

HISTORY
OF
TENNESSEE

From the Earliest Time to the Present; Together with an Historical
And a biographical sketch of from twenty-five to Thirty
Countries of East Tennessee, Besides a Valuable
Fund of Notes, Original Observation, Reminiscences, Etc.

Illustrated

Chicago and Nashville: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887

JEFFERSON COUNTY, TN – starting on pg. 856.

Jefferson County lies mainly between the French Broad and Holston Rivers. About one-fourth of the entire area being south of the former streams. It at first extended far beyond its present limit, covering the territory now embraced in Cocke, Sevier and part of Hamblen Counties. It now has an area of about 350 square miles. Bay's Mountains traverse it from east to west but the greater part of the county is either rolling or level. The soil along the French Broad River and the smaller streams is exceedingly fertile and yields large crops. No county in Tennessee has a more honorable record or a more interesting history. Her early settlers were many of them men of intelligence and education, patriotic and worthy citizens, the impress of whose character is still visible upon the third and fourth generations. The county received its first settlers in 1783. These were Robert McFarland, Alexander Outlaw, Thomas Jarnagin, James Hill, Wesley White, James Randolph, Joseph Copeland, **Robert Gentry**, and James Hubbard. The first two located in what is now Hamblen County, and the last named, in Sevier County.

Capt. Jarnagin settled on the north side of "Chucky," about four miles above its mouth. The next year he erected the first mill in the county, on Long Creek. James Hill lived about a mile below Capt. Jarnagin, and Wesley White immediately opposite Taylor's bend. **Robert Gentry** located four miles above Dandridge, and Joseph Copeland seven miles above on the South side of the French Broad.

From this time the settlements increased rapidly. On Long Creek and its waters located Ninian Chamberlain, Thomas Snoddy, Matthew Wallace; on Dumplin, Richard Rankin, Frederick Fulkerson and many others. On the north bank of the French Broad above Dandridge were Benjamin McFarland, Hugh Kelso, Rev. Robert Henderson, Parmenas Taylor, William Moore, George Willcoxon and William Goforth. The first settlement on Mossy Creek was made by Adam Peek in 1788. His house stood just below where the town now is.

The first settlement on Beaver Creek in Quaker Valley was made about 1786 by Adam Meek. He then had no neighbor west of him and so sparse were the settlements, on the east that he obtained his meal from the neighborhood of Greeneville. Soon after, however, a man by the name of Hazelitt built a mill on Beaver Creek. In 1793 it was replaced by one erected by James Walker. Alexander McMillin settled in Strawberry Plains in 1787, but soon after removed to Knox County. Later a fort or station was established there for the protection of the settlers during the Indian trouble 1790-95. William Cox lived between New Market and Strawberry Plains, and to the north of him on the Holston River was Samuel Cox. A few years later a colony of Quakers located in the neighborhood of what is now known as Friend's Station, where many of their descendants still reside.

About 1785 Col. George Doherty located west of Dandridge, at Shady Grove. He was one of the foremost of the early pioneers. He was elected colonel of militia under the Franklin government, and took part in several successful expeditions against the Indians. He represented the county in the Territorial Assembly, in which he was one of the most influential members. He was one of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1766, and was also a member of the Upper House of the first General Assembly and of the Lower House of the third. The date of his death could not be ascertained. His grave, in a very neglected condition may be seen not far from where he lived.

In 1785 the Franklin government formed two new counties out of the territory then embraced in Greene County. One of these was named Caswell. Its limits are not known, but it undoubtedly extended as far west as the junction of the French Broad and Holston, and included the greater part of the present Jefferson County. About all that is known concerning its transactions is that Joseph Hamilton was elected clerk of the county court, George Doherty, colonel of militia and John Sehorn or Zahaun entry-taker. The last named lived on the French Broad above Dandridge.

