

Inaugural Issue 2009

Discover

CHESTER COUNTY



Take a tour with us through historic Chester County, Tennessee.

www.chestercountychamber.com

Welcome to Henderson & Chester County.

Whether you are a new or long-time resident, a welcome visitor, a short-term FHU student, or a prospective industry or business owner, we're thrilled that you are taking a closer look at Chester County, Tennessee! Ours is a county with vision...but not visions of high traffic and tall buildings. City and county officials, along with the Henderson/Chester County Chamber of Commerce, see continued progress on the horizon - but not at the cost of sacrificing our quiet and charming small-town atmosphere. From the steps of our beautiful and historic county courthouse to the slightly rolling hills and lovely lake at Chickasaw State Park, the physical attributes of our county are a great asset, yet seemingly small compared to the heart of its hospitable residents.

Embodying the literal meaning of "The Volunteer State," Chester County residents roll up their sleeves and get involved in our communities, our schools, our congregations, and our workplaces. Many non-profit programs or organizations, such as Relay for Life or the Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, are heartened to have so much local volunteer support. There's always room for newcomers to jump in with both feet, so don't hesitate to get involved!

Chester County has met the requirements to be a Tennessee Three-Star Community, an annual award for community and economic preparedness, since 2005. This important Governor's certification encourages communities to look onward and upward with the creation of strategic planning and specific goals for growth and increased quality of life. Definitely not just busy work to shelve after its completion, Commissioner Matt Kisber is now using these strategic plans to strengthen the case for industries to choose Tennessee.

One of the many positive outgrowths of the Three-Star certification is that the Leadership Chester program was born. The monthly educational sessions include a closer look at local education, social issues, health-care, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, law enforcement, and state and local government. Educating its participants on the strengths and weaknesses of our home county fosters in them both a strong sense of pride and a will to help bridge any pinpointed gaps.

Speaking of education, our local education system is known for its excellence - boasting high ACT scores, low dropout rates, and a wealth of talented teachers. Also, unlike some other counties of the same size, Chester County is fortunate to have an institute of higher education right on its doorstep. Freed-Hardeman University is an accredited, four-year Christian institution dedicated to teaching her students "How to live and how to make a living." The fine arts communities within both of these local education systems are strong and enjoy providing quality theatre to the area residents.

Other recreational opportunities are available locally also, such as coffee shops, antique stores, gift shops, and a growing number of restaurants. Youth sports leagues are also a big part of life here in Chester County. And what would a county be without a festival? Each year, Chester County residents look forward to the BBQ Festival, which has been held on our charming courthouse square for almost 32 years. Offering live entertainment and two Thomas Media talent shows, the court house lawn is the place to be to greet friends and shop with the various vendors, all while enjoying our famed Chester County pulled-pork barbeque! This year the BBQ Festival is set for October 1st-3rd and we anticipate having the largest crowd yet.

On the following pages, you will find historical facts about our county, along with an event calendar and important information about living in Chester County. We would like to thank our advertisers for supporting our community in this endeavor, as we know this publication will become a wonderful resource for our residents and everyone else who visits our area.

We hope you choose to live, work, and play in Chester County!



Kristen Hester Hicks
Executive Director
Henderson/Chester County Chamber of Commerce



HENDERSON
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Calendar of Events



HENDERSON
CHESTER COUNTY
Chamber of Commerce

2009:
Freed-Hardeman University's Horizons
July 5-10 – Youth Camp at FHU
FHU's Christian Training Series - July 12-16
BBQ Festival Pageant - August
Chickasaw State Park Craft Show - September
Rick Jones Memorial Golf Tournament
September 12
Chester County BBQ Festival - October 1-3
Annual West TN Children's Home Harvest Festival - October
Chickasaw Craft Fair - October 10-11
Memphis Wrestling at CCHS to benefit Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse - October
FHU Baseball Team's Haunted Trail at Mid-South Youth Camp - October 29-31
Lighting of Chickasaw State Park - December
Annual Chamber Christmas Parade
December 3
Freed-Hardeman University's Annual Benefit Dinner – Speaker: Mike Huckabee
December 4

2nd Annual Holiday Tour of Homes to benefit Carl Perkins Center - December 6
2010:
Annual Lions Club Implement Sale - January 30
Freed-Hardeman University's Annual Bible Lectureship - February 7-12
Annual Chamber Membership and Awards Banquet - February
Annual Dinner & Auction - Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse - March 27
Egg Hunt at Chickasaw State Park - March
Freed-Hardeman University's Makin' Music
April 9-10
Chester County Chamber Golf Tournament @ The Bear Trace of Chickasaw - April
Annual West TN Children's Home Benefit Golf Tournament - May
Lions Club Pancake Breakfast - May
Chickasaw State Park Craft Show - May
Chester County Air Show - May
Lion's Club Tennessee Walking Horse Show
June 26

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The Discover Chester County book is produced by Bramblett Group and printed by Brothers Printing. See our ads on page 27.

To submit or suggest information for next year's issue please e-mail the Chamber of Commerce: discover@chestercountychamber.com

Book Online at www.chestercountychamber.com

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Top: Record Snow, March 2009
 Left: Cabin at Chickasaw
 Right: Lake Placid
 Photography by Jason Bramblett



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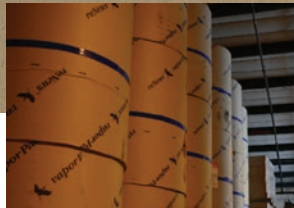
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JUST A GLIMPSE: HENDERSON



HENDERSON

the seat of Chester County, is located in the central southwest area of the state about 85 miles northeast of Memphis, 135 miles southwest of Nashville, and 15 miles southeast of Jackson. The history of Henderson begins in 1857 when the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was being constructed. At that time the only cleared land in the area consisted of farms. In 1860 a few families from Henderson County moved into the area.

A depot was built by the railroad company, and the town's businesses sprang up near the depot and railroad tracks. Mr. W.P. "Polk" Bray built the first business house in the fall of 1860 on what was called Front Row, now known as Front Street. At that time, the town was known as Dayton, a name it kept until after the Civil War. Building was slow until after the war. Only two or three businesses were here when the Civil War started, all of them located on Front Row. The war brought the building of the town to an abrupt halt. During the war the small town was occupied by Union troops protecting the depot.

Immediately after the war building activities resumed, and the name of the community was changed from Dayton to Henderson's Station, but finally shortened to Henderson.

This probably occurred because most of the people settling here were from the neighboring Henderson County. In 1870 there were about a half-dozen stores here, and in 1871 houses began to spring up in different places. In 1873 Dr. J.D. Smith, Sr., who owned most of the land in the area, began to lay out streets and sell lots. A map made by a Philadelphia firm in 1877 showed the location of all the business houses and home owners in the rapidly growing town.

The majority of Henderson's businesses were located just off of Front Street and along Main Street, where the downtown area is today. On South Washington and Union Streets, there were also clothing stores, a millinery shop, creamery, barber shop, feed store, livery stable, and blacksmith shop. A grocery store, drug store, dry goods store, and a hardware store quickly sprung up. By 1877, several business firms were being run by J.D. Smith, Jr., Case O'Neal, R.J. Barham, T. H. Bagwell, Dr. T.A. Smith, H.D. Franklin, A.S. Saylor and John West. On West Main Street across the railroad (which did not have a bridge over it) was a hotel and rooming house owned by a Mrs. Conyers that later became the Woodard Hotel. The First Baptist Church was on a lot where the City Cemetery is now.

