In the Footsteps of Notable Women
A Self-Guided Tour of Rutherford County
Welcome to Rutherford County, Tennessee!
We have a fascinating history that includes many compelling stories of women and their achievements. Throughout the years, women have had a powerful influence here. They have raised families, tilled fields, taught children, upheld churches, written novels, nursed soldiers, preserved buildings, and governed citizens—just to name some of their contributions.

This guide looks at many of the county’s historic sites and community landmarks from the perspective of women’s history. Rutherford County’s rich tradition of female education and community service becomes evident when one retraces the footsteps of local women over the years.

Many of the sites listed here are privately owned. Please respect the owners’ privacy and view these sites from the public right-of-way only.

On the cover: Miss Mary Hall (courtesy of Digital Initiatives, James E. Walker Library, MTSU); Myrtle G. Lord; display, Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County; Hilltop-Rosenwald Park; Sarah Childress Polk (courtesy of James K. Polk Home); Bradley Academy

1. The Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County
225 West College Street, Murfreesboro

The Heritage Center tells the community’s stories through exhibits, programs, and tours. “The Time That Changed Everything: Murfreesboro’s Civil War Era” features a display about Kate Carney, who wrote a riveting account of the July 13, 1862, Battle of Murfreesboro. “Entering the Modern Era: Murfreesboro’s Jazz Age” looks at the transitional years between the world wars, highlighting the Tennessee College for Women, African American nurse and journalist Mary Ellen Vaughn, and the county’s many farm women. “From the Nation’s Capital to Neighborhood Classrooms: Rutherford County Women, Past and Present” profiles ten female leaders and rotates with other temporary exhibits.

2. Rutherford County Courthouse and Square, Murfreesboro

Between the intersections of East Main and Church and West Main and Maple

In the 1900s, women promoted commemoration and preservation in and around the courthouse (1859). Women’s organizations raised funds for the Confederate monument (1901); the United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a plaque (1912) in memory of General Nathan Bedford Forrest for his role in the 1862 Battle of Murfreesboro; and the Daughters of the American Revolution contributed to the monument continued
(1946) to General Griffith Rutherford. In the 1950s, Sarah King and other women lobbied county leaders to restore, rather than demolish, the courthouse. The lobby painting *The Pride of Tennessee* (1990) includes Ida B. Wells-Barnett, journalist and anti-lynching activist, and Anne Dallas Dudley, women’s suffrage leader.

### 3. Soule College Site
**415 North Maple Street, Murfreesboro**

Located here from 1853 to 1917, Soule College was Murfreesboro’s longest-lived female academy. Soule offered instruction from primary education through college. Women always made up more than half the faculty. The school reached its apex in 1904, when 28 women received diplomas under the leadership of progressive educator Virginia Oceania Wardlaw. The 1908 catalog emphasized that the college was “not a fashionable society school” but a place designed to teach women “how to live as well as how to think.” Well-known local women who attended Soule include Mattie Ready (who later married General John Hunt Morgan), Kate Carney (who later taught at Soule), artist Willie Betty Newman, and Jean Marie Faircloth (who later married General Douglas MacArthur).

### 4. Historic Rutherford County Health Department
**303 North Church Street, Murfreesboro**

Built by the Commonwealth Fund of New York in 1931, the Rutherford County Health Department was the first of its kind in any rural county in the United States. The county’s partnership with the Commonwealth Fund was the idea of Red Cross public health nurse Maud Ferguson and began with the establishment of a child health demonstration unit in 1924 that succeeded in dramatically reducing death rates among mothers and infants. Remarkably influential across the state and throughout the South, the Health Department early on reached out to student nursing programs, and many women from throughout the country and abroad received training here.
5. Collier-Lane-Crichlow-Wagnon House  
500 North Spring Street, Murfreesboro

Built in about 1850, this house was purchased in 1858 by Jesse and Newton Collier for their widowed mother, Martha Covington Collier. Ten years later, a nephew of the Collier brothers, Ingram Collier Jr., bought the house for his sister, Martha Collier Lane, and her husband, William. Their daughter, Emily “Emma” Lane (1847–1923), kept a diary from 1864 to 1866 (now housed in the Albert Gore Research Center at MTSU). Extraordinary for her insights into the war, Lane lamented that it had brought “trouble, sorrow, and desolation to the hearthstones of so many.” Emma Lane and her husband, James Crichlow, raised their family here.

