



Tennessee State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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Tennessee State History In a Nutshell
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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

Tennessee State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



Great Seal of Tennessee

The state of Tennessee was named after the Little Tennessee River. Originally "Tanasi" the river took its name from two Cherokee villages on its banks.

People who live in Tennessee or who come from Tennessee are called Tennesseans or Tennesseans.

Tennesseans have also been known as "Volunteers", "Big Benders", or even "Butternuts." The first two names are obvious references to two of the state's popular nicknames. The third, "Butternuts," probably originated during the War between the States and is reference to the tan colored uniforms of Tennessee soldiers.



Map of Tennessee – Capital, Major Lakes and Rivers

STATEHOOD

What is now Tennessee was initially part of North Carolina, and later part of the Southwest Territory. Tennessee was admitted to the Union as the 16th state on June 1, 1796.

What is now Tennessee was initially part of North Carolina, and later part of the Southwest Territory. Tennessee was admitted to the Union in 1796 as the 16th state. It was the first state created from territory under the jurisdiction of the United States federal government. Apart from the former Thirteen Colonies only Vermont and Kentucky predate Tennessee's statehood, and neither was ever a federal territory.

Tennessee was the last state to leave the Union and join the Confederacy at the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, and the first state to be readmitted to the Union at the end of the war.

The state boundaries, according to the Constitution of the State of Tennessee, Article I, Section 31, stated that the beginning point for identifying the boundary was the extreme height of the Stone Mountain, at the place where the line of Virginia intersects it, and basically ran the extreme heights of mountain chains through the Appalachian Mountains separating North Carolina from Tennessee past the Indian towns of Cowee and Old Chota, thence along the main ridge of the said mountain (Unicoi Mountain) to the southern boundary of the state; all the territory, lands and waters lying west of said line are included in the boundaries and limits of the newly formed state of Tennessee. Part of the provision also stated that the limits and jurisdiction of the state would include future land acquisition, referencing possible land trade with other states, or the acquisition of territory from west of the Mississippi River.

STATE CONSTITUTION

The Tennessee State Constitution is the state constitution of Tennessee and defines the form, structure, activities, character, and fundamental rules (and means for changing them) of the Tennessee government.

Much like the U.S. Constitution explains the way the federal government is set up, the Tennessee Constitution explains how Tennessee's government is set up.

There are similarities and differences in the U.S. Constitution and the Tennessee Constitution. Both call for a government with three branches – executive, legislative, and judicial. Both explain how the people who run those branches are to be chosen, and when elections have to take place. Both call for a legislative branch that has two chambers – a house and a senate. Both talk a lot about individual rights – the U.S. Constitution in the Bill of Rights, and the Tennessee Constitution in its Declaration of rights.

Differences in the U. S. Constitution and Tennessee constitution:

- The U.S. Constitution was written in 1783. Tennessee's current constitution was written in 1870, after the Civil War. This is Tennessee's third constitution; previous ones were written in 1796 and 1834.
- To be president of the United States, you have to be 35 years old and a natural-born citizen (which generally means born in the U.S.). But to be governor, you only have to be 30 years old. And you don't have to have been born in Tennessee; you only have to have lived there for seven years.
- Under the U.S. Constitution, if the president dies in office, the vice-president becomes president. Under the Tennessee Constitution, if the governor dies, the Speaker of the Senate becomes governor. Because of this, the Speaker of the Tennessee Senate is also known as the Lieutenant Governor.
- The U.S. Constitution says nothing about lotteries. Tennessee's Constitution allows a state-run lottery.

- Federal judges are appointed for life and can only be removed from office for treason. (Treason means to wage war against one's own country by aiding its enemies.) State judges and the members of the Tennessee Supreme Court face re-election (members of the Tennessee Supreme Court face a yes-no referendum every eight years).

The constitution's preamble is much longer than its counterpart in the United States Constitution. Much of that length is devoted to justifying the authority behind the new constitution — that the new constitution was created under the authority of the constitution of 1835, and that the 1835 constitution was itself created under the authority of the original 1796 convention.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Tennessee's government is set up very much like the U.S. government. And, much like the U.S. government, Tennessee's government has three branches: the executive, legislative, and judicial. The legislative branch of Tennessee government makes the laws. It consists of the House and Senate, just like the U.S. government.

The executive branch of Tennessee government enforces the laws and runs the day-to-day operations of the state. The governor is the head of the executive branch of government.

The judicial branch of government interprets the laws -- which means they decide exactly what the laws mean when people don't agree on them. They also run the courts. Like the judiciary branch of the U.S. government, the state judiciary branch is headed by a supreme court (however there are nine judges in the U.S. Supreme Court and only five in the Tennessee Supreme Court).

The Tennessee Legislature, referred to as the General Assembly, is composed of two bodies, called houses, like the United States Congress. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Legislature is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Legislature is responsible for making the laws in Tennessee and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government.

STATE REPRESENTATIVES: Representatives in Tennessee each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 99 men and women representing 99 house districts in the Tennessee House of Representatives. Each representative serves for a period of two years in the House of Representatives, after which he or she must run for re-election. Tennessee state representatives are not subject to term limits.

