



# THE COURIER

TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

SUMMER 2026



**In This Issue:** Certificate of Merit Awards Announced,  
Eleven Properties Listed in the National Register, Federal Historic Tax Credit Projects Completed



Image courtesy of TN Photographic Services

## From the Director:

2026 is shaping up to be an exciting year for historic preservation in Tennessee! We are nearing the end of Historic Preservation month and heading into Statehood Day and the celebration of our country's 250th anniversary this summer. As you'll see in this issue, earlier this month our State Review Board approved six new National Register nominations on historic properties across our state, followed by a lively ceremony honoring this year's Certificate of Merit Award winners. This was our first in-person Certificate of Merit event since Covid, and we appreciate that many of you joined us to honor all the excellent work happening across our state.

We are also on the heels of the conclusion of the 114th Tennessee General Assembly, and I wanted to mention two bills that passed during this session. First, SB1490/HB1493 permits our state historic sites to directly engage local farmers for assistance with things like crop farming and mowing at our state-owned sites. Proceeds will be invested in the sites themselves, providing additional funds for the maintenance of the site.

Second, SB0599/HB0519 will return the ownership of the ancestral James K. Polk home to the Tennessee Historical Commission. In partnership with the James K. Polk Association, the success of this bill represents collaboration and advocacy on many levels over an extended period of time. Both of these bills are now on the Governor's desk for signature. We are grateful to our partners across the state who helped us turn these ideas into reality.

I hope you are planning to take part in some of the many events and celebrations taking place across our state this summer, beginning with Statehood Day on June 1 and continuing through the year as part of Tennessee 250. You can find more information on events near you at <https://tn250.com/>

Best Regards,  
*Miranda*

Miranda Montgomery  
SHPO and Interim Executive Director

# TENNESSEE HISTORIC CEMETERY REGISTER REACHES ONE HUNDRED

By Graham Perry, Historic Cemetery Preservation Specialist

The Tennessee Historical Commission's Historic Cemetery Program has continued to flourish in its first five years. The Cemetery Advisory Committee's 5-year Cemetery Report is now available on our website. The report aims to study, identify, and make relevant recommendations for legislative action. THC hopes the report will be a useful tool.

This period, Memphis's Elmwood Cemetery was added to the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register as HR000100. The cemetery was designed in 1852 as part of the Rural Cemetery Movement, popular during the early to mid-1800s and is one of the earliest rural cemeteries in the south. Initially, fifty Memphis gentlemen donated \$500 each to purchase the original 40-acre plat that was once 2.5 miles from the city. Since the Civil War, the cemetery has grown to 80 acres and is now surrounded by an urban environment.

When the original corporate charter was dissolved in 1870, Elmwood became what is now one of the oldest nonprofits in Tennessee. Today, the cemetery is the final resting place for more than 75,000 people of all races and backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Some of the many notable inhabitants include civil rights leader Maxine Smith (1929-2013), Confederate Brigadier General James Ronald Chalmers (1831-1898), politician Edward Hull "Boss" Crump (1874-1954), African American business mogul Robert R. Church Sr. (1839-1912), Bandleader Jimmie Lunceford (1902-1947), victims of the 1865 Sultana disaster and 1870s yellow fever epidemics, and many others.

Elmwood boasts a park-like setting with magnificent monuments and well-kempt vegetation and sports a wide-ranging array of grave marker symbols. Many monuments are from the Victorian Era, a time when death was romanticized.<sup>2</sup> Some of the more interesting monument styles unique to the cemetery include one-piece ovular cradle graves, carved, life-like statues of historical



Angel motif at Elmwood Cemetery. Photo by Sarah Thompson.

figures, and architecturally significant crypts. Today, Elmwood also serves as a bird sanctuary and arboretum.

Elmwood Cemetery is still active and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1973.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zeta Atoigue, "Day 186: Elmwood Cemetery, Memphis, Tennessee," Seattle: Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation, July, 2025. Online at <<https://apiahip.org/everyday/day-186-elmwood-cemetery-memphis-tennessee>> Accessed April 17, 2026.

