

Triumph & Tragedy in History  
 2019 National History Day Theme  
 Tennessee History Topics

Topic	Triumph	Tragedy	Triumph
Temperance Movement in Tennessee (c. 1840–1933)		Alcoholism blighted the lives of many people.	Anti-liquor groups in Tennessee successfully lobbied the General Assembly to forbid the sale of alcohol near several public facilities throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.
Scopes Trial (1925)	The Dayton, TN, court found high school teacher John T. Scopes guilty of violating the Butler Act which prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools. Fundamentalists considered the verdict a triumph for Creationism.	For the Modernists, the Scopes trial had both short- and long-term effects on the teaching of science in schools in the U.S.	
Battle of King's Mountain (1780)	John Sevier and several other Patriots defeated Loyalist adversaries in South Carolina during the Southern Campaign of the American Revolutionary War.	For the Loyalist militia, the lopsided defeat resulted in 290 killed, 163 wounded, and 668 captured.	
Nickajack Expedition (1794)	U.S. Major James Ore defeated the Chickamauga Cherokee over the increasing hostility against white colonizers.	The Chickamauga villages at Nickajack Town and Running Water town are razed and their armies defeated.	

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Columbia Race Riots (1946)		Fearing an attack on their community following the arrest of a black WWII veteran charged with physically assaulting a white store clerk, residents of the predominately black Mink Slide neighborhood shot and wounded advancing assailants. In retaliation, police officers and white civilians indiscriminately raided houses and black businesses, arrested bystanders, and confiscated weapons.	In response to this and several similar incidents, the NAACP successfully pressured President Harry Truman to create the Committee on Civil Rights in 1946.
Memphis Sanitation Strike (1968)		After the crushing to death of two black sanitation workers in garbage compactors, African American workers in Memphis' sanitation industry walked out of work in response to poor treatment from white supervisors, poor working conditions, the city's refusal to recognize labor union, and low wages.	After the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., national labor leaders, Pres. Lyndon Johnson, and TN Governor Buford Ellington pressured the city of Memphis to recognize the local union and allow deduction of union dues from workers' paychecks.

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Wilma Rudolph (1960)		Wilma Rudolph was born prematurely and suffered from several early childhood illnesses, including pneumonia and scarlet fever, and contracted infantile paralysis (caused by the polio virus) at the age of four. She recovered from polio, but lost strength in her left leg and foot. Physically disabled for much of her early life, Rudolph wore a leg brace until she was eight years old.	Rudolph over came the difficulties of her childhood to win three gold medals in the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome. She became a role model for black and female athletes and her Olympic successes helped elevate women's track and field in the United States. Rudolph is also regarded as a civil rights and women's rights pioneer.
<i>Kelly v. Board of Education: The Desegregation of Nashville Schools</i> (1955)		<i>De jure</i> racial segregation of public schools prevented African Americans from fully participating in civic life.	Prominent black Nashville and NAACP attorneys filed a federal case against Nashville public schools to bring the city into compliance with the Brown v. Board of Education decision. In 1957, Judge William E. Miller ordered the Nashville School Board to desegregate its public schools.
Ratification of the 19th Amendment in Tennessee (1920)		Women were denied the right to vote.	After several years of pro-suffrage campaigning, the Tennessee General Assembly ratified the Nineteenth Amendment in August 1920.

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The Coal Creek War (1891–92)		Coal Creek miners revolted against coal mine owners and the state government militia for allowing the use of convict labor.	Publicity of the event forced the Tennessee General Assembly to later refuse to renew convict labor contracts with private businesses in 1896.
Tennessee Valley Authority (1933)	As part of the New Deal, Pres. Franklin Roosevelt authorized the Tennessee Valley Authority Act to construct dams to prevent flooding, improve navigation, and created cheap electric power to the Tennessee Valley Basin.	Many families were displaced through eminent domain. Archeological sites and entire towns were submerged.	
Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931)		In response to her investigative journalism on the lynchings of her friends in 1892, white vigilantes destroyed the offices of her <i>Free Speech and Headlight</i> newspaper and forced her to flee Memphis.	After leaving Tennessee, Wells-Barnett continued her activism in Chicago. She was internationally recognized as a civil rights leader.
Memphis Massacre (1866)		In response to reports that black soldiers killed several police officers, white racist mobs violently attacked freedmen’s settlements in a three-day pogrom.	Radical Republicans passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 and the federal government forced Tennessee to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before readmission into the Union.

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Elizabethton Textile Mill Strike (1929)		Employees, primarily women, were underpaid and worked in unsafe conditions.	Elizabethton rayon plant workers began a strike to challenge low wages, unfair promotion practices, and petty regulations that applied only to women. President of rayon plant, Arthur Mothwurf, and labor representatives negotiated a compromise to increase wages, protect strikers against discrimination, lift injunctions, and recognize an in-plant grievance committee.
Clinton School Desegregation Crisis (1947–58)	Although Clinton made several attempts to curb full integration of public schools, in 1956, Federal Judge Robert L. Taylor ordered the school board to end segregation by the fall term of 1956. In August, twelve African American students desegregated Clinton High School.	Outside agitators incited violence.	
Cades Cove and the Great Smokey Mountains National Park (1923–40)	Between 1923 and 1940, the National Parks Service acquired land east of the Mississippi River to create the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.	Some four thousand residents were forced to leave their homes.	

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Z. Alexander Looby (1899–1972)		On April 19, 1960, white segregationists bombed the home of Nashville civil rights attorney Z. Alexander Looby for defending black student activists participating in sit-ins downtown.	In response, some 2500 activists marched downtown to confront Mayor Ben West who conceded that racial discrimination was morally wrong. By May of 1960, West had desegregated all downtown lunch counters.
Cordell Hull (1871–1955)	This Tennessee born diplomat served the United States as Secretary of State under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A staunch proponent of free trade, Hull saw free access to markets and raw materials as the key to world peace and progress. Responsible for establishing the United Nations, Hull is most well known for his work to establish a positive relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945.	Hull was responsible for refusing entry to the SS St. Louis, a German ocean liner carrying 936 Jews seeking asylum from Germany. Hull's decision sent the Jews back to Europe on the eve of the Nazi Holocaust. Many of the passengers were ultimately murdered by the Nazis. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt out-maneuvered Hull to allow some refugees passage into the U.S.	
Casey Jones (1863–1900)	This legendary engineer hailed from Jackson, Tennessee and quickly rose to his position through his hard work and innovative skills. He was known for the creative invention of his own personal train whistle. Binding six thin tubes together, he created a distinctive tone, that let others know when he was always coming.	He was killed on April 30, 1900, when his train collided with a stalled freight train near Vaughan, MS. His dramatic death while trying to stop his train and save the lives of his passengers made him a hero.	

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<p>First Women's Bank of Tennessee (1919)</p>		<p>Women lacked control over financial matters.</p>	<p>The First Women's Bank was a financial institution created, directed, and staffed entirely by women. Its opening produced a sensation, and deposits totaling twenty thousand dollars came in the first day. The bank was established at a time when women had recently experienced successes in their war efforts and in the temperance movement and were moving ever closer to gaining the vote.</p>
<p>One Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company (Citizens Savings Bank and Trust) (1904–present)</p>		<p>African Americans lacked control over financial matters.</p>	<p>Three distinguished leaders, Richard H. Boyd, James C. Napier and Preston Taylor opened the doors of Citizens Bank on January 16, 1904 as the One Cent Savings Bank &amp; Trust Company. It was the first minority-owned bank in the state of Tennessee and it is the oldest operating Minority Bank in the United States. As indicated in the original charter, the intentions of the institution were “to encourage frugality and systematic savings among our people, to secure the safekeeping and proper investment of such savings, and to set in motion business enterprise.</p>

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John Tyler, James K. Polk, and the Annexation of Texas (1845)	On March 1, 1845, President Tyler signed the annexation bill, and on March 3 (his last day in office), he forwarded the House version to Texas. When Polk took office the next day, he encouraged Texas to accept the Tyler offer. Texas ratified the agreement with popular approval from Texans. The bill was signed by Polk on December 29, 1845, accepting Texas as the 28th state of the Union.	Following the annexation, relations between the U.S. and Mexico deteriorated due to an unresolved dispute over the border between Texas and Mexico, and the Mexican–American War broke out only a few months later.	
Black Patch Tobacco Wars (c. 1904–09)		During the first decade of the twentieth century, violence erupted in the tobacco belt of western Kentucky and northern Middle Tennessee as farmers tried to ease their economic distress. Collectively, these acts of violence became known as the Black Patch War. The Black Patch War constituted one of the most serious domestic threats to civil government in the early twentieth-century. The armed and hooded vigilantes who participated in these violent acts became known as the tobacco night riders.	Several factors converged to end night riding. Kentucky Governor A. E. Wilson (1907–11) dispatched troops to trouble spots, and several victims successfully brought civil suits against individual night riders. The base of popular support and community consensus that protected the night riders eroded as tobacco prices rose and as a growing number of people objected to the mass violence. The Dark Tobacco District Planters' Protective Association of Kentucky and Tennessee (PPA) ceased to operate in 1914, when World War I closed most European markets for dark-fired tobacco.



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<p>Highlander Folk School (1932–present)</p>	<p>The history of the Highlander Folk School reflects the course of organized labor and Civil Rights movements in the South, as well as the struggles of southern activists between the 1930s and early 1960s. Established near Monteagle in 1932 by the Tennessee-born Myles Horton and a young Georgian named Don West, Highlander's programs were based upon the conviction that education could be used to help ordinary people build upon the knowledge they had gained from experience and work collectively toward a more democratic and humane society. This approach made the adult education center a source of inspiration.</p>	<p>The Highlander Folk School is most controversial school in modern Tennessee history. It has been forced to relocate, in response to community hostility. Backlash against the school's involvement with the Civil Rights Movement led to the school's closure by the state of Tennessee in 1961. It is currently located in New Market.</p>	

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<p>Harriman Hosiery Mills Strike (1933–34)</p>		<p>On July 1, 1933, textile workers at the Harriman Hosiery Mills (HHM) plant in Harriman seized the opportunity created by Section 7 (a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act to organize a local union of the Hosiery Workers, part of the United Textile Workers of America (UTW). Over the next year, hundreds of workers, most of them women, in this East Tennessee community became embroiled in a bitter strike against the town's largest employer, which produced nationally marketed women's silk stockings. The strike tore the town apart, divided managers and workers, and revealed the fragile state of labor reform in the early 1930s.</p>	<p>By March 1934 the strike had been lost, and the community was divided into factions supporting strikers or owners. A management lockout on June 25 led to a last-minute resolution of the strike on company terms. The July 1934 agreement was arranged by federal negotiators, who consulted neither union officials nor striking workers.</p>

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<p>State of Franklin (1784–90)</p>		<p>A short-lived attempt to create a new state in the trans-Appalachian settlement of present-day East Tennessee, the State of Franklin arose from the general unsettled state of national, regional, and local politics at the end of the Revolutionary War. Under the severely limited congressional revenue powers imposed by the Articles of Confederation, the best solution for funding the new national government in the 1780s was the cession of western lands by the individual states. Congress actively encouraged this process, anticipating substantial returns. North Carolina, however, had not agreed to such a step and instead reopened its western land office in 1783. Acting on the presumption that the Cherokees had forfeited their land claims due to their alliance with the British during the Revolution, the entire trans-Appalachian West, with only a few exceptions, was made available for purchase.</p>	<p>By early 1789 the Franklin movement was all but over. North Carolina continued its policy of reconciliation by allowing the locally popular Sevier to be seated in the legislature as the representative from Greene County; as a further gesture of goodwill he was appointed brigadier general of militia for Washington County. In the settlements south of the French Broad River, support for an independent state continued and settlers organized themselves into an association known as “Lesser Franklin.” When no strong leader emerged to replace Sevier, this movement also faded away.</p>

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William Walker: Grey-Eyed Man of Destiny (1824–60)	Native Nashvillian William Walker was a physician, lawyer, journalist and mercenary who organized several private military expeditions into Latin America, with the intention of establishing English-speaking slave colonies under his personal control, an enterprise then known as "filibustering." Walker usurped the presidency of the Republic of Nicaragua in 1856 and ruled until 1857, when he was defeated by a coalition of Central American armies.	Walker believed himself the legitimate president of Nicaragua and mounted six return expeditions from the United States. Foiled by port authorities and bad luck, Walker was removed from Nicaragua a second time by the U.S. Navy. After an unsuccessful attempt to take the country via Honduras, he surrendered to a British navy captain, who turned him over to Honduran authorities. On September 12, 1860, Walker was executed for piracy in Trujillo, Honduras, where he is buried.	
Mortimer May (1892-74)		The National Socialist movement in Germany threatened the lives of European Jews.	Mortimer May, was a Nashville businessman and director of May Hosiery Mills. During the 1930s he was personally responsible for bringing to the US more than 200 German Jews fleeing Nazism. Many of these people found job security at May Hosiery.

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Treaty of Sycamore Shoals (1775)	The Treaty of Sycamore Shoals was negotiated between Judge Richard Henderson of North Carolina and the Cherokees led by Little Carpenter during March 1775 at Sycamore Shoals (now Elizabethton) on the Watauga River. This private treaty was illegal under both British and later American law. It was, however, one of the most influential in Tennessee history. The treaty transferred the area between the Ohio River and the headwaters of the streams flowing into the Kentucky and Cumberland Rivers—central Kentucky and north central Tennessee—to the Transylvania Land Company for 10,000 British pounds of trading goods.	Little Carpenter’s son, Dragging Canoe, refused to recognize the sale and vowed to turn Middle Tennessee into a “dark and bloody ground,” a promise he kept through his leadership of the Chickamaugas.	

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Treaty of Hopewell (1785)	The Treaty of Hopewell was between the U.S. government and the Cherokee. It acknowledged that the Cherokee and the U.S. had boundaries and that the U.S. would protect the Cherokee from whites trying to take their land. The Treaty also permitted the Cherokee to send a deputy to speak to Congress on their behalf and established a peace between the two parties.	The treaty failed to keep settlers from encroaching upon Cherokee territory.	
Treaty of Holston (1791)	The Treaty of Holston, in 1791, called for the U.S. to advance civilization of the Cherokees. Between 1791 and 1828, the Cherokee would create larger and better producing farms, a constitution, branches of government, a Cherokee alphabet and school system, a state capital at New Echota, GA. It also stated that they would elect John Ross as the Cherokee Principal Chief.	The Cherokee would become arguably the most Americanized tribe in the United States. They believed this would help the whites see the Cherokees as equals. However, the 1828 discovery of gold on Cherokee land would prove to the Cherokee that whites would never see them as equals.	

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Treaty of New Echota (1835)		Signed on December 29, 1835, at New Echota, GA, the Treaty of New Echota finalized plans for the removal of the Cherokees and eventually led to the Trail of Tears. Though ratified by one vote in the U.S. Senate, the Cherokee Nation rejected the treaty, leading directly to forced removal in 1838. In retaliation, Major Ridge, his son John, and Elias Boudinot were all assassinated by other Cherokees in 1839, compounding the tragedy of the treaty.	
Frances Wright, Nashoba, and the Anti-slavery Reform Movement in West Tennessee (1826–30)	Frances Wright was arguably the most radical utopian thinker and activist in antebellum America. She advocated the freedom and equality of women, African American slaves, and white working people and designed social experiments to bring the United States closer to what she considered its fundamental principles. In Tennessee she launched a memorable attempt to find a peaceful solution to the problem of slavery through the education of slaves and the financial compensation of slave masters.	Nashoba was a short-lived, but internationally famous, utopian community on the present-day site of Germantown in Shelby County. Wright dreamed of demonstrating a practical and effective alternative to the South's slave-based agricultural economy. Hardly a trace of the community could be seen by 1830, but Nashoba survives in historical accounts of American utopias.	

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Sgt. Alvin C. York (1887-1964)		York overcame a difficult youth to dedicate his life to God. Although he was a conscientious objector, he was drafted into the Army during WWI.	York's extraordinary exploits during WWI earned him fame on the home front. In his later years, he turned his attention and influence to education and infrastructure improvements in the Upper Cumberland.
East Tennessee Convention: Unionists Trapped in a Secessionist State (1861-64)	East Tennessee Unionists attempted to secede from the Confederacy to rejoin the United States.	Although it failed in its goal of establishing a Union-aligned state in East Tennessee, the Convention played an important role in solidifying leadership and unity of purpose for the region's Unionists. Many of its delegates would serve in federal, state and local offices during the postwar period.	
Admiral David G. Farragut (1801-70)		Farragut's childhood was marred by the death of his mother. Placed with the Porter family, he went to sea at the age of nine.	Farragut's long career in the Navy was filled with triumphs and tragedies. As a Southern Unionist, he fought for the US during the Civil War.
Manhattan Project (1942-46)	Work on the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge contributed to the successful refinement of the atomic bomb.	Although the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima led to the end of WWII, many Japanese civilians lost their lives.	
Knoxville Sit-Ins (1960)		African Americans were denied service in public spaces.	Through a unique collaboration between student protestors from Knoxville College and city leaders, the Sit-Ins were resolved without violence.



