a missionary church about 1852; Shiloh, organized in 1844, now defunct; Harmon Creek, organized in 1840, now defunct; Unity at Holladay, organized in 1868; Camden Baptist dating to 1896 in its present location; Chalk Hill, near Eva, organized before 1850; Union, organized in 1857 and later merged with Unity; Big Sandy, organized in 1914; Missionary Grove, organized in 1926; Eagle Creek, organized in 1887, now defunct; Eva, organized in 1917; Green Hill, organized in Birdsong Valley in 1892, now defunct; Prospect Baptist, organized in 1903; and Pleasant Ridge, organized in Sawyer's Mill in 1890, but previously existing nearby as the Terrapin Hill congregation.

The Methodists first sent their missionaries into West Tennessee in 1821. The first Methodist congregation organized in the county was called Chapel Hill, but about 1860 it was renamed Cowell's Chapel. It has maintained the same location since it was first organized in 1824. The congregation currently meets in a pretty brick church in Camden. About the same time that Cowell's Chapel was organized, the Methodists on Beaverdam Creek also organized their church, always known as the Flatwoods Church. John Pafford, a lay minister, led the organization of this congregation. Just about two miles to the south of it was the oldest campground in the county, first cleared for brush arbors in the early 1830s. It was located partially on the two-acre site formerly occupied by the mixed-blood Indians who had been driven away from there a few years before.

Among other Methodist congregations have been Post Oak, organized before 1835, several miles northwest of Camden; Mt. Carmel, near Sawyer's Mill, organized several years before 1857; Bethlehem, organized near its present location in 1867; Morris Chapel, organized near Camden in 1883; Eva, organized in 1912; Manley Chapel, first organized as Hays Chapel on Morgan's Creek, now defunct; Harmon Creek, organized before 1869; Mt.

Zion on Eagle Creek, organized before 1887, now defunct; Baker's Chapel, six miles south of Big Sandy, organized before 1874; Salem on Caney Fork Creek in Birdsong Valley, organized before 1840, long defunct; Liberty, near Camden, organized before 1858; Cedar Grove, dating from before 1880; Pleasant Hill, organized before 1887; McRae's Chapel, near Big Sandy, organized by 1870; Holladay, organized in 1889; Lick Creek, seven miles north of Big Sandy, organized by 1844; Liberty, just north of Holladay; Palestine, near Holladay; Faxon; McIllwain, now defunct; and Carmel Congregational Methodist Church, organized in 1893, several miles north of Big Sandy. The Camden Methodist Church was organized in that town in 1838 and is now a flourishing congregation. Today the Methodists of Benton County are organized in the administrative units of Camden, the Camden Circuit, the South Camden Circuit, the Holladay Circuit, and the Big Sandy Larger Parish, United Methodist Church.

The local Cumberland Presbyterians were organized in the Hopewell Presbytery in August of 1842, at Camden. Their minister, Henry Bobbitt, preached the first sermon ever delivered in that town in Colonel Irvin Carns' yard. This congregation is now the only one active of this denomination in the county. Their brick church, in the West End of Camden, was built in 1956.

Other congregations that once existed in Benton County were Mt. Moriah, on Birdsong Creek, organized about 1847; Mt. Carmel, now at Holladay, organized by 1848; Pleasant Ridge, north of Big Sandy, organized in 1854-1855; Pleasant Valley, organized on Rushing's Creek in 1867; and McIllwain organized in 1881 as Caney Fork on the stream of that name. The latter moved in 1900 to nearby McIllwain and disbanded in recent years. Prominent among the old Cumberland Presbyterian ministers were Henry Bobbitt, H. R. Reid, Abner Cooper, Samuel Thomas, Allen A. Justice, Robert M. Gilliam, J. H. McKnight, and one of their best known, Abraham Miles Colvill Gossett, who was a resident of the county.

The Mormons or Latter-day Saints caused a great stir in the county when their zealous missionaries began preaching in the scattered communities in 1834. A prominent citizen, Dr. Wilson

August 14th 1852,

Temple Benton County
The church at Chalklevel met in conference
unanimously resolved to license Brother
Obediah Hardin to preach in the bounds
of this church or elsewhere, that God in
his providence may direct, signed by order
of the church

J. W. C. early M.D.
J. D. Arnold, S. p. M.

Baptist license to preach.

M. Sarrett of Beaverdam Valley, wrote in his family Bible, "David Patten & Warren Parish natives of New York belonging to the church of the Latter Day Saints preached at my house on Wednesday the 14th Inst. Oct. 1834." These missionaries penned thereunder, "We the above named D. W. Patten & W. Parish believe in the law and the prophets, also in the New Testament and in all the Revelations that God has given us in these last days to govern & build up his children as at the beginning."

These missionaries organized a branch early in 1835 on Eagle Creek. Another branch was organized at Seth Utley's house north of Chalk Level that July. Somewhat later, another branch was organized near Camden on Cypress Creek. At times the missionaries were mistreated by some of the rowdy sectarians of other faiths and most of the local converts seemed to have moved elsewhere. Several of the most respectable families in the county embraced this faith.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic congregation was organized in Camden as a mission of St. Patrick's in McEwen. Its church was dedicated on November 5, 1950. People of this faith were drawn here to work in local industries.

The county's first Church of Christ was organized in 1866 as the Disciples of Christ in what is now Holladay. The congregation of this church is still active. The second group was organized in Beaverdam Valley about 1897, but is now defunct. The Camden Church of Christ dates from 1901 and that of Big Sandy dates from 1920. Other congregations are located at Eva, Cedar Grove, and Dry Branch. The local Pentecostals first organized themselves at Flower's Chapel at Chalk Level in 1922. There are now several congregations of this denomination located throughout the county. The Camden United Pentecostals organized in December of 1940. Theirs is an active, growing church, drawing from the more fundamental Christians.

About 1962 several Amish families principally from Ohio and Pennsylvania moved to farms purchased near Holladay in southern Benton County. There are about 15 families of their denomination living at that locality. They take turns in meeting every other Sabbath in each other's homes, with the host couple pre-

paring food for the entire congregation. Their services are conducted in German. The Amish farms are easily distinguished in that they are cleared—almost manicured—and well ordered in field and woodland. The Amish are frugal people who are good farmers and steady citizens.

From the early 1830s until about 1880, an annual event of importance to many residents was the camp meeting, usually held by the Methodists but shared by all congregations. The best known local campgrounds were Beaverdam in Beaverdam Valley, the first located in the county; Sugar Creek, now the site of McRae Chapel near Big Sandy; and Mt. Carmel at Holladay. It later became customary for individual churches to hold revivals or protracted meetings, and many local Protestant churches still hold occasional revival meetings. During this period, these religious gatherings were major social events. They were held either in late July or in August. This was a time when “crops were laid by,” the hard work of planting and “tending” had passed, and the crops were left to grow on their own. Protracted meetings were held between this time and the autumn harvest. The regular pastors and visiting preachers were called upon to lead the meetings, and it was traditional for people to make professions of Christian faith. These professions did not lead always to baptism, but often this was the case. People came from far and wide to these meetings. Buggies, horses, and ever-faithful mules were hitched to posts, bushes, and trees, while their owners were listening to powerful preaching, exhortation, and the lively singing of favorite hymns, such as “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder,” “The Old Rugged Cross,” “Amazing Grace,” “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” and “Just as I Am.”

When services were not being held during the week, dinners were spread at the campgrounds. In later times, these meals were shared at neighborhood homes. Adults, released temporarily from the tedium of their daily lives, enjoyed social interaction with neighbors. Youngsters frolicked, enjoyed games, teased, courted, swam in the creeks, and filled themselves with watermelon.

Autumn in the hill country is usually a delight to the eye and the long Indian summer days can fill a heart with joy. The burst of autumnal colors in tree foliage offers its own special inspiration in people sensitive to the creative pulse in nature. Aaron Green Davis (1865-1933), a native poet and newspaperman, remembered this season:

This is autumn, 'witchin' time of all the year;
Time of beauty—mystic changes far an' near;
Time of harvests when our hearts are full of cheer.

Educational Heritage

The first public schools of Benton County were held in the log meetinghouses scattered throughout its communities. Pupils were taught by itinerant teachers who were poorly paid and whose lives were rather insecure. There were dedicated teachers among the early settlers of the county. Two such men were Josiah Florence, who taught near his home in Pleasant Valley of Rushing's Creek for the better part of three decades, and William A. Steele, who taught for 27 years in Camden.

Even in a backwoods settlement, there were persons who took advantage of the formal educations they were able to obtain. It was not until 1843 that the county had a school of any consequence, the Benton Academy, which opened that year, although it had been chartered several years earlier. Classes met in a small brick schoolhouse that sat in a grove of virgin timber in southeast Camden. Three generations of young people received their formal educations there.

The academy's successor was the Benton Seminary, a semi-private school. Its classes met in a large, frame schoolhouse erected at College Hill, just south of Camden's public square. In 1914, the school was restructured as a high school, the first worthy of the name in Benton County with the exception of Baber's high school at Eva in 1888. This old school was demolished, and a modern brick building took its place in 1915. Four years later it became known as Central High School and it gained accreditation over the years.



Benton Seminary, Camden.

In 1952, a new elementary school was built at Washington Avenue in Camden. In 1959, the high school was relocated nearby in a modern plant. Finally Briarcrest, grades four through eight, was added to this complex in 1969. Recently the Benton County Vocational School was built on the campus between the high school and Briarcrest.

The Benton County schools were closed during the Civil War and it was not until 1873 that numerous local schools were re-opened permanently under the able leadership of County Superintendent James F. Presson. About that time, the county's white school population numbered 2578 children and the black school population, 135 children. The average attendance was 1437 out of a total 2112. There were 35 schools for white children and two schools for black children.

By the early 1890s, the average number of days taught in a school year were 80. The schoolhouses were chiefly log structures, but in the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was a burst of local pride shown by the erection of small frame community schoolhouses. The main textbooks used then were McGuffey eclectic readers, from the first through the fifth years, the famed Webster *Blue Book* speller, and Ray's arithmetic series. Only in 1886 did all county schools begin to use the same textbooks, which local merchants stocked and sold.

Teachers were required for many years to attend annual teacher institutes held by the superintendent where methods and means of education were discussed and amplified. The first education association was organized in June of 1895 with the intention to raise the standard of education in the county. Compulsory school attendance went into effect in 1913 and many small schools began to consolidate at that time. There were nearly 50 neighborhood schools at the time of World War I. Their number has been reduced to the current five schools: two schools with grades one through eight, and two schools with grades eight through twelve, and one school with grades nine through twelve. The kindergarten classes are held in the old rock school at Eva.