After the formation of Chester County in 1879, the location of the county seat was left to popular vote. Two towns, Henderson and Montezuma, were placed in nomination. In 1882 an overwhelming majority of the electorate chose Henderson. On March 11, 1901 Henderson was incorporated by an act of the Tennessee legislature. The population at that time was about 1000. A city council was elected. J.B. Hardeman was elected the first mayor. H.C. Ashcraft was chosen city recorder, and M.J. Ozier was named city attorney. Soon after the incorporation, a sewage system was installed and sidewalks and water works were built, but it was still several years before the streets were paved. Telephone service arrived with the Cumberland Telephone Company in 1898, and electricity arrived around 1915. Henderson has had three county courthouses. The present one is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was built circa 1914.

Henderson has made its name on the national stage more than once. Although neighboring McNairy County was home to the legendary Sheriff Buford Pusser, his biographical movie *Walking Tall* was filmed in Chester

PHOTO:
Front Street Henderson,
Tennessee, Circa 1900

You can find several locals who were used as extras in the film. When Tennessee was honored at the Smithsonian Institution Folklife Festival in 1986, Henderson residents Waynell Jones and Bill and Minnie Howard were the featured experts on blues music and open-pit barbecue cooking. Country music superstar Eddy Arnold called Henderson home, as does 2002 American Idol finalist George Trice.



Frix-Jennings Clinic. If you come in the fall, enjoy the annual Chester County Barbecue Festival held on the Courthouse lawn. Let it be said that Henderson is truly a great place to visit and a grand place to live!

PHOTO:
Milan-Sitka Building

PHOTO:
Bell's Drive-In

PHOTO:
Buggy decorated for
Holiday Parade, Circa
1900

--Billie Noles and Lee Nell King

A few must-sees for the resident and visitor include Bell's Drive-In, winner of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative's "Best Burger This Side of Heaven" award for six consecutive years; Chickasaw Golf Course, the Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course; Chickasaw State Park, just nine miles west of town; historic architecture; and gelato and espresso at Besso's Creamery next to the



JUST A GLIMPSE:

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY



du Christ, in Verviers, Belgium. Since 1919, the school has been formally affiliated with the Churches of Christ.

The first institute of higher education in Chester County was a private high school/college directed by A.S. Sayles and Helen West. Incorporated by an act of the Tennessee General Assembly on November 30, 1869, the Henderson Male and Female Institute counted approximately 150 students drawn from the local populace and surrounding region. The charter was amended, changing its name to Henderson Masonic Male and Female Institute (1877) and then to West Tennessee Christian College (1885). George M. Savage, a Baptist minister, served as president of these three schools before

assuming the presidency of Jackson's Union University in the late-nineteenth century.

SINCE 1869, higher education has been active in shaping the future of Chester County. The communities of Henderson, Montezuma, Plainview and others hosted public and private schools and colleges. Population shifts, funding restrictions, and a growing college in Henderson led schools like the Jackson District High School and the Howard Seminary to close or merge with other schools. By 1960, all primary and secondary schools were consolidated, and Freed-Hardeman College (as it was then known) remained the only college in the county.

Now called Freed-Hardeman University, this school and its predecessors have dominated the county's educational focus for 140 years. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, FHU offers twelve degrees in more than forty majors, on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The residential campus occupies approximately 130 acres in downtown Henderson. Two satellite campuses exist—the Graduate School of Education in Memphis and the International Studies campus at L'Iglise

This school, whose buildings sat on the site now dominated by FHU's Old Main Administration Building, succeeded in the face of many immediate obstacles. At the time of HMFI's incorporation, Chester County was divided between Hardeman, Henderson, Madison, and McNairy counties. Henderson was then called Henderson's Station and experiencing a boom period as post-war redevelopment was brought in with the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Before 1861 there were only six businesses and fewer than twenty residences. Reconstruction-era development caused a boom period for Henderson's Station's business community. Times were good for businessmen, accountants, and secretaries—three programs in which HMFI specialized.

The original school sat amongst some of Henderson's finest residences, on the corner of Main Street and Cason Street. Two residences from this neighborhood remain today. Additional facilities were erected across Main Street, at the corner of Main Street and White Avenue. WTCC built a large, wooden, two-story structure on the

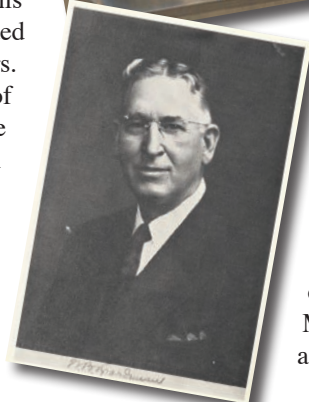
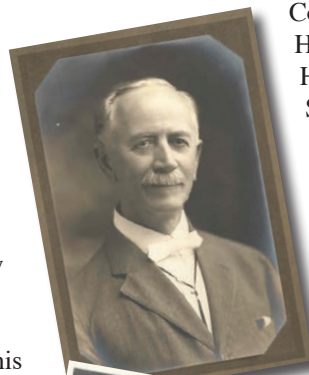


PHOTO:
Old Main, Freed-
Hardeman University,
circa 1907

RIGHT, TOP:
A. G. Freed

RIGHT, BOTTOM:
N. B. Hardeman

site where the Bulliner-Clayton Visual Arts Center now stands. In 1897, Mr. and Mrs. J.F. Robertson of Crockett County donated a large sum of money in honor of their daughter Georgie. A new brick building was built with the donation and the school renamed Georgie Robertson Christian College.

GRCC was promising. More than 400 students were in residence each academic year. Disagreements over music in worship and missionary societies caused a split between co-Presidents A.G. Freed and E. C. McDougle in 1905. Attendance and financial support dropped off significantly. Freed moved to Texas and his absence had rippling effects: "While he was absent," an unnamed writer said in 1911, "the school affairs of Henderson were declining and rapidly coming to a close." By 1907, the Henderson school faced imminent collapse. Freed resigned his position in Texas after a battle with typhoid fever and returned to Tennessee at the urging of friends.

National Teacher's Normal and Business College prepared to open its doors to college and primary students in 1908, but it set a unique tone from the beginning. President Freed and Vice-President N. B. Hardeman had taken bold steps away from the historic pattern of educational facilities in town and wanted to ensure a successful reception by "all interested parties." NTNBC was preparing to do what all the previous schools had not been able to do: survive. Citizens were taking sides on the new school. Morale was low, and the nation was in the grips of the Panic of 1907. The economy was in recession and the stock market was at half of the preceding year's value. Although school facilities existed, they were rapidly decaying.

President Freed wrote, "Henderson [was selected] as the ideal school town. It is an historic education center. It is located on the beautiful rolling highlands of West Tennessee and is noted for its healthful climate and varied scenery. The town is situated in a forest of young oaks. The neat cottage homes, grassy lawns and the intelligent

Christian character of our citizens make Henderson a choice location. The very air a student breathes inspires him to a higher and nobler life. [The people] always manifest a deep and kindly interest in the students, who are cordially welcomed into our churches, homes and society."