Jefferson County was formed by ordinance of Gov. William Blount on June 11, 1792, contemporaneously with Knox County, the two having been taken off from Greene and Hawkins Counties. The first county court was held at the house of Jeremiah Matthes, for and one-half miles west of Dandridge, on July 23, 1792, at which time the following magistrates were present: Alexander Outlaw, James Roddye, John Blackburn, James Lea, Joseph Wilson, Josiah Wilson, Andres Henderson, Amos Balch and William Cox. Joseph Hamilton qualified as clerk; Robert McFarland, sheriff; James Roddye, register, and William Job, Robert Pollock Josiah Rogers, John Reneau, Stepehn Wolsey and Barsdill Riddle, constables. The first grand jury was as follows: John Gilliland, Benjamin Harrison, Joseph Rainey, Edward Wright, William Doherty, John Coffee, John Hornback, Benjamin Davis, Sr., James Alexander, James Hill, John Bradshaw, Benjamin McFarland, Samuel McSpaddeen, Tidence Lane and Thomas Jarnagin. The first indictment was found against Reuben Roach for petit larceny. He was tried and found guilty of having stolen three yards of linen and the same amount of "royal ribbon" from George Baxter. For this offense he was sentenced to receive two lashes.

At the August term 1796, Samuel Duncan, John Bullard and William Carver were severally fine \$2.50 “for fighting in the verge of the court.” One of the first criminal cases that went to the superior court from Jefferson County was that of the State vs. Jesse Jeffrey for horse stealing in 1796. He was convicted, and the sentence passed upon him was that he should stand in the pillory one hour, receive thirty-nine lashes upon his bare back well laid on, have his ears nailed to the pillory and cut off, and that he should be branded upon one cheek with the letter H and on the other with the letter T “in a plain and visible manner.” The next year Robert Parker was tried for stealing 500 Spanish milled-dollars from Thomas Humes. He was convicted and sentenced to be hung.

The first and only case of murder tried by the county court took place on February 22, 1808, when Frank, a slave, was tried for the murder of Betsey Osborn, whom he had killed by strangling with a skein of thread. The grand jury returned a bill and he was tried and convicted in one day. He was executed on the 26th of February, only eleven days after the commission of the crime. The trial and execution partook somewhat of lynch law as both were clearly beyond the jurisdiction of the court of pleas and quarter sessions even at that day.

On January 15, 1810 the circuit court was organized by James Trimble, and on April 4, 1836, the chancery court for the division composed of Jefferson, Cocke and Sevier Counties was organized by Judge Thomas L. Williams.

In January 1793, the county court appointed Alexander Outlaw, George Doherty, Garret Fritzgerald, Andrew Henderson and Hugh Kelso to locate the seat of justice. After viewing two or three places they fixed upon what in denominated in the act establishing the town as the neighborhood of Robert Henderson’s Lower Meeting house. Tradition has it that a still house had been erected in the vicinity and that the commissioners were so pleased with the liquor it afforded they decided it to be the best location for the town. It is probable however that as a church and burial ground had been located there for several years it has already become a central meeting point for the people of the county. This together with its position on the bank of the French Broad undoubtedly influenced the commissioners to make it the seat of justice. Fifty acres of land were donated by Francis Dean and the town was laid off by Samuel Jack. **It was named in honor of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington, the wife of President Washington.**

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The first church building that is now remembered was a very large hewed-log house, weather-boarded, which stood not far from the spring just back of Mrs. Hynd’s residence. In 1843 a frame building was erected upon the lot where the present church stands. The latter was begun in 1869 and completed in 1872. The second church established in the vicinity of Dandridge, and the only one having a complete record from its organization, is the Baptist Church. It was organized as the French Broad Baptist Church at Coons’ Meeting House, two and one-half miles east of Dandridge, on March 25, 1786, by Jonathan Murkey and Isaac Barton. The original roll of members is as follows: Michael Coons, James Randolph, Henry Haggard, John Fryer, Wesley White, Charles Gentry,

Rebecca Coons, Dolly Haggard, Margaret Smith, Sarah Fryer, Tabitha and **Elizabeth Gentry**, Elizabeth Morrow, Elizabeth Johnson (Sr. & Jr.), Margaret Johnson, Alexander Morrow, Unius and Sarah Carlock, Joseph and Sarah Witt, Elizabeth Whitman and Catron McGirk. The first clerk was **Charles Gentry**, who continued in that position for several years. In 1797 a committee consisting of **Duke Kimbrough**, **Robert Gentry**, Joseph Witt and _____Smelson were appointed to organize Dumplin Creek Church on July 29 of that year.

