

Historical Sources on Microfilm:
Weakley County, Tennessee

Revised: 2005 March

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West Tennessee Heritage Study Center
Univ. of Tennessee at Martin

Weakley County, Tennessee

Basic county history may be found in Virginia C. Vaughn, *Weakley County, Tennessee County Historical Series* (Memphis: Memphis State Univ. Press, 1983).

Though claimed by Euroamerican powers and nominally included in various county organizations, Western Tennessee remained Chickasaw territory until after statehood and the opening years of the nineteenth century. In mid October 1818, Andrew Jackson and Kentucky governor Isaac Shelby successfully strong-armed Chickasaw Indians into ceding lands of the tribe's cultural region lying east of the Mississippi River. This new U.S. land claim was bisected by the Kentucky-Tennessee border at 36° 30' north latitude. The territory falling within Tennessee became the Western District.

Settlers began moving into the Weakley County area as early as 1819 when brothers-in-law Reuben Edmonston and John Bradshaw located on Mud Creek south of present-day Martin and about three miles west of Dresden. The first formal organization for the new western territory was the creation in October 1819 of a number of surveyor districts. These facilitated land-claim registration and sales for white settlers. The eastern part of what became Weakley county fell into the 12th District, the western part formed part of the 13th. The legislature passed an act to organize the Western District region into counties on November 7, 1821 (*Acts of Tennessee* 1821, p.39). Henry County, established in 1821, originally included land marked for other counties, including what became Weakley. Two years later Weakley County, named for Tennessee Senate speaker Robert Weakley, was one of eight counties officially organized by a legislative act 1823 Oct 21. During all this time, North Carolina military land grants from the Revolution complicated claim registration within the region, including Weakley County. Practical organization did not occur until 1825, when Dresden was laid out and established as the county seat; however, the Henry County chancery court held jurisdiction over Weakley County until 1838, and even after Weakley County was formally organized North Carolina land grants were being claimed and registered in that state, a process that lasted into the 1840s.

As originally established, Weakley County boundaries were rectangular and simply ignored physical features. While mountains were not a deterrent to travel, unbridged rivers were. In 1837 Weakley and Gibson county commissioners agreed to redraw their common boundary to follow the watercourse for the South Fork of the Obion River. While it means little today, this action simplified travel to the respective county seats, necessary for legal business on both sides. Two changes to county lines (1868 Dec and 1869 Mar) were enacted but repealed. These would have transferred large sections of Weakley to neighbouring Obion county. A permanent boundary change was enacted 1870 Jul 2, when much of District 2 (in the northwest corner of the county) was finally annexed to Obion County. The last change to boundaries occurred in 1889, when the county line was nudged eastward to locate J. W. Boyd & Co. in Obion County.

The original log courthouse, built in 1828, was replaced in 1840 with a smallish brick structure. It served until being outgrown by 1852, when a new one was built. That remained in use until being destroyed in a fire on 1948 Feb 19. Bound records were saved, but some of the loose chancery court records were lost. A few files show

scorching. An undetermined volume of veterans records, school records, and trustee records were lost in the fire.

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This information sheet describes *only* microfilm holdings. Corbitt Special Collections holds a number of original Weakley County business records, diaries, and photographs. It also holds the County Court files dating 1899–1927, and the county’s Chancery Court case files between 1824 and the 1920s, with isolated material dating as late as 1935. These are described in the library catalogue and on the departmental Web site. Point a browser to the university Web page at <<http://www.utm.edu>> and click the <Library> link. From there, choose either the <Catalogue> link, or on the library navigation bar at the left follow the “departments” link to “Special Collections,” then the blue button for “Manuscripts.” To find records you may either read through a list of manuscripts numerically or try the search feature.