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During seventy years as FHC, tuition increased from \$200 per academic year to \$9,000 per year. The campus expanded rapidly in number of buildings, acreage, and programs offered. As a result, the school's charter was amended to change the school's name one last time to University in February 1990. Graduate programs in Biblical studies, counseling and education were added. Enrollment hovers around 2000 students between the Henderson and Memphis campuses.

The school's history includes not only the "college" crowd, but also the citizens of Henderson and a healthy mix of the two. Spencer Rice was a local African-American resident who served as the janitor from 1906 to 1946. Known for his uncanny impersonations of the faculty, Mr. Rice was included in school photographs, as were many others who played an active role in the school's identity. All of the school's support staff was composed

of local residents. They are largely responsible for the existence and success of what we know today as Freed-Hardeman University. That trend continues today, as FHU is the largest single employer in Chester County. For more information, go to www.fhu.edu and www.volunteervoices.org.

--Erin Adams, with research added by Holly Roeder and Dr. J.D. Thomas



PHOTO:
Old Main, 1939

AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN CHESTER COUNTY

Jacks Creek

THE history of African-Americans in Jacks Creek goes back to 1881 when land for the Beech Springs Baptist Church was purchased from Isaac L. McCallum. At this time, Jacks Creek was located in Henderson County, as this was before Chester County was established. Some of the early African-American settlers of Jacks Creek were Ned Trice, Samuel Trice, Thomas Beaver, Jerry Barham, Marshall Trice, Tom Trice, Bob Hart, Elbert Barham, L.E.F. Ross, and Wallace Thomas. Most of these people were landowners. Some of their descendants moved away and some still live in Chester County.

A one-room frame building was erected soon after the land was purchased. This building was used for Sunday School, worship service, and an elementary school; it was located about one mile from Jacks Creek on Highway 22A. The church was named for a very large spring which is just across the highway from the site of the first building. The spring was surrounded by beech trees and for a long time, furnished water for the Beech Springs membership and hundreds of travelers who passed by each year.

The first building was destroyed by fire in 1922. The Ruby Masonic Lodge and the Church went in together and built a two-story structure that was used for worship service, an elementary school and lodge meetings. In 1927, this building was also destroyed by fire. Another one-room building was built for the church.

African-Americans had raised money to purchase land for a school. They purchased land from Robert McCorkle and deeded it to the county, where a two-classroom school with lunchroom a near the church building was built. After consolidation, they were able to purchase it back from the county and build their present church building on the lot where the school was.



In recent years, Jacks Creek has had people doing various kinds of work. We have had some carpenters, TV repairmen, teachers, electricians, beauticians, and health care workers. Leon Johnson, the assistant police chief of Chester County, and Marcus Thomas, a deputy sheriff, are originally from Jacks Creek.

Oak Grove

Oak Grove is located off Highway 100 East on the Glendale Road. It is primarily a farming community. Some of the residents work in factories in Chester and Madison Counties.



Some of the earliest settlers were Luther Burgess, John and Ona Howard, Tommy Shields, Luke Massengill, Roger Ruth, Luke Trice, Redge Ruth, Ben Foxx, Sam Hardin, and Sol and Mary Hardin. Most of these people moved here from Mississippi. Some were sharecroppers and some were landowners. These early settlers and their offspring wanted a school and a place to worship. Theirs was the second school building to be erected in the county. The school was built on land given by private citizens and, since it was

built in a wooded area, Oak Grove seemed an appropriate name. Thus, it became Oak Grove School.

Roger Ruth was the first African-American insurance agent in the county. Dr. Elizabeth Ann Saunders, a professor in the School of Education at FHU and former city alderwoman, is the granddaughter of the late Roger Ruth. Across the road from the Oak Grove church is a subdivision where beautiful homes are being built. The Evergreen subdivision is on a part of the Roger Ruth farm.

The Oak Grove Church of Christ was established in 1918 by Marshall Keeble. In the early days of the church, the congregation held church services in the community school building. They later built a frame building and then a brick building. The Base Croom family was instrumental in helping establish this church. Just recently, this congregation has built a new building. Their minister is Dr. Samuel Jones. Dr. Jones is an instructor at FHU and a member of the Chester County Board of Education.

Lovies Barham, an African-American employee of Chester County Bank also lives near the church. Bill and Helen Howard were the children of Ona and John Howard. Bill cooked delicious open-pit barbecue for the people of Chester and surrounding counties. In 1986, they were invited to the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., where Bill cooked barbecue and Helen baked southern pies. Waynell Jones, a worker at FHU, played the guitar and was a blues singer invited to go to Washington with the Howards. Hosea and Ruby Trice lived near and worshipped at Oak Grove church. They operated a café in downtown Henderson for many years.

In December 2004, Dr. Larry Ivery, previously the minister at Oak Grove Church of Christ established a Church of Christ at the West Tennessee Children's Home where he is Executive Director. The next year, they moved their place of worship to a store front on Church Street in Henderson. It is now the Church Street Church of Christ. Dr. Ivery's wife, Dianne, is a teacher at Chester County Junior High and his son, Tony, is assistant principal at Chester County Middle School.

Montezuma

Montezuma is a small rural community about five miles southwest of Henderson. Some of the early settlers of Montezuma were Calvin Spears, Sim Croom, Edgar Johnson, Rufus Stewart, Frank Stewart, Will Sneed, Jim Sneed, Bliss Thomas, Lee Allen, Andy Rowsey, John Johnson, and Ona Johnson. Andy Rowsey was a preacher and carpenter. Ona Johnson was also a preacher.

Most were landowners and farmers. Like so many small communities in the South, a lot of these people and their descendants moved to Northern cities to find work. A few went to work in local factories and some still own their farms.

Like most African-Americans, they knew they needed a school and a place to worship. The C.M.E. Church



PHOTO:
Last bale of cotton
brought to the
Talley Gin

owned the property which would house Montezuma's first school. This school was destroyed by a tornado. Land on the opposite side of the road was purchased from Mrs. Carl McNatt and in the early 1930s, a new one-room building was constructed. This building was torn down after school consolidation and a dwelling was built on the lot. Worship services are still held at the C.M.E. Church across the road.

Montezuma's community center meets many social needs today.

Masseville

Masseville is a small community located in the southwest portion of Chester County. A part of Masseville is in Chester County, and a part of it is in McNairy County.

In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a number of African-Americans living in Masseville. Some were landowners but most were sharecroppers. All were farmers. Some of the early settlers were Bill Nettles, Bill Johnson, Bud Moten, Bobby Holmes, Jasper Stovall, Pump Croom, John Floyd, and Will Spencer.

The first school in the Masseville community was built on the Bill Nettles farm and was called the Needmore School. This building burned, and classes were held in the Hatchie Church for some time. In the early 1930s, a one-room school was built on the Chester and McNairy County line to accommodate the children from both counties. The name was then changed to Masseville. When you finished the 8th grade at this school, you had to drop out of school or board away from home, as there was no transportation for African-American children. The first bus was a car driven by Troy Moten in 1938.

Today, many people have moved away. The church building is still there. The last pastor was Brother Henry Sanders.

JUST A GLIMPSE: SWEETLIPS



"WHERE are you from," is a question I've been asked several times over the years. My reply, "Sweetlips." "You're kidding, right?" is their response. We take a pretty good ribbing about our name. Story is, a traveler came through more than 133 years ago. Being very weary and thirsty, he stopped at a spring, scooped up a handful of water and took a drink. He said, "Oh, this is so sweet to my lips." We do have good water. Some say the people then started calling the settlement Sweetlips. One of the oldest residents says the community was in existence before the Civil War.