6. Baskette House  
221 East College Street, Murfreesboro

Built as a home for Dr. William T. Baskette in 1856, this building has been owned by the Murfreesboro Woman’s Club since 1916. A social, philanthropic, and community-improvement organization, the new club recorded 175 members its first year. Its activities have included making bandages during WWI, maintaining a publicly accessible library, hosting recitals, producing plays, sponsoring lectures, promoting downtown beautification, and endorsing such reforms as regular trash pickup and traffic control. The Woman’s Club continues to thrive.

7. King House  
303 East Lytle Street, Murfreesboro

This Queen Anne house (1892–94) is associated with the family of Sarah McKelley King, who purchased it in the 1950s. King was born not far from here on North Spring Street and in the late 1950s became one of the most influential preservationists in Murfreesboro. She and others worked to save the county courthouse and Oaklands Mansion from demolition. King once said, “Twenty-five ladies can move the earth.” In 1983, she was the first Tennessean elected president general of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

8. Bradley Academy Museum and Cultural Center  
415 South Academy Street, Murfreesboro

Originally open to white boys only, Bradley Academy became a coeducational school for African American students in 1884 and evolved into a thriving community center when a new building was constructed in 1917. Seven women graduated from Bradley High School in 1922 (courtesy of Earnestine Tucker)
One of Bradley’s best-known graduates was Myrtle Glanton Lord, who taught here and served on the museum’s board; the Heritage Classroom is named for her. Exhibits feature such prominent women as Nannie G. Rucker, the first black woman elected as a Tennessee delegate to the Democratic National Convention (1972) and Emma G. (Rogers) Roberts, a principal at Bradley and the first African American educator from the county inducted into the Tennessee Teachers Hall of Fame (1995).

9. Windrow-Jordan House
403 South Academy Street, Murfreesboro

This house was built in 1903 for Delora Scales Windrow and her husband James by her nephew, Preston H. Scales. After Mrs. Windrow’s death in 1918, her sister, Cora Scales Jordan, moved in with her husband, Fred, and three children. A graduate of Bradley Academy, daughter Lillian Jordan Hammons taught in the county for more than fifty years and for a brief period held nursery school here. Daughter Ola Jordan Hutchings became the first black woman on the Rutherford County Board of Education (1972) and was church clerk at First Baptist for fifty years. Both women belonged to the Criterion Club, an African American women’s group.

10. Oaklands Historic House Museum
900 North Maney Avenue, Murfreesboro

Sallie Murfree Maney (1793–1857) inherited this land from her father, Colonel Hardy Murfree, for whom the town is named. She and her husband, Dr. James Maney, raised their family here and managed the growing plantation. James Maney was a supporter of two schools for young women, Eaton College and Soule College. Female slaves worked both in the fields and in the house; a permanent exhibit tells their story. In the late 1850s, Rachel Adeline Cannon Maney (1826–1911) and her husband, Lewis, redesigned the house, built in the 1820s, with an Italianate façade. In 1959, local women led by Sarah King formed the Oaklands Association to restore the house and turn it into a museum, which King called “a product of love and labor.”
In the Footsteps of Notable Women

1. Heritage Center
2. Courthouse and Square
3. Soule College site
4. Historic Rutherford County Health Department
5. Collier-Lane-Crichlow-Wagnon House
6. Baskette House
7. Sarah McKelley King House
8. Bradley Academy Museum and Cultural Center
9. Windrow-Jordan House
10. Oaklands Historic House Museum
11. Clardy House
12. Historic Rutherford Hospital
13. Tennessee College for Women site
14. Homer Pittard Campus School
15. Albert Gore Research Center, MTSU

16. McFadden School
17. Piedmont
18. Rucker-Betty-LaRoche House
19. Sam Davis Home and Museum
20. Tucker House
21. Hilltop-Rosenwald Park
22. Mary Kate Patterson House