Since integration, the consolidation of schools has provided other services. The county's first special education program began in 1950 with a homebound program for the physically handicapped taught by John Dwight Melton. He was for many years a dedicated teacher and a person well versed in the historic folklore of Benton County. In 1951 the speech and hearing services were instituted in the school system. In 1958 the program began for the educable handicapped student, followed by another such program in 1960.

Since 1953, all local schools have been placed under a single county school board. Benton County had only one college, probably equivalent to a contemporary junior college. This was the Holladay Independent Normal, an outgrowth of the excellent school begun by Professor James A. Baber in Holladay. Begun and chartered as a private school in May of 1890, it was designed to give instruction to adults "in literature, the arts and sciences

and also to confer the degrees ordinarily confirmed by schools and colleges." Courses were offered in teacher training, commercial instruction, science, and in the liberal arts. This school was housed in a two-story frame building in Holladay and boasted of a music hall and chapel on the second floor with three recital rooms below. Other classrooms were added later and there was a small library.



Holladay Independent Normal.

The Normal drew students from Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, and Kentucky. It was considered a successful school, with a peak enrollment in 1893 of 323 students. The Normal began to lose impetus when several of its outstanding teachers received teaching positions elsewhere and Colonel John Holladay died, causing it to close with its June of 1901 commencement.

The most respected educator in Benton County in the twentieth century has been Professor Edgar Jackson Clement, who was

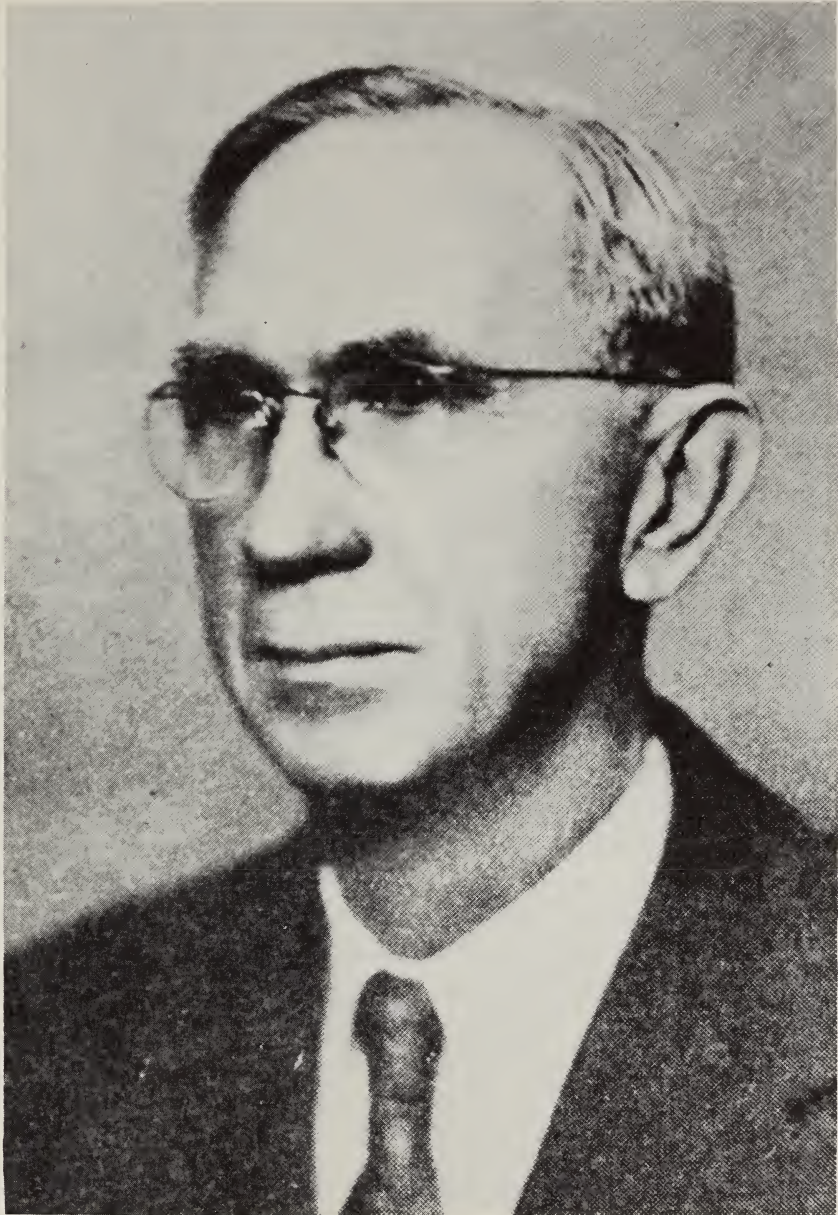
born in 1882 in the northern section of the county. Aspiring to teach, he left a rural life to attend the McLemoresville Collegiate Institute (1904-1905) and earned his teacher's certificate. He began in 1905 to teach at his first school in the old Sulphur Creek log schoolhouse. After teaching for several years, he became superintendent of schools from 1915 until 1922, and led a vigorous movement for school consolidation, building improvements, and improved educational programs. He also advocated the lengthening of the school term.

Professor Clement served later as principal and teacher at Central High School in Camden. He took further teacher training and served again as head of the county schools, from 1924 until 1926 and from 1933 until 1939. After many years of service to the county as an educator, teacher, superintendent, principal, and attendance teacher, Professor Clement retired in 1955. He will probably always be considered the local prototype of the dedicated educator who gives meaning to the "tedious but honorable vocation of teaching."

Military Heritage

While Benton County was still western Humphreys County, its men, aged 18 to 45, were called to serve in the county militia, the 38th Regiment, which had been authorized by law in 1819. The local companies of this regiment met each September at Reynoldsburg for their annual musters. These were festive occasions at which the men conducted military drill, followed by something like a public picnic. The militia was a distinct factor in the lives of able-bodied men, and to be a militia officer was an honor. In 1829, the county militia companies were organized as the 116th Regiment, commanded by Colonel Solomon Copeland. The county militia was organized as the 113th Regiment in 1836 with a captain commissioned for each civil district.

When the secession movement was under way, Benton Countians went to the polls on June 8, 1861, to cast their 798 votes for and 228 votes against Tennessee's withdrawing from the Union. The state seceded to become one of the Confederate States of America. It became a major battlefield in the Civil War.



Professor Edgar J. Clement.

Although a majority of the county residents were non-slave-owners, most of the men were avid Democrats and gave their allegiance to the southern Confederacy with more than 750 enlisting. Companies E and M led by Captains P. G. Swor and John T. Winfrey, organized locally in April and May of 1861. They went into the 5th Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, CSA, and saw much service during the war. Company A, 27th Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, was organized in September of 1861, the majority of whose men were from southern Benton County. This outfit saw service at Shiloh, Perryville, and later in Georgia. In November of 1861, Company I, 49th Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, was gathered at Chalk Level and organized in Camden under Captain Thomas A. Napier. Several of its men died in the POW Camp Douglas in Illinois. This regiment surrendered at war's close in North Carolina.

Companies A and B, 55th Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, were organized in September of 1861 and led by Captains William A. Jones and Prigeon M. Melton. It was variously engaged during the war and paroled at Greensboro, North Carolina, in May of 1865. Captain Robert W. Ayres organized a local infantry company in northern Benton County late in 1861; it was a home guard unit until it was reorganized in the spring of 1862 after which it was known as Captain J. R. Williams' Tennessee Cavalry.

Although no federal outfits were raised in Benton County, several men chose to enlist in the 7th Tennessee Cavalry, along with many men in Carroll County. The Confederate heritage of the county is very strong. The local United Confederate Veterans' chapter was organized in 1889 and was an active organization until it was suspended in 1923 because all but a few veterans of the war in the county had died.

Federal troops first entered the county in March of 1862, after the fall of Fort Donelson and Fort Henry. They captured Confederates home on leave from time to time. Their presence actually stabilized local government so that the guerrilla warfare so prevalent in some areas was minimized in the county.

The people of the county were not generally mistreated by federal soldiers. Several Confederate deserters organized in small bands, thieving scamps that they were, and preyed on the weak and known Unionists. Some of them were called to account in the county's circuit court after the war but little was done to punish them.

In the summer of 1865, the Reconstruction government under Governor William G. Brownlow asserted its local control. At that time, new county officials were appointed by the governor, and it was March of 1866 before regular elections were allowed for local county offices and then only loyal Unionists were allowed to cast their votes. The local Republicans ruled under the reconstruction policies from 1865 until 1870. The state had been readmitted to the Union in July of 1866.

Johnsonville was the western terminus of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. Just months before May of 1864, the tracks of this railroad were laid from Kingston Springs to this point on the river. Formerly Lucas' Landing, the mushroom village was renamed for the state's Unionist war governor, Andrew Johnson. The Johnsonville site was located at the base of forested hills some two miles south of Reynoldsburg. The timber was cleared in the river bottom and along the west sides of these hills so that warehouses and soldiers' quarters could be built. An earthen redoubt was built on the hill south of the occupied area from which cannon and other arms were directed on the countryside as a means of defense.

General William T. Sherman made Johnsonville a principal source of his commissariat. Quartermaster supplies and some munitions were sent by rail to be loaded aboard transports and barges and sent by the Tennessee River to other bases farther south and closer to the fighting around Atlanta, Georgia. In October of 1864, General Forrest was ordered to enter West Tennessee to interrupt the navigation of the Tennessee River and to destroy the military stores at Johnsonville. General Forrest, who had been operating in northern Alabama and middle Tennessee, mustered his forces and commenced the West Tennessee campaign in a matter of days. They met close to the

Kentucky-Tennessee border at Fort Heiman and Paris Landing, several miles north of Johnsonville. On October 29, the Rebels captured the Mezeppa, a federal transport filled with considerable freight. Several other boats and barges were captured and manned by the Rebels, supported by land batteries which followed them as they made their progress southward.

In the next several days, these captured boats were either destroyed or recaptured by the federal gunboats from Johnsonville. General Forrest and his land troops rode from Henry County, via Paris, into Benton County over the old Paris-Reynoldsburg road, dividing near the Flatwoods Methodist meetinghouse. Forrest sent some of his troops to what is now Eva over the regular road to the southeast, while he and others of his cavalrymen rode directly south through Beaverdam Valley. All these troops rendezvoused late in the afternoon of November 3 in the woods around Eva. General Forrest and his artillery chief, Captain John Morton, made a reconnaissance of this area from Pilot Knob and other high points, from which they had a panoramic view of Johnsonville. The federals were incredibly unaware of the presence and strength of this large enemy force.

The Confederates were deployed in the thick woods along the west bank of the river opposite Johnsonville where the river was only 400 yards wide. In the cold and early darkness of this winter evening, the Rebel batteries took their places, with their cannon, along the river. General Forrest established temporary headquarters in the two-story log house occupied by James Sykes and his family; it stood beside the stage road known as the Eva-Camden Road, a site now a few hundred yards west of the rock schoolhouse in Eva. The Rebel commander sent his men into the neighboring countryside to forage for their horses. Union sympathizers were especially pointed out to these troops and they lost much oats and fodder, for which they were later compensated by the federal government.