Sweetlips was once a thriving little community. It had a post office, general store, saw and gristmill, blacksmith shop, cotton gin owned by J.A. Miller, doctor's office, school, and two churches. The original log school/church building was located south of the Sweetlips Cemetery. The building burned and a new school was built in 1937, which is now the Sweetlips Store. The school had two rooms and was heated by an old pot-bellied stove. Some of the children were paid five cents a week to get to school early enough to build a fire so it would be warm. Different families contracted with the school to cut wood. One of only two teachers, Miss Lessie Barton owned a 1929 Model-A Ford which can still be seen running the roads of Sweetlips and has graced the Henderson Christmas Parade. For five to ten cents, you could see a movie at the school. Many residents speak of the time Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs performed at Sweetlips School around 1952. Sweetlips resident Joe Kinchen played guitar with the "Tennessee Plow Boy" Eddy Arnold at the store and WDXI in Jackson. Cousin Tuny, a local TV personality, also graced the stage of Sweetlips School.

Sweetlips Store is the hub of the community. There have been a long line of owners: Ward Busby, D.C. Busby, Donnie Bullman, Joe Fowler, Leonard and Tennie Pusser, Tommy Koonch, Jr. and Francis Brooks, Jerry and Christie Newsom, and Lou and Dianne Williams. Most folks say if you want to know anything, go to the store and sit a spell. The store has t-shirts, cookbooks, and postcards for sale. Also, they display old photos of the school and its students and are always looking for photos to add to the collection. While you are browsing, they would be happy to serve you sandwiches, pizza or a slug burger.

We still have a little spark left! We have our community center and fire station, Sweetlips Store, Sweetlips Greenhouse, and Cross Timbers Sawmill. Sweetlips Store and Sweetlips Greenhouse each have a website: www.sweetlipsstore.com and www.sweetlipsgreenhouse.com. We have three churches: Hopewell Baptist Church, built in 1860, which will be 149 years old on October 4, 2009; Sweetlips Baptist Church, built in 1846, which is 163 years old; and Faith Baptist Church, built in 1982. There are five cemeteries: Hopewell, Sweetlips, Faith Baptist, McCann Cemetery, and Dix Cemetery.

Since I moved back home in 1985, there has been a lot of growth. We have people from all over the U.S. settling in Sweetlips. It is a quiet, peaceful place to live. Our oldest known male resident is Perry Barton, and oldest known female resident is Frances Busby. We have the Sweetlips songbird Cindy Springer Piechocki, our very own bass fishing guide Lou Williams, storyteller and court jester Neal Kinchen, some mighty fine cooks, and just good folks in general with good hearts, gifts and talents. Native son Mike Tedford flew on Air Force One to serve several presidents and was recently on a National Geographic special talking about one of former President Bush's trips to Iraq. We have had sons, fathers, and brothers serve in the military dating back to the Civil War, and a few of the ladies have served as well. Each year there are visitors from here in the United States, but we also have visitors from Germany, Holland, England and Canada.

In 2003, author Gary Gladstone included Sweetlips in a book called *Passing Gas and Other Towns Along the American Highway*. Local resident J.C. Pickett's face was the first photo in the book and on the outside back cover. "Just how sweet are those lips in Sweetlips?" I've been asked. Guess you just have to come out this way to find out. It helps to have a sense of humor to live in a place called Sweetlips. Y'all come see us!

--JoAnn Russell Greer

PHOTO:
Sweetlips School House
closed in 1960



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JUST A GLIMPSE:

ENVILLE



THE Enville community is located in Southeastern corner of Chester County on Highway 22. It is the only other incorporated town in Chester County besides the City of Henderson. The following information is the story of Enville as recorded (with some minor editing) in the book *Chester County Tennessee, 1882 to 1995* and utilized with the permission of the Chester County Historical Society.

“In 1826, Mr. Frederick Sewell arrived in McNairy County and filed a claim on some land west of what is now Enville. William Canaday and Jacob Sewell arrived at the same time and entered their claims. All three of these were in June of 1826. Some time later, Samuel Sewell, brother of Frederick, arrived and filed in what is now Enville. The log house that he

built has been occupied continuously ever since, and the well that he dug furnishes good water to this day. Today the house is owned by Vaude Sewell, a great-grandson of Samuel. Bryce Findley filed a claim in what is today the Mt. Zion Community. Joseph Findley, a son of Bryce Findley, was just a lad when they made the trip across and enjoyed telling about it in later years.

When our forefathers settled in Tennessee, their lands were in what was then northeast corner of McNairy County. In 1882, Chester County was organized and their lands fell in the new county. The community today is now known as Enville, Tennessee, and has a population of about 300.

We do not know how many years elapsed before the community was given a name. In the 1860 census, we find our people under the post office listing of Mud Creek; however, we have never heard that name used by any of the older kin.

One of the older settlers was W.R. “Dick” Hardin, who owned and operated a water mill. We do not know how long he ran the mill, but he sold it to B.C. O’Neal in 1887. This mill pond attracted large numbers of wild geese; because of these geese, the little settlement acquired the name of Wild Goose, and it wore this name for a few years.

At first Wild Goose was just a small settlement of a few widely scattered log cabins. Somewhere in the 1870’s Gus Sewell, a son of Samuel Sewell, opened a small store. A little later, in 1877, Marshall Bishop, a grandson of Samuel Sewell, put up another store, and later Sam Perry Smith put up a third one. These three little stores were down on the bank of the old mill pond. Very little

mail came to Wild Goose in those days, but in a corner of one of the little stores was the post office of Wild Goose. A few years later these stores were moved a few hundred yards west of the mill pond to higher ground, enlarged, and there they stand today. The M.E. Bishop store was operated 72 years under the same name. The others changed names.

Each year, the merchants of Wild Goose went to distant markets such as St. Louis, Louisville, KY, etc., to buy goods to replenish their stocks. Marshall Bishop, a prominent citizen and merchant, got tired of being laughed at when he told them to ship his goods to Wild Goose, Tennessee, and was instrumental in having the name changed to Enville. Enville was named in honor of B. A. Enloe, a Representative from the 8th Congressional District. There are a few old timers left today, who, with a mixture of nostalgia and humor, refer to the little town as Wild Goose.

For many years there was no school in Wild Goose. The few children of school age walked two miles north to Rotundy, a little schoolhouse which also doubled as a church occasionally. William Issac Young taught there in 1890, and N.B. Hardeman came in 1891. The little schoolhouse was of frame weatherboard construction and had no ceiling. There were no desks. Instead, there were benches about six feet long with a narrow strip for a backrest. The water came from a spring down at the foot of a steep hill, and all the pupils used one dipper.

About 1893, the school was moved to Wild Goose and in an old building where the Methodist Church now stands. Shortly after, a new one-room school house was built on the grounds where the Church of Christ now stands. This building served for school and church until the new modern elementary school was built.

In those days, every third Saturday in every month of the year was horse swapping day. Crowds of men from miles around would gather there just outside the town at a place called the “bone yard,” and farmers would bring their horses and mules to sell or trade. They had no machinery to do their work in those days, and every farmer kept plenty of mules and some horse stock for his farm work.