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JEFFERSON COUNTY, TN – pg. 1180 & 1181.

John M. Meek, a prosperous farmer, was born on the old homestead of his grandfather in Jefferson County, January 2, 1838. He is the son of Adam K. and Elizabeth (Childers) Meek. Adam, Sr., the grandfather, was a native of Ireland, of Scotch-Irish blood, and among those early men of Mecklenburg, NC who originated the famous **Mecklenburg Resolutions, the first declaration of independence of any American people**. He was a lieutenant in the Revolution, and after the close of the war, he was the first settler in Jefferson County who built a house. He was also a Government surveyor, and after the close of a useful life his body was laid in Strawberry Plains Cemetery. Adam K., the father, is a successful farmer, and was one, in the Seminole war times, who organized a company, but was mustered out before reaching the field. He is now an old and respected citizen of Jefferson County. His mother Elizabeth (Childers) Meek, was born in Yancey County, near Mecklenburg, NC and came to East Tennessee, when quite young, with her father's family, after the close of the war of Independence. Our subject, the youngest but one of four sons and six daughters, was reared on the farm, and when seventeen he entered and in 1858 graduated from the college at Strawberry Plains. In September, 1859, he married Elizabeth J., a daughter of Maj. Gaines McMillan of Knox Co., TN. Of their six sons and five daughters, two of the former and one of the latter are deceased.

Alexander K., John L., Gaines M., Dan W., Mary E., Margaret B., Nellie B. and Bertha C. are living. He was at home two years of the civil war, and succeeded in avoiding the Confederate conscript by enlisting in the Federal Army, as scout, guide, etc., and was mustered out at the close with a captains' commission. He had studied law thoroughly, and after the war was admitted to the Jefferson County bar. In 1876 his farm caused him to withdraw from practice, and he now cultivates about 300 acres of his 500 acre farm, which lies near Strawberry Plains, and is known as Fancy Meadows Stock Farm, and is crossed by the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad. He has been active in public affairs, and for three years was secretary, and two years president of the East Tennessee Farmer's Convention. He is an elder in the Presbyterian Church of which church his devoted wife, who died August 10, 1886, was a member, as are also all his children except the youngest.

Alexander R. Meek, farmer and stock raiser, was born in Jefferson County, May 17, 1829, the son of Alexander Wallace and Nancy (Douglas) Meek, the former a native of Jefferson County, TN and the latter of Mecklenburg County, NC. The ancestors are mentioned in the sketch of John M. Meek. The father was a successful farmer and died in February, 1849, at the age of sixty-one. Our subject is the youngest but on of eight children, and was reared on his present homestead. When his father died he was compelled to leave school at Strawberry Plains, and take charge of the farm at the age of twenty years, and receiving the farm by his father's will, he has controlled it ever since, as a practical and successful farmer. He has always preferred the retirement of rural life and is now an aged and respected citizen and member of the Presbyterian Church.

*(I included the biography of John M. Meek and Alexandr R. Meek from the book History of Tennessee because I found the reference to the **Mecklenburg Resolutions** very interesting and important to our freedom as citizens of the United States of America).
Audrey J. Lambert*

County Formation

<http://www.tngenweb.org/jefferson/>

Jefferson County, named for President and statesman Thomas Jefferson, was erected June 11, 1792, while present-day East Tennessee was still part of the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio (also called the "Southwest Territory"). Portions of Greene and Hawkins Counties were taken to form Jefferson County. Sevier (1794), Cocke (1797), and Hamblen (1870) Counties were later formed by dividing part of Jefferson County. A small portion of Blount County, near Walland, was contained in the original boundaries of Jefferson County. For a short time during Tennessee's early history, the area of Jefferson County was included in Caswell County, of the short-lived State of Franklin (or Frankland, as sometimes written by historians and contemporary writers). In the early history of the County, residents occasionally petitioned the Tennessee Legislature for relief in the form of minor boundary changes. One often-affected area was along the modern junction of Jefferson, Sevier, and Knox Counties.