About two o'clock on the afternoon of November 4, the Rebel batteries opened fire on the warehouses and the various boats lining the landing. The federal troops returned a steady fire; even so, it was not long before the warehouses and wharf were aflame.



While at the Sykes residence, General Forrest had the use of a small, two-drawer desk which has survived to this day. This is a drawing of this desk that is currently owned by Myrtle Hollingsworth Summers of Eva. She is the great-granddaughter of James Sykes.

Vast stores of meat roasted, and whiskey ran in small rivulets to the riverbank. For as much as a mile along the river at Johnsonville, a wall of flame burned, lighting up the sky for miles around. The command of federal forces at Johnsonville was shared by Colonel Charles R. Thompson and Lt. Commander E. M. King, U.S. Navy. Some of their men fled toward Waverly while others made a stand. The transports, barges, and gunboats were destroyed completely, although with a minimal loss of life.

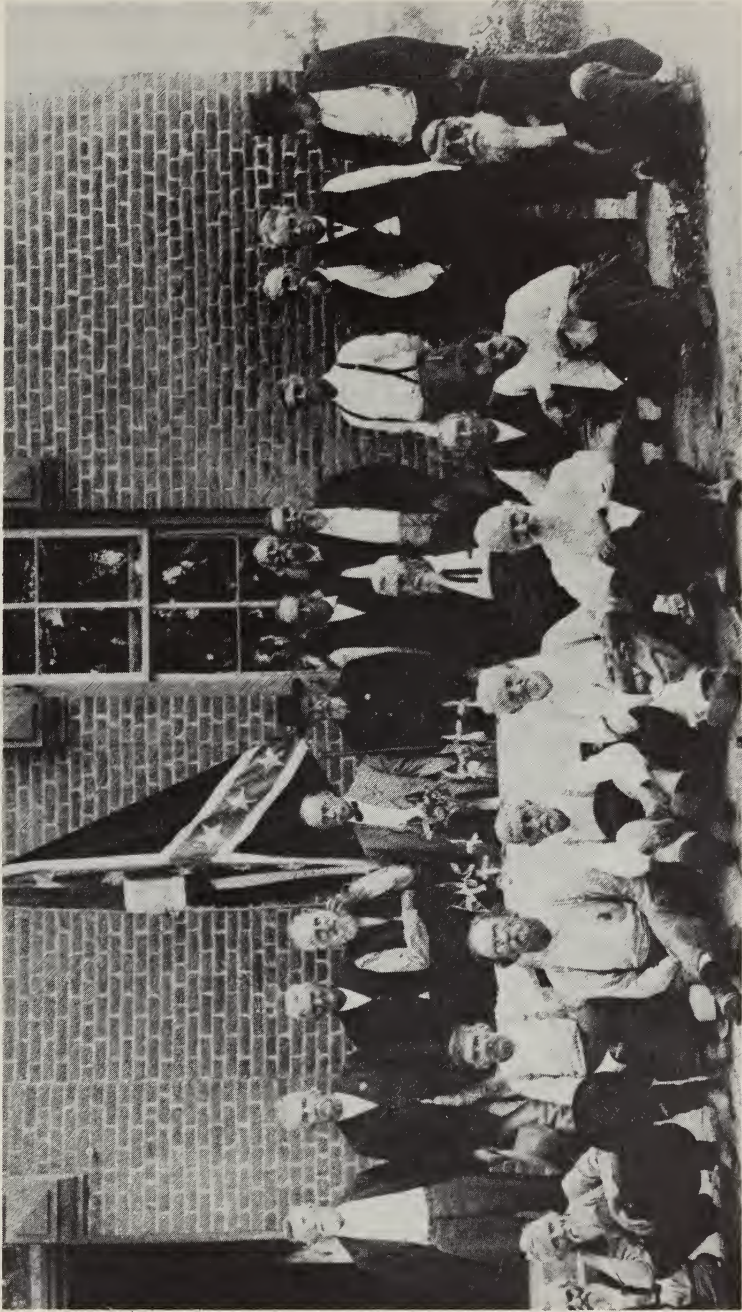
Having fulfilled the expedition's purpose, General Forrest and his troops rode away in the night, traveling six miles by the light of the huge fire at Johnsonville. They traveled down the Natchez Trace to Chalk Level, forded Birdsong Creek, and moved slowly southward, impeded by miserable roads, made worse by incessant rain. People all along the route in Benton County ran to cheer and talk with these soldiers. General Forrest

rode back to observe for himself the damage done at Johnsonville the morning after the raid, after which his guard moved south to join the rest of his army. After a long march, the Rebels reached Perryville, where they camped the night of November 6. Several hundred of them crossed the swollen Tennessee River at this place, while the majority of troops moved toward Florence, Alabama, where they joined General John B. Hood's army several days later.

In January of 1865, Colonel William Sinclair, investigating the raid, reported that the federal losses there were estimated at something over \$2 million. He criticized the officers for their negligence and hasty decisions. Pictures taken at Johnsonville about 20 days after the raid showed several warehouses and assorted buildings which had not been destroyed during the raid or which had been erected since that time.

This famous Confederate engagement is commemorated in the Nathan B. Forrest Memorial State Park, which was established in 1929 and encompasses Pilot Knob and its environs. It is now a popular tourist attraction nine miles east of Camden. At the close of the war, the valuable parts of the boats sunk at Johnsonville were salvaged. However, the white oak hulls of more than 20 boats still hugged the shoreline there when they were removed by army engineers in the summer of 1917. A few years later, in 1925, during the driest summer ever known locally, the Tennessee River reached a low water stage when other war relics were exposed.

During the brief Spanish-American War of 1898, several local men, particularly from the Big Sandy area, enlisted and served in Tennessee units in the Philippines and Cuba. Several hundred county men rendered military services in 1917-1918 during World War I. A few women also saw service as nurses. The home-folk lent their moral support, notably with several successful war bond drives. Natives of the county who died in battle or by disease were Edward H. Lockhart—the first killed in action, Raymond Barnes, Leonard Black, Jesse S. Brewer, Martin L. Flowers, Elbert O. Garner, Linzy Goodwin, Charles Hicks, Commodore Hinson, Hobert Hollowell, William B. Jenkins,



Confederate veterans at Camden, Tennessee,
June 6, 1914.

James C. Matlock, and James J. Nicholas. In March of 1921, numerous war veterans organized American Legion Post 102 at Camden.

Some 1215 men and women from Benton County served in the country's armed forces during World War II, 1941-1945. Several other county natives who were living elsewhere at the war's beginning also were killed. Some of those from the county who gave their lives during the war were William H. Bell, James D. Black, Robert G. Black, Albert V. Bradley, James L. Cantrell, David W. Cole, J. T. Cox, James E. Davis, Claudie L. England, Louis Evans, Maston C. Evans, Hildra A. French, Cecil P. Goodman, Jessie D. Hatley, Benjamin R. Herndon, Elihu Z. Herndon, Roy T. Holland, James P. Norton, William L. Lindsey, Fred T. Maddox, Hoyle Marchbanks, Herman Markham, Connie M. McEwen, Thomas W. McKelvey, Herdis J. McKenzie, Gains I. Milligan, Thomas H. Moore, Vernon L. Nance, Harold L. Rush, Tillman Ezell Thompson, Truman G. Turner, Robert G. White, and Nelton C. Winters.

Several local soldiers gave heroic service this time, among them Corporal Neldon Theo French who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1940. This 24-year-old marine fought heroically in the First Marine Division in close and desperate battle with the Japanese along the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal in the Solomons, where he was killed October 9, 1942. The U.S.S. French, a destroyer, was named for him and was commissioned in October of 1944 for service in the Pacific fleet. It first saw action off the Palau Islands during the following June. It patrolled in the Pelelieu anti-submarine screen for the remainder of the war.

The civilian population of Benton County responded patriotically to the demands made upon them by war-time urgency. Many of the county's older men and others deferred from the regular armed services enlisted locally in Company M, 5th Regiment, Tennessee State Troops, throughout the war. This was a very active home-guard unit. One of the local leaders, Wayne Lashlee Hall, mayor of Camden, 1939-1943, and an officer in the local Tennessee State Guard, also served as chairman of the



Corporal Neldon T. French.

Benton County Finance Committee which oversaw the sale of war bonds. Several war bond drives were held during the war, the largest of which climaxed in the spring of 1943. The quota of \$88,000 had been assigned to the county, but that quota was topped and passed by the \$101,851.75 total. Seldom had the residents responded so well to any call for a general cooperative enterprise.

The American Red Cross was well organized in the county with the ladies lending great assistance in this area. They sponsored several fund-raising activities during the war. All major goods were rationed for the duration of the war, including food-stuffs, gasoline, and automotive apparatus. The controls for this policy were handled through the War Price and Ration Board of Benton, Carroll, and Humphreys counties, under the leadership of John Wyly Lashlee and Wyly Crawford Lockhart.

The French-Black Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2109 was organized in Camden in September of 1944. It shared a veterans' building on Paris Street with the active American Legion Post 102. Big Sandy had a similar unit, the Post 228. Although membership in these organizations has drastically diminished in recent years, for a long time the united veterans were a politically potent group. Benton County's first National Guard Unit, the 212 Engineer Dump Truck Company, Tennessee National Guard, was activated early in 1956. Its local armory, completed in 1961, is located adjacent to the McDaniel Park complex in the West End of Camden.

The Legionnaires vigorously supported Gordon Browning in his successful 1948 gubernatorial race, winning with an overwhelming majority of votes in Benton County. These men participated in many civic activities and furnished honor guards on occasion. Men who were active in the political and civic life of the county for the next three decades were active in these veterans' organizations. In 1947-1949, William A. Derington, a Camden attorney, won a seat in the 75th General Assembly. Joe F. Odle, Jr., was another activist who won a seat in the state legislature, 1951-1953. Ford Hollingsworth and Grover Wright were boosted for local offices. Frank L. Hollis, a Camden attorney, put con-

siderable energy into the veterans' activities. Their rank and file members visibly helped to mold post-war life in the county.