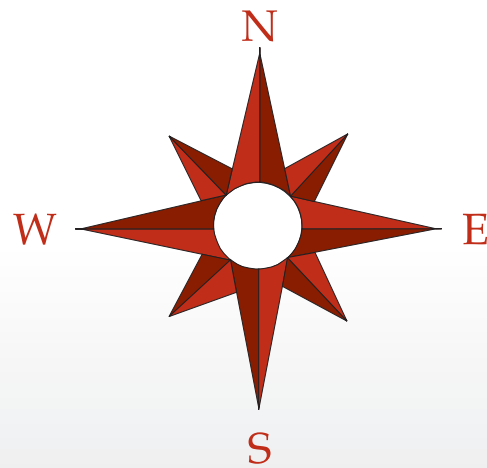
Enville is the center of a fine agricultural area and has had steady, stable growth through the past century. Its citizens always have had great pride in their schools, churches, homes and places of business. The Enville Baptist Church, built around 1900, is one of only four buildings listed in the Tennessee Register of Historic Sites in Chester County. And, as Mr. Reid stated in his history of the early part of this (the 20th) century, “Enville possesses a good citizenry and is alive to every good work.”



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JUST A GLIMPSE:

CHICKASAW STATE PARK



CHICKASAW

State Park in Chester County is one of Tennessee's most visited parks. Almost every outdoor recreational opportunity West Tennessee has to offer can be found within the borders of Chickasaw.

At one time all of West Tennessee was under the control of the Chickasaw tribe of Native Americans. The area that is now Chickasaw State Park was mostly used to hunt deer, bear and bison. The Chickasaws were forced to cede their land to the Federal Government in the Jackson Purchase of 1818. This land is now West Tennessee and the Purchase area of Kentucky.

The origins of the park began in 1934, with the Chickasaw Land Use Area Project. This project had three major objectives: to give the people that were farming poor lands the opportunity to reestablish themselves in a more favorable environment; The second was to put this land to a better use; and to create a wildlife preserve and recreation area.

Much of the work done to create the park was done by the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC, and the Works Progress Administration, or WPA. Most of the men involved were between 18 and 25. These young men were responsible for reclaiming much of the nation's natural resources. Their results can be seen all throughout the country. At Chickasaw there are several magnificent examples of the work done by the CCC and WPA. Sagamore Lodge is a stone and wood structure completed in 1937. The vast majority of the building materials were obtained from the immediate area around the lodge within the boundaries of the park. Several vacation cabins also

were built by the CCC and WPA. These cabins are still rented out and are the most popular vacation cabins at the park today. Two lakes also were created within the boundaries of Chickasaw, Lake Placid and Lake LaJoie. The concrete roller used to pack the soil of the earth dams for both lakes is on display along the shoreline of Lake Placid.

The park was opened in 1937 and was run by the Federal Government. The State of Tennessee took control in 1939, officially creating Chickasaw State Park. During 1939 to 1940 more than 171,000 people visited Chickasaw. This is almost twice as many as any other park in operation at that time. In 1955 most of Chickasaw came under the control of the Tennessee Forestry Division with the exception of the two areas around the lakes; these are still managed by Tennessee State Parks.

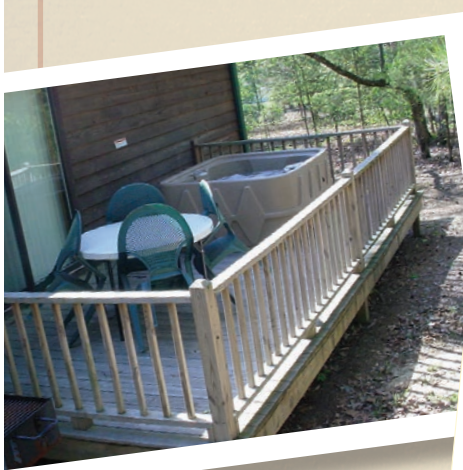
Today Chickasaw is one of the most popular of Tennessee's 53 State Parks. Last year it was visited by more than 380,000 people. Chickasaw offers numerous recreational opportunities. Swimming in Lake Placid and boat rentals are the most popular of the activities offered. There are also four playgrounds, several hiking trails, picnic facilities, horseback rentals, fishing and a restaurant on site. In the adjacent state forest, visitors can ride ATVs and horses as well as hunt in season. The park's overnight accommodations include 13 fully furnished vacation cabins, a group lodge, a group camp and three campgrounds. The campgrounds can accommodate large RVs as well as rustic tent camping. The wrangler campground is only one of two Tennessee State Park facilities where horseback riders can camp with their horses. The 18 hole golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus is an extremely popular destination for golfers. The course is one of the premier public courses in this area. No matter the reason for the trip, everyone will be able to enjoy the numerous activities and the scenic beauty of Chickasaw State Park. Come and enjoy our good nature.

For more information about the park or to make reservations call 731-989-5141 or 1-800-458-1752. www.tnstateparks.com

PHOTO LEFT:
Lakeshore Trail around
Lake Placid

PHOTO RIGHT:
Lake Placid one
summer evening

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JUST A GLIMPSE:

TALLEY TOWN

THE Talley family moved here in 1890 from Hardin County, Tennessee. As with all areas, we have seen many changes over the years. We are very close to Henderson (east of town on Hwy. 100) and can be there in five to ten minutes and we now have the privilege of using Hwy. 100-By-pass.



Many new homes have been built in our area. Presently there are two subdivisions—Oak Grove Estates and Hidden Springs. We have people from Hawaii, Ireland, Washington, Texas and other places that have moved here. They enjoy being close to town and the good school system that we have in our county.

Two of the “Walking Tall” films had connections to this area. The old Plunk house was used as the Buford Pusser home in the original movie and still stands. An area around the Talley Store and Gin was used in the second film.

Through the years farmers raised cattle, cotton and corn; they later began to raise soybeans, hay and food to last the year. We had two different Talley Stores. One was located near the Oak Grove Cumberland Presbyterian Church which, many years ago, was called Smith Hill and Whistle Hill. The oldest store was run by Riley Talley, and it had a small building attached which was a post office for a short while. It was named Melburn. That was about 1903.

The Talley Store and cotton gin were in operation for many years. I have met people who recall coming there to eat certain things at the store, how they were fed well and had lots of good memories. The store finally closed in 1982 and was run by Joe Talley. The gin was completely destroyed by a tornado in 1962 and a new one was built, which still stands. About 1900 there was another gin in the area which was near the Oak Grove Church. It burned in 1908 and was run by Newt Browder. Talley Gin was owned and operated by Riley Talley, R.A. Talley, Jr., and Dossie Talley. R.A. Talley, Jr. was Chester County’s first elected county judge.

The school that most people remember was the Sand Hill School. There were two of those. There was also a Gibson-Rosewall School. The first Sand Hill School burned and the second closed in 1961 when all of the county’s schools were consolidated. Around 1900 there was another school

which was the Freeman School.

The creek was the dividing line that determined whether students went to the country school or to town. My first three years were at Sand Hill and then we moved across the creek and began to go to Henderson.

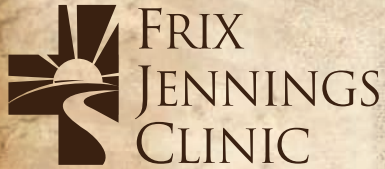
There are not too many of the oldest homes left in the community—just the Gibson place, Talley houses, two Browder houses, two Plunk houses, the Sanford house and the Robertson (Finch) place. There also standing frames of the old Horton and Morris houses. There are three cemeteries in the area—old and new Oak Grove Cemetery and the Robertson Cemetery near the Plunk home.

