

Historical Resources on Microfilm:
Perry County, Tennessee

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West Tennessee Heritage Study Center
Univ. of Tennessee at Martin

Perry County

Perry County was one of seventeen counties formed to organize the land west of the Tennessee River known as the Western District. Settlers in southern Humphreys County petitioned for organization as a new county in September, 1819. Two months later the legislature acted to create Perry County, named for Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, naval hero of the War of 1812. The original boundaries were foursquare and the county straddled the Tennessee River. The county seat was first established west of the river at Perryville.

County boundaries were adjusted northward by an addition of territory along the line with Humphreys County less than a year later (1820 Jul 26). Perry's boundaries were more precisely defined by an act dated 1821 Nov 14, but the legislature played with minor adjustments for years. Fortunately, after Perry's original division from Humphreys County, the northern boundary remained relatively fixed, shifted only 1868 Mar 7 and 1870 Mar 5. To the east the Perry/Hickman line was affected in acts of 1852 Feb 25, 1854 Mar 3, 1867 Feb 25, 1868 Mar 7, 1869 Feb 19. Perry's southern boundary with Wayne County shifted frequently, including acts dating 1825 Nov 30, 1837 Dec 27, 1840 Jan 27 (which repealed the act immediately previous to it), 1845 Nov, 1846 Jan 15, 1852 Feb 21, 1856 Feb 29, 1860 Mar 7, 1891 Mar 17.

The northern boundary west of the river between Perry and Benton County was adjusted less frequently, but two laws dating 1836 Feb 20, 1843 Dec 21 each contributed changes. In November, 1845 Perry County was divided to create Decatur county from lands lying west of the Tennessee River. The division took effect 1846 Apr 6. Perryville was retained as the county seat for Decatur (until it was moved to Decaturville) and a new county seat for Perry was needed. For two years between 1846 and 1848, the Perry court met at the Harris farm, about four miles south of present-day Linden. A new wood-frame courthouse was constructed at Linden in 1849. This is said to have burned during the Civil War, destroying a body of records. A new brick courthouse was built in 1868 which operated until a fire on New Year's Day 1928 consumed the building entirely. The present structure in Linden was constructed in 1928–29.

An attempt was made in 1869 to dissolve Lewis County and return portions taken from Maury, Hickman, Lawrence, Wayne, and Perry counties. The dissolution was repealed in 1870 Feb 28. Finally, a detailed act dating 1899 Mar 25 fixed several boundary concerns between Lewis, Perry, and Wayne counties.

A compilation of the legislative acts affecting Perry County boundaries (cited by date but not legislative session or laws volume) can be found in Connie Copeland Young and Francine Sullivan Copeland's book *Perry County Tennessee Land Survey Abstracts, 1820–1890* (Irving, Tex.: Connie Young, 1995).

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Book and film holdings of the West Tennessee Heritage Study Center may be searched via the Internet by pointing a browser to <<http://wthsc.utm.edu>> and following the link to the Paul Meek Library catalogue.

MICROFILM

WTHSC Film reel	Contents
<u>Federal census</u> ¹	
456	1820 census
465	1830 census
482	1840 census
513	1850 census, free schedule
527	1850 census, slave schedule
558	1860 census, free schedule
574	1860 census, slave schedule
617	1870 census
667	1880 census
684	1890 census, Union veterans and widows schedules
720	1900 census
760	1910 census
803	1920 census
851	1930 census

<u>Maps</u>	
407	Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps (Linden)

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¹ County boundaries changed dramatically between nineteenth 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).