From Settlement to Statehood:

TENNESSEE'S PIONEER CENTURY FARMS

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October 2008
This publication is a public service project of the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation (CHP), which has administered the Tennessee Century Farms program since 1984. It was produced in cooperation with MTSU's Office of Publications and Graphics and MTSU Printing Services.

The text, unless otherwise noted, was prepared by Caneta Hankins, assistant director of the CHP and director of the Tennessee Century Farms program, and Kevin Cason, graduate research assistant. Entries for each farm are based on information supplied in applications submitted by the families. Selected excerpts originally appeared in Tennessee Agriculture: A Century Farms Perspective, written by Carroll Van West and published by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture in 1986.

Images are from the Tennessee Century Farms collection and, unless otherwise credited, were supplied by the families or photographed by the staff and student assistants of the Center for Historic Preservation.

For additional information on early settlement, statehood, and agricultural history, an excellent introductory reference is the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, University of Tennessee Press and Tennessee Historical Society, online edition, at http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net.
Preface

Beginning in the mid-1700s, men and women journeyed to the lands west of the Unaka Mountains where they could establish farms and on what appeared to be a frontier of unlimited promise and possibilities. Settlers migrated generally from the colonies of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Their families originated in Scotland, Ireland, and England, primarily, but also in Wales, Germany, Switzerland, and France. Many brought African slaves with them, and some free blacks chose to come into the largely uncharted wilderness.

The lands they sought to purchase, clear, plant, and farm had been, for centuries, the hunting and dwelling places of tribes and nations with their own agricultural traditions. Through treaties with the native tribes, and by establishing forms of government including the Watauga Association (1772), these early settlers attempted to impose familiar law and direction in an area removed by distance and culture from the Atlantic colonies and ties to England.

With the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the conflict between colonists and British soldiers escalated in the east. At the same time, hostilities between natives and settlers increased in the west. In hope of some protection, as well as a more stable governing body, the settlers petitioned North Carolina in 1777 to recognize the western frontier as part of its domain. In that year, Washington County, extending from the mountains to the Mississippi River and covering most of what is Tennessee today, was established as part of North Carolina. A second county, Sullivan, was established in 1779. After the Treaty of Paris officially ended the Revolutionary War in 1783 and the Treaty of Hopewell sought to end the hostilities between the United States and the Cherokees in 1785, the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio, or the Southwest Territory, was created in 1790. Through the provisions of the territorial government, Tennessee moved forward to claim its place as the 16th state on June 1, 1796.

Within this historic period of settlement, many family farms were established and thousands more were founded in the succeeding decades. Representing all the family farms of Tennessee, including the more than 1,200 certified Century Farms, are farms that trace their origins to 1796 or before. That these farms have remained in the same family and in continuous agricultural production from those pioneer days, more than 200 years ago, until the present is an extraordinary achievement. Through wars, economic depressions, natural disasters, personal tragedies, public projects, and encroaching development, each generation has chosen to maintain their roots in one place. Because of the fortitude, perseverance, enduring labor, contributions, and stewardship of these families, Tennessee is a richer state. We honor and commemorate the founders and heirs of these family lands with this publication and with the designation Pioneer Century Farms.
More than a year before Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, Henry Masengill Sr. and his wife, Mary Cobb, established a farm in what was then a distant part of the British colony of North Carolina. Their acreage was part of the Watauga Purchase, lands bought from the Cherokees in March of 1775. Among the earliest families to settle west of the Appalachian Mountains, the Masengills and Cobbs participated in the history of Tennessee from the very beginning. Mary was the sister of William Cobb, whose house, Rocky Mount (ca. 1770), served as the first capitol of the region, known as the Southwest Territory. The Masengills had six children, and their son Henry Jr. (Hal), who fought in the Revolutionary War, became the next owner of the farm. Henry Masengill was married first to Penelope Cobb, with whom he had six children, and then to Elizabeth Emmert, who gave birth to three children. As local, state, and national history unfolded in the 19th century, succeeding generations of Masengills farmed their growing acreage and were active in the political and social life of Sullivan County and beyond.

By the mid-20th century, John Michael Masengill, the great-great-grandson of the founders, and his wife, Annie Lee, were operating a farm of over 700 acres. They raised Rolled Herefords, mules, grains, tobacco. The white plank fences surrounding the farmstead were "a beauty to behold," wrote their daughter, Sara Lou Masengill-Bell, the current owner. Annie Lee Masengill inherited the property in 1958 after her husband's death. During her ownership, she installed a silo and feeder system to improve the cow and calf operations. In 1959, the Cobb and Masengill descendants agreed to sell a portion of the farm, which included a two-story log house and outbuildings, to the state of Tennessee to operate and interpret as Rocky Mount—a museum of early settlement, political history, and farm life.

On the Masengill Century Farm, the late 18th-century brick residence, known as the Devault-Masengill Home (above left), is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and several other buildings chart the farming progression over the generations. Mrs. Masengill-Pell is an active manager on the family farm, also known as Mary Lou Farms, which is worked by brothers Otis and J. D. Feathers. Wild turkeys as well as deer are abundant on the farm today just as they were when the first Masengill and Cobb settlers began farming this land that would become part of a new nation in 1776 and a new state in 1796.
Located near the town of Chuckey along the banks of the Nolichucky River is Elmwood Farm. Its history details how the activities of Tennessee's farm families have been intimately involved with the state's economic growth and development. Henry Earnest of Switzerland (originally Heinrich Ernst) established the farm in 1777. As one of Greene County's earliest settlers, Henry was involved in local and territorial politics and served on the Greene County Court in 1792. He wed Mary Stephens, and they had eleven children. During this period of early settlement, the Earnests also helped pioneer what is recognized as the first Methodist church in Tennessee, Ebenezer Methodist Church. The current church, constructed in the 1890s, stands on the same location of the original meeting house built in 1795.

When Henry died in 1809, the 600-acre farm went to his youngest son, Peter Earnest. Throughout the antebellum period, the farm produced corn, wheat, hay, horses, swine, and cattle and proved to be quite successful. In 1856, Peter organized the “Earnestville Bridge Company,” selling stock at $25.00 per share, to build a toll bridge for crossing the Nolichucky River.

On the north side of the bridge, Peter established a mill, which served as the economic center of a small settlement called Earnestville.

Peter married Ruth Fair, and they raised twelve children. Their son, Benjamin Franklin Earnest, inherited the entire farm in 1862. Benjamin's wife was Mary Rhea, and they had two boys and one girl. The Civil War brought a brief boom to the farm's fortunes because Benjamin was able to sell flour to both armies. After the Civil War, Benjamin did not follow his neighbors' lead into the tobacco industry on a commercial scale; instead, he continued the family's farming tradition of diversifying crops and livestock.

Nicholas Peter Earnest, the founder's great-grandson, inherited the farm in 1887. According to the family, Nicholas "was an outstanding church and civic leader," serving as a director of the Greene County Bank for more than 50 years and as president of the East Tennessee Farmer's Association. The family also owned and operated businesses in Chuckey. Nicholas and his wife, Eliza Doggett, moved the farm into the modern age of agriculture, cultivating tobacco and operating a dairy. As a result, the agricultural program at the University of Tennessee selected the farm as a pilot demonstration project. Although Nicholas was involved in the promotion of commercial dairy farming at the state and local level, he did not incorporate large-scale dairying into his own farm. Under his management, the farm produced corn, wheat, oats, hops, and tobacco. His small level of dairy production resulted primarily in cream that was shipped as "express freight" from the Southern Railroad depot in Chuckey to either Bristol or Knoxville.

Upon Nicholas's death in 1956, the property passed into the hands of his six children. Over the next few years, Katherine Earnest Clemmer and her husband, Claudius, bought most of the land and focused solely on developing a registered Holstein herd for dairy farming. During the 1950s and 1960s, several dairy complexes were added to the farm site.

Elmwood Farm, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, retains much of its 19th-century farming landscape with an 1831 two-story brick house, a rare 1784-1789 three-story log blockhouse still in use, a smokehouse, and the Ebenezer Methodist Church and cemetery. In addition, the farm has many significant buildings that demonstrate the progressive farming of the 20th century, including tobacco barns, storage sheds, houses, milk houses and stalls, and a wash house. Today, the property is owned by Nic Earnest Clemmer.
As the colonies became states, all of what is now Tennessee was declared a part of North Carolina in 1779. The new territory was called Washington County and Jonesborough became its county seat in 1779. In that same year, Richard Mynatt, a Virginian, acquired 136 acres of land and with his wife, Sarah Cummins, established a farm. They raised the basic products necessary for survival, including corn and cattle for food and sheep and flax for clothing. The property, watered by springs and containing a salt lick, had been an Indian campground for centuries.

The founders left the farm to their sons. It seems that the Mynatt brothers worked the land in partnership for some time, but by the time Union County was formed in 1820, A. Kilon Mynatt, the founders’ grandson, had acquired the property. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, the farm served as a meeting place for religious revivals. Family members also helped build Mount Pleasant Church.

