

Cumberland Compact



The bronze statue of pioneers James Robertson and John Donelson was created by Nashville sculptor Puryear Mims in 1962 for placement inside the stockade of the replicated (1930) Fort Nashborough overlooking the Cumberland River. The statuary's symbolism is revealed in Robertson's figure (left) shouldering the civilization-building axe as he shakes the hand of Donelson, who holds a rifle and was captain of *The Good Boat Adventure* leading the flatboat flotilla over treacherous waterways to join Robertson's 1779 overland party on the Cumberland bluffs on April 24, 1780. In 1979 the statue was relocated to the adjacent Bicentennial Park, north of the fort, and on May 13, 1980, part of the Metro Historical Commission's observance of Nashville's Century III Celebration was the addition at the monument base of a second metal plaque inscribed with the entire list of "Signers of the Cumberland Compact -- Nashborough -- 13 May 1780."

On May 1, 1780, the "Articles of Agreement, or Compact of Government" - popularly known as the Cumberland Compact - was drawn up, with additional resolutions on May 13, 1780. Names of 249 males were signed, representing those buying land from Richard Henderson and Company under the Watauga purchase of 1775. Although this interesting document is probably the closest equivalent to a "written record" of the founding families, according to Arnow in *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (p.243), "equally interesting is the number of known settlers who did not sign; these include John Buchanan, Jr. and Sr., Edward Swanson, William and Isaac Neely, . . . neither John Rains nor Edmund Jennings signed." With that stipulation noted, the 249 males represented the eight stations of Nashborough, Gasper's, Bledsoe's, Asher's, Stone's River, Freeland's, Eaton's, and Fort Union, and are as follows: Richard Henderson, Samuel Deson, David Shelton, Nathaniel Hart, Samuel Marten, Spill Coleman, Wm. H. Moore, James Buchanan, Samuel McMurray, Samuel Phariss, Solomon Turpin, P. [Pleasant] Henderson, John Donelson [Col.], Isaac Rentfro, Edward Bradley, Gasper Mansker, Robert Cartwright, Edward Bradley, Jr., John Caffery, Hugh Rogan, James Bradley, John Blakemore, Sr., Joseph Morton, Michael Stoner, John Blakemore, Jr., William Woods, Joseph Mosely, James Shaw, David Mitchell, Henry Guthrie, Francis Armstrong, Thomas Henricks, W. Russell, Jr., Robert Lucas, John Holladay, Hugh Simpson, James Robertson, Frederick Stump [in Dutch], Samuel Moore, George Freeland, Joseph Denton, James Freeland, William Hood, Arthur McAdoo, John Tucker, John Boyd, James McAdoo, Peter Catron, Jacob Stump, Nathaniel Henderson, Philip Catron, Henry Hardin, John Evans, Francis Catron, Richard Stanton, Wm. Bailey Smith, John Dunham, Sampson Sawyers, Peter Luney, Isaac Johnson, John Hobson, John Luney, Adam Kelar, Ralph Wilson, James Cain, Thomas Burgess, James Givens, Daniel Johnson, William Burgess, James Harrod, Daniel Jarrot, William Green, James Buchanan, Sr., Jesse Maxey, Moses Webb, William Geioch, Noah Hawthorn, Absalom Thomson, Samuel Shelton, Charles McCartney, John McVay, John Gibson, John Anderson, James Thomson, Robert Espey, Matthew Anderson, Charles Thomson, George Espey, Wm. McWhirter, Robert Thomson, William Gowen [or Gower], Barnet Hainey, Martin Hardin, John Wilfort, Richard Sims, Elijah Thomson, James Espey, Titus Murray, Andrew Thomson, Michael Kimberlin, James Hamilton, William Seaton, John Cowan, Henry Dougherty, Edward Thomelu, Francis Hodge, Zach. White, Isaac Drake, William Fleming, Burgess White, Jonathan Jenings, James Leeper, William Calley, Zachariah Green, George Leeper, James Ray, Andrew Lucas, Daniel Mungle, William Ray, James Patrick [his X mark], Patrick McCutchen, Perley Grimes, Samuel McCutchen, Samuel White, Richard Gross, William Price, Daniel Hogan, John Drake, Henry Kerbey, Thomas

CUMBERLAND COMPACT

Richard Henderson, land speculator and representative for North Carolina on the western Virginia/North Carolina survey team, drew up the Cumberland Compact in 1780. Signed on May 1, 1780, by 250 men of the new Cumberland settlement, it served as a guide for land transactions and as a simple constitutional government for settlers. With the inclusion of additional provisions on May 13, the compact became the document by which the settlement governed itself until North Carolina created Davidson County in 1783.