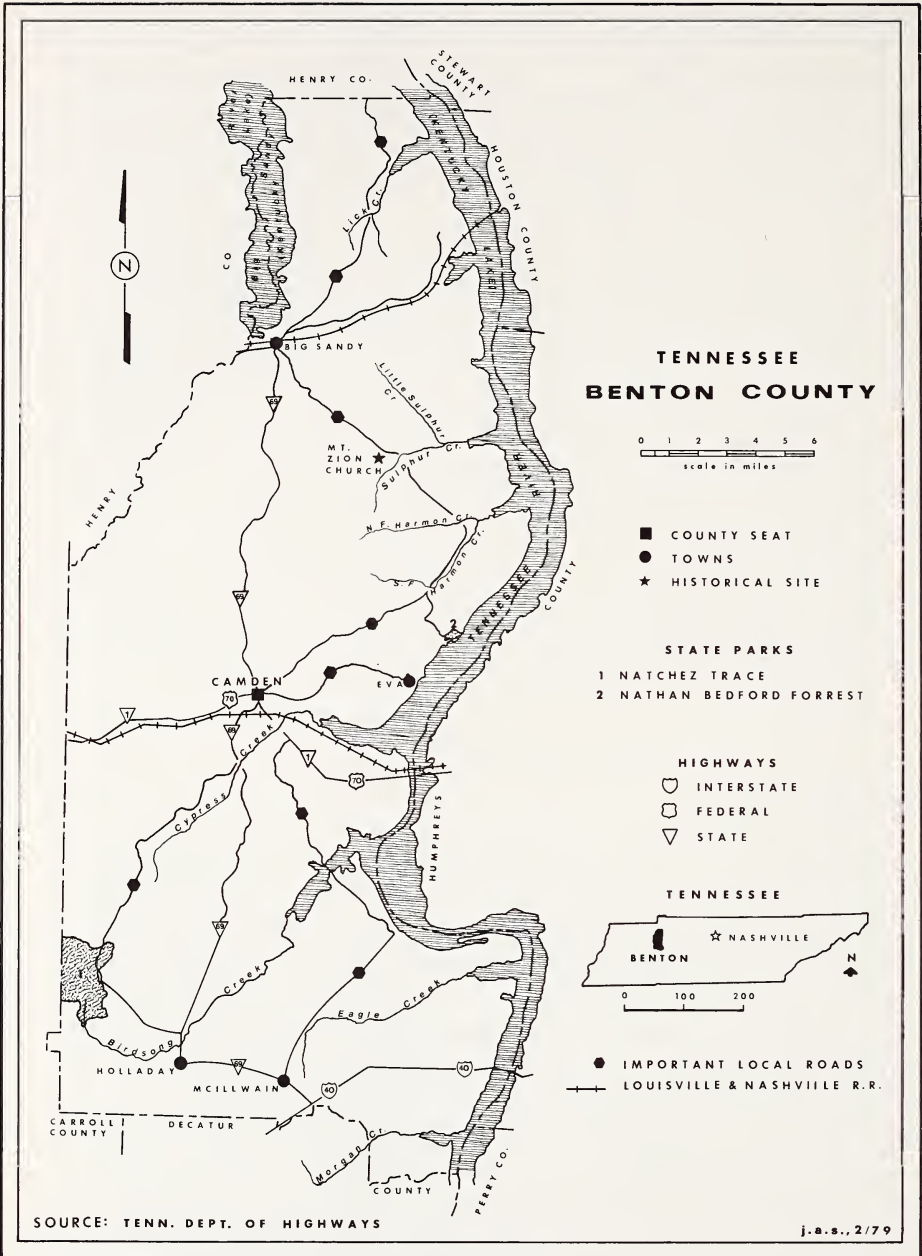
Numerous residents were called upon to serve in the armed forces during the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953. Pfc. James Alma Patton, Company C, 17th Infantry Regiment, was killed on Chichon Hill near the DMZ in South Korea on July 3, 1952. He had fallen when his outfit had tried to take this hill. Corporal Charles F. Pendleton, U.S. Third Infantry, was killed July 17, 1953, in a furious battle in which 37 of the enemy were killed. He was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Corporal James C. Potts was awarded a Bronze Star for his valor in battle. Captain Leonard F. Parker, Company B, 231 Engineer Combat Battalion, was wounded in battle and received several awards. Captain Wilber Nelson Herndon, U.S. Marine Corps, received numerous military awards. In December of 1950, he and a small file of Marines were attacked at a road block junction. They set up a firing line and in some fierce fighting killed 500 of the enemy. Three Americans were killed and 34 were wounded. Some Benton Countians fought in the Vietnam military action, and a few of them gave their lives in this prolonged conflict.

Towns and Post Offices

Camden

Camden, the seat of justice and the oldest town in Benton County, is located in the Tennessee River Valley, some 85 miles west of Nashville, Tennessee's capital, and 140 miles east of Memphis. Named for Camden, South Carolina, it was located in 1836 on the high ground above Cane Creek, a tributary of Cypress Creek. Its early commissioners had the 40-acre site surveyed late that year, but it was resurveyed for greater accuracy in June of 1838. Located approximately in the county's center, it was at the crossroads of several important east-west stage routes.

The county courthouse was built in the middle of the public square of Camden in 1837, where all its successors have since stood. The town's first inhabitants were merchants, saloopists, men who were craft-workers, and county officials. First chartered



in 1838, Camden has a mayor-alderman form of government. Its growth has been gradual throughout its history, growing from some 176 people in 1850 to a population exceeding 3000 today. Small businesses have come and gone, several of which have earned an affectionate place in the town's heritage.

Camden has always been the principal town of the county, strategically located for public commerce. It gained telephone and electrical lighting from a modest scale in the 1890s to full such services today. Its electrical power is distributed by the Benton County Board of Public Utilities. It is furnished with natural gas for heating and its water is brought from the Tennessee River, purified, and has a pumping capacity of a million gallons per day. It has two radio stations and the Benton County Airport is nearby. Camden has several flourishing churches, factories, financial institutions, and numerous small businesses in the town proper, as well as in South Camden and in its latest developed section, the West End.

U.S. Highway 70 runs through Camden, as does State Highway 69. U.S. 641 runs from Paris to Holladay and passes through the western margin of Camden. Interstate 40 is located 20 miles south of the town and is easily accessible from U.S. 641.

Late in 1889, Benton County's first banking institution, the Camden Bank and Trust Company, was established with a capital stock of \$30,000. Its birth was essentially the story of Henry Gould Latimer and the "Latimer Estate." Henry Gould Latimer was an industrious young man whose origins were obscure. Raised in poverty, he began early as a peddler, trading his goods in the tarheel state of North Carolina. In these rounds, he met Sarah Mitchell, a robust young girl who lived with her father, Ben Mitchell and family on their piedmont farm in Chatham County. They married shortly before the rest of her family emigrated to Benton County, Tennessee about 1838.

The Latimers were thrifty, diligent workers. He managed to invest in cotton trading, taking this precious commodity by ship to New York City; after a while he became quite wealthy through this trade and with the acquisition of government bonds, railroad and bank stock. To be near large commercial centers, the

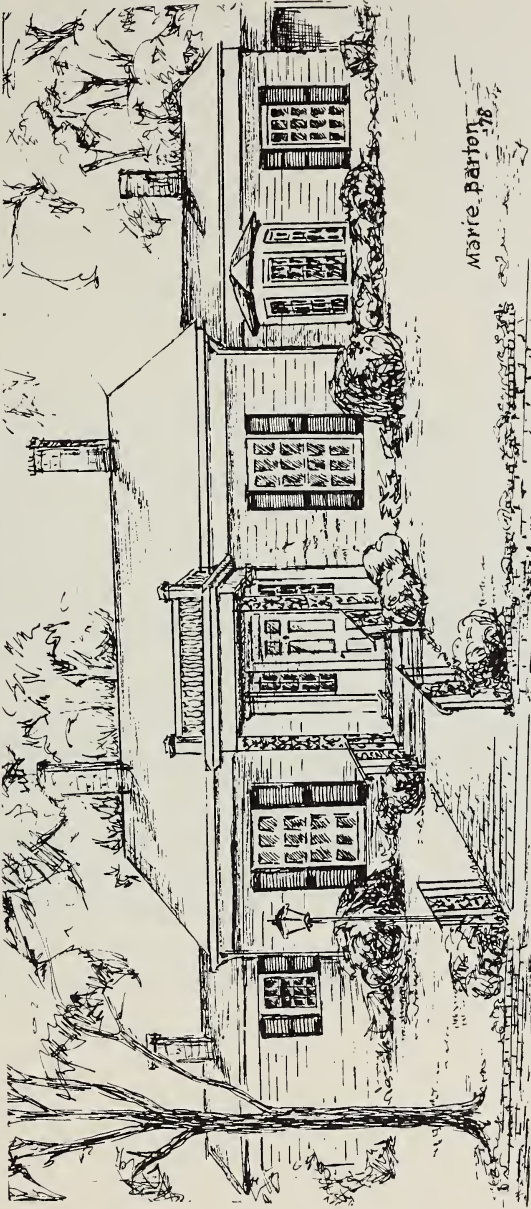
Latimers moved to Plainfield, New Jersey. Childless, they adopted a son, David, who died as a federal soldier in the Civil War.

Henry Latimer was a crusty, matter-of-fact businessman whose chief goal was money-making. At his death, in 1884, at the age of 83, he left his widow half a million dollars. Henry had been a religious skeptic and would have nothing to do with sectarian religion. However, in her loneliness and need, Sarah Latimer sought the consolation of the Christian faith; she joined the First Presbyterian Church of Plainfield late in life and contributed nearly \$45,000 to the construction of its new church, located near her residence on East Front Street.

The church pastor, Kneeland P. Ketcham, and officials of the church insisted that Sarah Latimer be honored for her beneficence. Unknown to her, it was decided that her name was to be placed on the selvedge of the exquisite rose window which was planned for the church. Although she did not live to see the new church dedicated in June 1889, during its construction she was taken there once to see its building progress. Back home later, she remembered that the only reverential thing she could recall her husband saying about religion was the sentimental boyhood memory of attending Sunday school in a building on which there was a small black cross.

As she was unaware of the honor given her own name, Sarah Latimer requested that if some recognition was to be pressed by the churchmen, she wanted a little black cross put on the top of the church; complying with this request, the building committee had such a cross placed on the steeple. Time passed and during a July storm, lightning struck and destroyed this cross; restored, it was once again struck and destroyed by lightning. The third replacement proved to be a charm as the cross remained intact thereafter.

Sarah Latimer, bedridden at last and paralyzed, died February 3, 1889; several days previously she had her long will drawn up leaving some bequests to local charitable organizations but the bulk of her fortune, \$425,000, went to her relatives in Benton and Humphreys counties in Tennessee.



Drawing of Wyly Place in Camden. Built in 1871-1872 by John Harris Wyly, it was later enlarged and beautified by Wyly C. and Ruth P. Lockhart.