In 1902, William L. Mynatt acquired 17 acres of the original family land. The great-grandson of the founders, he raised cattle and turkeys for market. He also planted cotton and worked a fruit orchard. His son, Byron B. Mynatt, inherited the family farm in 1956. Byron and his wife, Lillian Triuan Mynatt, raised four children. Together the family produced cattle, hay, and fruit. After Byron Mynatt’s death, Mrs. Mynatt managed a farm of 65 acres for some years, and her grandchildren, Joe Vest and Dwight Cosans, focused on garden vegetables, hay, tobacco, and cattle. Dwight Cosans reports that 15 acres of the original farm remain in the family.

Scientists from around the world have visited Beal Farm because of a natural phenomenon known as the Ebbing and Flowing Spring. The spring’s fresh water ebbs and flows throughout the day in a manner similar to ocean tides. The farm dates to 1780, when Captain Thomas Amis, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, acquired 1,000 acres of land located three miles east of present-day Rogersville (Hawkins County). It was Captain Amis, the first senator to represent Hawkins County (created in 1797), who presented a petition to the North Carolina legislature to establish a town at the site of the Hawkins County Court House and name it Rogersville. It was named for Joseph Rogers, who married Mary Amis, daughter of Thomas and Alice Gale Amis. After Alice’s death, Amis married Lucy Haynes in 1787. These women bore him fifteen children. Haynes Amis inherited the farm in the early 1800s. His son, Thomas Jefferson Amis, inherited in his turn as did his daughter, Mary Teresa, who married Charles J. Beal. Charles and his wife, Lucy Maxwell, had two daughters, Matilda Ann and Mary, the current owner.

Bishop Francis Asbury visited the farm, and the Ebbing and Flowing Spring Methodist Church was built in 1856. Also, Amis Chapel United Methodist Church was built on Amis land. Here, too, the Ebbing and Flowing Spring Academy was built in 1845. The current owner of the farm, Mary Beal Doty, was the teacher at the school when it closed in 1936. Over the generations, the farm has produced tobacco, cattle, row crops, and vegetables. The brick house, part of the Meadow Brook Farm, which Charles J. Beal bought and combined with the Amis Farm, was built in 1866. Beal Farm, located on the Old Stage Road, is one of the most historic natural and agricultural sites in Tennessee.
1782

Campbell Acres Farm

Thomas and Delphia Caldwell established a farm of 400 acres in 1782 in what would become Hawkins County in 1787. With their eight children, they produced several different types of livestock and foodstuffs, including sorghum, ginseng, and oxen. Twenty years after the farm’s establishment, James S. Caldwell inherited the land from his parents. He and his wife, Juliet, and their seven children raised more specialized crops, and Caldwell considered corn, wheat, hay, and livestock to be his commodities for market. Sally Caldwell and her husband, James Netherland Campbell, married in 1867 and were the next owners of the farm.

1783

Doty Farm

Doty Farm was founded by Azariah Doty of New Jersey in 1783, the same year that Greene County was created by the state of North Carolina. A veteran of the Revolutionary War, Doty served under General Francis Marion, famously known as the “Swamp Fox.” Azariah married Sarah Tucker, and they raised nine children in the forbidding environment of the frontier. The family grew foodstuffs and managed a small livestock herd on their 200 acres of land.

Ephriam Doty inherited the entire farm from his parents in 1851. Married to Sarah Cooper, he fathered four children, and their son, William C. Doty, acquired the land in 1889. Throughout the 19th century, the farm’s agricultural products remained much the same. Not until great-grandson William B. Doty inherited the land at the turn of the century did common East Tennessee products such as sheep and tobacco become part of the farm’s operations.

William D. B. Doty and his spouse, Ruth Ann Kilby, were the parents of five children. Their son, Willard Doty, became the fifth-generation owner in 1926. He and Minnie Babb Doty were the parents of Lyle B. Doty and Helen Doty Loyd. Lyle and his wife, Charlotte, and their great-nephew, John Douglas Doty, continued the family farming traditions through the remainder of the 20th and into the 21st century. Lyle Doty died in 2008, and today the acreage is owned by Charlotte and by John, who continues to manage daily operations, which include raising hay, corn, and cattle. The family hopes that John’s children and grandchildren will carry on the proud farming tradition of the Doty family.

1783

Gladestone Farm

In 1783, when Davidson County was formed by an act of the North Carolina legislature, it included most of the area west of the Cumberland Mountains that is now middle Tennessee. Major David Wilson, a Revolutionary War veteran who had the distinction of fighting against General Cornwallis, received a land grant of over 4,000 acres in what was largely wilderness but would become Marshall County in 1836. Wilson was an important figure in Tennessee’s early history: he was involved in the founding of Sumner County, and when Wilson County was established in 1799 it was named in his honor.

Major Wilson and his wife, Jean Rowen Wilson, had eight children. In 1840, David’s nephew, Jonathan Wilson, acquired the farm. After Jonathan, the farm passed through seven more generations, and owners included Joe P. Moss Sr. and his wife, Ruth E. Wilson.

For a number of years, beginning in the 1970s, siblings Joe P. Moss Jr. and Betty Lee Moss owned about 400 acres. In 2003, Daniel E. Moss, Joe’s son, purchased 56 acres of the farm. His farm now produces Christmas trees and hay. Another important objective, reports Daniel, is managing the land for wildlife. A variety of habitats including oak and hickory forests, grassland, shrub land, cedar glades, and ponds provide important areas for deer, wild turkeys, and quail as well as a number of rare and declining species. Gladestone Farm, a part of Major Wilson’s original land grant, is the oldest certified Century Farm in middle Tennessee.
Treaty Hill Farm

Treaty Hill Farm is closely associated with pre-statehood government. Major Hugh Henry, who purchased acreage in what is now Sevier County in 1783, was a member of the Watauga Association. He also joined the Mountain Men of John Sevier at King's Mountain and later at the Battle of Boyd's Creek in 1780. On May 6, 1783, the Treaty of Dumplin Creek was signed at Major Henry's house. This treaty between the commissioners of the state of Franklin and the Cherokee Indians allowed white settlers to inhabit and settle in the area. Hugh married twice and fathered 19 children. His daughter, Rachel Henry, became the next owner of the land. She was married to Ephraim Johnson. The couple had nine children and produced hay, corn, tobacco, cows, horses, pigs, chickens, and wheat on the farm.

The land was passed down through the family and eventually was willed to William H. Catlett, a fifth-generation grandson in 1954. He married Emma R. Catlett, and they had two sons. In 1954, the family participated in the celebration of the signing of the Dumplin Creek Treaty. At this time, the Catletts deeded a small area of land to the state for the placement of a historical marker. In addition, the Catletts worked with local church groups and celebrated by serving chicken and dumplings. For the bicentennial of the treaty in 1984, Mrs. Catlett commissioned the production of a play that was enacted by local residents for several performances. William Catlett’s grandfather, Harvey Underwood, was the first postmaster of Kodak and is credited with naming the community. The Catletts also assisted with the centennial of Kodak in 1992, and the family continues to keep and tell the history of the Sevier County community. Mrs. Catlett makes her home in the house built for Harvey Underwood and his wife, Rachel, in 1899-1900.

When William died in 1999, the land was willed to his widow, Emma R. Catlett. Today, the farm operates as the Catlett Family Limited Partnership, which includes sons Stephen and Larry. They lease the majority of the farm for hay, cattle, and horses.

Gillespie Farm

Gillespie Farm is one of four Pioneer Century Farms in Sumner County. Its founders, Joseph and Mary Meek Wallace, originally acquired a land grant of 640 acres, and by 1820 they had expanded the farm significantly. Captain Joseph Wallace, born in Pennsylvania, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and his property was largely self-sustaining—producing tobacco, corn, maple syrup, horses, cattle, and swine. He and Mary raised twelve children. In 1820, the home place plus 129 acres passed to their son, Major Samuel Wallace. Samuel, a veteran of the Seminole and Mexican wars and a founder of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, married Saffiza Brackin. His land yielded tobacco, corn, grains, and maple syrup, and he also raised cattle, sheep, swine, and horses.

Joseph and Elizabeth L. Wallace, who were both grandchildren of the founders, purchased 430.5 acres of Samuel Wallace’s estate in 1882. Parents of eight children, the third-generation owners practiced mixed farming. Joseph was the county surveyor “and bought and sold many acres” in the region. His daughter, Mary Jane Wallace Gillespie, acquired the farm’s home place plus 129 acres in 1884. Mary Jane was the wife of Foster C. Gillespie. The Gillespies practiced mixed agriculture and later planted the farm’s first tobacco.

In 1913, the farm passed to three sons of Foster and Mary Jane Gillespie, and the brothers worked the farm in partnership for a few years. After World War I, however, they divided the farm and Charles H. Gillespie became sole owner of 129 acres of the original farm. Charles and his wife, Allie Corham, managed a farm that yielded tobacco, corn, hay, grains, and livestock. They were the parents of four children. In 1940, the farm passed intact to Allie Corham Gillespie, and she managed its operations along with her son, Charles, for over 40 years. Their commodities included hay, tobacco, and cattle. When Mrs. Gillespie died in 1994, the farm was left to her three daughters—Katharine G. Barnes, Jo Ann G. Pedue, and Mary G. Gregory—and to the widow of Charles. Mrs. Pedue received the original home, cemetery sites, and the remnants of the Gillespie house, which dates to 1787-1790, and is incorporated into a barn. Mary Gregory and her family own another tract of the land and farm it as Gregory Farms along with the acreage owned by her sisters.