Rutherford County map created by Anna Tegarden, Rutherford County GIS, for the Center for Historic Preservation, Dec. 2009
11. Clardy House
435 East Main Street, Murfreesboro

In 1948, Hattie Moore opened a guest house in this building, which dates to 1898. Moore had the home’s red brick painted white. In 1954, Betsy and Frank Clardy purchased the house, where they raised their family and continued to welcome guests. Their daughter, Barbara Deaton, and her husband, Robert, next operated the business. When the bed and breakfast closed in 2000, it was one of the oldest in the state.

12. Historic Rutherford Hospital
423 North University Street, Murfreesboro

The historic Rutherford Hospital, built in 1927, was constructed by the Commonwealth Fund of New York as part of its commitment to rural health care and to the child health demonstration program established in the county three years earlier. Two women, Mary E. Marshall and Margaret B. Haynes, served on the initial board of directors. As the first superintendent of the hospital, public health nurse Mary F. Petitte was in charge of everyday operations.

13. Tennessee College for Women Site
701 East Main Street, Murfreesboro

Beginning in 1907, the Tennessee College for Women operated at this site and offered education to girls of all ages. It later became a standard college offering bachelor’s degrees. Courses in art, music, physical education, and drama enhanced the curriculum. The annual May Day celebration became a cherished tradition. Graduates received lifetime Tennessee teaching certificates. In 1946, the college merged with Lebanon’s Cumberland University and five years later it became part of Ward-Belmont School for Women in Nashville, now Belmont University.

14. Homer Pittard Campus School
923 East Lytle Street, Murfreesboro

Since its inception as part of Middle Tennessee Normal School (now MTSU) in 1911, Campus School has provided training for thousands of teachers, predominantly women. The first school was in a wing of the Normal School’s administration building; the current building opened in January 1929. Over the years, women have made up the vast majority of the school’s faculty, many of whom devoted decades of service.
15. Albert Gore Research Center, MTSU

128 Todd Hall

Founded in 1911 to train teachers, MTSU has been educating women for almost a century. The center has a wealth of materials by and about women who have contributed to the University and community. Among the highlights are oral interviews with educators and activists including Ruth Bowdoin, Mary Hall, Sarah King, Myrtle Lord, and Mary Scales. Collections document such key women’s organizations and institutions as the American Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women’s Club, Charity Circle, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the June Anderson Women’s Center, the League of Women Voters, the Tennessee College for Women, and the Woman’s Club. Other treasures include the works of Civil War diarist Emma Lane, equine journalist Margaret Lindsley Warden, and Smyrna writer-editor Adeline King.

The Women’s Athletic Association at MTSU in 1942 (courtesy of the Albert Gore Research Center, MTSU)

16. McFadden School

221 Bridge Avenue, Murfreesboro

McFadden is the first school in Rutherford County named for a woman. During the 1910s and 1920s, Elvie McFadden worked among the poor in this neighborhood, promoting Christianity and education. Before her death in 1925, she led efforts to establish a mission church in the community and received a promise from the county school board chairman that a school would be built here. Two years later, the Elvie McFadden School opened, with Madge Manson as principal. The current building (1939) replaced two earlier structures lost to fire.

17. Piedmont

9725 John Bragg Highway

Mary Ella Hall (1895–1991), renowned statewide for her contributions to elementary education, lived here until after her retirement from MTSU’s Education Department in 1960.

Growing up at Piedmont (c. 1840), “Miss Mary,” as she was affectionately known, developed the compassion and independence that characterized her career as an inspirational teacher, pioneering regional supervisor of elementary education, civic leader, and founding member of the Tennessee chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, an honorary society for women in education. Miss Mary Hall dormitory at MTSU is named for her. Described by First Lady Rosalynn Carter as “a perfect role model for generations of young women,” Hall is buried here in the family cemetery.
18. **Rucker-Betty-LaRoche House**  
3978 Betty Ford Road

This is the childhood home of acclaimed artist Willie Betty Newman (1863–1935). Her grandfather, Benjamin Rucker, built the house in 1832 and left it to his daughter, Sophie Rucker Betty, in 1866. Willie Betty Newman studied at Soule College, the Art Academy of Cincinnati, and the Julian Academy in Paris. After twelve years in Paris, she returned to Tennessee, where she established an art school in Nashville and painted portraits including posthumous paintings of John C. Bell and James K. Polk for the U.S. Congress. She received the Parthenon medal from the Nashville Museum of Art.