In our community, we have the Oak Grove Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which welcomes members of all faiths, those who have not been to church and to those seeking a church home. Part of the church’s motto is “whosoever will may come!”

I have lived in Talley Town, Chester County, Tennessee all my life except for about two and one-half years at Bethel College and one and one-half year in Memphis. When people ask me where I live, I tell them that I live in Talley Town, which is about halfway between Finger and Sweetlips! Sometimes they have to be shown that those places really do exist, but are very memorable! You are invited to come to Talley Town to establish roots or to relive many memories.

~Joanne
Talley VanCleave





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JUST A GLIMPSE:

JACKS CREEK



JACK is responsible for the name of the creek. Three legends follow Jack. He traveled with early settlers from North Carolina and drowned in the creek, was captured by Indians, or brought creek water to the camped settlers. In any case, the creek was named after Jack because he was never seen again. The community was settled in the 1820s. Presently Jacks Creek

has a population of 430 based on zip codes. Jacks Creek was first located in the Fifth Civil District of Henderson County until 1882, when Chester County was formed. An act of the Tennessee General Assembly legislated that no resident should live more than twenty-five miles from their county seat, and Chester County was created from the surrounding four counties at that time. During the Civil War, residents of this area could hear gun fire from the Battle of Shiloh. A small skirmish occurred at Jacks Creek on September 12, 1863. Ike Stone, who lived west of Jacks Creek, was a Civil War hero; he is buried in Hart Cemetery.

The Jacks Creek Post Office was established January 28, 1837 through September 22, 1866. It was re-established July 6, 1874. The present postmaster, Janice Coady Goodwin, transferred in 2004 making her the 19th postmaster. The post office is located at the Highway 100-Highway 22A intersection in the west end of a grocery store built in the late 1950s. Mail is carried in a twenty-five mile area. The Jacks Creek Bank was established 1919 and abolished 1963.

In the 1930s Jacks Creek had seven general stores, a bank, two blacksmith shops, two hamburger joints, two schools, three churches, horse smith shop, grocery stores, post office, and cotton gin. Sand Mountain, the highest peak in West Tennessee, is located two to three miles southeast of Jacks Creek. Three cotton gins have been here; the last was built in 1959 and ceased in 1977. School stopped turning out for kids to pick cotton in about 1966, when cotton-picking machines took over the farm land.

Highway 100 was built 1930-31. Jacks Creek got electricity about 1948. The pipeline north of Jacks Creek was built in 1949, but hit by a dozer in 1969, causing a mist of oil to blow over cars at Unity Church. Ma Bell came in the 1950s with eight-party-lines (community news traveled

faster). A tornado hit Jacks Creek in 1962, a funnel cloud roared over the same area in 1973, and another tornado hit the Jacks Creek area in 1985.

The presidential Air Force One will not be landing at Jacks Creek Airport. The airport was discontinued in 1957 and returned to cropland on the W.L. Smith farm, now owned by Glen and Gary Williams. The grand opening was August 13, 1938. Jacks Creek was on the flight line from Nashville to Memphis, and designated as an emergency landing field. Two runways, a beacon light, and radio control tower were erected. The field was used in WWII for practice landings by the US Army (Air Force Cadets). At one time, it was the second largest landing field in the U.S.A. Located across from this airport is the Smith home, now a National Historic Place called Hamlett-Smith Home in 1983, and is privately owned.

Students attended the Jacks Creek School. After mid-term tests in 1957, students returned to a new brick Jacks Creek School for grades 1-8 with Ruth Wells as principal. The new gym roof collapsed in March 1958. There was no school for two days, then reconstruction started. Afterwards, the 1917 white painted wood school and outdoor toilets were demolished, but thankfully, a likeness still stands as a mural in the new school. The new Jacks Creek School housed grades one through eight from January 1958 until May 1970. In August 1970 all elementary schools became grades one through six and Chester County Junior High was established with grades seven through eight. In 1975, kindergarten was added, making elementary schools K-6. A new brick addition was added to Jacks Creek School in 2003. The present Jacks Creek School has recognition as a Blue Ribbon school with 158 students in grades K-3 with eight teachers. LaTasha Phillips has been principal since 1997.

The present businesses are C & R Grocery, Industrial Paint, Hilton's Jacks Creek BBQ, Siler's Old Time BBQ, Jacks Creek Post Office and Stone Trucking. Places of worship are Apostolic Church and School of Jacks Creek, Beech Spring Baptist, Jacks Creek Church of Christ, Jacks Creek Community Church, Johnson Crossroad Primitive Baptist and Unity Baptist Church. The Jacks Creek Community Club meets the first Thursday of each month. The Jacks Creek Fire Department has an annual stew fund-raiser. The school has a fall festival. These are the social events that welcome everyone to have a country visit.

--Patsy Nobles Jones

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MIFFLIN COMMUNITY

MIFFLIN was the first town in Chester County. The first settlers entered in the early 1800s.

Calvin Scarborough built a large two-story building, a large store, an attached dwelling and a porch all around the building. There was a well in the rear and a basement under the store. The store had a barber shop and a post office. W.T. Carroll carried the mail from Luray three days a week for \$6.00 a month. Dick Taylor transported mail to Jackson and many trips were made on foot in the winter. Carl Vestel was the town barber, collecting 15 cents for a haircut and 10¢ for a shave. Izz Rogers ran a hotel and Kit Stanfill operated a blacksmith shop and Grist Mill for many years. There were three saloons in Mifflin before the Civil War.

The Buckley-Tucker home, a Landmark in Mifflin, was begun in 1840 and completed around 1844 by John H. Buckley and his wife, Mary. It was constructed of yellow poplar boards cut on the premises of 2,200 acres. Five generations have resided in the house. During the Civil War, Yankee Soldiers camped across the road, coming up to the house for meals and entertainment. It is still occupied by Fred, his wife Betty, and son, Michael Tucker. Dr. Tucker, while living there, was the first Doctor in Mifflin. Other Doctors were: Kilpatrick, D.H. Brown, D.W. Brown, Homer Brown, Dr. J.G. Anderson, and Dr. Wallace.

Mifflin's first school was located on the J.W. Butler's land and was destroyed by a storm. The church across the road was used for a school until a two-room building was built in South Mifflin about 1910. The latter building was used until 1962, when county-wide consolidation was begun. After the school closed, a pretty brick building was built for Mifflin Baptist Church. Mifflin Community has another pretty brick church, Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church about two miles from Mifflin.

There are four cemeteries in the community, Old Mifflin, New Mifflin, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and Buckley, just over the Chester County Line in Henderson County. The Buckley Cemetery is occupied mostly by Buckleeyes, Dodds, Tuckers, and Edwardes. Other merchants were Miles Jones, Homer Jones, David Vestal, Henry Linton, J.P. Inman, Henry Johnson, Lee Johnson, Junior Strong, T.L. Vest, Milt Attaway, H.E. Jones, Fred Linton, Nelson Browder, Edward Tignor, Paul Holmes, and Jimmy Wells. Jimmy Wells has owned and operated "The biggest Little Store" in Chester County since 1973. He began selling produce and kept adding. He now has a

full line of groceries, serves breakfast and lunch every day and serves fish with all the trimmings every Friday and Saturday night. He also has hardware, furniture and gasoline. He is open from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

The first Saturday in August since 1981 has been observed every year as "Mifflin Day." The people of Mifflin and surrounding towns gather in the shade with folding chairs to eat stew that has been cooked in large black pots, barbecue, ice cream and other food. They talk about old times and listen to the good music. Some even dance in the street.

