

# Lonesome Background Information

## History of Dickson County

### History

The Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill on October 25, 1803, creating Dickson County. Dickson was formed from Montgomery and Robertson counties. The county was named for William Dickson, a Nashville physician and statesman who served in Congress at the time. Although Dickson never lived in the county named for him, his relatives played roles in its early development.

Notable activity took place a decade earlier when in 1793, James Robertson, the “father of Middle Tennessee,” purchased land on Barton’s Creek. It was on this tract of land that Robertson built the first iron works on Tennessee’s frontier. In 1804, Robertson sold his furnace to Montgomery Bell, who became one of the state’s wealthiest capitalist and industrialist.

The development of the iron industry in Dickson County did much to shape the county in its early years. However, the building of the railroad in the 1860s, the building of the “Broadway of America,” now known as Highway 70, and the construction of Interstate 40, all of which pass through the southern portion of the county, have done much to shape the county over the last 150 years.

### 200 Years of Dickson County History 200 YEARS(+/-) in a Nutshell

Before 1783 Dickson County was a part of the “Cumberland country”..that just means an area west of the mountains. In 1783 the county of Davidson was created by an act of the North Carolina legislature, and Dickson County was a part of that subdivision. Three years later the north-eastern part of Davidson had grown enough to become a county within itself and the general assembly of North Carolina created Sumner County for it. Two years later in 1788, the legislature carved another division from Davidson, giving it the name of Tennessee County. Clarksville was designated the county seat. This area included all of the territory inside of Dickson, Montgomery, Robertson, Houston as well as parts of Hickman, Humphreys and Stewart. In the following year North Carolina ceded her western lands to the Federal Government, and the Territory South of the Ohio was established to include all of the Tennessee Counties. A territorial government was organized and by 1795. To be admitted to the union as a separate state, a population of 60,000 people had to inhabit the region. The territory legislature authorized a census and the population was found to be 67,000 Whites and over 10,000 Negros.

Because of Middle Tennessee’s fear of East Tennessee’s dominance an election was held to determine whether the people of the entire territory favored immediate admission. Over 2,500 people voted against it. Tennessee County, of which Dickson was a part (with a population of 1,941 voted 231 to 58 against immediate admission. East Tennessee heavily favored immediate admission to statehood. Despite Federalist opposition in the nation’s capital, Tennessee in 1796 became the 16th state of the union. In that year, a constitutional convention was called and was held in Knoxville. Five representatives attended from Tennessee County. During that time, Ten-

nessee county was abolished and the area became Robertson and Montgomery. Dickson remained a part of these local units of government until it was created by state legislature in 1803.

By the time Dickson was formed many settlers were already established in the area. During this time it is known that Montgomery BELL, John NESBITT, Abraham CALDWELL and James Richard NAPIER had settled on BARTON's Creek; that a Revolutionary soldier named Christopher STRONG along with Molton DICKSON, James MARTIN, Robert HARPER, had settled on JONES Creek; that George TUBBS and William WARD had settled on JOHNSON's Creek; that Minor BIBB, Edward TIDWELL, John BROWN, Milton JOHNSON, and William and Thomas GENTRY had staked out claims on TURNBULL Creek; and that William HOGINS and Thomas PETTY had established homes on Piney River. During the time of 1800-1810 the population of Tennessee doubled. During this time Dickson was receiving its share of the growth.

During this time many Revolutionary War soldiers received a grant of 640 acres in what is now Dickson County. Many recipients never 'took up their claim', but sold it. John HOGG, a North Carolinian, (for example) and his brother Samuel were to be found in Bedford County. From there, John Hogg sold John K WYNNE of Wilson County his 640 acres on Yellow Creek in Dickson County. He received only one dollar per acre for it.

The Legislature of 1803 convened, and was acted upon passing a bill on October 25, 1803, creating DICKSON COUNTY. The county was named for William DICKSON, a Nashville physician and statesman who served in Congress at that time. Although DICKSON never lived in the county named for him, his cousin Molton DICKSON and other relatives played roles in its early development. The legislature of 1803 also named the first county court and set the convening date for the first session Monday, February 1804. IT was held at the home of Robert NESBITT on Barton's Creek. But, because the roads were in such poor condition due to the weather, the meeting was officially on March 19th as a two day session.

Attending that first meeting were Montgomery BELL, Sterling BREWER, William CARROLL, Robert DRAKE(appointed county court clerk pro tempore), Drury CHRISTIAN(temporary sheriff), David DICKSON (announced his candidacy for office of County Court Clerk and was elected), Robert WEAKLEY (was named Sheriff), James Walker (was elected Register of Deeds),Robert DRAKE(chosen Commissioner of Revenue), John LARKINS(elected Trustee, William CALDWELL (Ranger), James FENTRESS (County Surveyor), John HALL(became Coroner). N.A.McNAIRY was the first lawyer admitted to the bar and was elected as the first County Solicitor. A jury was appointed for the first session of the court and a provision for a road to extended from the farm of William TEAS on Yellow Creek to the Montgomery County line was voted on . The court adjourned to meet again in June.