Wallace Farm

Wallace Farm, also known as Thistledeed Hills Farm, is the second Century Farm to evolve from the original 1785 land grant of Joseph and Mary Meek Wallace. Wallace Farm and Gillespie Farm shared a common history until 1884, when John Randolph and Mary Elliott Wallace received a portion of the family property. Their son, Charles H. Wallace, was the farm’s next owner, and in 1947 he sold over 85 acres of the farm to Joe M. Wallace.

Joe and his wife, Mary, farmed their 85 acres for 25 years and then obtained another 74 acres of the original property in 1972. The Wallses worked 159 acres and raised tobacco, swine, and cattle, living in the family dwelling, which was built by slaves. Carol Wallace owns this Sumner County farm.
1787

Larkins Farm

Founded in 1787 by John Larkins of North Carolina, the Larkins Farm originally encompassed 1,000 acres. Larkins, a Revolutionary War veteran and the first treasurer of Dickson County (formed in 1803), married Sarah McAdow. The Larkins had four sons who received shares of the farm. James Larkins inherited his 250 acres in 1805 and raised corn, hay, wheat, and cattle.

The current owner, Leslie D. Larkins Jr., remembers many stories handed down in his family. He tells how his great-grandfather refused to sign a document presented to him by Union soldiers stating that he would not help the Confederates. Upon hearing his reply, "I help everybody," the soldiers threw him into an icy creek then marched him to Charlotte.

By the time he reached the county seat, his clothes were frozen to him. He contracted pneumonia and died about six weeks later.

The property has been worked and maintained by successive generations through both good and difficult times. Leslie D. Larkins Sr., the fifth-generation owner, acquired 215 acres in 1940. The elder Larkins, his son, L. D., Jr., and his wife, Jean, applied for Century Farm certification in 1978. As of 2008, L. D., Jr. owns the farm and his son, Kevin Dale, manages the day-to-day operations. Not only is this a busy and productive 21st-century family farm but the Larkins also take time to appreciate and preserve their history and the rural landscape.

1788

Bailey Farm

Bailey Farm is located one mile west of Baileyton in Greene County. Thomas and Elizabeth Weems Bailey began farming with 320 acres, and the family believes that the farm's initial commodities were corn, wheat, hay, and livestock. The founder's son, Thomas Porter Bailey, operated the farm from 1832 until his death in 1864. Thomas married Henrietta Keel, and they raised nine children. Upon Thomas's death, the ownership passed to his son, George Alexander Bailey. He, in turn, passed it to his daughter, Nannie L., who did not marry, and to his youngest son, George Benson Bailey.

Thomas Porter Bailey, the son of George Benson Bailey, retained ownership of the farm along with his wife, Ethel Beatrice Bailey, until it was passed to their surviving daughters, Patricia Bailey Fornash and Connie Bailey Waespe, upon the death of Ethel in 2007. Their late sister, Margaret Chivers, and her husband lived on the farm for twenty years before her death, also in 2007.

Patricia Fornash returned to live on the farm in 2006 and manages the property, which is farmed for cattle and hay by a neighbor. One of the barns (pictured above) dates from the 1890s. Patricia notes that her father, Thomas Porter Bailey, worked very hard to preserve the farm for his family, and that she "loves the beauty of the farm and its history."
Brothers John and Hugh Torbett began their journey from Scotland to Pennsylvania in the 1760s. They eventually settled in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, and both died there, but their children chose to move on to lands in western North Carolina. Hugh’s son, John, founded the family farm in the frontier settlement of Piney Flats when he purchased 200 acres of a North Carolina land grant for 100 shillings in 1788. In 1813, he married Catherine Payne of Virginia, and they began the branch of the Torbett family that still occupies this Sullivan County land. John deeded land for Locust Grove School, and his heirs donated property for Edgefield United Methodist Church. Some members of the Torbett family attended New Bethel Presbyterian Church, organized by Rev. Samuel Doak in 1782, and are buried in its cemetery.

As the farm passed to each generation, the owners raised grain, hay, cattle, horses, hogs, chickens, and sheep. Eli Anderson Torbett operated a sawmill and began raising flowers and plants, pioneering the greenhouse industry in the Piney Flats area. Eli’s son, Farrell J. Torbett, was a charter member of the Piney Flats Ruritan and with his wife, Anna Jane, started the F. J. Torbett Plant Farm Greenhouses. John Phillip Torbett, current owner of Cedar View Farm, is the sixth generation to farm the land his ancestor purchased. Building upon the family’s agrarian tradition, he participated in farm-related clubs throughout his school and college years, obtaining a B.S. in agriculture from the University of Tennessee–Knoxville. In 1984, the Sullivan County Farm Bureau named him Young Farmer of the Year. He is an active 4-H Club supporter and participates in various county and state agricultural organizations including the Sullivan County Cattlemen’s Association and the Tennessee Flower Growers Association; he is a past president of both groups. With his wife, Denise, he operates the F. J. Torbett Plant Farm in Piney Flats. John Colby Torbett, the next generation, holds an M.S. in agriculture from the University of Tennessee and is currently employed by the USDA in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Cloydland Farm is in Wilson County, which leads the state in the number of certified Century Farms. John and Margaret Scott Cloyd, originally from Scotland, founded the farm in 1789 with 220 acres located fourteen miles east of Nashville. Corn, cotton, wheat, hay, cattle, swine, horses, and sheep were agricultural products of this 18th-century self-sustaining farm. Of the founders’ seven children, John became the second-generation owner of the family land. As a farmer, John produced the same crops and livestock as his father but also operated a tan yard. He married Sarah Wade and fathered nine children. According to tradition, the Cloyd family were “a strong religious family.”

Dora T. Cloyd, granddaughter of John and Margaret Cloyd, was the farm’s third owner. In 1916, James Duncan Ligon, the great-grandson of the founders, acquired all of the original Cloydland acreage. The farm’s history also documents early 20th-century experiments with purebred cattle, swine, and sheep. Duncan was a champion stock breeder for over six decades, raising Poland China swine, registered polled Shorthorn cattle, and Hampshire sheep, he also raised milo, small grains, hay, and purebred livestock. His son, Herschel C. Ligon, was born in what is considered the oldest house in Wilson County, built in 1791 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Herschel served in World War II and led his company in the D-Day landing on Utah Beach. He commanded his company through five campaigns in Europe and retired as a U.S. Army major.

Herschel continued the farming traditions of his family. He was founder and president of Registered Farmers of America and Associated Consumers. Twice, he testified before the Senate and House agricultural committees. He was featured in a television program and a number of newspaper articles. The Tennessee ran an article in 1991 featuring Herschel and including a photograph of his Poland China sows, which he was exhibiting at the Tennessee Pork Convention at Middle Tennessee State University. His sons, William (Bill) and James (Jim), share ownership with their father and are involved in the farm work as well. The family reports that Cloydland Farm “has the oldest Poland China hog herd in the United States and probably the oldest sheep flock in Tennessee.”
In May of 1789, John Logue Jr. established a farm of 1,000 acres he received as a military land grant for his service in the Revolutionary War. Logue and his wife, Eleanor Telford-Tinnin Logue, had five children. The family raised corn, hay, swine, and cattle as primary crops on this farm, which would become part of Wilson County in 1799. A son, Cairmes Logue, became the next owner of the farm, and he and his wife, Margaret (Peggy) Randal Logue, had eight children. The family continued to farm and Cairmes Logue, who served in the War of 1812 under Captain Eli Hammon, also owned and operated a tannery. A log home was built around 1811 by Cairmes for his wife and a larger home in 1814, as dated by a rock which is part of the intact chimney. A smokehouse and barn from that period remain. Cairmes had 350 acres in 1800 and owned six slaves.

Tapley Green Logue Sr., son of Cairmes and Peggy, farmed 574 acres, having bought some of the original farm from his siblings. He continued farming and operating the tannery and also did business as a broker and moneylender. He was married to Nancy Ann Bass, and they had twelve children. When they died, Nancy and Tapley were buried in the Logue cemetery on the farm.

Franklin Lindsay Logue, one of the twelve children, acquired the property, and with wife Daisy Cantrell Logue and four children, farmed 160 acres. The current owner, Martha Janice Logue Coleman, has childhood memories of her grandparents, Daisy, cooking on a wood stove for soldiers who were holding maneuvers on the farm during World War II.

Mrs. Coleman, the great-great-granddaughter of the original owner, inherited a portion of the original Logue Farm, Windy Hill, in 1972. She and her husband, Herman M. Coleman, raised cattle for a number of years and continue to have hay and vegetables.

Just a decade after the first settlement of the Shady Valley community of Sullivan County, North Carolina, now Johnson County, a land grant was issued to Joseph Cole Sr. in 1789. He was married to Freelove Mason Cole and their son, Sampson, was the next to own the farm. The family records that Sampson and his father both fought in the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. Married twice, Sampson fathered four children.