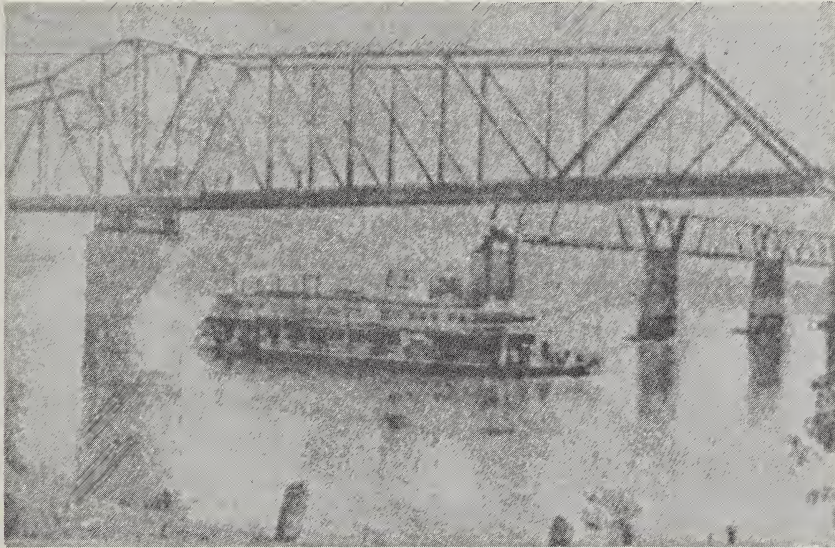
Late in 1889, this money was siphoned from New Jersey banks to the bank in Waverly, a little over 20 miles from Camden. The Camden newspaper editor reflected in print that when the impact of this windfall was felt in the local economy it would make Benton County "blossom like the rose" and it did! There were no banks and had never been any in Benton County. Several of Sarah Latimer's nephews, with their newly gained prosperity, organized with several other local entrepreneurs the Camden Bank and Trust Company on December 7, 1889. There was a flurry of building construction and land speculation, the basic impetus of which was Sarah Latimer's fortune. No wonder, then, that the "Latimer Estate" has a respectable place in Benton County's folklore.

Big Sandy

Big Sandy, named for the river on which its eastern boundary lies, owes its existence to local railroad development. It was first located on the land of Dr. Elijah Alsup, as a store and water-tank site to serve the trains of the Louisville and Nashville Railway's predecessors in 1860. A small town of several hundred people, its present government dates from its 1903 charter. At the present time, Big Sandy is a prosperous rural town, having enjoyed considerable growth due to the county's outdoor recreation. Within a radius of 40 miles, there are more than 35 resorts, restaurants and boatdock facilities available for the tourist industry. Laverne Watson Gearhiser, local songwriter, served as postmaster for the town for 44 years, the longest tenure in such a position by anyone in the U. S. Postal Service.

Eva

Eva, originally called Bartlett's Switch, an unincorporated village on the west bank of the Tennessee River near Pilot Knob, began as a railway station in the late 1860s. Its official existence began when Thomas Lowery became postmaster at this settlement in 1882 and called it Eva for Miss Eva Steele, a girlhood chum of his daughter Lola. It presently benefits from tourism. The river, a small rivercraft landing, its proximity to the Nathan B. Forrest Memorial State Park, and the Methodist assembly ground at Lakeshore which was established in 1947, make it attractive to visitors.



Railroad bridge at Eva in 1902.

Faxon

Faxon has been described as "a quiet little village" situated in northern Benton County where the railway passes through a narrow valley bordered by mountain-like hills. It is now on the Bass Bay Road, seven miles east of Big Sandy. Its name came from its first postmaster, George B. Faxon in 1881. Several Irish families settled in and near this village in the mid-nineteenth century including the Harneys, Murphys, and Fitzsimmonses.

Holladay

Holladay is a village in the southern section of the county, 15 miles south of Camden. It lies in the rolling landscape of Birdsong Valley. In 1848, Robert J. Lawrence deeded three acres of land for a campground and church site to the trustees of the Mt. Carmel Cumberland Presbyterian congregation. This church and campground lent its name to the community thereabout. A major county travelway, the Westport Road (into Carroll County) passed through this place.

Wesley King owned much of the land around Mt. Carmel and it was with his encouragement that a native of Carroll County, John Milton Holladay (1840-1898), moved in 1867 and taught a subscription school in the old log meetinghouse. He also kept a general store for King. Captain Holladay, as he was then known but was later given the courtesy title of colonel, was born and raised near Huntingdon, Tennessee. He enlisted in the 55th Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, CSA, in 1861. He was captured later at Island No. 10 and paroled. When the regiment was re-organized, he became a second lieutenant. On July 28, 1864, in the ferocious fighting around Ezra Church near Atlanta, he lost an arm. After recuperating, he fought to the close of the war, serving as a captain.

Colonel Holladay married into the locally prominent Mathews family and opened a general store at Mt. Carmel in 1873, where he prospered. He and his brother, Stephen, ran grocery and general goods stores and a cotton gin. A post office was secured for him on March 16, 1887, and the settlement was thereafter known as Holladay.



Colonel John M. Holladay.

The Holladay Independent Normal was established in 1890 and led to the location of several merchants, boarding houses, and small craft businesses in Holladay, which knew its golden age during the 1890s. The Bank of Holladay, organized in 1910 and housed in a small brick building, failed in 1932. The village's best known church, the Church of Christ, called at first the Disciples of Christ, was organized in 1866 and is now housed in an attractive brick building. Colonel Holladay's big two-story frame dwelling with its gingerbread features, built in 1891, still stands in the village.



Chalk Level Baptist Church,
August of 1912.

Chaseville and McIllwain

Chaseville was located about 14 miles south of Camden, on the high ground above Wolf Creek in 1847. It is a ghost town, nothing of which remains except the dwelling built there in 1842 and owned by one of the county's most prominent settlers, Joseph Randolph Mathews. A log house, long ago weather-boarded, it consisted of two large ground floor rooms with a breezeway between them. In the east room, a stairway led to a commodious second floor that ran the length of the house. There were chimneys located in the east and west ends of the house.

About two miles east of old Chaseville is McIllwain, a crossroads village and a place of several dwellings and a church. Its existence dates from 1890 when David B. Gossett served as its first postmaster.

Chalk Level

Chalk Level was the earliest recognized community in the county and was named for the chert that crops up in its vicinity. The county's first post office was organized there on January 6, 1831 by John D. Camp of a well-known local family. The post office was abolished in 1845 and resumed in 1895 only to be placed on a rural route from Camden in 1903, about seven and one-half miles to the northeast. There is a tiny settlement at Chalk Level today, a few houses, and a store. The active Boy Scouts of America Camp Mack Morris, along Birdsong Creek is located just southwest of the crossroads. It was opened in 1947.

Among the other former post offices and riverboat landings on the Tennessee River, all of which contribute to stories which compose a part of the county's lasting folklore, are Coxburg, Doherty's Landing, Rockport Landing, Sawyer's Mill, Thompson's Point, Claud, Eggville, Eli, Gismonda, Pavatt's Landing, Point Mason, and Way.

Pt. Mason

Pt. Mason has a secure niche in the local history of Benton County. Located about fifteen miles nearly northeast of Camden, this early steamboat landing was named for Colonel Daniel Mason.

In 1819, Colonel Mason and his family moved from Northampton County, North Carolina to Humphreys County, Tennessee, where they settled on a farm along the east bank of the Tennessee River. As early as August 1801, Colonel Mason had acquired a large part of a Revolutionary War grant at this place. He began to buy other adjoining land, in January 1820, on White Oak Creek, opposite Little Crooked Creek in what is now Benton County. He developed a highly successful ferry and mercantile business at this place called Mason's Landing. A northeast prong of the stage road, from Nashville to Paris, Tennessee, crossed the river at this landing.

Colonel Mason eventually entered over 1200 acres of land on the west bank of the river, thereby controlling the ferry location. Pt. Mason was the name of the horse-ferry landing and store site on the west bank. One traveller, D. Craft, made a steamboat trip down the Ohio River and up the Tennessee River early in 1825. In his journal, Craft noted that they had passed on March 22, Mason's Island, "which is the best improvement we have yet seen on this river. This afternoon we again passed some high hills on the NE side of the river, thickly set with pine trees." On March 23, he noted, "Made an early start this morning again, past Reynoldsburg island and town, about noon. Wild turkeys are very plenty in this country, we can see them flying across the river every day. This island is very thickly covered with green cane which looks very handsome." He continued, "The land is principally unsettled along this river. Sometimes in going two days journey we don't see more than one or two rusty cabins; we have seen but one shingle roof house since we left the mouth of the Cumberland."

Although Colonel Mason moved his family into Paris where they might have certain advantages for several years, he kept his farm on the river where he had a comfortable dwelling, orchard

and "one of the best stock farms in the state." Colonel Mason died at his farm in the spring of 1832 and his remains were buried in the family graveyard nearby.

In October 1853, Holden Rushing acquired the Pt. Mason tract, about 825 acres, for \$3100. He improved the landing and built one of the handsomest brick warehouses on the river at this location.

After Rushing's death in 1887, Pt. Mason became simply a secondary local community; it was eventually abandoned and flooded permanently in 1944. All that remains as evidence of its former importance is a neglected cemetery on the hill west of the river.



Holden Rushing's warehouse at Pt. Mason.

Appendix A

Survey of the Public Records of Benton County

The county is fortunate that most of its bound public records kept in the various offices in the courthouse have survived from 1836 to the present date. Many of the loose records, such as original copies of wills and estate settlements, have been lost, largely through indifference of some record custodians. However, in the summer of 1970, under the auspices of the Benton County Library Board and the librarian, Mrs. Virginia L. Whitworth, a considerable body of these loose papers, principally estate settlements, administrator reports, guardian accounts, and some marriage licenses, dating from the 1850s, were placed by Jonathan Smith in cartons after the papers had been cleaned; thus preserved they are available for use by patrons in the Benton County Library at 122 West Walnut Street in Camden, where also are kept numerous printed and manuscript materials relative to the heritage of the county. The Tennessee State Library and Archives microfilmed most of the county's public records in 1968. These records document the following information:

A. Circuit Court Clerk's Office

This court deals with litigations and criminal actions within the county. Its records contain valuable information.

1. Minute Books: These books record cryptic accounts of the cases brought before the grand jury. Seldom do these accounts contain elaborate information but they do mention many estates and the manner in which they were distributed. These bound records are extant from April 1836 to the present time. (The first 161 pages of Minute Book B are a merchant's account book of N. Morrison of Reynoldsburg, Tennessee, and contain a neat listing of individual accounts of their customers for the years 1831-1833.)
2. Loose papers: Original documents of this office are almost complete from 1836; most of these papers are kept in the storage room of the clerk's office. Richard P. Haley, a clerk during the years 1870-1878, wrote, "From the time the county of Benton was formed up to the close of the war—Civil War—the old papers were scattered over the place and some lost in 1870, when I came into office as clerk, there was a large amount of paper lying loose in an old drygoods box which I assorted and filed them thinking they may be of benefit to someone in

the future, today being 29 May 1877. I am now packing up and labelling these papers. Hence you who see this in the future will know why they are in such a condition. This day we move from our offices so that the old courthouse may be pulled down and rebuilt.”