MICROFILM

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Film	Contents
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Federal Census¹

468	1830 census
482	1840 census
520	1850 census, free schedule
528	1850 census, slave schedule
568	1860 census, free schedule
576	1860 census, slave schedule
634	1870 census
677–678	1880 census
684	1890 census, Union veterans and widows schedules
733	1900 census
770	1910 census
815	1920 census
867	1930 census
1485	Agricultural schedules: 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880 censuses

Local Newspapers

Those seeking to find things in early local newspapers face several challenges. First, almost all newspapers were issued weekly, not daily, so the likelihood is not good that a report of an event was printed near the time it happened. Second, until the twentieth century there were no reporters, so an event appeared only if the editor was notified, and then only if there was space to print a notice *and* if the editor chose to do so. Finally, though newspapers began being published in Dresden as early as 1839, only a few scattered issues have survived; with one exception there are no complete files extant.

Newspaper titles are listed below in chronological order. If a sequential run is available, then the range of dates is given by noting the first and last issues using a hyphen rather than listing each individually. In the accompanying lists, the newspaper masthead (title) is given first, followed by the volume and issue number separated by a colon, as “1:24,” and then the date.

Dresden

12	<i>The Tennessee Patriot (Dresden, Tenn.)</i> , 1:41 1839 Sep 25 only
12, 134	<i>The Jacksonian (Dresden, Tenn.)</i> , 1:11 1840 Nov 11 only
61	<i>The Flag (Dresden, Tenn.)</i> , 1855 May 26 (p. 3–4 only)

¹ County boundaries changed dramatically between nineteenth century census enumerations. Researchers can follow changes graphically in William Thorndale and William Dollarhide’s *Map Guide to the U. S. Federal Censuses, 1790–1920* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1987).

- 165 *Dresden Gossiper (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 1866 Jun–Nov
 12 *Dresden Weekly Democrat (Dresden, Tenn.)*
 5:32 1876 Jul 7
 7:33 1878 Aug 26
 7:39 1878 Sep 6
- 11 *Our Country (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 1:52 1880 Apr 23 – 2:27 1880 Oct 29
 11 *Dresden Democrat (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 2:29 1880 Nov 12 – 3:24 1881 Dec
 16 (missing scattered issues)
- 12 *Dresden Democrat (Dresden, Tenn.)*
 2:29 1880 Nov 12 – 2:31 1880 Nov 26
 2:37 1881 Jan 7 – 3:34 1881 Dec 16 (scattered issues missing)
- 134 *The Republican (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 1890 Apr 2 only
 11, 12 *The Republican (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 4:51 1892 Apr 8 only
 12, 134 *The Enterprise (Dresden, Tenn.)*, 1:24 1883 Jun 29 only
- 11 *Dresden Enterprise (Dresden, Tenn.)*
 10:13 1892 Apr 22 – 10:17 1892 May 20
 15:43 1897 Dec 10 – 15:46 1897 Dec 31
- 1417 *Dresden Enterprise (Dresden, Tenn.)* [first filming]
 3:6 1890 Feb 28
 10:13–14 1892 Apr 22–29
 10:16 1892 May 20
 11:11 1893 Dec 10
 15:45 1897 Dec 24
 21:1 1903 Feb 13 – 24:52 1907 Mar 1
Dresden Enterprise (Dresden, Tenn.) [second filming]
 Images on the second filming have sharper focus than the first filming, but a large
 number of damaged issues
- 1478 23:2 1905 Mar 3 – 23:44 1905 Dec 22
 23:50 1906 Feb 2 – 25:45 1907 Dec 28
- 1479 25:46 1908 Jan 4 – 25:52 1908 Mar 6
- 1418–1477 *Dresden Enterprise and Sharon Tribune (Dresden, Tenn.)* [first filming]
 26:1 1908 Mar 13 – 26:52 1909 Mar 5
 29:26 1911 Sep 15
 30:3 1912 Apr 12 – 31:26 1913 Sep 26
 32:2 1914 May 15 – 52:52 1934 Apr 27
 54:1 1935 May 3 – 115:52 1995 Dec 27
- 1479–1484 *Dresden Enterprise and Sharon Tribune (Dresden, Tenn.)* [second
 filming]
 Images on the second filming have sharper focus than the first filming, but a large
 number of damaged issues
 26:1 1908 Mar 13 – 28:41 1910 Dec 23
 28:[42] 1911 Jan 6 – 42:13 1924 Jul 25
- 1496–1447 *Enterprise and Sharon Tribune*, 1996–1997 Apr
 1498–1499 *Enterprise*, 1997 May–1998