Sampson's son, Jesse Cole, born to his second wife, Lydia Wheeler Cole, represented the third generation to own the land. During the war of 1812, Jesse served as a captain of militia in Crocker's Brigade of General Andrew Jackson's Division of Tennessee Militiamen. In return for his military service, he was awarded a land bounty of 2,120 acres. Jesse married Celia Brown Cole, daughter of the earliest known settler in Shady Valley. The couple had thirteen children. While managing the farm, Jesse served as a county justice in Carter County, and he became the first presiding judge in Johnson County when it was formed out of Carter County in 1836.

In 1856, Moses Wright, the husband of Lydia "Liddie" Cole Wright, who was the great-granddaughter of the founder, acquired the farm. James Jones Wright, the great-great-grandson of the founder, became the next owner of the land. Married twice, he fathered two children. In later years, the Jim Wright Branch, which runs through the farm from its headwaters on Iron Mountain in the Cherokee National Forest until it flows into Beaversdam Creek, would bear his name.

James's son, Allen Jesse Wright, was the next to own the land. Under his stewardship, the 187 acres produced buckwheat, chestnuts, corn, hay, herbs, oats, sorghum, tobacco, wheat, cattle, honeybees, horses, poultry, sheep, and swine. Over the years, the farm experienced some changes such as in 1919 when a railroad was built through the property. The railroad carried ore from Shady Valley to other communities. During the Great Depression, A. J. Wright distributed flour for the American Red Cross to eligible residents in the community. In the 1940s, the family was awarded certificates of recognition by the governor for its participation in the Tennessee Home Food Supply Program during the war years.

In 1982, descendants of the founders, Ruby Wright Testerman, Nellie Wright, Letha and Otis Shuler, Kenneth and Eula Sluder, and Kenny and Kelly Sluder, became the owners of the farm. As of 1999, the farm supported cattle, corn, hay, and tobacco. In addition, a portion of the land owned by Ruby Wright Testerman and Nellie Wright and her son John was leased to Vince Gentry, a dairy farmer. The oldest building on the Wright Farm is the house that was built in 1909. Also of natural significance is the old-growth forest on the farm that was added to the Tennessee Landmark and Historic Tree Register in 1998.
The third owner of the land was John Lancaster's nephew, Thomas A. Lancaster, a veteran of the War of 1812. He and his wife, Frances Lancaster, had six children. Thomas opened a general merchandise store in Lancaster. William, son of Thomas and Frances, was the next to own the land. William began a substantial two-story house before the Civil War but was unable to complete it until after 1865. Melissa Lancaster, daughter of William and his wife, Elizabeth, and her husband, James C. Prichard, were the next owners of the property. In 1884, the couple sold 400 acres to the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad Company.

The farm passed through several more family owners and today is owned by John Williams Rose, commissioner of agriculture for the state of Tennessee in 2002–2003. John and his sister, Cindy Rose Dowell, and his husband, Steve Dowell, currently operate the farm. It is managed by Darin Drake, who owns a nearby parcel of the original Lancaster property. The farm produces beef cattle, Kentucky 31 tall fescue seed, burley tobacco, and timber. Rose reports that the entire family including John's sister, Rhedona, director of public affairs for the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; their brother, Lanny; and their father, Jerry Lancaster Rose, have worked on the historic farm on the Caney Fork River.

Another land grant farm was established in 1790, near an area later to be known as Shouin's Crossroads, by Col. David Wagner. Married twice—first to Mary Catherine Hagay and then to Margaret Peggy Weitzel—he was the father of 18 children. It is not surprising, then, that his offspring are considered among the "first families of Johnson County."

Situated along Roan Creek on 572 acres, the farm produced tobacco, wheat, corn, and hay, swine, sheep, and cattle. David and Margaret's son, Nathaniel T. Wagner, was the next owner of the land. Nathaniel is credited with building the farmhouse (circa 1850) that is inhabited by his descendants today. Also dating from the first half of the 19th century is a barn and a well house for storing dairy products in addition to covering and providing convenient access to a consistent water supply.

Nathaniel and his family produced corn, barley, flax, sugar cane, oats, wheat, hay, and tobacco and raised swine, sheep, and cattle. Nathaniel married three times and was the father of 16 children. His first wife died in childbirth in 1846; his second wife, Elizabeth Baker, bore three children before she died; and his third marriage, to Amanda Baker, sister of Elizabeth, produced 12 more children.
During the marriage of Amanda and Nathaniel, the Civil War occurred and both armies raided the farm. In Nathaniel’s will, the farm was deeded to his son, Clyde. The will, however, stipulated that Clyde pay a specific amount of money to the other heirs. Moreover, for his two daughters who were not married, Nathaniel mandated that they be allowed to live at the home place as long as they remained single and that they be supported by the farm’s income.

Thomas P. Worley, the founder’s great-great-grandson, is the farm’s current owner. His mother was Jennie Lee Wagner, the daughter of Clyde and wife Ada Wilks. Jennie lived on the farm throughout her life, which spanned most of the 20th century. She and husband Tom Worley, who was a minister as well as a farmer, took good care of her parents in their old age. Jennie also taught first grade at Shoun’s Elementary School, and Tom began a dairy that sold milk to a North Carolina cheese factory.

Throughout this time, apples continued to be an important crop on the farm. An apple house, with a smokehouse built around and over it, dating from the 1850s, kept the apples and root vegetables warm in the winter and cool in the summer. In 2000, Tom and Mary Ann Worley retired early to live on and operate the farm. On 160 acres, they raise garden vegetables, hay, beef cattle, sheep, and burros. In addition, the Worleys are working to maintain the historic buildings and landscape and preserve the family, county, and regional heritage of this farm.

In documenting the farm’s history, the Worleys noted that they “feel fortunate to have inherited the Wagner-Worley Farm and farmhouse that are so rich in family history.”

Records of land transactions are not always available from the earliest years of settlement history. While the Young family may have come into Carter’s Valley (Hawkins County) as early as the 1760s, documents to prove the exact date are unavailable. William Young and his wife, Carolyn Walker, are known to have been in the area for some years prior to their deaths (in 1793 and 1790 respectively). The earliest legal document associated with Long Meadow Farm, however, is a deed registered in 1791 showing the acquisition of 350 acres by John Young for fifty shillings in what was then Sullivan County, North Carolina. John and his wife, Margaret Galbraith, raised twelve children. Their son, John Young Jr., became the next to own the land. John and his son Wylie fought in the Civil War on the Confederate side.

The next owner of the property was Wylie Miller Young. Along with his wife, Ida Whittington, they managed the farm and raised four children. Eventually, the farm was passed on to the three remaining children: Henry, Frances, and Robert. Under their ownership, the farm produced tobacco, wheat, cattle, and sheep. Henry never married; however, his sister Frances married Charles Edward Schumack. Robert wed Naomi White Polkerson, and they resided in Knoxville, where Robert practiced medicine. Their three children, Georgiana Young Pearson, Frances Young Torbett, and Robert Miller Young Jr., are the current owners of the farm. Robert manages Long Meadow Farm, which is located just north of Sycamore. The farm mainly produces beef cattle. The farm is a lesson in Tennessee history. A slave burying ground is on the farm and remaining 19th-century buildings include a log corn crib, a stable, a log kitchen, a log springhouse, a log smokehouse, a widow’s house, two barns, a hay barn, and the main house. The main house has evolved over the years and has a log part that likely dates to at least the late 18th century. In the 1973 nomination that placed the house on the National Register of Historic Places, it was described as “one of the oldest structures remaining in the state.”
Following the signing of the Treaty of Dumplin Creek (May 31, 1785) between the state of Franklin and the Cherokee Nation, the lands north of the French Broad and Little Tennessee rivers were opened for settlement. In 1786, Richard Rankin (1751-1827) and William Bradshaw traveled from Virginia to begin building homes at the origin of Dumplin Creek. Their families followed in the spring of 1787, and they began farming in Dumplin Valley. On June 11, 1792, Jefferson County was formed in what was then the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio.

Richard Rankin, a Revolutionary War veteran, and his wife, Jane Steele of Rockbridge, Virginia, settled approximately 100 acres of land along Dumplin Creek. The parents of 12 children, they raised corn, wheat, cattle, and swine. Their son, Richard Duffield (1800-1890), married Nancy McClure in 1829 and after her early death married Mary Woods. This Rankin generation also had a large family of 12 children. Their daughter, Almira M. Rankin (1839-1952), married James Moore McMurray (1845-1917) in 1872. To make a home for their family of eight children, they replaced the original Rankin home with a new dwelling (see above), located near a spring, in 1892. This generation farmed corn and wheat but also raised tobacco in addition to dairy and beef cattle and swine and poultry. Their son, John McCambell McMurray (1879-1968), who married Louella Caldwell, farmed with his brother, Ben, until 1968 in much the same manner as had their parents.