Mifflin has a memorial Park with a marker in memory of Ray Harris, Chris Stanfill, and "Happy" Joe Blanton. The Ruritans built a building a few years back and the building is used for community activities. Every family has contributed to the greater community.

Roger Page graduated from Chester County High School in 1973, the University of Tennessee, College of Pharmacy in 1978 and the University of Memphis Law School in 1984. He practiced law for 14 years and was elected Circuit Judge of Madison, Chester and Henderson Counties in 1998. He was elected without opposition to another eight year term in 2006. He was the first Chester County native to serve as Judge of a Court of Record and is the first Chester County native to preside over the Chester County Circuit Court.

Randall Page is retired from the Madison County School System and has a real estate business in Madison County, Henderson, Trenton and Humboldt, and part owner of a Realfoot Motel. Cley and Gina Morris own and operate Clay's Custom Siding and Gutter Company on Highway 45.

Bill Ross and his sons, Phillip, Barry and Bart started singing and playing instruments and travelling as "The Faithmen" for about twenty years. They became ill, so Barry, his wife, and Bart are still performing and travelling as "The Ross Family."

We also have had ministers, principals, teachers, nurses, businessmen, clerks, dairy farmers, cotton and bean farmers, big cattle farmers, electricians, and Volunteer firemen. Every family has contributed to the great community.

- by Lee Nell King

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- Barry Hutcherson
- Diane Jordan
- Mike Alexander
- John Welch
- Doug Burkhead

JUST A GLIMPSE:

HICKORY CORNER & DEANBURG

HICKORY CORNER is located in the southwestern part of Chester County. It is an agricultural area—mostly row crops and some cattle. Settlers began to settle here in the early 1800s, coming primarily from North Carolina.

One settler was Dr. John S. Rodgers, who was born in 1804 and died in 1878. He owned at least a section of land and several slaves. He is buried on his farm, even though his wife and family are buried at Cave Springs. It was often said that he knew there was a thief buried at Cave Springs and he did not want to be buried there. So high on his farm near Hickory Corner Road, a marker says he “forever rests on a farm he dearly loved.” A stage line once came through our community. Today a more modern road serves the people with State Route 225. It connects State Highway 100 with U.S. Highway 64.

As the settlers increased there was a need for a church, store and school. Each was built. Prior to Hickory Corner, the children attended schools at Rucker and Cave Springs. Around 1920, a school was built on two acres about one mile from Rucker on State Route 225, formerly Hickory Corner Road. The first building burned; later a larger, more modern building was erected to serve the area until schools in Chester County were consolidated. Once Hickory Corner had one of the finest schools in the county under the leadership of Mr. Neal Ratliff. His wife also taught grades one through four. He later was killed in action during World War II.

Today the school, church, and store are gone. The New Home Baptist Church was replaced a new, modern building on Silerton Road. Like all the small country stores, ours was replaced by larger, more modern stores in Henderson. As the school left, the community saw a need for a place to have social gatherings. Today we have a community center with a modern kitchen, bathroom facilities and a large stage.

FORMERLY KNOWN as Pultite, the village of Deanburg is located in the extreme western corner of Chester County near present day Chickasaw State Park. Settled in the 1830s or 40s by a Mr. Dean, the community was destroyed in 1923 by a cyclone that left only two houses.

At one time land was so cheap in this area that a large tract of land was granted in exchange for three deer hides. Around 1935 the government purchased the land that created the state park, which opened in 1937. This recreational area still plays a major role in the recreation facilities of Chester County.

The community thrived, having a two-story schoolhouse, a saw mill and cotton gin, a depot stop on the G.M. & N. Railroad and general merchandise store. In addition to two churches, Bethel Church organized in the late 1840s and Pleasant Springs organized in 1879; both still in operation today.

Today Deanburg is a quiet community that is an easy driving distance to both Henderson and Jackson. The schoolhouse is long gone, but several older homes share the rolling peaceful land with a community center having a volunteer fire department, a convenience store and easy access to Chickasaw State Park.

- by Deborah Grantham



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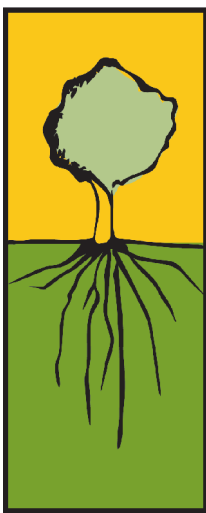
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MASSEYVILLE/ WOODVILLE COMMUNITIES



MASSEYVILLE

a small community located in the southwest portion of Chester County. It is named after Bill Massey, one of the early settlers. Part of the community is located in Chester County and part in McNairy County. Masseyville was originally fully in McNairy County, until the formation of Chester County.

Other early settlers were Elijah Hurst, E.S. Hurst, John Hodge, Andrew Maness, Judge Mitchell, Edd Siler, J.F. Fortune, John Ingle, J. L. Robinson, A.F. Smith, and A.W. Massey.

At one time, a post office was located in the J. H. Mitchell home. J.H. Mitchell and Sons also ran the first general store which was known as Wheeler Store. Mr. Mitchell also practiced medicine and owned a gin, sawmill and a grist mill. Earnest Fortune operated a drug store here for a number of years. An outstanding citizen of Masseyville was Mr. Romus Massey, who founded West Tennessee Business College.

In the early part of the twentieth century, there were a number of African-Americans living in Masseyville. Some were landowners, but most were sharecroppers. All were farmers. Some of these early settlers were Bill Nettles, Bill Johnson, Bird Moten, Bobby Holmes, Jasper Stovall, Pump Croom, John Floyd and Will Spencer.

The first school in the Masseyville community was built on the Bill Nettles farmland and called the Needmore School. It serviced the African American community. This building burned, and classes were held in the Hatchie Church for some time.

In the early 1930s, a one room school was built on the Chester and McNairy county line to accommodate the children from both counties. The name was then changed to Masseyville. When you finished the eighth grade at this school, you had to drop out of school or board away from

home as there was no transportation for children and the only high school was Henderson. The first bus was a car driven by Troy Moten in 1938. Today, many people have moved away. The church building is still there. The last pastor was Brother Henry Sanders.

WOODVILLE, located close to Masseyville, also was originally in McNairy County, close to the Hardeman County line, and several of the early families lived in Hardeman County. The elementary school building at Woodville was built just after the Civil War. A cotton gin near Mt. Gilead Church was in operation in this community just after the Civil War.

During the period of the Civil War, the families in the area of Woodville were divided, some sympathizing with the northern cause and some fighting with the Confederacy. Colonel Fielding Hurst of this area formed a cavalry regiment for the Union army from the general area of Woodville. This area has been called the “Nation” (Hurst Nation) by some historians. The name was first used when Colonel Hurst after the war, while serving as a judge at Purdy (in McNairy County), instructed Sheriff Mitchell to go back to the “Nation” and bring back 25 men to serve a jurors for a trial to be held the next day.