19. **Sam Davis Home and Museum**  
1399 Sam Davis Road, Smyrna

Captured by Union forces during the Civil War, 21-year-old Sam Davis, a Confederate scout, refused to reveal his source and was hung in Pulaski in November 1863. In his final letter to his parents, Jane Simmons Davis and Charles Lewis Davis, Sam implored his mother not to grieve for him and wrote, “Mother, I do not fear to die.” Both parents are buried with him here. Women later immortalized Davis as the “Boy Hero of the Confederacy” and helped preserve the house (c. 1810) after the state bought it in 1927. All of the early officers and directors of the Sam Davis Memorial Home Association were women. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy contributed furnishings.

20. **Tucker House**  
112 Oak Street, Smyrna

This house, built about 1860, became the property of Tucker descendent Frances Neel Cheney (1906–1996) and her husband, Brainard, in 1939. A graduate of Vanderbilt University, the George Peabody College for Teachers, and Columbia University, Frances Cheney had a brilliant career as a librarian and professor of library science. She worked at Vanderbilt, the Library of Congress, and the Peabody School of Library Science. An influential reviewer of reference books, she remains renowned for her essays. The Tennessee Library Association’s librarianship award is named after her.

21. **Hilltop-Rosenwald Park**  
565 Mason Tucker Drive, Smyrna

Built in 2003, the park honors several outstanding female leaders from the Hilltop community, including Annie Malone, Lucille “Honey” Miles, Lottie Sublett, and Kathryn Wright. In 2005, a replica of the Smyrna Rosenwald School that educated African American continued
students here from 1927 to 1960 opened as the Rosenwald Community Center. An outdoor exhibit about the school shows that two of its early principals were women, Nannie Glass and Maude Collier.

22. **Mary Kate Patterson House**

158 Fergus Drive, LaVergne

Mary Kate Patterson (1838–1931), a Confederate spy, lived here from the mid-1880s to the early 1920s. During the Civil War, she assisted the Army of Tennessee by providing information to Coleman’s Scouts, a cavalry unit and spy network. In November 1863, she brought food and other provisions to Sam Davis before his capture and may have helped with the identification and return of his body after he was hanged. Widowed three times, she participated in Confederate memorial activities for many years. When she died in 1931, she was buried in the Confederate Circle in Nashville’s Mt. Olivet Cemetery, the first woman so honored.

**Childress House**

225 North Academy Street, Murfreesboro (near Baskette and King houses on map)

Rutherford County was the birthplace of one of the most significant First Ladies in United States history. Sarah Childress Polk (1803-1891) married lawyer James K. Polk, a member of the General Assembly, when Murfreesboro was the capital of Tennessee. Known for her intelligence, political acumen, and dignity, Sarah Polk assisted her husband throughout his career. At the White House from 1845 to 1849, she strengthened the role of First Lady. The Childress House (1847) belonged to her younger brother, John Childress, and she visited in the 1870s and 1880s. Preservationist and owner Alice Newsom Ray has kept the house a local treasure.
Please visit the Heritage Center at 225 West College Street in Murfreesboro if you have questions or would like additional information about historic sites related to women in Rutherford County. The Heritage Center is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission and parking are free.

The Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County is a partnership between the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, Main Street Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Inc., and the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation. It also receives support from the City of Murfreesboro, Rutherford County government, and State Farm Insurance.

This brochure is a project of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. Brochure text by Antoinette G. van Zelm.

Thanks to Megan Akerstrom, Kevin Cason, Sara Beth Gideon, Bethany Hall, Caneta Hankins, Cheri LaFlamme, Tyler Moore, and Anna Tegarden.