First Settlers

The first recorded settlers arrived in present-day Jefferson County in 1783. Those who established homesteads were men renowned in the early history of Tennessee. Early pioneers include:

William Bradshaw	Ninian Chamberlain	Joseph Copeland
William Cox	Samuel Cox	George Doherty
Frederick Fulkerson	Robert Gentry	William Goforth
Rev. Robert Henderson	James Hill	James Hubbard
Thomas Jarnagin	Hugh Kelso	Robert McFarland
Alexander McMillin	Adam Meek	John Mills
William Moore	Alexander Outlaw	Adam Peck
James Randolph	Richard Rankin	James Roddy(e)
Thomas Snoddy	Thomas Stockton	Parmenas Taylor
Matthew Wallace	Wesley White	George Willcoxon

It is likely that some early families, including the Burchfiels and Russells, were living in the Cherokee territory south of the French Broad River at the time the first settlers arrived in present-day Jefferson County. No records have been found to substantiate their arrival in the county.

Jefferson County, Tennessee- Early Churches

Early churches in Jefferson County were organized by the Quakers, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Perhaps because the region was initially settled by Scots-Irish, Presbyterians were the first to establish congregations in present-day East Tennessee, just as they did in Jefferson County.

Hopewell Presbyterian Church, Dandridge, was organized in 1785 as the first church in the county. No minutes of this congregation, prior to 1816, exist; little is known of its earliest members. The first church building, a large, hewn-log house, was located near a spring behind the Hynds' family home. Westminster Presbyterian Church formed in 1787, approximately ten miles northeast of Dandridge. Members of Westminster broke away to form New Market Presbyterian (1826) and Mt. Horeb (1841). Concord Presbyterian, located about ten miles west of Dandridge, organized in 1853.

Lost Creek Monthly Meeting was established in 1797 by members of the Newhope Monthly Meeting in Greene County, with approval of the New Garden Quarterly Meeting in North Carolina. Administratively, Hopewell Monthly Meeting, in Frederick, Virginia, was the parent of Lost Creek. Friends had been resident in Jefferson County since about 1784, when John Mills brought his family into the area now known as Rocky Valley. Lost Creek, the only Quaker congregation in the county, still holds regular services in New Market.(1)

The first Baptist congregation was established in 1786 as French Broad Baptist Church. It met at Coon's Meeting House, two and one-half miles east of Dandridge (property of Michael and Rebecca Coons/Koontz). This church has a complete record from its beginning. Dumplin Baptist Church was organized in 1797, its members having petitioned the French Broad Church for permission in 1794. John Cate, Sr., donated land for building the church, which was organized in 1797. Interestingly, 23 of the 27 charter members of Dumplin Baptist were women. Tidence Lane, progenitor of several Jefferson County family lines, was the first Baptist minister to establish a permanent church in present-day East Tennessee (Buffalo Grove, in Washington County).

Early records of Methodism in Jefferson County are not clear as to the first congregations. Elizabeth Peck, wife of pioneer Mossy Creek settler Adam Peck, established a chapel on their plantation in the early 19th Century. Elizabeth Chapel had no minister, so one of the Pecks' slaves led services. First Methodist Church of Jefferson City evolved from Elizabeth Chapel. A brick building was erected in Dandridge in 1828, with a deed for the property following in 1829. First United Methodist, Dandridge,

continues to hold services at that location today. The congregation divided over the slavery issue, with members of both segments using the same building.

The Brethren were originally represented in Jefferson County by the Hepner, Oren, and Finch families on Spring Creek, from about 1870. The families held regular Sunday School and had services when travelling preachers were available. A permanent minister arrived in 1875, and French Broad Church of the Brethren was built in Dandridge in 1885-86.

1. For a history of the Lost Creek meeting and a transcription of its earliest records, see William Hinshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy North Carolina* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1936; reprint ed., Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969; reprint ed., 1978), pp. 1119, et seq.

Adam K. Meek

<http://members.aol.com/chrismEEK/Zc0.htm>

2. Adam Kennedy Meek Sr. was born in 1746 in County Derry or Kerry, Ireland. He resided in 1775 in Mecklenburg Co., NC. Signed Mecklenburg petition. He signed a will on 22 Oct 1823 in Jefferson Co., TN. Will names wife and children/ (Tennessee Cousins, p. 104) He died on 8 Jun 1828 in Jefferson Co., TN (Tombstone/bible records). He was buried in Old Strawberry Plains cemetery, Jefferson Co., TN.