The Rankin home was a center of activity in the Mt. Horeb community. The front parlor was a library that was supplied each month by the Tennessee regional library van and was open to all members of the community for many years. The family also hosted home demonstration clubs and many other activities. John McMurray served as the recording secretary of Hebron Presbyterian church for over 50 years. It is said that daily prayer was held in the two Rankin homes for over 150 years. In 1969, Thomas Crawford and Mary Ruth McMurray Crawford inherited much of the original Rankin property including the 1892 house. Mr. Crawford modernized the farming operation and concentrated on raising hay and quality commercial beef cattle. Thomas died in July 2007, but Mary Ruth continues to actively manage the business of the farm while her son and nephew raise cattle and hay.

--- text provided by the Crawford family ---

William and Jemima Fullen Phillips established Valley Breeze Farm in 1791. Their initial 640 acres are located in the St. Clair community of Hawkins County. Practicing general farming, the Phillips and their nine children "were hard workers and neighborly."

Charlotte Phillips Arnott and her husband, Minnis, inherited 84 acres of the farm in 1899. Two years earlier, Minnis had contributed to a written history of Hawkins County. According to the family, he "was very poor in early life but by working as a carpenter and blacksmith, he was the owner of several hundred acres of farm land by the time of his death." During Charlotte and Minnis's ownership, the farm produced grain, cattle, swine, fruit, vegetables, and sugar cane.

In 1907, William Minnis Kite received 84 acres of the original Phillips farm. He built a new barn and corn crib and several smaller outbuildings. He also used a tenant house to build an addition to the family home. Married to Elsie Hawn and the father of two daughters, William was an early member of the Hawkins County Farm Bureau and helped "build and maintain the first telephone lines in our community." Like so many 20th-century farmers, he cultivated tobacco as a major cash crop.
Valley Breeze Farm cont.

Ruth Kite married Bruce Turner in 1937, and in 1940 they inherited 84 acres from her parents. They farmed the land, which at that time was 90 acres, as long as their health permitted. All six of their children—Alvin, William, Lana, Fred, Sidney, and Judy—did their share of work in developing the farm and maintaining it. The Turner’s story of working together to keep a farm vibrant and alive is shared by all of Tennessee’s Century Farms.

In 1970, Sidney Turner returned to the farm after serving in the U.S. Air Force with a tour of duty in Vietnam. In 1971, he married Sandra Hileman, also of St. Clair, and they remodeled and moved into the tenant house located on the 90-acre farm.

Sidney took a job with Farm Bureau Insurance in 1972, which took him and Sandy to Meigs County, Unicoi County, and then back home to Hawkins County in 1998, at which time they purchased 160 acres of the original 640 acres, and moved back on the farm. Sid retired from Farm Bureau Insurance in December 2005. Sid and Sandy live on the farm, and they are the proud parents of Patricia Turner Nguyen, who is married to Tuan, and Patrick Turner, who is married to Lanie. Their grandchildren are Turner Nguyen and Deacon Turner. Sidney and Sandy are in the process of changing the farm’s present beef and hay crop operation over to an organic-based, grass-finished beef operation, which is more in keeping with the farming traditions of their ancestors, who have farmed this land for over 200 years.

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text provided by the Turner Family

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1792

Hartsaw Cove Farm

Hartsaw Cove Farm originated with Gilbert Christian, who received a land grant from the state of North Carolina for 1,208 acres in 1792 for his service in the Revolutionary War. This was fourteen years before Overton County was established on September 13, 1806. The second owner of the property was Gilbert’s son, George Christian Sr., who eventually deeded the land to his son, George Christian Jr. The direct descendants of Gilbert Christian retained ownership of the farm, and, in 1973, A. E. Christian conveyed the farm to Millard V. Oakley and his brother R. L. Oakley. The Oakleys are related to the Christian family. Several members of the Christian family are buried on the farm, including George Christian, who was born March 28, 1789, and died April 3, 1870. His wife, Elizabeth, is buried on this plot as is their daughter Eliza Christian, who was born in 1810 and died in 1892. The slaves of the Christian family were buried on the same plot.

Today, Millard Oakley and his wife, J. Annette Oakley, raise cattle on the 1,200 acres, and a white frame dwelling built in 1902 still stands on the property. Hartsaw Cove Farm is the oldest certified Century Farm in Overton County.

1792

Oak Thicket Farm

On Caldwell Road in Jefferson County is Oak Thicket Farm, established by William Caldwell in 1792. Of Scots-Irish descent, William and his brothers, Anthony and Alexander, came into the area soon after the end of the Revolutionary War. They visited the farm site, near what is now New Market, twice before William decided to establish his homestead. Observing the fields where Cherokees had cleared land and planted corn, William noted that “the oak-timbered land had the smallest corn and the soil was white and thin, whereas the pine-timbered land of the other section had fine corn and the soil was rich and loamy. He was not long in deciding where he would build his home.” He married Eleanor Moore in 1791 and brought her to the farm. William’s brothers located their farms nearby and together they built a blockhouse to protect themselves in case of Indian attack. The family has passed down many stories from these early and uncertain years of settlement in the wilderness.

The farm next passed to William’s son, Anthony Caldwell. A practitioner of general farming, Anthony married Polly McSpadden, and they raised nine children. Anthony and his family were active members of the Presbyterian Church. He was an elder for many years, as were his sons and grandsons, some of whom became ministers.

In 1962, Ralph Caldwell acquired 100 acres of the property. For over 40 years he specialized in cattle and tobacco production. Mr. Caldwell is now in his nineties and lives on the farm established by his great-great-grandfather.
Early manufacturing centers in Tennessee were scattered throughout the state and were invariably located adjacent to the natural resources they used. One example from Jefferson County is the Old Brick Farm, which once was part of Tennessee’s gunpowder industry. Founded by Samuel McSpadden in 1792, Old Brick Farm is six miles west of Dandridge. A Revolutionary War veteran, Samuel practiced general farming on his 400 acres of land. In 1804, his family’s slaves built a two-story brick house from raw materials that were available on the farm. McSpadden also operated a mill that produced gunpowder used by General Andrew Jackson’s troops in the War of 1812.

Alvah McSpadden was the second-generation owner of Old Brick Farm. Married twice, he fathered four children. During the Civil War, his family sided with the Union cause and two sons fought in the Federal armies.

William Wallace Blackburn, the grandson of Alvah McSpadden, was the next owner of the family land, and after his death, his wife Ida A. Blackburn operated the farm until 1942. In the 1930s, the Tennessee Valley Authority acquired about one-third of the farm property for use as a reservoir that is now Douglas Lake. Benjamin A. and Mary Marion Blackburn began to manage 53 acres of Old Brick in 1942, even though they lived away from the farm. Mary was also a descendent of the founder Samuel McSpadden through his daughter Polly McSpadden Caldwell (see Oak Thicket Farm). In the 1970s, the Blackburns retired to the farm, lived in the 1804 brick house (see above), and raised Hereford cattle, hay, orchard fruits, and vegetables. In their 1985 application to certify the farm, the Blackburns noted that their three daughters planned to keep the farm in the family. A Tennessee Historical Marker describes the site of the powder mill and the house built by Samuel McSpadden.

Woodard Hall Farm is the oldest Century Farm in Robertson County and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was founded by Thomas Woodard, who was born in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, on August 15, 1769, and came to Tennessee in 1788. This was also the year of his marriage to Elizabeth Wills, born in 1768, with whom he had seven children. In 1792, Woodard purchased 180 acres from John Stanley, later adding 48 acres to make a home place tract of 228 acres.

Siding for the frame house came from a sawmill on Beaver Dam Creek operated by Thomas Johnson. Further up the creek, Thomas Woodard began a distillery that processed corn into whiskey and peaches and apples into brandy. After his death in 1836, his son, Wiley Woodard, born in 1810, expanded the distillery operation and increased the size of the farm to approximately 2,000 acres. He married Elizabeth Henry and had six children who lived to maturity. Wiley was a colonel in the state militia and a representative in the Tennessee General Assembly. Woodard also sponsored the construction of the Springfield and Manscove’s Creek Turnpike and the Edgefield and Kentucky Railroad and was a founder of the Springfield National Bank.

Prior to the Civil War, crops were grown and processed with the help of a few slaves and hired hands and an Irish distiller. Commodities included corn, wheat, orchard products, tobacco, cattle, and a large number of hogs that consumed the mash from the distillery and filled the log smokehouse with country ham and bacon. After the war the farming operation continued with the help of tenants, some of them former slaves.
Woodard Hall Farm cont.

Upon Wiley’s death in 1877, his son, George Rogers Woodard, known as “Larkin,” inherited 408 acres that included the home place. Another son, Daniel Woodard, built his home on adjoining land and operated the distillery until 1903. Upon Larkin’s death in 1920, his sister Josephine, who was the widow of banker-distiller J. S. Brown and the mother of 11 children, bought the home place tract of 228.5 acres. In 1932, she sold that land to her son, Edwin Hart Brown, who owned the farm until his daughter, Josephine Brown Cervantes, inherited it in 1970. Ed Brown briefly experimented with sheep, and during Josephine Cervantes’ tenure, soybeans were added to the traditional crops. Tenant farmer Jack Cook cultivated these crops from 1942, first with mules and then with tractors, until he took his last crop of tobacco from the farm in 1992. He remained on the farm as caretaker for several years thereafter.