Greenfield

- 11, 13 *Greenfield Sentinel (Greenfield, Tenn.)*, 1:12 1880 May 21 – 1:11 [sic]
 1880 Jun 6
- 11 *Greenfield Times (Greenfield, Tenn.)*, 6:52 1899 Sep 1 only
- 13 *Greenfield Times (Greenfield, Tenn.)*, 14:48 1908 Dec 1 (incomplete)
- 13 *Greenfield Gazette (Greenfield, Tenn.)*
 36:25 1931 May 14
 39:7 1935 Feb 1
 40:3 1936 Jan 3 – 12:47 [sic] 1937 Dec 24
- 1486 59:7 1953 Feb 13
 59:9 1953 Feb 27

Martin

- 1324–1325 *The Martin Mail*, 6:13 1891 Apr 10; 12:2 1897 Jan 8 – 36:2 1921 Jan 14
- 1326–1335 *Weakley County Press and Martin Mail*, 1:1 1921 Jun 21 – 56:26 1942 Jul
 3
 Numbering continues from *Martin Mail* with issue 36:4 1921 Jun 27.
- 1318 *The County Times*, 1:5 1937 Mar 30 – 6:14 1942 Jun 19
- 1346–1374 *Weakley County Press, Martin Mail and County Times*, 56:27 1942 Jul 10
 – 88:8 1975 Feb 20
- 1375–1416 *Weakley County Press*, 88:9 1975 Feb 27 – 110:104 1995 Dec 28
- 1487–1495 *Weakley County Press*, 1996–1998
- 1121–1123 *Volette (Martin, Tenn.)*, 1929–1971
- 1124–1131 *Pacer (Martin Tenn.)*, 1971–2000

Sharon

- 12, 134 *The Sharon Tribune (Sharon, Tenn.)*, 6:9 1896 Sep 25 only

Church records

- 193 Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church (Martin, Tenn.) records, 1824–1969
- 199 Thompson Creek Baptist Church (Como, Tenn.) records, 1831–1982
- 200–201 First Baptist Church (Dresden, Tenn.) records, 1910–1983
- 202 Martin Church of Christ (Martin, Tenn.) records, 1874–1899
- 213 Jolley Springs Missionary Baptist Church (Weakley County, Tenn.)
 records, 1888–1983
- 215 New Hope United Methodist Church (Chestnut Glade, Tenn.) records,
 1831–1983
- 224 Hickory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Weakley County,
 Tenn.) records, 1866–1928
- 225 Mt. Moriah Methodist Church (Weakley County, Tenn.) records, 1913–
 1958
- 226 Olivet United Methodist Church (Weakley County, Tenn.) records, 1887–
 1982
- 234 First Presbyterian Church (Greenfield, Tenn.) records, 1868–1962
- 237 New Salem Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Weakley County, Tenn.)
 records, 1874–1978

Manuscripts

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 246–248 | U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Choctaw Agency. Emigration letters, 1826–1859 |
| 394 | Daniel Montgomery papers, 1788–1964 |
| 395 | Conner family papers, 1817–1940 |
| 399 | Archelous Hughes diary, 1867–1884 |
| 400 | Ed and Archelous Hughes diary, 1864– |

Maps

- | | |
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| 404 | Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps (Dresden) |
| 405 | Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps (Gleason, Greenfield) |
| 408 | Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps (Martin) |
| 410 | Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps (Sharon, South Fulton) |

Municipal records

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| | Martin |
| 1524 | Martin City cemetery records v.1–3, 1885–1889 |

Weakley County Public Records Microfilm

Chancery Court

Under Tennessee's judicial structure, chancery court judged cases involving actions that did not have fixed legal penalties, typically cases of dispute, breach, damage, or contract. These cases were typically suits between individuals but could involve an individual and the state or municipal jurisdictions. Contested estate (probate) matters were resolved in chancery court. Cases involving actions for which the law specified statutory consequences (*i.e.*, criminal penalty) were referred to the criminal court.