He came to America in 1763, settling on Waxhow Creek, Union District, about 100 miles NE of Charleston, SC. Served in Revolutionary War under Col. Francis Marion, SC troops; wounded in Battle of Cowpens. After war, moved to TN. He was a surveyor.

"Adam Meek, Sr., ... is said to have been the first settler to build a house in what is now Jefferson County. He came to Jefferson Co. after the close of the Revolution, from over the mountains in Mecklenburg County [NC], and one account declares he was a native of Ireland." (Tennessee Cousins, p. 107.)

He married Martha Wallace on 23 Mar 1781 in Charlotte, NC (Marriage abstracts). She was born in 1766. She died on 21 Nov 1831 (Tombstone/bible). She was buried in Old Strawberry Plains cemetery. Adam Kennedy Meek Sr. and Martha Wallace had the following children:

child4. James Steele Meek was born about 1785 in Mecklenburg, NC. Lived in Tennessee. He married Martha Douglas (daughter of John Douglas and Sarah Dunn) 29 Sep 1808 in Knox Co., TN. She was born in 1786 in Pendleton, SC.

child 4a. Adam Caswell Meek was born about 1813 Tenn. He married Sarah L. Douglas 1 Dec 1835 in Knox Co., TN.

child5. Sarah C. Meek. was born in 1787. She died in 1864. She married (1) Lemuel McBee on 22 Jan 1806 in Jefferson Co.,TN. She married (2) Alvah McSpadden on 5 Jan 1834 in Jefferson Co., TN.

child6. Alexander Wallace Meek. was born on 12 Dec 1788. He died on 18 Feb 1849. He was buried in Old Strawberry Plains cemetery. He married Nancy Douglas on 29 Jan 1811 in Knox Co., TN. She was born in 1789. She died on 9 Sep 1849.

child10. Nancy Evaline Meek. was born in 1821. She died in 1868. She married John Pinckney Mathes M.D. on 13 Apr 1849 in Jefferson Co., TN. was born in 1812 in Jefferson Co., TN. He died in 1870. He was a physician in Strawberry Plains, TN.

child7. Adam Kennedy Meek Jr.. was born on 15 Jul 1798 in Jefferson Co., TN.

child8. Daniel Meek. was born on 20 Mar 1792 (Bible records). He died on 20 Aug 1860 (Bible records).

Daniel is listed in "Meek Genealogy," by Carleton L. Meek, 1962, but is not found elsewhere. May be the DAVID listed in Adam Meek's will.

He married Betsy L. Campbell on 11 Mar 1813 in Knox Co., TN. (Bible records). She was born on 7 Nov 1792. She died on 16 Jul 1871.

child9. Jane (Jennie) Meek. was born on 28 Feb 1794. She died on 20 Dec 1846. Listed as Jane in "Meek Genealogy". She married ? Thornton.

Adam K. Meek Jr.

7. Adam Kennedy Meek Jr. was born on 15 Jul 1798 in Jefferson Co., TN. He died on 28 Aug 1890. "Tennessee Cousins" states that Adam K. Meek was the oldest son of Adam Meek, Sr. Our information has Alexander Wallace Meek with an earlier birthdate.

He married Elizabeth Jane Childress on 18 Jun 1821 in Jefferson Co., TN. She was born in Yancey Co., NC. Adam K. and Elizabeth were said to be "the parents four sons and 6 daughters ..."

child11. Addie Elizabeth Meek. was born in 1829. She married Major Russell Thornburg.

child18. Mary Elizabeth Thornburgh. was born in New Market, Jefferson, TN.
She married Thomas Lauriston Hill.

child12. Amanda Kathrine Meek. was born in 1835. She married R. P. Martin.

child13. Sarah Meek was born in 1831 in Tennessee.

child14. Harriet N. Meek was born in 1833 in Tennessee. Listed 1850 Census, TN.

child15. John M. Meek was born in 1838 in Tennessee. "A prominent lawyer for a time in Jefferson County, and popular, notwithstanding he was a Republican in politics."

child16. Daniel Meek was born in 1840.