Mr. Jim Grantham, an early settler of the community, was noted for his athletic prowess. He was a skilled marksman and runner. He was the father of Kirk Grantham, who became a coach at Hall-Moody College and the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Most of the early settlers of this community came from Virginia and the Carolinas. Among those who settled here were the families of: Armour, Arnold, Grantham, Isbell, Holifield, Cox, Tull, Woods, Robinson, Rowland, Deming, Stumph, Mitchell, Hurst, Jernigan, Rainer, Hatch, Riley, Campbell, Hinson, Frank, Howell, Hooper, Fish, King, Whitten, Fulghum, Hodges, Ingle, Lambert, Naylor, Dearman, Wilson, Holmes, Brooks, Moore, Maness, Wyatt, Huddleston and Sparks.

PHOTO:
Masseyville black
school, closed 1952

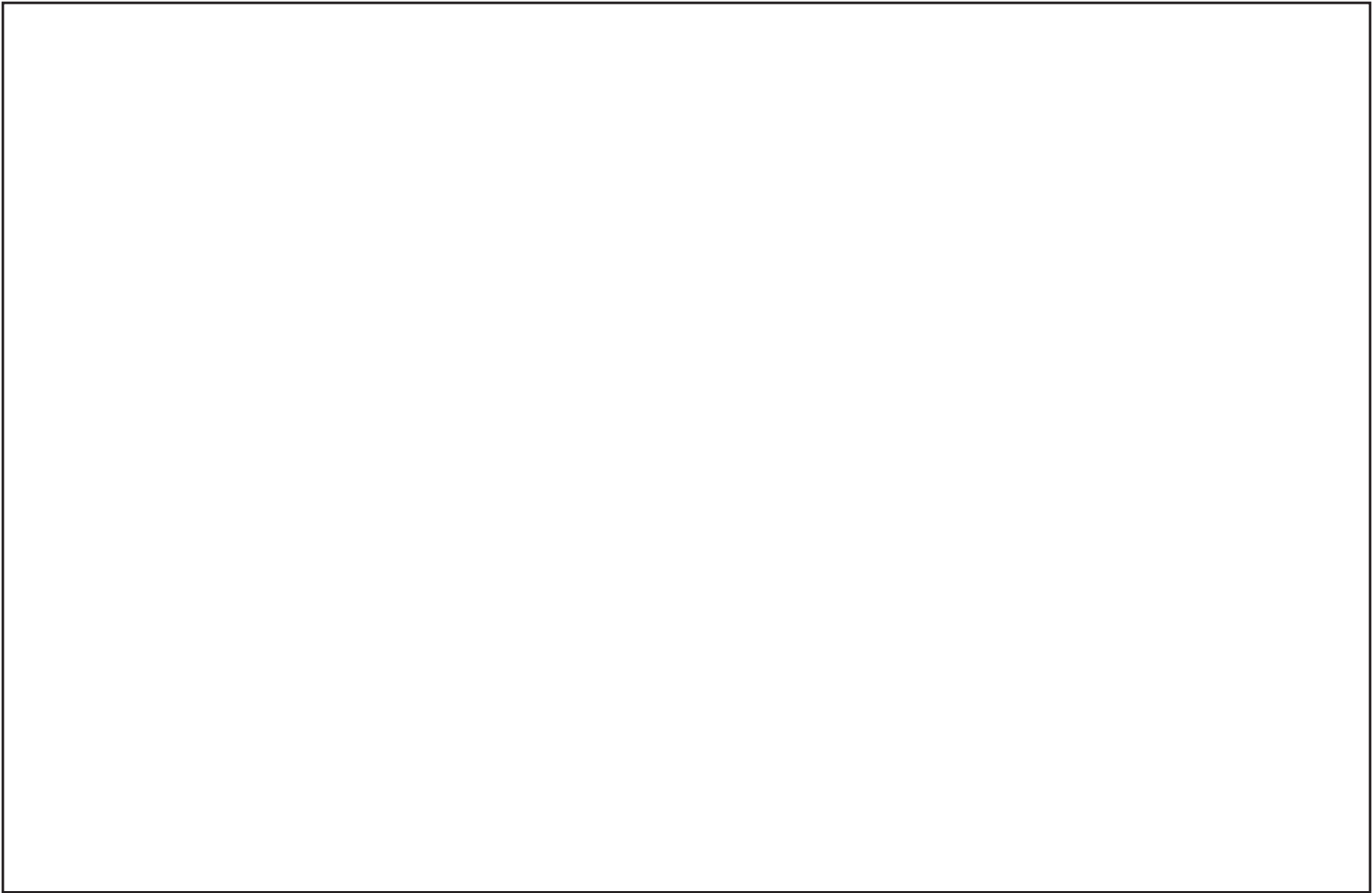
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970 East Main Street 989-5134

Chester County Schools
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552 East Main Street 989-8125

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123 N. Church 989-2404

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708 East Main St. 989-8145

West Chester Elementary
1243 W. Main St. 989-8150

Jacks Creek Elementary
65 State Rte 22-A-S - Jacks Creek 989-8155

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634 East Main St. 989-8110

Alternative School
186 Luray 989-8144

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Juvenile Office 133 East Main Street 989-7938

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School Consolidation and Integration

After Chester County Training School (the only African-American high school in the county) burned in 1949, a new school was built on the north side of Henderson. Dedicatory exercises were held on April 7, 1950. The school was renamed Vincent High in honor of the founder, Mr. J.A. Vincent. This building later became North Chester Elementary School. Knowing the value of education, the African-American people of Chester County took advantage of the new school and the opportunities it provided. Graduates from the school continued their education at colleges and universities and have made valuable contributions in all walks of life.

Another step forward was the consolidation of all the rural African-American schools in the county in 1962. All the students of the small county schools were brought to the new school in North Henderson. This helped teachers do a better job and helped to prepare for school integration, which was to take place in a few years. In 1965 two local students, graduates of Vincent High, were the first African-Americans to attend Freed-Hardeman College. The following year, several African-Americans were enrolled there.

Integration of Chester County schools began in 1965 when two six-year old African-American children began first grade at East Chester Elementary School and two African-American girls began high school at Chester County High. This was after segregated schools were declared unconstitutional and students were given "freedom of choice" as to the school they wanted to attend. The first graders did not ride the bus. One of the high school girls gave them a ride to and from school. From the time these four children integrated East Chester and Chester County High, until Vincent High School closed in 1969, there were few African-Americans enrolled in the white schools.

In 1968, two African-American teachers were transferred—one to Jacks Creek Elementary and one to East Chester Elementary. This worked out well but few children transferred from Vincent. In early 1969 an official of the Regional Office for Civil Rights in Atlanta gave Chester County an ultimatum. The "freedom of choice" plan was inadequate and unless the county school system came up with an acceptable desegregation plan in the very near future, federal aid to the system would be cut off.

Mr. Vaudie Plunk, school superintendent, and Mr. J.M. Trice, principal of Vincent High, had worked hard to prepare Chester Countians for integration. So, in the fall of 1969 when Vincent closed, and the schools were fully integrated, there were no major problems. Not everyone was happy, but most were willing to accept the fact that our dual school system was not only separate but also unequal and every child should have the opportunity for the best education possible, regardless of their skin color.

- by Nina Ross



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