Today, Joe and Kay Baker Gaston, representing the sixth generation of Woodard descendants, own Woodard Hall Farm. They have expanded it to 416 acres and live in the farmhouse, which dates to the late 18th century. Other historic structures include tobacco barns and a corn crib, a tenant house, a guest house, a brick kitchen, and a log smokehouse. There is also a walled cemetery where Thomas, Wiley, and Daniel Woodard and their families are buried. In 1992, the Gastons revived the annual family barbeque, last held in 1938, to celebrate Josephine Woodard Brown’s birthday on August 1, 1848.

—text provided by Kay Baker Gaston

1793

1793

Archie Hatcher Farm

William and Polly Crowson Hatcher were important early settlers in Sevier County. A native of Virginia, Hatcher owned 800 acres in Wear’s Valley by 1793. The parents of eleven children, they often feared Indian attack in the farm’s early years of development. William died in 1820 and Polly died in 1838; both are buried on the farm in the family cemetery, as are many of their descendants. The farm’s second-generation owner was Reuben Hatcher, who owned and managed 400 acres. He and his wife, Martha McGill, and their ten children raised a variety of livestock and crops.

Reuben Hatcher Jr. was the next owner of the family farm, and during the ownership of both Reuben and his son, James W. Hatcher, the daily patterns of farm operations were similar. By the time Andrew W. Hatcher had acquired the property in the early 20th century, however, the Hatcher place exhibited new patterns of agriculture and yielded new crops. Andrew tilled 81 acres of the original farm and cultivated tobacco. By purchasing a tractor-powered threshing machine, Andrew was able to harvest grain throughout the community and to improve his farming income. He paid a personal price for this new technology, however, when he lost his arm in an accident involving the machine.

The sixth-generation owner of the Hatcher land was Lendell A. Hatcher, who acquired 40 acres of the original homestead. His son, Archie, the great-great-great-grandson of the founders, purchased the farm in 1963. Archie and his wife, Karen, along with their daughter, Sloan, raise cattle, tobacco, and hay. “Buying the land was an important event,” Archie writes, “because of my deep family heritage here, which I am very proud of. I hope to keep it prosperous in this time of economic depression in farming and for many generations to come.”

1793

James F. Hatcher Farm

The James F. Hatcher Farm is the second Century Farm to originate with the land settled by William and Polly Crowson Hatcher in 1798. Its history is the same as that of the Archie Hatcher Farm until the 20th century. James F. Hatcher, a sixth-generation farmer, acquired a portion of the original farm in 1940. He and his wife, Nelle, and their children raised corn, tobacco, potatoes, garden vegetables, and cattle for their own use. Nelle Hatcher continues to make her home on the Wear’s Valley farm.
William Walker of Wythe County, Virginia, established his family farm, now called Brookside, in 1793. Located nine miles north of Jonesboro in the Blackley Creek community, the land was purchased from Robert Carson. Walker and his wife, Susannah Graham (pictured above), were married in 1787 and had three sons. On 100 acres, the family raised sheep and kept bees. Walker donated land to the community for the construction of Pleasant Grove Church and Cemetery.

In 1888, the farm became the property of their daughter, Sarah Mattida, and her husband, Elbert Keys. Elbert, also a farmer in Washington County, fought for the Union Army during the Civil War. Sarah and Elbert built a house on the farm in 1903. Charles Keys and his wife, Montnie Osborne Keys, became the owners of the land in 1916, and Sestile and Mary Martin Keys became the fifth-generation owners in 1948.

By 1978, Charles A. and Marie E. Keys, the current owners, had acquired the farm. Alfalfa, hay, and Holstein steers are raised at Brookside. The 1908 house, a barn built before the Civil War, and another one built in 1917 are part of this historic agricultural landscape.

Oak Haven Farm, dating to 1793, has contributed significantly to the social and economic development of Sumner County, especially in the areas of progressive farming and bred livestock. Founders William Edwards Sr. and his wife Sarah Janette (see portraits above) came from North Carolina and originally owned 540 acres but soon developed other acreages in the county as well. Cotton, maple sugar, small grains, sheep, and beef cattle were the commodities produced at Oak Haven.

The founders had eight children, and their daughter, Sarah, wife of William Howard Douglass, inherited 540 acres in 1828. William managed the farm as his father-in-law had done and made few changes in its operations. Sarah and William were the parents of six children. In 1865, the founder's grandson, Cullen Douglass, acquired 288 acres of the original farm. Douglass, who married twice and fathered eighteen children, was a member of the Sumner County Court. He made major changes in the farm's operations, ceasing the cultivation of cotton and breeding registered Shorthorn cattle.

In 1899, the farm passed to his children, who jointly managed it for 29 years. The farm's commodities expanded to include corn and swine. Cullen E. Douglass Jr., the great-great-grandson of the founders, acquired the family's 288 acres in 1928. Douglass later sold 138 acres and, on his reduced acreage, became a specialized farmer of tobacco, milk products, lespedeza, and livestock. Cullen held several public and civic offices, including foreman of the county grand jury, director of the Sumner County Farm Bureau, and treasurer of the Bill Wilkerson Hearing and Speech Center. Married to Elisabeth Anderson, they had one child, Wade Anderson Douglass, the current owner.
1794

Anderson Farm

William Ross emigrated from Ireland some time before the Revolutionary War, in which he fought for at least two years. His son, John Ross, married Rebecca, the daughter of John Carter, who received a land grant in Greene County in 1787. The same year they were married, 1794, they began farming 257 acres of her father’s land. They grew corn, wheat, and hay and raised cattle and swine. The farm next passed into the hands of their son, Allen Ross, and his wife, Sarah Weems. Allen and Sarah had three children, and they continued to produce many of the same crops and livestock.

The third-generation owner was William Ross, the founders’ grandson. The property passed through the hands of two more generations before William Charles Ross became the sixth-generation owner of the family farm. He and his wife, Ethel Reed, were the parents of four children. Betty Ross and her husband, William Anderson, acquired all of the original farm in 1959. Mrs. Anderson, who retains ownership of the farm today, is the great-great-granddaughter of John and Rebecca Carter Ross. She reports that she and her two sons “try to take good care of the farm, which produces corn, hay, and cattle.”

1794

Hillcrest Farm

James Burnley of Louisa County, Virginia, began paying taxes on 880 acres in 1794 in what would become Troup County. James and his wife, Elizabeth Ann Burnley, ran one of the area’s most important agricultural operations during the antebellum era. The Burnleys managed large tobacco, corn, and wheat fields, acquired the farm’s first swine; and cultivated small grains. At some time in the 19th century, the Burnleys owned and operated a tobacco factory. During the Civil War, Moses (son of the founders and second-generation owner) and his wife, Molly, hosted General John Hunt Morgan and his officers at their home.

In 1853, Ray F. Foley acquired 231 acres of the original farm. Ray, the great-great-great-grandson of James and Elizabeth Ann Burnley, worked the land for the next 27 years, producing tobacco, milo, hay, and cattle. Upon his death in 1980, his widow inherited the farm and continued to supervise its daily operations. Mrs. Foley writes that few of the farm’s 19th-century buildings remain at Hillcrest though a log smokehouse does date to the antebellum era. A slave cemetery is also located on the farm.

1794

Brabson Ferry Plantation

John Brabson II came from Virginia in 1794 searching for new land and a more prosperous future. Having received a land grant from the state of North Carolina in the same year, Brabson was eager to establish a new life in the area that would eventually become Sevier County. Not long after his parents died, Brabson returned to Virginia and made an indenter agreement with his brother, Thomas J. Brabson, to release all his shares of the family land in Virginia that was divided between them.

After the transaction, Brabson returned to Sevier County and began acquiring more acreage and engaging in several enterprises. In 1818, he was granted leave by the Tennessee General Assembly to construct a dam on the south side of the French Broad River near the head of Rogers Island.

During the Civil War, conditions reportedly became intolerable for many members of the Brabson family, and they left for safer places. While some relatives went to Macon and Morgan counties, and Gregory County, Benjamin opted to move to Winchester in Franklin County. Less than a year after moving, Benjamin died and his family returned to Sevier County and began to restore the farm and land.

Over the years, the farm passed through several generations. Today, Ben D. Brabson II, the great-great-grandson of the founder, owns the farm. He and wife Elaine D. Brabson produce beef cattle, corn, oats, wheat, hay, and soybeans. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and many historic structures built in the 19th century remain to tell the story of the Brabson family.
A family whose descendants helped settle Cocke County highlights the history of River Dale Farm, which was founded in 1794. Reps Jones, born in Virginia in 1742, migrated to the area in 1784 and settled along the Nolichucky River, a scenic river that has several Century Farms along its length. On this farm, Reps and his wife, Lucy Pritchett Jones, and their five children worked 250 acres in Beech Bottoms raising corn, wheat, hay, cattle, and swine. Reps Jones served as county commissioner to help locate the seat of justice and supervise the erection of the log courthouse after Cocke County was formed in 1797.

Daniel Jones, born in 1776 to Reps and Lucy, was the next owner of the land. He and his wife, Mary Harrison Jones, and their 10 children produced corn, wheat, hay, cattle, and swine. Daniel Jones served in the War of 1812. The first two generations of the family are buried on the family farm.