The compact called for a representative form of civil government. Each of the seven stations (or forts) of the Cumberland settlement was entitled to a specific number of elected representatives to form a twelve-man "Tribunal of Notables" which dispensed justice, received and dispersed funds, settled claims, and regulated the land office.

In 1775 Henderson privately purchased a large area of land in Kentucky and the part of Tennessee drained by the Cumberland River from the Cherokee Indians. Henderson hoped North Carolina and Virginia would accept this transaction--known as the Transylvania Purchase--and lobbied for the endorsement of the land provisions of the compact by these states. Both North Carolina and Virginia disallowed the purchase and instead granted Henderson several hundred thousand acres of land as compensation. Despite frequent Indian attacks that saw approximately one-third of the original signers of the Cumberland Compact killed in battles with Native Americans by 1784, the Cumberland settlement succeeded.

Kenneth Fieth, Metropolitan Archives for Nashville and Davidson County
<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=C167>

TIMELINE OF NASHVILLE / DAVIDSON COUNTY

1800 - 1849

1800 Joseph Johnson is **Sheriff** of Davidson County.

1802 **John Boyd** is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. Boyd was one of the signers of 1780's Cumberland Compact, and is believed to have fathered the first male child whose birth was recorded in Nashville.

1806 Cumberland College is chartered as the successor to the Davidson Academy. 1806 Nashville incorporates as a town in Davidson County, to be governed by six Aldermen and a Mayor.

1807 The Bank of Nashville is founded, becoming the first bank in Tennessee. 1807 Nashville's first force of volunteer fire-fighters is created.

1808 Michael C. Dunn is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. He also served as a Justice in 1805. 1810 The first book in Davidson County is published.

1812 The first meeting of the legislature is held in Nashville. 1812 The War of 1812 begins.

1813 James Robertson, one of the founders of Nashville, dies near Memphis.

1815 The War of 1812 ends. 1816 Caleb C. Hewitt is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. 1816 The Nashville Female Academy is founded. 1818 Nashville celebrates the first arrival of a steamboat, the *Andrew Jackson*. 1818 Thomas Hickman is **Sheriff** of Davidson County.

1819 James Monroe visits Davidson County, becoming the first U.S. President to visit Nashville.

1820 Ann Rodgers Grundy begins the first Sunday School class in Nashville.

1821 The Nashville Medical Society is founded in the log courthouse on the public square, becoming the first medical association in Tennessee.

1822 Joseph W. Horton is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. 1822 The City Cemetery is established on 4th Avenue South. 1822 The first bridge is built across the Cumberland River. It is made of stone. 1824 Andrew Jackson is defeated in his campaign for President of the United States. 1824 Music publishing begins in Nashville with *Western Harmony*, a book of hymns and instructions for singing. 1824 Phillip Lindsley comes to Nashville to be the head of Cumberland College.

1826 The General Assembly passes an act establishing the University of Nashville.

1828 Andrew Jackson is elected seventh President of the United States.

1830 Willoughby Williams is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. In his retirement, he took pride in the fact that he "was never in a single instance called on to explain one of his many official acts [as Sheriff]".

1833 Nashville's first publicly owned waterworks is completed. 1833 The first insurance company in Davidson County, the Tennessee Marine and Fire Insurance Company, is founded.

1836 Philip Campbell is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. He also served as a Justice in 1822. 1838 Cherokee Indians pass through Davidson County on the now-infamous "Trail of Tears" march. 1838 Felix R. Rains is **Sheriff** of Davidson County.

1843 Nashville is declared the permanent capitol of Tennessee.

1844 Churchill Lanier is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. 1844 James K. Polk is elected President of the United States.

1845 Andrew Jackson dies at his home, "The Hermitage", outside Nashville. 1845 Construction begins on the Tennessee State Capitol building.

1848 B. M. Barnes is **Sheriff** of Davidson County. 1848 The first telegraph message in Davidson County is received.

1849 James K. Polk dies in Nashville.

<http://www.nashville-sheriff.net/time1800a.htm>

<http://www.ajlambert.com>