B. Clerk and Master's Office

This is the office of record for the chancery court, the highest court of appeal in the county; cases involving appeals from the circuit court are therefore “referred to chancery.” Chancery cases involving Benton Countians, 1838-1854, were held at Huntington in Carroll County (before Benton had a separate court of chancery) and are recorded in Minute Books, 1836-1840; 1840-1842; 1844-1855. Cases recorded in bound volumes of (1) Chambers Minutes, (2) Enrollment Books, (3) Minute Books are usually cryptic, except for the enrollment records for the years 1854 through 1860. When the new courthouse was built in 1972-1974, the original loose papers of this office were rediscovered in large metal files (cases dating from 1836).

C. County Court Clerk's Office

This office is the business office of the court of county commissioners and contains the following records:

1. Administrators and Executors Bonds and Letters
(August 1874 to the present)
2. Administrators Settlement Books
(August 1860 to the present)
3. Guardian Bonds and Letters
(August 1874 to the present)
4. Guardian Settlements and Accounts Books
(August 1860 to May 1956)
5. Minutes of Insanity Records
(Kept 1919 to 1944; these records are not available for research except in the Clerk's office)
6. Insolvent Estates
(July 1852 to December 1943) When a decedent's estate debits exceeded the ability to pay them, the administrator or executor published a suggestion of insolvency in a local or nearby newspaper under the auspices of the county court, indicating this condition and thereby notifying creditors to file their claims against the estate, possibly for a pro rata compensation on the funds available on the estate. Such records may be especially valuable for genealogists because they may pinpoint a death

date not available from any other source.

7. Marriage Records

(1838 to the present) Prior to 1838, all marriage licenses (called bonds) were issued to the groom with his bondsman. Law required that the license be procured in the county of the bride's residence. After the marriage ceremony, the groom gave the license to the minister or performing officer, who would write his name and the date he solemnized the marriage on the back of the document. He was then supposed to return the document to the county court clerk within six months. The clerk would file the license in a drawer or carton. Then, in January, 1838, the state legislature passed a law directing that the clerks keep a well-bound book in which marriages were to have been recorded. This explains the reason why there are no records of marriages in bound volumes before 1838. Unfortunately, many of the earlier original marriage licenses of the county have been destroyed; some are kept securely in the Tennessee room of the Benton County Library. The marriage records for 1859 are missing. W. D. Cooper, County Court Clerk, commented in the confederate widow's pension record of Louisa Gossett, February 1909, that he failed "to find any record of licenses issued in Benton County during the year 1859." He commented that the marriage records were poorly kept from 1850 to 1865. William A. Jones was clerk during the Civil War but he was away in military service and his deputy, William A. Steele, considering the scarcity of paper and ink, probably did the best he could in keeping such records.

Originally the county marriage records were registered in several small volumes but these have been combined into two volumes. These and volume three are not indexed. Since 1969 the marriage records have been properly indexed. The late G. B. Holladay published in alphabetical order (by the grooms' names) the Benton County marriages in the *Camden Chronicle* from May 1956 to May 1958. It should be noted that many of the surnames of the married parties in the early records are very poorly spelled.

8. Quarterly Court Minutes

(July 1842 to the present; the first minute book, 1836-1842, has been missing from before 1910. As this court is the business agency of the county, its minutes are replete with mentions of interest to local historians and genealogists. The old county

court, consisting of justices of the peace or magistrates, became the court of the county commissioners in 1978.)

9. Miscellaneous Records, two volumes

(1836 to 1855; among the most valuable of extant records from this period, covering early wills, estate records, scholastic population reports, etc. Poorly indexed.)

10. Road Records

(1889 to 1907) Just prior to World War I and the advent of a modern well-structured state and local highway road commissions, the individuals living in the various civil districts of the county were paid by the court to maintain the public roads in their localities. Before 1889, the road orders were recorded in the quarterly court minutes.

11. Wills

(September 1855 to the present) The two volumes of the Miscellaneous Records (Item 9, above) contain whatever wills, estates, and guardian settlements were presented before the court, 1836-1855. There are no original wills extant before 1859.

Will Book I, 1855-1916, has an index; its records begin on page 18 and run to page 384, including wills, estate, and guardian accounts. From page 384 to page 610, only wills were entered. Since that date, all wills have been entered into will books and properly indexed. One hundred and two original wills are known to be extant, 1859-1899, and these are kept in the clerk's office. In August 1860, the clerk began to keep estate settlements (administrators settlement books) separately from the wills and guardian settlements. These records are listed above as items 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Executors fulfilled the stipulations of wills; the quarterly court appointed administrators to settle intestate estates. The administrator was, by law, the next of kin to the decedent family member or largest creditor. Administrators were required by law to sell all the personalty—personal, movable items, of the dead person at a public sale; the funds from such a sale were used for the maintenance of the heirs. The real estate was distributed somewhat differently. A dower was provided always where there was real estate involved; the widow generally was apportioned her third interest of the land. Administrators and guardians of the underage heirs filed periodic reports regarding their interests to the county court; these reports were called

settlements and in many instances are replete with vital data regarding family relationships.

12. Vital Records

Birth and death records were not kept officially in the county except from March 1881 to January 1882 and from January 1900 to March 1901. Official registration of births and deaths began on the state level in 1914. Such records are kept in the vital statistics division of the Tennessee Department of Public Health.

D. Register of Deed's Office

1. Land Entry Taker Books (2)

(December 1820 to 1849) To take up government land, a person had to secure a certificate from one of the land offices, stating the acreage to which he was entitled; this he presented to the county land entry taker who entered it upon his records. Then the land had to be surveyed by the county surveyor or his deputy. Survey Books A & B (1821-1848) contain the actual surveys made for the lands entered in this county. The combined record was then submitted to the secretary of state through whom a land grant bearing his signature and that of the governor was issued. Copies of such land grants may be secured from the archives division of the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville.

All regular deeds from 1849 are recorded, beginning alphabetically with volume C. Later deed books are numbered by Arabic numerals. Deeds A (1836-1843), pages 1-327, contain land entries from 1848 to 1902; pages 328-428 contain surveys made from these land entries. Deeds B, 644 pages long, is entirely composed of surveys. Then, regular deeds, 1836-1843; 1842-1849. Trust deeds (mortgages) are extant and recorded in separate volumes from November 1874. Deed Book I was destroyed in July 1873, but the essentials of the conveyances were written in the register's notebook three which is extant.

E. Trustee's Office

Continuous tax records are extant only from 1926. The original tax book, 1836-1842, is kept in the Benton County Library; a duplicate is also in the state archives. The 1845 tax register is in private hands but has been microfilmed for public use. The tax registers for 1876-1877, 1880-1881, 1909, and few scattered ones from early in this century have been preserved or have been microfilmed.

Appendix B

Official Census Population Figures
For Benton County, Tennessee:

1840: 4772, of whom 244 were slaves	1900: 11,888
1850: 6315, of whom 363 were slaves	1910: 12,452
1860: 8463, of whom 534 were slaves	1920: 12,046
1870: 8234	1930: 11,237
1880: 9780	1940: 11,976
1890: 11,230	1950: 11,495
	1960: 10,662
	1970: 12,126
	1978: (interim tabulation) 13,100

Appendix C

State Legislators from Benton County

Albert Bell, House, 1927-1929; 1931-1933	John Wylly Lashlee, House, 1935-1937; 1939-1941
Hobert T. Bradley, House, 1943-1945	Senate, 1943-1944
David Brewer, House, Reconstruction	Mildred J. Lashlee, Senate, 1945-1947
James M. Castile, Senate, 1891-1893	Robert J. Lawrence, House, 1877-1879
John W. Davidson, House, 1859-1861	George M. Leslie, House, 1903-1905
William A. Derington, House, 1947-1949	Wylly C. Lockhart, Senate, 1947-1953
Green B. Dillon, Senate, 1921-1923	William L. Morris, House, 1893-1895
Ichabod Farmer, House, 1871-1873	William P. Morris, House, 1861-1863; 1879-1881
John H. Farmer, Senate, 1885-1887	Senate, 1883-1885
B. B. Gilbert, House, 1855-1857	Joseph F. Odle, House, 1911-1913; 1919-1921
Henry L. Hollingsworth, House, 1959-1961	1923-1925
1963-1965	J. F. Odle, Jr., House, 1951-1953
James Jeffreys, Senate, 1895-1897	Henry Blake Pafford, House, 1915-1917; 1955-1957
Joseph E. Jones, House, 1889-1891	Robert L. Stockard, Senate, 1917-1921
Anderson P. Lashlee, House, 1899-1901	D. B. Thomas, Jr., House, 1907-1909
Frank P. Lashlee, House, 1972, incumbent	Senate, 1909-1911; 1913-1915
John P. Lashlee, House, 1885-1887; 1891-1893	James K. Wheatley, House, 1887-1888

Appendix D

Presidential Election Returns in Benton County

The other election results over the years (chief contenders, votes gained, with year of elections; the national winners' names are marked by asterisks):

- 1840: Martin Van Buren, Dem., 301; *William H. Harrison, Whig, 259
 1844: *James K. Polk, Dem., 481; Henry Clay, Whig, 292
 1848: Lewis Cass, Dem., 459; *Zachary Taylor, Whig, 329
 1852: *Franklin Pierce, Dem., 485; Winfield Scott, Whig, 340;
 1856: *James Buchanan, Dem., 632; Millard Fillmore, American, 453;
 1860: John C. Breckinridge, Southern Dem., 713; John Bell, Constitutional Union, 452; Stephen A. Douglas, Northern Dem., 5; *Abraham Lincoln, Republican, none;
 1864: Bentonians were in occupied territory. They did not participate in the general election for the president;
 1868: Horatio Seymour, Dem., 206; *U. S. Grant, Rep. 31; others, 175;
 1872: Horace Greeley, Dem., 1005; *U. S. Grant, Rep., 749; others, 256;
 1876: Samuel Tilden, Dem., 1325; *Rutherford B. Hayes, Rep., 1021;
 1880: W. S. Hancock, Dem., 1353; *James A. Garfield, Rep., 771;
 1884: *Grover Cleveland, Dem., 1657; James G. Baline, Rep., 1053; others, 603;
 1888: Grover Cleveland, Dem., 1715; *Benjamin Harrison, Rep., 1075;
 1892: *Grover Cleveland, Dem., 1805; Benjamin Harrison, Rep., 1001; others, 804;
 1896: W. J. Bryan, Dem., 1384; *William McKinley, Rep., 769
 1900: W. J. Bryan, Dem., 1403; *William McKinley, Rep., 759;
 1904: A B. Parker, Dem., 1110; *Theodore Roosevelt, Rep., 732;
 1908: W. J. Bryan, Dem., 1221; *W. H. Taft, Rep., 860;
 1912: *Woodrow Wilson, Dem., 1095; W. H. Taft, Rep., 652; Theodore Roosevelt, Progressive, 289;
 1916: *Woodrow Wilson, Dem., 1313; Charles E. Hughes, Rep., 805;
 1920: James M. Cox, Dem., 1914; *W. G. Harding, Rep., 1514;
 1924: J. W. Davis, Dem., 1110; *Calvin Coolidge, Rep., 724;
 1928: Alfred E. Smith, Dem., 1241; *Herbert Hoover, Rep., 949;
 1932: *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dem., 1540; Herbert Hoover, Rep., 455;
 1936: *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dem., 1762; Alfred Landon, Rep., 661;

