

## Tennessee, Formation of <sup>[1]</sup>

## Tennessee, Formation of

by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

See also: [Franklin, State of](#) <sup>[2]</sup>.



Map from the 1780s showing Tennessee as still part of North Carolina.

Image from the North Carolina Maps project.

<sup>[3]</sup>Prior to the [American Revolution](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, white settlers were building cabins along the Watauga and Nolichucky Rivers in the western part of the North Carolina colony. In 1772 they drew up a compact called the "[Watauga Association](#) <sup>[5]</sup>." Four years later they petitioned North Carolina to extend its jurisdiction over their area, and the following year North Carolina created [Washington County](#) <sup>[6]</sup> with boundaries that included all of modern [Tennessee](#) <sup>[7]</sup>. Between 1779 and 1788 the state legislature established six additional counties in the Tennessee country: Sullivan (1779), Greene (1783), Davidson (1783), Sumner (1787), Hawkins (1787), and Tennessee (1788).

In 1784 the General Assembly <sup>[8]</sup> ceded the state's western lands to the United States, then revoked the cession later that year. Nevertheless, the frustrated settlers, led by [John Sevier](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, organized the [State of Franklin](#) <sup>[2]</sup> with a constitution, a separate legislative body, and Sevier as governor. The Continental Congress, as well as Virginia and North Carolina, refused to recognize the new state, and it soon collapsed. In 1789 North Carolina [ceded](#) <sup>[10]</sup> its western lands to the newly established federal government, and on 1 June 1796 Tennessee was admitted to the Union as the sixteenth state. Sevier was elected governor.

### References:

Noel B. Gerson, *Franklin: America's "Lost State"* (1968).

Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (3rd ed., 1973).

William S. Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries* (1989).

### Additional Resources:

"Cessions to the United States. Tennessee. An Act for the Purpose of Ceding to the United States of America, Certain Western Lands Therein Described." *Revised statutes of the State of North Carolina, passed by the General Assembly at the session of 1836-7*. Raleigh [N.C.]: Turner & Hughes. 1837. p.171. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/revised-statutes-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-passed-by-the-general-assembly-at-the-session-of-1836-7-including-an-act-concerning-the-revised-statutes-and-other-public-acts-passed-at-the-same-session-...-v.2/2691256?item=2816703> <sup>[10]</sup>

Scott, Joseph and Smith, Daniel. "A map of the Tennessee government, formerly part of North Carolina, taken chiefly from surveys by Gen. D. Smith & others." [Philadelphia]: [M. Carey]. circa 1794. <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/141/rec/10> <sup>[11]</sup>

### Image Credits:

"North America with the boundaries of the thirteen United States, as settled by the Treaty of 1783" (map). <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/66/rec/9> <sup>[3]</sup>

### Subjects:

[Early Statehood \(1789-1820\)](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Geography](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

[Places](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

[Politics and government](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

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Williams, Wiley J. [16]

**Origin - location:**

Washington County [17]

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. [18]

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