

White County, Tennessee – Oldest Marriage Book 1809 – 1859

Copied by Mary Fancher Mitchell

Arranged by J. Sharon Johnson Dollante – 1991

INTRODUCTION

WHITE COUNTY, TENNESSEE was formed by an Act of the General Assembly, meeting in Knoxville, on September 11, 1806, after a petition requesting that such a county be formed was drawn up and signed by approximately 155 residents, including John White (Sr.), Woodson P. White, and John Scoggin (Jr.). John White was the father and father-in-law, respectively, of the last two. These men were then living in what is now the northern or north central portion of White County, and appear to have been well settled there for some months, according to Charles Leonard, of Sparta (1976), who located this historic petition (#5-1-1806), at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, in Nashville. The petition itself bore no date, but an attached sheet contained the date, July 22, 1806. The endorsement was to Mr. Chisum and Sampson Williams, who were in Jackson County, in 1802.

THE TENNESSEE STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES states flatly and without equivocation, that White County was named for this same John White. So too, have county historians, past and present, and state erected highway signs proclaim the same, at the county boundaries. In GENEALOGICAL SERENDIPITY, Vol. I, published in 1965, and which included data on the White and Scoggin families, we voiced doubt that the county actually was named for John White, as we proved he was not in the area nearly so early as historians have claimed.

JOHN WHITE, SR. a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and a native of Amelia County, Virginia, sold land he owned in Washington County, Virginia, on October 18, 1805, and together with his family (including son-in-law, John Scoggin, Jr.), moved into middle Tennessee. It's entirely possible, and even probable, that these men had previously explored the region they chose for their new home.

In the light of the discovery by Charles Leonard of the petition of 1806, we are now inclined to give some credence to the possibility that the county may indeed have been named for John White, Sr. In his will dated White County, 1843, and proved there in 1846, John White mentioned that he had given to his son Woodson, "in his lifetime, one set of surveying instruments", leading one to the conclusion that both men were surveyors...and quite possible responsible for laying out or helping to lay out the original boundary lines for the county. In all fairness though, we must report that Charles Leonard has not changed the opinion he has long held, that the county was named for James White, founder of Knoxville, and father of Hugh Lawson White, one of the wealthiest and most influential men of his day, in the then fledgling state of Tennessee.

ALTHOUGH our friend Charles reports that John White still has descendants who live in the northern portion of White County, in the area where John, Sr. originally lived, this early settler bought 592 acres of land in southern White County, on June 1, 1808, and built his home there (it is labeled by county historians, the "oldest house in White County"), in what is known as Hickory Valley, and his son-in-law, John Scoggin, Jr., settled near him, in the area now know as Doyle, on his first land, a state grant of 144 acres, issued September 26, 1808.

WHITE COUNTY originally encompassed all of what is now Warren County, as well as parts of the counties of Cannon, DeKalb, Franklin, Grundy, Putnam, and Van Buren.

ABOUT a quarter of a century ago, the late Mrs. B.K. Mitchell, nee Mary Fancher, served White County as Clerk and Master, and continued in this capacity or in that of Deputy Clerk and Master, off and on for the next 10 or 15 years. During this period she copied many of the oldest marriage records, including some loose sheet in the old dirt-floored basement vault of the courthouse.

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November, 1976

*(On page 36 of this book is listed my Great Great Grandparents marriage date: **Wiley Jernigan & Sarah Short** were married – 19 April 1856. Shown on pg. 53 of the book compiled by Mrs. B.K. (Fancher) Mitchell – "Oldest Marriage Book of White County Tennessee." Audrey J. Denny Lambert - *See Chapter 10 & Jernigan Family.)*

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