Tennessee Genealogy Research

Tennessee is informally segregated into three "Grand Divisions" that are topographically, politically, economically, and culturally different. East Tennessee even attempted to secede from the rest of the State during the Civil War. In 1820, Historically, Tennessee's top three manufactured goods were whiskey, blacksmith's products, and flour. Many 1820 East Tennessee census population schedules have been lost, but manufactures schedules survive for most counties.

Tennessee Birth Records

Online indexes of some Tennessee births:

- *FamilySearch.org*
- *Ancestry.com*

The larger cities in Tennessee kept early birth records:

- Nashville (beginning in 1881)
- Knoxville (beginning in 1881)
- Chattanooga (beginning in 1879)
- Memphis (beginning in 1874)

In 1874, a few Tennessee counties began sporadic recording of births.
Most counties began recording births in 1908.
Statewide registration of births began in 1914.
Delayed birth records exist from as early as 1869. .

Birth records created more than 100 years ago:
Obtain a copy from **TSLA (Tennessee State Library and Archives** or from the **County Office.**

Birth records 100 or fewer years old:
The **Tennessee Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Records** stores birth records less than 100 years old.
Genealogists can request verification of the information on these birth records.
Immediate family members can request certified copies.

Tennessee Marriage Records

Online indexes of Tennessee marriages:

- *FamilySearch.org*
- *Ancestry.com*.
- Shelby County Register of Deeds – statewide marriage records from 1980 to 2014; Shelby County marriage records 1830 to 2014
- TSLA (Tennessee State Library and Archives) - an index of marriage records 1790 – 1861 and 1945 until 50 years ago.

Most counties began recording marriages at the time of the county's creation.
In 1838, the state mandated registration of marriages at the county office.
Early county marriage record ledgers usually listed the names of the bride & groom, the cleric or Justice of the Peace, and (sometimes) the bondsman.
From the 1880s through the 1920s, some counties kept duplicate copies of the marriage license.

TSLA (Tennessee State Library and Archives) has copies of marriage records or county marriage ledgers 1790 – 1861 and 1945 – 50 years ago. **Order a copy of a marriage record from 1790 – 1861 and from July 1945 till 50 years ago** from **TSLA.**

The Tennessee Vital Records Office keeps marriage and divorce records for 50 years.
Order a copy of a marriage record less than 50 years old from the **Tennessee Office of Vital Records**

Tennessee Death Records

Online indexes of Tennessee death records for various years:

- *Ancestry.com*
- *FamilySearch.org*
- *Shelby County Register of Deeds*: statewide death records 1949 – 2014;
  Shelby County death records 1848 - 1965
- *TSLA* (Tennessee State Libraries and Archives): Deaths 1914 – 1933

In 1872, some Tennessee counties and cities began recording deaths. Records are incomplete.
Most Tennessee counties began recording deaths in 1908.
Order a copy of a death record before 1908 from the *County Court Clerk* or *Register of Deeds.*