Daniel and Mary’s son, Daniel Jones II, and his wife, Oella Clare Campbell Jones, acquired and purchased more than 615 acres. It was this generation that gave land to the Cocke County Board of Education for the Jones School on Jones Hill. The school building was also used for church services. The family also gathered here for many Jones family reunions in June of each year until the building burned in the early 1970s. In addition to providing land for the school, Daniel also gave acreage for Jones Cemetery, also on Jones Hill. According to the family, over fifty Jones descendants as well as friends and neighbors are buried there.

The current owners, John Lyman Ayers and William Victor Ayers, the sixth generation of the family, were born and raised on the farm. The Ayers brothers raise hay, corn, soybeans, and tomatoes. The descendants of Reps and Lucy Jones are proud of their heritage and like to walk through the family cemeteries on the property and talk about the names of ancestors they see engraved on the markers. Family members also take care of the burying grounds and the property by mowing and trimming the land, cleaning, mending broken tombstones, resetting the fallen ones, and installing new grave markers. John’s wife, Mary Miller Ayers, writes that the next generation, who have chosen not to farm for a living, are nevertheless “attached to the farm and will inherit it but never want it sold.”

Summer County, was created in 1786, and a farm was established by Elisha and Rebecca Wood Kirby in 1795. The Kirbys were important late 18th-century landowners, and their 1,000 acres produced cattle, swine, sheep, corn, wheat, and tobacco. Margaret Kirby Warren, their daughter, inherited the farm in 1848. Her spouse, Thomas H. Warren, practiced general farming. During the Civil War, Thomas joined the Confederate army and was captured and imprisoned in Ohio in 1863. The family history recounts that, in his absence, “Yankee soldiers pillaged the farm, stealing everything they could take with them.”

Margaret and Thomas Warren had four children, and two of their sons also fought for the Confederacy. In 1870, the family land passed to their daughter, Laura Warren Bradley, the spouse of Andrew Jackson Bradley, also a veteran of the Confederate army. Little is known about this period in the farm’s history except that the Bradleys raised five children and practiced general farming. In 1888, John Ernest Bradley became the farm’s fourth-generation owner. He and his wife, Bessie Briley, managed the property through the first half of the 20th century.

In 1932, heirs of John and Bessie acquired the property, and in 1976, when the Bradley farm was certified as a Century Farm, the owners were Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Bradley, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Bradley, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilburn Emison. On the 165 acres, the Bradley family produced beef cattle, wheat, corn, soybeans, and hay. These products are still the mainstays of Bradley Farm, now owned by Mrs. Lawrence (Mary K.) Bradley, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Bradley, and Mrs. Wilburn Emison. John R. Bradley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Bradley, is also involved in the farm, some of which is currently leased.
Allendale Farm, located six miles north of Clarksville (Montgomery County), was founded by Captain Abraham Allen and his wife, Elizabeth, of Orange County, North Carolina. In 1796, the Revolutionary War veteran purchased 1,725 acres for $37 pounds and 10 shillings. The family planted corn and began hewing tulip poplar trees for buildings. From these logs a dwelling of one and one-half stories was built. A second log house was also built in 1796, to which a two-story brick addition was made in 1808.

The founders' son, George Allen, was the farm's second-generation owner. He and his wife, Elizabeth Blackwood, raised thirteen children. Bailey F. Allen, the grandson of the founders, and his wife, Mary Jane Osburn, raised six children. The farm prospered until the Civil War and Reconstruction. These were hard times, indeed, ending in the loss of land and wealth. The land, however, remained productive throughout these years, and the family raised corn, tobacco, hay, and livestock.

Bailey F. Allen Jr. (1803–1943) and his wife, Eliza Emery (1879–1965), maintained 300 acres of the original land grant. With his ownership, Bailey relied on the four pillars of income—selling wheat in the summer, cattle in the fall, tobacco in the winter, and sheep in the spring. In 1903, Allen purchased a Hereford cow and bull for his son's (William Bailey Allen Sr.) 4-H project. The family continued to improve the herd by adding heifers from the Nebraska foothills. William returned from military service upon the death of his father in 1943. By 1954, Allendale Farm was a charter member of the University of Tennessee Performance Testing Program. The family raised wheat, hay, Geltvich-cross cows, and Tennessee Walking horses.

William Bailey Allen Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Farmer had two children, Amelia Allen Hartz and William Bailey Allen II. Members of the family, the sixth and seventh generations, continue to live in the original log and brick structures. The two original late 18th-century dwellings are separately listed on the National Register of Historic Places. William Bailey Allen Sr. continues the family tradition of teaching his great-grandchildren, the eighth generation, to protect and nurture the land.

William and Mary Harris Ogilvie moved from North Carolina to a homestead in the new state of Tennessee in 1796. They chose property near a spring (that still supplies the farm with fresh water), and William built a log house. As needs changed during the antebellum period and later years, additions were made to the Ogilvie home. This dwelling, however, continues to serve as the main farmhouse.

William Ogilvie gave and sold many parts of his landholdings to his sons. In his 1813 will, he gave to his son Richard 515 acres including the house, cabins, and farm buildings. When Richard died in 1832, he willed the farm to his wife, Cynthia, and youngest son, James Smith Ogilvie.

James Smith Ogilvie married Rachel Webb, and they raised six children on the farm. In 1897, James died and passed the plantation to his sons, Samuel Jason Ogilvie and James Smith Ogilvie II, who purchased their sisters' shares. Later on, the brothers divided the land: Samuel obtained the portion with the buildings and 150 acres, and James received 165 acres on which he built a new house for his family. Samuel Jason Ogilvie died at the age of 36, leaving three young children for his wife, Anna Rucker Ogilvie, to raise. With the help of African American families living on the property, she was able to save the farm for her children, James D., Rachel, and Samuel. During World War I, James, a Marine, served in Europe. According to the family, he was given the job of caring for a team of miles and an ammunition wagon as the troops made their way through France and Germany. After he returned from the war, James became responsible for the farm's operations. Not long after, his siblings left the farm, and he and his wife, Bettye Maxwell, bought their interest. Here they raised their children, Samuel Rucker and Elizabeth Maxwell. James and Bettye Ogilvie operated the farm for the next three decades. It was this couple who named the farm "Beech Hill" because of the number of beech trees growing on the acreage.

Samuel R. Ogilvie and Elizabeth Ogilvie Battle, the great-great-great-grandchildren of the founders, received the farm's 150 acres in 1964. In 1992, Elizabeth and her husband, William Robert Battle, became the sole owners. Mr. and Mrs. Battle make their home on the farm today. Currently, the land is rented to a local farmer who raises Black Angus cattle on it. Beech Hill Farm, located one mile south of College Grove in Williamson County—with its log house (above left), begun by William Ogilvie in the late 18th century, its 1830 slave quarters, and its 1850 stone springhouse (above right)—is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
A group of about 50 pioneers came through the "unbroken forests of Virginia and settled in the Holston valley," in what would become Hawkins County in March of 1796. Among them was George Kite. To protect the newly settled community, a fort was built. Eventually, the site of the fort, six miles south of Rogersville, became the property known as Circle J Farm. Under George Kite's ownership, the 600 acres produced horses, cattle, hay, and corn. He was married to Susan Barrett, and the couple had three children.

John Kite, their son and a Revolutionary War veteran, was married to Betsy Loudonback. They were the parents of six children. The family raised horses, cattle, hay, and corn. The third owner of the land was Martin Kite Sr., who was married to Susannah A. Kite. The couple had nine children. One son, Martin Jr., and his wife, Betsy Smith, and two children made the farm their home and raised wheat, hay, corn, hogs, horses, and cows. During the Civil War, part of the farm was used as a camp by Union troops.

David S. Kite, son of Martin and Betsy, acquired 73 acres. After David's death, his son, Joe, bought out the other heirs and became sole owner of the land. He and his wife, Mildred Burchette, were the parents of Elizabeth Rose, who was the next to obtain the farm in 1969. Married to W. C. Manes, they are the parents of William Joe Manes. The family operated a diverse farm, raising a variety of crops and livestock. Joey Manes is the current owner of the farm.

Tennessee agricultural reformers of the antebellum period believed that the state's soil and climate were perfect for the cultivation of silkworms and the production of silk. A native silk industry, they hoped, would allow Tennessee to better compete against the cotton states of the Deep South. Several Century Farms, including the Easterly Farm, participated in the silk production experiments of the 19th century. Dating to 1796, the Easterly Farm is eighteen miles southwest of Greeneville. John George and Mary Harpine Easterly, who initially acquired 600 acres of land, developed one of Greene County's largest farms and eventually owned about 1,100 acres of land. The farm's products included corn, wheat, oats, flax, and livestock.

In the 1810s and 1820s, Jacob Easterly purchased several tracts of land from different family members and soon managed his father's original 1,100 acres. Jacob was an agricultural innovator, and in the mid-1830s, he planted mulberry trees and began to raise silkworms. As a Knoxville newspaper reported in 1836, the silk cloth produced by Jacob's daughters, Catherine, Ruth, and Clarissa, "measured between seventy and eighty yards and in evenness of thread and firmness of texture are equal to most foreign fabrics we have seen." The climate of East Tennessee, however, would not support the mulberry trees and Jacob's courageous silkworm experiment failed.