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| | Chancery Court minutes |
| 135 | 1827–1856 |
| 136 | 1856–1872 |
| 137 | 1872–1875 |
| 138 | 1876–1880 |
| 147 | 1828–1846 |
| 148 | 1853–1866 |
| 149 | 1866–1871 |

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Other records

142	Guardian letters, 1874–1901; Settlements, 1843–1851
143	Guardian settlements, 1854–1885
144	Guardian settlements, 1897–1909; Estate inventories, 1852–1858
145	Estate inventories, 1858–1881
146	Estate inventories, 1880–1904
150	Vital statistics and wills, 1828–1912
151	Wills, Order books, Guardian and administration land sales, 1861–1904

Circuit Court

The county's circuit court tries state criminal cases, as well as cases brought between individuals for a wide variety of causes, from debt to wrongful death. All these matters were questions revolving around actions governed by statute, or rather, cases about the imposition of a specific legal consequence.

Circuit Court minutes

139	1844–1856
140	1857–1869
141	1869–1876

Register [i.e., registrar] of Deeds

Survey books

181, 1523	1784–1857
1522	Item 1: 1820 Dec–1885 Aug Item 2: vol. B1, 1827–1837 Apr

Deeds

152	Direct and reverse indices to deeds, 1815–1876
153	Direct and reverse indices to deeds, 1876–1908
154	1822–1833 Jan
155	1833 Jan–1838 Nov
156	1838 Nov–1844 Sep
157	1844 Sep–1850 Jan
158	1850 Jan–1853 Aug
159	1853 Sep–1856 Jan
160	1856 Feb–1858 Jul
161	1858 Jul–1862 Jun
162	1862 Jul–1868 Oct
163	1868 Nov–1871 Jan
164	1871 Jan–1873 Feb
166	1873 Feb–1875 Mar

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167	1875 Mar–1878 Jan
168	1878 Jan–1880 Dec
169	1880 Dec–1883 Apr
170	1883 Apr–1885 Jan
171	1885 Jan–1886 Nov
172	1886 Nov–1888 Sep
173	1888 Sep–1890 Feb
174	1890 Jan–1891 Nov
175	1891 Nov–1893 Nov
176	1893 Nov–1896 Jan
177	1896 Jan–1898 Feb
178	1898 Feb–1899 Oct
179	1899 Oct–1900; Trust deeds, 1868 Jul–1873 Jul

Tax Duplicates

180	Tax books, 1842–1866
182	1867–1874
183	1875–1878
184	1879–1882
185	1883–1887
186	1889–1891
187	1892–1895
188	1896–1898
189	1899–1900

County Clerk

Marriages

1500	1843 Jun–1866 Jan
1501	1866 Apr–1886 Nov
1502	vol. C: 1886 Nov–1898 Nov
1503	vol. D, F: 1898 Nov–1910 Jun
1504	1910 Jul–1913 Nov
1513	1913 Nov–1915 Jun
1505	1915 Jun–1918 Feb
1506	1918 Feb–1921 Mar
1507	1921 Mar–1925 May
1508	1925 Jun–1930 Mar
1509	1930 Mar–1937 Mar
1510	1935 Jun–1941 Jun
1511	1941 Jun–1955 Dec

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Marriage bonds (colored)

1515	1880 Mar–1914 Aug
1513	1886 Apr–1902 Aug
1514	1902 Sep–1914 Nov
1512	vol. 6: 1914 Nov–1974 Aug

Marriage bonds (white)

1512	1846 Nov–1854 Jul
1514	vol. A–B: 1878 Nov–1888 Nov
1516	vol. C–D: 1888 Nov–1897 Jan
1517	1900 Jan–1903 Oct
1518	1903 Oct–1907 Apr
1519	1907 Apr–1910 Jun

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