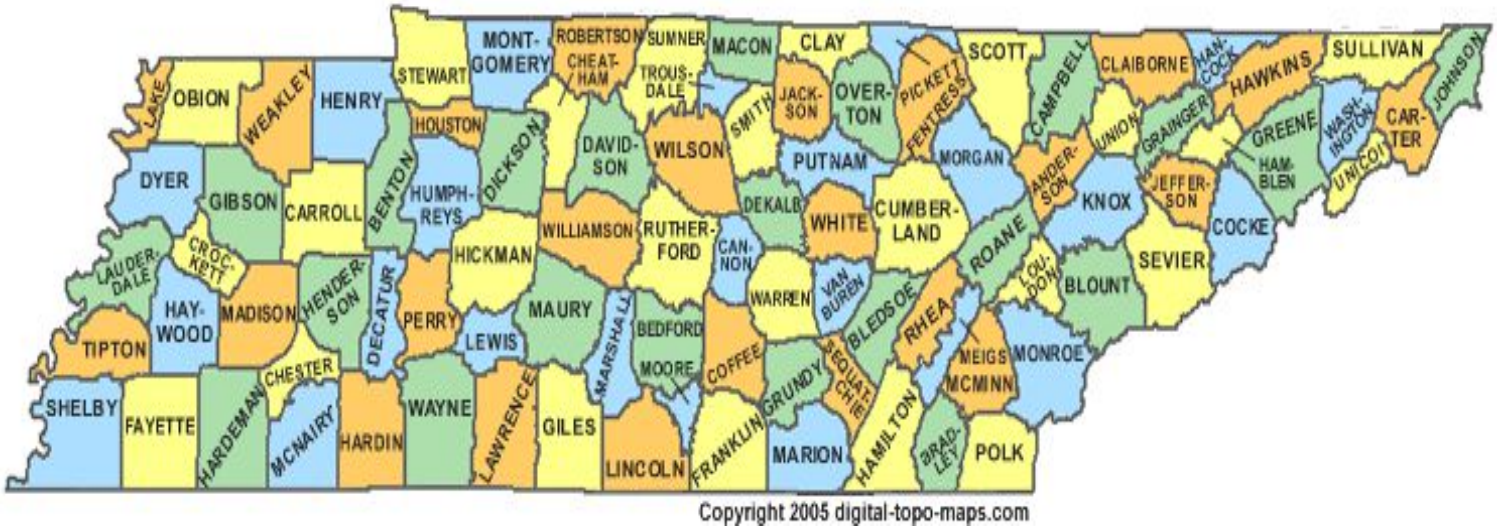
Order copies of death records from 1908 - 1912 and **1914 – 50 years ago** from **TSLA.** If you do not know the exact date or place of death, TSLA will do a 3-year search for free.

The state of Tennessee began recording deaths in 1914.
The Tennessee Vital Records Office keeps death records for 50 years.
Order a copy of a death record less than 50 years old from the **Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Vital Records**

Other Sources of Birth, Marriage and Death Information:

- Newspaper birth, marriage, and death announcements
- Bible records
- Church records
- Military records
- Censuses
- Death records/Funeral Home/Cemetery records/Wills/Probate records

Tennessee Counties



Copyright 2005 digital-topo-maps.com

Note: The short-lived State of Franklin created counties not recognized by North Carolina or Tennessee

The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – Interactive maps and text covering the historical boundaries, names, organization, and attachments of every county, extinct county and unsuccessful county proposal from the creation of the first county through December 31, 2000. - http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html

Early Migration Routes

Cumberland River Mississippi River Tennessee River Avery's Trace or Nashville Road Black Fox Trail Bolivar and Memphis Trail Catawba Trail Chattanooga-Willstown Road Cisca and St. Augustine Trail or Nickajack Trail Cisco and Middle Tennessee Trail Cumberland and Great Lakes Trail Cumberland and Ohio Falls Trail Cumberland Trace Georgia Road (Federal Road) Great Indian Warpath Great South Trail Great Trading Path Great Valley Road Jackson's Military Road Jonesboro Road Kentucky Road Lower Warpath or West Tennessee Trail Mississippi and Tennessee River Trail Nashville-Saline River Trail Natchez Trace or Chickasaw Trail Old Cherokee Path Tennessee, Ohio and Great Lakes Trail Unicoi Trail West Tennessee Chickasaw Trail Wilderness Road

Major Genealogical/Historical Repositories

Tennessee State Library and Archives East Tennessee Historical Society Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center West Tennessee Heritage Study Center National Archives Southeast Region (Atlanta) Allen County Public Library

Tennessee Genealogy Research Websites

Note: Check online for the *GenWeb* or *Genealogy Trails* of any county in which your ancestor lived.

Cleveland, TN, Obituaries – search index of obituaries 1865 to present - http://clevelandlibrary.org/obitsearch/index.php
Digital Library of Tennessee - letters, diaries, oral histories, photos - https://tn.dp.la/
Genealogical Research Files of Dr. Barbara Long - research files document 33 different family lines in TN, AL, GA, the Carolinas, VA, and MD – housed in the Tennessee Virtual Archive - http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15138coll30
My Genealogy Hound – *biographies* extracted from *pre-1900 county histories* of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee – vintage county maps from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma (including Indian Nations), and Tennessee - http://www.mygenealogyhound.com/
Oak Ridge, TN, Obituaries – search indexes of obituaries in 2 newspapers - http://oakridgetn.gov/obituary.aspx
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il
Tennessee Bible Records - name search the surname indexes of family Bibles donated to the Tennessee State Library and Archives - http://tnsos.net/TSLA/Bibleproject/
Tennessee Biographies - index of biographies in TSLA collection - copies can be ordered for a fee - http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/misc/biography.htm
Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture - chronicles of historical persons and events - http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/
Tennessee Genealogy Trails - links to genealogical records in counties -http://genealogytrails.com/tenn/
Tennessee GenWeb – links to genealogical records in counties - http://tngenweb.org/
Tennessee State Library and Archives Genealogy Index Search - indexes list the items, order copies of records from the library - city directories - 1800's U.S. newspapers - death records/obituaries – veterans/pensions various wars – family Bibles – prison inmates - https://tslaindexes.tn.gov/
Tennessee Virtual Archive – digitized military records and photos, family histories, diaries, Family Bibles, maps - http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/