Jacob Easterly gave 115 acres to his son Abraham's widow, Anna Parrott Easterly, in 1842. The next-generation owner was Francis Marion Easterly. The Civil War took place during his ownership, and in Greene County, the divisions between families and neighbors were especially bitter and severe. Francis Easterly was a Confederate sympathizer in a generally Union area; two of his sons were killed, one in North Carolina and one by bushwhackers while on his way home. Francis, who was allowed to stay home to care for his large family, was kidnapped, hung from one of his own apple trees, and left for dead. After the bushwhackers left, a female slave cut Francis down and saved his life. In 1875, Francis was a founder of Parrotsville Academy, which "made it possible for even the poorest man to give his children an education."

In 1905, Frank Payne Easterly acquired the farmstead and 85 acres of the original family land. Family tradition describes Frank as "a very scientific farmer for his day." His daughter, Boggie Easterly Smith, inherited 100 acres in 1968. She and her husband, Earl H. Smith, managed the farm for many years, producing tobacco, corn, hay, and cattle. With the death of Mrs. Smith in 2003, a daughter, Mary Anna Smith Pirozzoli, inherited the farm. The family has built a horse barn on the property in preparation for boardering horses. Mrs. Pirozzoli reports that she treasures the farm and is keeping it productive.
Massengill Farm

Established in 1796 by Michael Massengill, the eldest Century Farm in Grainger County. Located seven miles southwest of Rutledge in the Buffalo Springs community, the farm records the physical terms the history of a family who mixed agricultural production with commercial businesses for several generations. The founder originally owned 200 acres devoted to the production of corn, wheat, horses, and cattle. More important, Massengill and his wife, Dorcus Stone, owned and operated a mill. The mill and mill house served as headquarters for the Union army during the Civil War. Robert Massengill and his wife, Elizabeth Paul, the second-generation owners, were the parents of four children. Together, they managed a farm of 1,600 acres and raised diverse crops and livestock while operating the mill and a general store. The mill and store were operated by the family until the death of fish hatchery. When Will Massengill died, he left the family farm to his five grandchildren: Emily Dodson Cantwell and her brother, Willis Dodson, two of the great-great-grandchildren of the founders, each inherited 250 acres. Willis is now deceased, but Emily Cantwell and Betty Dodson, widow of Willis, still own their farmsteads. Thomas J. Cantwell, Emily's husband, manages their farm, which produces hay, wheat, and cattle.

The early 19th-century mill was moved from the property in the late 1990s to Townsend and rebuilt, but it was destroyed by fire shortly thereafter.

Rocky Field Farm

In 1796, Joseph White purchased 40 acres of land north of Greeneville on the sinking branch of Lack Creek from the land grant holder, John Smith. Joseph married Margaret Duncan in 1805, and the Whites had six sons and two daughters. At Joseph's death in 1841, all the property was inherited by Margaret. In April 1852, their son Jacob bought the shares of three of his brothers; only the sons inherited property at their mother's death. Jacob and his wife, Rebecca Thompson, who married in 1833, had six children: Isaac, Susan, Eliza, John, Sarah, and Aby.

When Jacob and Rebecca died, the land passed to their children, including the daughters. John White and wife Elizabeth White (a cousin) had seven children. Their son, also named Jacob after his grandfather, acquired the property in the 1890s. Along with his wife, Salome, Jacob cultivated corn, wheat, and hay and raised cattle, horses, mules, sheep, hogs, and poultry. In addition to this acreage, Jacob bought an additional forty acres (20 acres each from two of his aunts) bringing the total acreage to 80. Jacob and Salome's son, Arthur, died of typhoid fever in the 1920s and the land passed directly to his children, Clara and Evelyn White. According to the family, Evelyn and her husband obtained the acreage with the old homestead, but Evelyn's husband made moonshine under the house and burned it down. Not long after, Evelyn and her husband sold the property.

Clara White became the sole owner of the farm in 1938. Clara married Dorsey Hobart Hughes, and they had four children. Under their ownership, the farm supported livestock and crops similar to those raised by the founders but with the addition of hogs and tobacco. In 1978, the land was acquired by their son, Bobby Wayne Hughes, and his wife, Helen M. Hughes. They owned the property until 1995, when Herbert Wayne Hughes obtained it. In 1996, Hughes bought an additional 21.34 acres, and, in 2007, he purchased 23 more acres. The farm's current size is 134.34 acres. Wayne and his wife, Pamela, raise beef cattle, horses, tobacco, hay, and corn. Members of the family living on the farm include Mr. and Mrs. Herbert W. Hughes and their children; Mrs. Helen Hughes, Wayne's mother; and his brother, Mark. These three generations are keepers of many documents that tell their family's history, and they continue the farming legacy of their ancestors.
In 1796, Jeremiah Nesbit purchased approximately 1,000 acres on Yellow Creek in Dickson County from land grants owned by Hezekiah Barnes and Edward Dickson. Nesbit, just 21, and his three brothers, Robert, John, and Nathan, immigrated from Ireland and Scotland to settle near each other. It was in Nathan’s home that the “first meeting to organize local government in Charlotte” was held. The name of Nesbit’s first wife is not known, but his second wife is believed to have been Elizabeth Williamson. Many records were destroyed in the tornado that hit Charlotte, the county seat, in 1850, making it difficult to trace some of the county’s early settlers. It is known, however, that Nesbit fathered eleven children and ten survived to adulthood. Nesbit’s sons fought in the Civil War, and it was during this period that the original log house was burned.

Through the years, the land was divided among the descendents, many of whom still live in the area. Hilda Nesbit Sullivan and her husband, Robby, own one of the larger tracts, 385 acres, of the original farm. They grow hay and beef cattle and note that a log house, built to replace the one burned during the Civil War, still stands.

The Tennessee Century Farms Program

The Tennessee Century Farms Program was created in 1975 by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture as part of our nation’s bicentennial celebration. In 1984, the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University assumed the responsibility for the program.

First, the program honors and recognizes the dedication and contributions of families who have owned and farmed the same land for at least 100 years. After 30 years, the statewide and ongoing program has 1,238 certified farms. Of that number, 109 are at least 200 years old, 552 are more than 150 years old, and 567 are over 100 years old.

Second, the program documents, collects, and interprets the agrarian history and culture of Tennessee. The collection has supported the 1985 book Tennessee Agriculture: A Century Farms Perspective, a traveling exhibit that toured the state in 1988-89, and a large collection of articles in journals and magazines, county displays, local museum exhibits, brochures and booklets, and Web sites.

Families choose to submit an application and be a part of the program. The Century Farms program places no restrictions on the farm and offers no legal protection. There is no cost to the family to nominate their farm and be designated a Century Farm.

What are the requirements?

- Is at least one of the family owners a resident of Tennessee?
- Has the farm been in the family continuously for over 100 years?
- Is the farm 10 acres or more?
- Does it produce at least $1,000 in farm income annually?

If the answer is yes to each of these questions, the farm is eligible to be a Century Farm.

Once the application has been submitted, it is reviewed and processed at the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation. Within one to two weeks, a letter is sent, along with a certificate. A file is prepared on the farm and it is added to the respective county file, joining the over 1,200 other Century Farms that make up this significant collection concerning the state’s agricultural history. A news release is sent to local newspapers and the farm is added to the Web site. The farm name then appears with other newly certified farms in the next issue of the Century Farms newsletter, which is issued in July and December each year. After the application is processed and approved, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture is notified and a complimentary yellow metal sign is sent to the owner. One sign is provided free to each farm. The sign program is funded by the Tennessee AG TAG specialty license plate.

For nearly 25 years, the Center for Historic Preservation has considered the documentation and preservation of the state’s rural landscape to be one of its highest priorities. Through the Tennessee Century Farms program, the center has partnered with farm families, government agencies, county extension agents, county historians, local heritage organizations, and non-profit groups to ensure that this state’s important agrarian legacy and its future remain strong. The center continues its commitment to the support of this ongoing collection project, to the study and protection of the changing rural landscape, to the recognition of farm families, and to the interpretation of their stories.

For further information, contact

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The Center for Historic Preservation

The Center for Historic Preservation is a research and public service institute committed to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and sensitive promotion of our historic environment. A Center of Excellence at Middle Tennessee State University, its primary responsibility is to serve Tennessee’s 95 counties. The center is recognized for its innovative approaches, applied experience training, and placement of students. Statewide programs include the following:

Tennessee Century Farms Program
Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area
Tennessee Rural African American Church Program
Town and Country Preservation Projects
Heritage Education

The center has two missions: improving higher education in Tennessee Board of Regents universities and expanding the state’s economic opportunities through historic preservation and heritage development programs and activities. The center responds to the requests, needs, and concerns of communities, individuals, agencies, and organizations (both governmental and not-for-profit) that are working toward historic preservation goals.

The Center for Historic Preservation supports undergraduate and graduate education and student-centered learning through fellowships, graduate research assistantships, and other employment options. Staff-directed projects provide interdisciplinary and applied working experiences.

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