In 1804 a commission composed of Montgomery BELL, Robert DUNING, Sterling BREWER, John DAVIDSON, and George CLARK. They were to study terrain, for a central suitable location for a courthouse, prison, and stocks. They were authorized to purchase not more than 40 acres...to be laid off in town lots. These lots were to be sold for to provide the income for the construction of the courthouse, jail and stocks. If the sale of the lots did not provide the required funding, a tax would be levied to cover the difference. Charles STEWART a property acres for the new county seat. The offer was accepted by the commissioners and a survey of STEWART's land began. The precise site of Charlotte was chosen when the commissioners stopped to rest near a spring and determined that the abundance of water and general location to be ap-

propriate to build a town. It was named CHARLOTTE, in honor of Charlotte REEVES ROBERTSON, wife of the Father of Middle Tennessee.

By George E. Jackson , Dickson

The Tennessee General Assembly formed Dickson County on October 25, 1803, from the counties of Montgomery and Robertson and named it in honor of Congressman William Dickson, a Nashville physician. An industrial county from its inception, Dickson County was part of the frontier until 1818. The first court justices included several well-known Tennesseans: Montgomery Bell, William Doak, William Russell, Sterling Brewer, Gabriel Allen, Lemuel Harvey, Jesse Craft, Richard C. Napier, and William Teas. They organized the county on March 19, 1804, at the home of Robert Nesbitt on Barton's Creek. Later sessions of the court met at the homes of Colonel John Nesbitt and John Spencer until the courthouse was completed in 1810.

The county seat of Charlotte, named for James Robertson's wife, was built on 50 acres purchased from Charles Stewart for five thousand dollars. On May 30, 1830, a tornado devastated the town, destroying most of the businesses and homes, as well as the jail and courthouse, along with many county records. A new brick courthouse was completed in 1832 and is now the oldest courthouse in the state.

As a part of the Military Reserve, Dickson County was attractive to many settlers, who established farms along the rich bottom lands of the Cumberland, Piney, and Harpeth Rivers, as well as Jones, Turnbull, Bartons, and Yellow Creeks. Although the soil and climate of Dickson County were not conducive to the production of cotton, early farmers raised the crop to take advantage of the high cotton prices. In 1807 Robert Jarman began operating his own cotton gin, which he claimed was superior to all others due to its "hollow neck teeth saw" design. By 1860 wheat, rye, oats, corn, and tobacco had overtaken cotton in economic importance.

During the antebellum years, Dickson County was one of the leading iron producers in Tennessee. In 1796 James Robertson began manufacturing the first iron products west of Tennessee's Allegheny Mountains from his Cumberland Iron Works at Cumberland Furnace. In 1804 Robertson sold his furnace to Montgomery Bell, who became the state's wealthiest capitalist and industrialist. Other important iron manufacturers included Anthony and Bernard Van Leer and George F. and Richard C. Napier. Much of the iron production was accomplished with slave labor, and throughout the antebellum period iron makers held approximately one-fourth of the slaves in Dickson County. Although iron production declined in importance in the post-Civil War period, the furnace was still in production in the early 1940s.

Dickson County played a pivotal role in the development of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Influenced by the religious fervor associated with the Second Great Awakening, some members of the Presbyterian Church chafed under the Calvinist doctrines and church rules regarding ordination of ministers. On February 4, 1810, Samuel King, Finis Ewing, and Ephraim McLean met at the home of Samuel McAdow on Acorn Creek (now in Montgomery Bell State Park) to discuss the conflict. After a night of prayer, they organized the Cumberland Presbytery, the foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Although a school board was appointed in 1807, public education received little support during the nineteenth century. The first four-year high school was established in 1919. From the 1820s to the 1920s private secondary schools and colleges followed the fortunes of ministers and professors who moved into the county. Included among those early schools were Tracy Academy, Charlotte Female School, Alexander Campbell School, Edgewood Academy and Normal College, Dickson Academy, Dickson Normal School, Glenwylde Academy, and Ruskin Cave College.

On June 8, 1861, the county voted overwhelmingly to join the Confederacy. Dickson County supplied six infantry companies and an artillery battery to the Southern cause. Yellow Creek and Cumberland Furnace were favorite rendezvous areas for guerrilla forces. No major skirmishes took place, but frequent attacks occurred along the railroad constructed by the Union army.

After the war the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad (on the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis main line), which traversed the southern portion of the county, became a magnet for migrants from the North, who settled in the new railroad towns of Dickson (originally called Smeedville), Tennessee City, White Bluff, and Burns. With two railroad branch lines terminating in Dickson, the town became the county's railroad "hub," and by the early 1900s was the financial and commercial center of the county. The growth of Dickson produced bitter conflict with Charlotte, the economic fortunes of which were in decline, over the best location for the county seat.

Among the new arrivals to Dickson County was Julius Augustus Wayland, who founded the Ruskin Cooperative Association in August 1894. The cooperative was first located at Tennessee City, but soon moved to the great cave (since named Ruskin) on Yellow Creek. Internal disagreements led to the dissolution of the colony in 1899.

Montgomery Bell State Park, the county's major recreation area, was established as a project of the National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps during the New Deal. After World War II administration of the 3,782-acre park was transferred to the state. Montgomery Bell offers camping, hiking, boating, fishing, and golf to park visitors. The state completed a major resort facility at the park in 1998.

Historical Burns, Tennessee: [https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1o6MBA9PcHrcK-70103o-8m6Bou5E&hl=en\\_US&ll=36.050013689395755%2C-87.31659010000004&z=15](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1o6MBA9PcHrcK-70103o-8m6Bou5E&hl=en_US&ll=36.050013689395755%2C-87.31659010000004&z=15)