- 1940 *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dem., 1876; Wendell Wilkie, Rep., 819;
 1944: *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dem., 1901; Thomas E. Dewey, Rep.,
 1195;
 1948: *Harry S. Truman, Dem., 1757; T. E. Dewey, Rep., 908;
 1952: Adlai E. Stevenson, Dem., 2452; *Dwight D. Eisenhower, Rep.,
 1304;
 1956: A. E. Stevenson, Dem., 2231; *D. D. Eisenhower, Rep., 1279;
 1960: *John F. Kennedy, Dem., 2030; Richard M. Nixon, Rep., 1773;
 1964: *Lyndon B. Johnson, Dem., 2611; Barry Goldwater, Rep., 1363;
 1968: Hubert Humphrey, Dem., 1059; *Richard M. Nixon, Rep.,
 1468; George Wallace, Ind. Dem., 2255;
 1972: George McGovern, Dem., 1479; *Richard M. Nixon, Rep.,
 2614;
 1976: *James E. Carter, Dem., 4088; Gerald Ford, Rep., 1678;

Appendix E

Mayors of Camden and Big Sandy

Camden

Although Camden was first incorporated January 12, 1838, only two mayors are known before 1883 and they were Christopher K. Wyly, 1860, and Captain Lilly Crocker, 1874.

Joseph E. Jones, 1883-1885	Will Noah Rushing, 1927-1929
Edmund M. Carnell, 1885-1886	James Max Smythe, 1929-1931
Travis Davidson, 1886-1887	E. M. McAuley, 1931-1933
Corporation suspended, 1887-1894	James Tolbert Hollingsworth, 1933- 1937
Henry Franklin Stigall, 1895-1897	R. T. Flynn, 1937-1939
Corporation suspended, 1897-1898	Wayne Lashlee Hall, 1939-1943
Sidney Lee Peeler, 1899-1900	James Mansfield Bailey, 1943-1944
Thomas Clarke Rye, 1900-1902	Earl Lynn McCullough, 1944
Dorsey Brown Thomas, Jr., 1902-1904	Wyly Crawford Lockhart, 1944-1949
Sidney L. Peeler, 1904-1911	George Riley Bain, 1949-1955
Robert Lee Stockard, 1911-1914	Robert Lee Davis, 1955-1957
Joseph Fry Odle, 1914-1915	Thomas Hogan Hardy, 1957-1961
Thomas J. Lowery, 1915-1916	Wyly C. Lockhart, 1961-1963
Sidney L. Peeler, 1916-1917	Thomas H. Hardy, 1963-1967
Allie Virgil Bowles, 1917-1919	H. Ray Smith, 1967-1979
Ennis Martin McAuley, 1919-1922	Phillip O. French, 1979-, incumbent
Allie V. Bowles, 1922-1924	
Robert Timothy Flynn, 1924-1927	

Big Sandy

Big Sandy was incorporated in 1903; its first mayor was Dr. James M. Moses; names of others to 1911 are unknown.

Thomas C. Craney, 1911-1913	E. B. Bell, 1947-1949
Virgil F. Morris, 1913-1917	William F. Sloan, 1949-1950
John C. Herrin, 1917-1919	George C. Christopher, 1950-1953
Unknown, 1919-1921	Carlton O'Neil Stockdale, 1953-1955
John Askew, 1921-1923	Cleatus Hicks, 1955-1959
W. B. Akers, 1923-1925	Maylon Milliken, 1959-1961
E. C. Greer, 1925-1927	Max Beaton, 1961-1962
Harvey E. Cantrell, 1927-1931	Q. B. Dowdy, 1962-1963
James Hill Moses, 1931-1933	Ralph Graham, 1963-1965
Isaac D. G. Cooper, 1933-1935	Arle Taylor Stockdale, 1965-1967
Frank Cheatham, 1935-1937	Jimmy Allen, 1967-1971
William Sterling Rayborn, 1937-1941	Robbie Berry, 1971-1973
Quentin Wilson, 1941-1945	Warren G. Melton, 1973-1977
W. W. Phillips, 1945 (failed to serve)	James O. Allen, 1977-, incumbent
D. F. Wheatley, 1945-1947	

Appendix F

Local Educators Recognized for Outstanding Service

There have been scores of worthwhile teachers and other educators in Benton County, those who have contributed to the cultural uplift of its citizenry. The following persons have been recognized as outstanding educators, representatives of their other dedicated colleagues.

19th Century

Jordan G. and Margaret Sims, Benton Academy, 1843-1858
 William A. Steele, Camden, 30 years
 Josiah Turner Florence, Pleasant Valley, 30 years
 Christopher Columbus Vick, Beaverdam Valley, 30 years
 James Freeman Presson, County Superintendent, 1873-1875
 George Milton Leslie, County Superintendent, 1890-1892
 Thomas Witt Cuff, County Superintendent, 1896-1898
 James Ab Baber, Principal, Holladay Independent Normal, 1890s

20th Century

Edgar Jackson Clement	Ford H. Hollingsworth	Sara Armantrout
Martin L. Hardin	Hildon King	W. Curtis Johnson
Ruth Priestley Lockhart	Jerry Dinwiddie	Queen Cowell
Bert P. Cagle	John Dwight Melton	Doris Thomas Trombla
Alice Cagle	Fred Armantrout	Bessie Scott

Appendix G

Benton County Magistrates, 1836-

A

Abbot, H. F.
 Aden, H. C.
 Aden, W. K.
 Aden, Simon P.
 Akers, Roy
 Allen, Andrew
 Allen, Jesse
 Allen, Joseph
 Allen, Nelson
 Allen, W. J.
 Allen, William
 Alsup, David
 Alsup, Elijah
 Alsup, J. N.
 Alsup, J. T.
 Alsup, Mack
 Anderson, Barney
 Anderson, Isaac
 Anderson, John
 Anderson, N. B.
 Anderson, W.
 Arnold, James
 Arnold, Wyatt
 Ashby, M. D.
 Askew, John
 Askew, Leo
 Atchinson, S. M.

B

Baber, O. N.
 Baber, W. F.
 Bain, George R.
 Baker, Garland
 Ballard, Fred
 Barker, F. B.
 Barnes, W. J.
 Barnes, William
 Barnett, A. J.
 Barnett, Carl R.
 Barnett, E. A.
 Barnett, Mansfield
 Barnett, S. M.
 Barrett, Jack

Beard, Burrell
 Beaton, M. L.
 Beaton, Max
 Benton, David
 Benton, David W.
 Berry, Dewell
 Berry, M. F.
 Berry, Robbie
 Berry, Roy
 Biggs, M. B.
 Bishop, J. M.
 Bivens, Frank
 Blackburn, W. H.
 Bland, L. E.
 Blanks, W. M.
 Bomar, J. C.
 Bomar, J. H.
 Bonds, G. B.
 Bonds, Wayne
 Borchert, Harvey
 Bowles, Allie V.
 Bowman, Floyd
 Bradley, H. T.
 Branch, Billy G.
 Brannen, Orren
 Brewer, Lewis
 Brewer, Sterling
 Briggance, J. W.
 Brown, J. D.
 Buchanon, John
 Burgess, J. A.
 Burkett, D. M.
 Byrd, D. D.
 Byran, J. W.

C

Cagle, J. H.
 Cagle, J. O.
 Cagle, Leon
 Cagle, W. C.
 Cain, E. S.
 Caldwell, J. R.
 Camp, J. T.
 Camp, James M.

Cantrell, C. C.
 Cantrell, Carmack
 Cantrell, J. W.
 Cantrell, W. D.
 Castile, James M.
 Cate, W. A. T.
 Cheatham, J. B.
 Childress, James R.
 Childress, Z.
 Clark, Wm. H.
 Clement, C.
 Clement, Clifff
 Clement, Daniel J.
 Clement, James A.
 Clement, J. R.
 Cochran, Paul R.
 Coble, J. L.
 Cole, C. C.
 Cole, K. G.
 Cole, Oscar
 Combs, J. H.
 Conley, Eli W.
 Conley, W. B.
 Cooper, I. D. G.
 Cooper, W. J.
 Cooper, W. T.
 Cottingham, James
 Crawley, C. A.
 Crews, James C.
 Crocker, Lilly
 Crossno, Allen
 Crossno, Felmer
 Cuff, F. E.
 Cuff, Fred
 Cuff, J. M.
 Cuff, J. T.
 Cuff, S. W.
 Culpepper, W. R.

D

Davidson, J. W.
 Davidson, Joseph
 Davidson, Samuel H.
 Davis, H. W.

Davis, L. E.
 Deaton, J. E.
 Dickey, F. M.
 Dinwiddie, J. B.
 Dobson, Mitchell
 Doherty, C. L.
 Sorris, J. P.
 Dowdy, E. H.
 Durdin, A. J.

E

Earp, Ben
 Earp, G. E.
 Elmore, J. D.
 Elmore, Jesse D.
 Elmore, Johnny
 Elmore, S. H.
 Elmore, Vessie

F

Farlow, Bill
 Farlow, J. H.
 Farmer, Arch
 Farmer, Daniel M.
 Farmer, Felt
 Farmer, George W.
 Farmer, John
 Farmer, John H.
 Farmer, Ichabod
 Farrar, T. P.
 Ferguson, V. P.
 Florence, J. T.
 Florence, R. G.
 Florence, Walter N., Sr.
 Flowers, J. C.
 Flowers, J. G.
 Flowers, T. J.
 Flowers, Thomas L.
 Flowers, W. D.
 Floyd, Thomas L.
 Forest, Hezekiah
 Forest, W. T.
 Foust, W. T.
 Fowler, Fred
 Freeman, Egbert
 French, B. A.
 Fry, A. J.
 Fry, M. A.
 Fuller, Jonathan

Furr, Loye
 Furr, Nathan

G

Galbreath, J. W.
 Garner, M. M.
 Gatewood, G. K.
 Gearhiser, W. J.
 Gibbons, George
 Goodman, Bob T.
 Gossett, A.
 Gossett, A. M. C.
 Gossett, C. P.
 Gossett, David A.
 Graham, D. J.
 Graham, Robert M.
 Grainger, J. F.
 Green, H. A.
 Greer, F. M.
 Greer, Green Berry
 Greer, Hezekiah
 Greer, James A.

H

Hall, D. B.
 Hall, Jesse D.
 Hammonds, Jesse
 Hardin, Albert
 Hardin, Allen V.
 Hardin, W. O.
 Hargis, E. P.
 Harper, J. H.
 Harris, C. M.
 Harrison, Thomas
 Hatcher, Neal
 Hatley, A. C.
 Hatley, Allen
 Hatley, Edward
 Hatley, E. M.
 Hatley, H. W.
 Hatley, John
 Hatley, L. E.
 Hatley, L. L.
 Hatley, Mark
 Hatley, Ross
 Hatley, W.
 Hatley, W. A.
 Hatley, Wesley
 Hawley, R. M.

Hawthorne, R. H.
 Heathcott, Ted
 Hedges, R. C.
 Hedges, R. F.
 Heggie, Arch
 Henry, C. C.
 Henry, M. F.
 Herndon, J. C.
 Herrington, Hollis
 Hicks, A. J.
 Hicks, Seab
 Hicks, William K.
 Hill, John W.
 Hinnant, Berry
 Holladay, George B.
 Holladay, J. R.
 Holland, C. R.
 Holland, Charlie
 Holland, Crayton
 Holland, D. B.
 Holland, J. A.
 Holland, J. G.
 Holland, Thomas
 Holland, W. B.
 Hollingsworth, C. C.
 Hollingsworth, H. L.
 Hollingsworth, J. G.
 Hollingsworth, J. T.
 Hollingsworth, M. C.
 Hollowell, J. M.
 Holmes, E. B.
 Howe, A. J.
 Howe, Aubrey
 Howe, George E.
 Howe, Homer
 Howe, Jesse
 Hubbs, William
 Hudson, Dawsey P.
 Hudson, J. H.
 Hudson, J. L.
 Hudson, P. W.
 Hudson, R. G.
 Hughes, Ovie
 Hyatt, A. A.
 Hyatt, W. H.
 Hyer, W. D.

J

Jett, Thomas R.

Johnson, J. G.
 Johnson, W. A.
 Johnson, W. C.
 Johnson, W. P. C.
 Jones, C. C.
 Jones, J. R.
 Jones, Thomas
 Jordan, A. Y.
 Jordan, Evans

K

Kee, C. V.
 Kee, Cecil
 Kee, J. M.
 Kee, W. R.
 Kelly, Thomas
 Kilbreath, John
 Kilbreath, William
 Kirk, D. R.
 Kirk, J. L.
 Kirk, O. P.
 Knight, Absolom
 Kornegay, George D.

L

Langley, John W.
 Lashlee, Anderson
 Lashlee, Horace
 Lashlee, J. M.
 Lashlee, J. P.
 Lashlee, Lewis
 Lashlee, N. P.
 Lashlee, O. P.
 Lashlee, W. A.
 Lashlee, W. P.
 Lawrence, Robert J.
 Lee, J. Sherman
 Leslie, Hugh
 Lessenberry, Tyree
 Littleton, J. L.
 Lowry, Thomas J.
 Luper, Sherwood
 Luter, J. W.
 Luther, Wade
 Lynch, Edward W.

Mc

McAuley, C.
 McAuley, John
 McAuley, William M.
 McCord, R. D.

McCutchen, William
 McDaniel, Alcy
 McDaniel, E. E.
 McDaniel, J. C.
 McElyea, F. A.
 McIlwain, Don
 McKee, J. M.
 McKelvey, Joseph
 McKenzie, W. L.
 McRae, Alexander C.

M

Maiden, J. W.
 Maiden, William F.
 Malin, B. E.
 Malin, J. C.
 Mannon, Ernie
 Martin, William
 Massey, D. O.
 Matheny, A. W. C.
 Mathews, Joseph R.
 Matlock, W. L.
 Matlock, William
 Medlin, Jr., E. C.
 Medlin, L. H.
 Melton, A. A.
 Melton, J. C.
 Melton, J. F. L.
 Melton, Grady
 Melton, Guy
 Melton, J. C.
 Melton, Joe
 Melton, T. J.
 Melton, Thomas
 Melton, W. H.
 Merrell, Porter
 Merrick, James E.
 Mitchell, Leaburn
 Moody, C. N.
 Moore, J. C.
 Moore, J. G.
 Morris, Elbert T.
 Morris, W. T.
 Morrison, Tom
 Mullinix, Pleasant

N

Nance, C. B.
 Nobles, J. L.
 Noles, D. F.
 Norwood, B. H.

Nunnery, F. A.
 Nunnery, James J.
 Nunnery, Lee
 Nunnery, Nat
 Nunnery, W. E.
 Nunnery, W. J.

O

Odle, A.
 Odle, H. D.
 Odle, H. J.
 Odle, J. B.
 Odle, Joe
 Odle, R. L.
 Odle, S. D.
 Oatsvall, Jesse
 Oxford, U. G.
 Oxford, W. P.

P

Pafford, Elcany
 Pafford, John
 Pafford, O. N.
 Pafford, Virgil
 Parker, G. W.
 Parker, Homer
 Parker, J. C.
 Parker, Raymond
 Parker, Wylly
 Peacock, J. S.
 Peeler, Sidney
 Penick, John J.
 Perkins, Ephraim
 Perkins, O. G.
 Pettyjohn, C. A.
 Phifer, Elmo
 Phifer, Howard
 Phifer, John
 Phifer, Otto
 Pierce, C. D.
 Pierce, E. A.
 Pierce, H. R.
 Pierce, R.
 Pierce, W. R.
 Pope, John A.
 Powell, Allen
 Powell, W. R.
 Presson, Allen C.
 Presson, A. N.
 Presson, I. N.
 Presson, Ira L.

Presson, J. b.
 Presson, J. H.
 Presson, James F.
 Presson, John T.
 Presson, Thomas
 Prince, J. T.

R

Randle, Cloeberry
 Rayles, R. B.
 Robbins, Gene
 Roberts, Osby
 Robins, Cornell
 Robins, G. E.
 Robinson, Dr. J. W.
 Robinson, W. G.
 Rogers, R. B.
 Rogers, Stanley
 Rowe, J. W.
 Runions, R. K.
 Rushing, John
 Rushing, John D.
 Rushing, W. W.

S

Sales, John
 Sanders, J. M.
 Saunders, Fred
 Saunders, T. W.
 Saunders, W. P.
 Sayles, James S.
 Short, James
 Short, Needham
 Shurley, James
 Sims, Jordan G.
 Simmons, L. L.
 Smalley, Wm. H.
 Smith, Dee
 Smith, G. A.
 Smith, J. A.
 Smith, J. W.
 Smith, Rye
 Smith, Thomas
 Smith, W. C.
 Smothers, A. H.
 Smothers, F. J.
 Smothers, T. J.
 Sparks, Buford
 Spellings, G. C.
 Spence, J. E.

Steele, William A.
 Stigall, Henry H.
 Stockdale, J. F.
 Stockdale, J. M.
 Stockdale, W. D.
 Stockdale, W. R.
 Summers, E. C.
 Sutherland, Don
 Swindell, R. A.
 Swindle, A. E.
 Swindle, Thomas
 Swindle, W. A.
 Sykes, A. J.
 Sykes, W. M.

T

Thomas, J. K.
 Thompson, Lucian T.
 Thompson, Willis C.
 Throgmorton, Sam
 Tippett, A. r.
 Tippett, J. O.
 Tolbott, James
 Trout, James
 Turner, W. F.
 Turner, W. J.
 Turner, William T.

U

Utley, A. J.
 Utley, Burrell L.
 Utley, Steve

V

Vanhuss, D. H.
 Vester, Berry
 Vick, E. C.
 Vick, G. T.
 Vick, Wm. C.

W

Waggoner, R. H.
 Wagner, M. M.
 Walker, A. N.
 Walker, E.
 Walker, Gus
 Walker, J. S.
 Walker, James
 Walker, Joseph
 Walker, Robert

Walker, Zach M.
 Ward, A. T.
 Ward, William
 Warmack, John B.
 Warmack, T. J.
 Warren, B. W.
 Warrick, W. B.
 Waters, Linos
 Watts, Edd
 Weaks, A. R.
 Welch, A. L.
 West, Kenneth
 West, Lloyd
 Wheatley, C. H.
 Wheatley, C. W.
 Wheatley, D. A.
 Wheatley, F. P.
 Wheatley, James K.
 Wheatley, Taylor
 Whitfield, T. J.
 Whitley, B. W.
 Wilhelm, A. C.
 Wilhelm, Leo
 Williams, J. L.
 Williams, James R.
 Williams, John H.
 Williams, Nathan
 Williams, Noah
 Wimberly, H. P.
 Winters, Earlie
 Wiseman, J. H.
 Woods, Kit
 Woods, W. W.
 Wright, C. H.
 Wright, D. M.
 Wright, J. L.
 Wright, Joe E., Jr.
 Wright, W. B.
 Wright, William
 Wyatt, J. F.
 Wynn, Troy

Y

Yarbrough, I. C.
 Young, E. H.

Z

Zimmerman, E. L.

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About the Author

Jonathan Kennon Thompson Smith was born May 8, 1939, in a suburb of Camden, Tennessee, a son of Herschel Kennon Smith and his wife Dorothy McGrady-Smith, and only living grandson of Cassie Hardin and James Patrick McGrady. He is descended from some of the earliest Benton County families. He took his B.S. from George Peabody College for Teachers in August of 1960. He earned his M.A. from Memphis State University in August of 1962. Jonathan K. T. Smith has been a successful elementary teacher for many years in the public schools of Shelby County, Tennessee. On February 14, 1978, he was awarded an honorary life membership by the Tennessee Congress of Parents and Teachers through the Bartlett, Tennessee, school where he had taught for a decade. This award was in recognition of his "devoted and distinguished services to children and youth." He has participated in numerous professional activities as an educator, genealogist, and historian. A genealogist since 1952, Smith completed the genealogical institute of the National Archives and American University in 1957. He was the protégé of Mary B. B. Crouch, who sponsored his early genealogical studies. In 1968, a collection of his local history and genealogical papers was established in the manuscript collection of Duke University Library in Durham, North Carolina. Jonathan K. T. Smith is the author of several monographic studies on Benton County, Tennessee. He has been Benton County Historian since November 19, 1973, as recognized by the County Board of Commissioners. On November 8, 1965, Letters-Patent were issued to Jonathan Smith, an Anglo-American, through the Lyon Court of Scotland, ennobling him. A Unitarian, he has been interested in philosophy in addition to his concern for history and genealogy. Benton County is home for Jonathan Smith although he has resided since 1960 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he has pursued his professional career.