STATE SENATORS: Senators in Tennessee each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 33 men and women representing 33 senate districts in the Tennessee Senate. Each senator serves for a period of four years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election. Tennessee state senators are not subject to term limits.

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral

body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms. Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

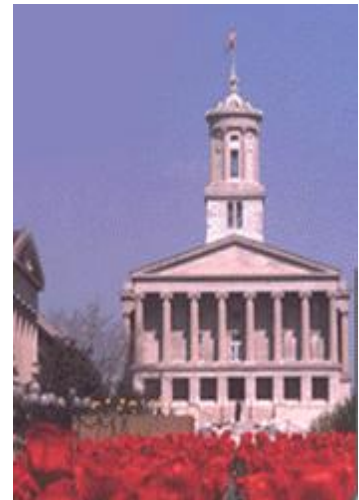
There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Tennessee elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and nine people, based on Tennessee's population, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE CAPITAL

The Tennessee State Capitol stands today much as it did when it first opened in 1859, and is a magnificent tribute to the people of Tennessee. This graceful structure was designed by noted architect William Strickland who considered it his crowning achievement. When Strickland died suddenly during construction in 1854, he was buried in the north facade of the Capitol.

The cornerstone for the building was laid on July 4, 1845, and construction finished in 1859. The grounds of the State Capitol contain statues honoring Sam Davis, Sgt. Alvin York, and Presidents Andrew Jackson and Andrew Johnson. The tombs of President and Mrs. James K. Polk are also located on the Capitol grounds.



STATE MOTTO

Officially adopted in 1987, the state motto of Tennessee is "Agriculture and Commerce" (taken from words on the state seal of Tennessee).

STATE SLOGAN

Tennessee - America at Its Best" was adopted as the official state slogan of Tennessee in 1965.

STATE FLAG

The Tennessee State Flag was designed by a fellow named LeRoy Reeves of the Third Regiment, Tennessee Infantry.

It was officially adopted by the Tennessee State Legislature. The geometric design symbolizes the geographical and cultural heritage of the state of Tennessee while echoing the colors of the national flag of The United States of America.

The color white symbolizes purity. The blue symbolizes the love that Tennesseans feel for their state and the red symbolizes, that in times of war and peace, Tennesseans are true-blooded Americans.



Mr. Reeves explained his design:

The three stars are of pure white, representing the three grand divisions of the state. They are bound together by the endless circle of the blue field, the symbol being three bound together in one - an indissoluble trinity. The large field is crimson. The final blue bar relieves the sameness of the crimson field and prevents the flag from showing too much crimson when hanging limp. The white edgings contrast more strongly the other colors

The "three grand divisions of the state." that Mr. Reeves refers to are the three sharply contrasting geographical divisions of the state of Tennessee.

STATE NICKNAMES

The Volunteer State

This is the most widely recognized nickname for the state of Tennessee and one of the most revered. This nickname was earned, during the War of 1812, when thousands of Tennesseans enlisted in response to Governor Blount's call for volunteers. It also honors the courage of Tennessee soldiers fighting under General Andrew Jackson in The Battle of New Orleans (Jan 8, 1815).

The Big Bend State

This nickname is a reference to the Indian name for the Tennessee River, "The river with the big bend".

The Mother of Southwestern Statesmen

This proud nickname refers to the role Tennesseans have played in shaping this country's national government. Many elected and non-elected national offices have been held by Tennesseans including the office of the President of the United States. Three presidents have called this state home; Andrew Jackson(7th), James K. Polk(11th), and Andrew Johnson(17th).

The Hog and Hominy State

You won't hear Tennessee called the "Hog and Hominy State" very often today and, in fact, this nickname is considered obsolete. It refers to the time when Tennessee was a major producer of corn and pork products; between 1830 and 1840.

The Lion's Den State

J.C. Thomas refers to Tennessee as the "Lions Den State" on page 22 of *Manual of Useful Information* published by the Werner Company in 1893. Mr. Thomas does not give any background. George Earle Shankle suggests in *State Names, Flags, Seals, Songs, Birds, Flowers and Other Symbols* that "Probably its origin and application to this State are in some way connected with the life and activities of Andrew Jackson."

STATE BIRD



In 1933, the Tennessee Ornithological Society initiated a statewide campaign of education in connection with a vote to adopt an official state bird to represent the state. The purpose of the vote was to determine the preferences of the people of Tennessee. Over 70,000 people cast votes that gave the mockingbird (15,553) a small, but winning edge over the robin (15,073). Finishing after the top-two contenders were the cardinal (13,969 votes), the bobwhite (10,460 votes), the bluebird (9,125 votes) and others (8,751 votes).

The mockingbird was adopted as the state bird of Tennessee by Senate Joint Resolution No. 51 on April 19, 1933

STATE FLOWER

The iris (Genus Iridaceae) was designated as the state cultivated flower by the Legislature in 1933. While there are several different colors among the iris, the purple iris is commonly accepted as the state flower.



Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