Volunteer Voices – Digitized photos, letters, diaries, oral histories – many related to the Civil War - https://sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/volunteer-voices
Williamson County Genealogy & Local History Database – search Williamson County obituaries, local African-American Genealogy, Local History news database, and information on Williamson County births, marriages, veterans, and family histories - https://wcpli.williamsoncounty-tn.gov/genealogy/about

Tennessee African American Research

Access Genealogy – links by state to websites of African American genealogy, cemeteries, and censuses
AfricaMap – track the slave trade with historical overlays and geographical data - http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/
AfriGeneas – slave records, death and marriage records, censuses, surnames – chat or send messages to other researchers - http://afrigeneas.com/
African American Cemeteries Online, Tennessee– burial transcriptions in various counties - http://africanamericancemeteries.com/tn/
Digital Library on American Slavery – search database of slave petitions, runaway slave advertisements, bills of sale, transatlantic slave trade database; this compilation of various online collections started with a focus on records in North Carolina but the information includes people in all 15 slave states and Washington D.C.; more records are currently being digitized - http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/
Free African Americans in the Southeast - Free people of color in the colonies of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware – a few families in Illinois, Tennessee and Indiana - http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/
International African American Museum - African American funeral programs, obituaries, marriage records, photos, historical documents and family histories – military records of the U.S. Colored Troops are currently being digitized - https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/records/
Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery - search thousands of "Information Wanted" advertisements taken out by former slaves in all states searching for family members lost by sale, flight, or enlistment – the collection currently includes newspapers from 1853 to 1911 - http://www.informationwanted.org/
Nashville City Cemetery – index of burials in the city cemetery, includes names of slaves buried there, and the names of their owners - http://www.library.nashville.org/localhistory/citycemetery.asp
Slave Confederate Payrolls - digitized payrolls list names of slaves of 10 southern states who worked for the Confederate Army and whose pay went to their masters - https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=719477
Slave Voyages - the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* documents vessels along the Atlantic slave routes from 1514 to 1866; *Intra-American Slave Trade Database* documents vessels traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific ports ranging from the United States to Brazil; the *African Names Database* gives names, ages, possible origins of slaves liberated from captured slave ships between 1808 and 1862 - https://www.slavevoyages.org/

Tennessee Cemetery Research

Nashville City Cemetery – Inscriptions menu gives index of burials in the city cemetery, research menu includes names of African Americans buried there, including slaves, indexes of veterans, civil war interments, obituary index - http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org/
City Cemetery website – GPS map of veterans interred there, index of tombstones by ID number and section - http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org/
Tennessee Valley Authority Cemeteries – index of over 30,000 graves originally in TN, AL, MS, KY, GA, NC, and VA that were flooded or relocated when the dams were built - https://www.tva.com/environment/environmental-stewardship/land-management/cultural-resource-management/relocated-cemeteries

Tennessee Military Research

Grand Army of the Republic Records Project – developing database - histories of posts, reports of officers and members if available, search by state - http://suvcw.org/garrecords/

Tennessee Native American Research

Native American Tribes of Tennessee - http://www.native-languages.org/tennessee.htm

Tennessee Newspaper Research

Chattanooga Newspapers – read pages of various Chattanooga newspapers for selected years - http://chattanooga.advantage-preservation.com/

Tennessee Online Historical Newspapers – names and locations of archived Tennessee newspapers - https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/tn

Information on these pages is compiled from:

- Family Tree Magazine
- *Genealogy Gems from the Allen County Public Library*
- Tennessee Department of Health, Vital Records
- Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter