

History of Chester County

Chester County is located in West Tennessee, one of the state's three "grand divisions."

Chester County was created in 1879 from Hardeman, Henderson, McNairy and Madison counties, and named in honor of Robert I. Chester (1793-1892). The county seat is located at Henderson.

The treaty which opened West Tennessee for settlement was signed on October 19, 1818 by Isaac Shelby, Andrew Jackson and the leaders of the Chickasaw Indians. The Chickasaws were allowed to exclusively use the territory for hunting for two more years. Once settlers were allowed within the territory, progress was rapid, as evidenced by the fact that the area courts were organized in the Fall of 1823 and the first census was held in 1830. The first settlers came from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, North Alabama, and, largely, Middle Tennessee. The first settlement in the area was Mifflin. Colonel J. Purdy migrated to the Pennsylvania; the town of Mifflin was named after a town in his home state.

In 1973, the legacy of McNairy County Sheriff Buford Pusser was preserved in film when "Walking Tall" was filmed in Henderson and Chester County. Many Henderson residents served as extras or played bit parts in the film that launched several sequels. Henderson's most famous son is country music singer and songwriter Eddy Arnold, who was born in Henderson in 1918. In the 1930s, Arnold could be seen every Saturday sitting atop downtown's overhead bridge, strumming his guitar and telling skeptical onlookers that someday he'd be famous. He kept that promise, rising to the top of the country charts with songs such as "Make the World Go Away" and "What's He Doing in My World." Arnold was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1966.