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Pat Head Summitt (1952–2016)		Pat Summitt, the University of Tennessee’s former NCAA women’s basketball coach, began her career with the Lady Vols in 1974 and won 1,098 games. Her career and her work with Title IX influenced women’s sports for the better.	Summitt’s career and life were tragically cut short by complications from early-onset Alzheimer’s disease. Since her death is not within the 25 year restriction recommended by NHD, the student should not devote the bulk of the project to this.
Cornelia Fort (1919–43)		Cornelia Fort was a Nashville debutante whose love of flying led her to become a pioneer in women’s military aviation as a member of the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, which later became part of the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) in 1943.	Fort was killed in a mid-air collision on March 21, 1943.
Ernest William Goodpasture (1886–1960)		Infectious diseases, parasitism, and a variety of rickettsial and viral infections ravaged the earth, causing great suffering.	For over thirty years, the work at Goodpasture’s Vanderbilt laboratory produced a series of noteworthy contributions which brought national and international recognition in the field of infectious diseases, especially virus infections. These studies made possible the practical application on a large scale of the development of present-day vaccines against viral diseases. Goodpasture’s innovations made possible modern abilities to control viral diseases.

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Elihu Embree, the <i>Emancipator</i> , and Abolition (1920)		Over 1.5 million people were enslaved in the US in 1920.	The <i>Emancipator</i> was the first newspaper in the United States solely devoted to the abolition of slavery.
Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University's Freedom Riders (1961)		Segregation limited the movement of African Americans throughout the South. Freedom Riders from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University had successfully integrated the city's lunch counters and movie theaters in 1960.	In 1961, the fourteen students traveled to MS. For their efforts, they were met with hostility and expelled from school. In 2008, they were awarded honorary degrees by Tennessee State University (formerly TN A&I State University).
Tent City: The Civil Rights Struggle in Fayette County, TN (1959–62)		African American sharecroppers in Fayette and Henderson counties built a makeshift community known as "Tent City" after their white employers fired and evicted them for attempting to register to vote.	U.S. Department of Justice filed several suits against landowners, merchants, and one financial institution for violating African American voting and civil rights.
William P. Lawrence (1930–2005)		Lawrence was a noted pilot, the first Naval Aviator to fly twice the speed of sound in a naval aircraft, and one of the final candidates for the Mercury space program.	During the Vietnam War, Lawrence was shot down while on a combat mission and spent six years as a prisoner of war, from 1967 to 1973. He became noted for his resistance to his captors.
Sequoyah (1821)	Cherokee silversmith Sequoyah created a Cherokee syllabary in 1821.		

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Battle of Athens (1946)	The veteran-led GI Non-Partisan League overthrew the corrupt McMinn County government and began legislating reforms to combat political corruption in the county.		
Fort Pillow Massacre (1864)		Confederate soldiers slaughtered African American Union soldiers at Fort Pillow, Tennessee.	
Knoxville Race Riot (1919)		White vigilantes attacked a predominately black neighborhood in retribution for the alleged murder of a white woman by a black man. Hundreds of African Americans fled the city for fear of racist violence. Despite a lack of motive and evidence, the alleged murderer is found guilty and executed.	
Indian Removal Act (1830-50)		President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act to relocate Native American tribes west of the Mississippi. White Southerners strongly support the Act. As a result, forcible removal at the direction of President Martin Van Buren of the Cherokee began in 1838 under brutal and inhumane conditions.	

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The Great Floods of 1927		Flooding of the Mississippi, Cumberland, and Tennessee Rivers Valleys destroyed whole communities across Tennessee and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes.	
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East Nashville Fire of 1916		Pushed by dry, westerly, fifty-mile-per-hour winds, the fire destroyed seven hundred homes and businesses within a thirty-two-square-block area of Nashville.	
<i>Sultana</i> Disaster (1865)		The side-wheeler riverboat <i>Sultana</i> exploded, triggering the worst inland marine disaster in U.S. history.	
Earthquakes of 1811–12		Between mid-December 1811 and mid-March 1812 a series of catastrophic earthquakes shook West Tennessee and the rest of the Central Mississippi Valley.	
Influenza Pandemic (1918–19)		A recorded 7,721 people died from the influenza pandemic of the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century.	