

250 Years through the lens of Williamson County



The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

Time Period

Years

Connection

Indigenous People of Tennessee

Pre-Ongoing

Historic tribes in Williamson County include: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Shawnee, Choctaw, and Creek

American Revolutionary War

1775-1783

While no battles were fought here, many veterans were granted land in "Western North Carolina" (now Tennessee) as payment for their service, leading to the first permanent white settlements.

Tennessee Founded as the 16th State

June 1, 1796

As the first state west of the Appalachian Mountains. Its admission marked the expansion of the young nation into the frontier, bringing new opportunities for settlement, agriculture, and trade.

Establishment of Williamson County

October 26, 1799

WilCo was formed by an act of the Tennessee General Assembly, which carved the territory out of a portion of Davidson County. It is named after Dr. Hugh Williamson.

Time Period

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The Founding of Franklin

Oct. 26, 1799

Abram Maury founded the town of Franklin, naming it after Benjamin Franklin. He purchased the land from Maj. Anthony Sharp.

Antebellum Period

1820s–1860

Franklin became one of the wealthiest towns in Tennessee due to a plantation economy driven by enslaved labor, focusing on hemp, cotton, and livestock. The courthouse (built 1858) still stands today.

Civil War

1861–1865

The Battle of Franklin (Nov. 30, 1864) was one of the war's bloodiest battle. The Carnton and Carter House plantations became field hospitals. Over 2,000 Confederates were buried at the McGavock Confederate Cemetery.

Reconstruction Era

1865–1877

Local tensions remained high. African Americans established independent communities like Hard Bargain and Natchez Street. The Freedmen's Bureau operated locally to assist the formerly enslaved.

Second Industrial Revolution

1870s–1914

The Industrial Revolution transformed Franklin from a largely agricultural economy into a center of industry and trade. Factories like the Lillie Mills Silos begin to shape our economic landscape.

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The Gilded Age

1870's-1900s

We see the rise of the "Merchant Class" and the introduction of the Nashville-Franklin Interurban as the height of Gilded Age sophistication.

The Progressive Era

1890s-1920

Franklin saw the rise of formalized education and social clubs. The Harpeth Hall tradition and local "Home Demonstration" clubs reflected the national "Domestic Science" movement.

World War I

1917-1918

Williamson County, Tennessee had a significant and diverse connection to World War I, with over 765 individuals from the county serving in the military during the conflict. This included 688 in the Army, 59 in the Navy, and 14 in the Marine Corps.

Roaring Twenties

1920-1929

Franklin's Main Street flourished with new storefronts and the rise of car culture, though the region remained largely agrarian.

The Great Depression

1929-1939

The Allen Manufacturing Company in Franklin, a key employer, went into receivership but was salvaged by the Dortch Stove Company, while local residents faced widespread poverty.

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World War II

1941–1945

Residents participated in blackouts and scrap metal drives. The county's agricultural output was redirected to the war effort.

Post War Era

1945–1960s

The completion of I-65 in the 1960s began the shift from a quiet farming community to a major "bedroom community" for Nashville- meaning people lived in Williamson County and worked in Nashville.

The Modern Era

1970s–Present

The founding of the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County (1967) led to the preservation of the historic downtown and Williamson County. Today, it is a hub for the healthcare and music industries.

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