<sup>2</sup> \_\_\_. "Historic Elmwood Cemetery: Memphis at Rest since 1852," Memphis: Historic Memphis, Online at <https://historic-memphis.com/memphis-historic/elmwood/elmwood.html> Accessed April 17, 2026.

<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_. "Elmwood Cemetery History and the Grounds," Memphis: Elmwood Cemetery, Online at <<https://www.elmwoodcemetery.org/the-grounds>> Accessed April 17, 2026.

## Cemeteries Recently Added to the Historic Cemetery Register

**Historic Morristown Cemetery**, Hamblen County

**Reynolds Cemetery**, Hawkins County

**Grizzard Family Cemetery**, Davidson County

**Gibson Community Memorial Garden**, Gibson County

**Mount Bethel Cemetery**, Greene County

**Oak Grove Cemetery**, Greene County

**Byers Cemetery**, Hickman County

**Scott Cemetery**, Obion County

**New Hope Presbyterian Church Cemetery**, Greene County

**Wiley Jones Family Cemetery**, Cocke County

**Dawson Cemetery**, Cocke County

**Old Saint Paul Cemetery**, Hamblen County

**Elmwood Cemetery**, Shelby County

**Dewitt-Smith-Jobe Cemetery**, Rutherford County

**Thomas Cain Graveyard**, Hamblen County

**Rehobeth Cemetery**, Greene County

**Jonathan Bible Family Cemetery**, Cocke County

**Williamson Cemetery**, Cocke County

**Caleb Ira Allen Brasfield Cemetery**, Weakley County

**Battle Creek Baptist Church Cemetery**, Robertson County

**Ebenezer Methodist Cemetery**, Greene County

**Joe Bob Allison Cemetery**, Putnam County

**Gum Springs Cemetery**, Greene County

# SIXTEEN CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AWARD RECIPIENTS IN 2026

By Caty Dirksen, Outreach Coordinator

The Tennessee Historical Commission celebrates National Preservation Month each May by presenting Certificate of Merit Awards in recognition of exemplary work by individuals, groups, organizations, corporations, or governmental entities that further promote historic preservation or the study of history in Tennessee. Since 1975, THC's Certificate of Merit Program has solicited Merit Award nominations from the public. All nominations are judged by category.

The **Historic Preservation** category recognizes excellence in the preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of a historic or archaeological site, preservation leadership, preservation planning, publications related to historic preservation, public programming, or research. The 2026 awards in this category go to:



**Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park**, for the preservation and renovation of the Honeymoon House in Pall Mall, TN. Built in 1940, the Honeymoon House served as home to Alvin York Jr. and his new bride. The park worked to rebuild windows, secure floors, fix the roof, and copy original siding. The finished product will allow for adaptive reuse of the home as office space.

**Belmont Mansion**, for the preservation of the Billiards Room. A multi-year project, the Mansion reproduced original wallpaper, floor cloth, and wood graining. The project was completed in August 2025, and it is now one of the only 19th century Billiards Rooms open to the public for tours in the south.



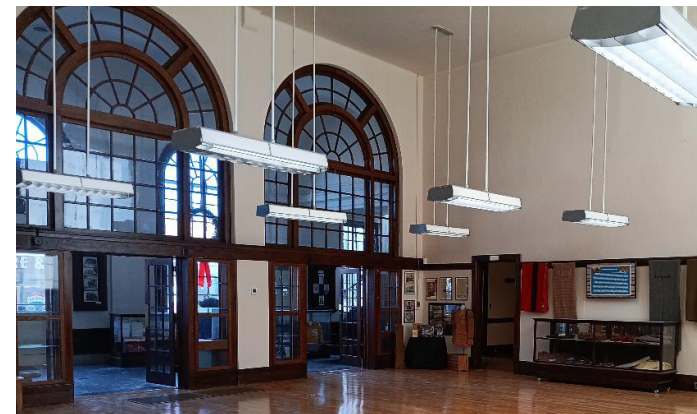
**Jane-Coleman Cottone and John Sweeney**, for their efforts in the successful Capitol Hill Redevelopment District National Register Nomination. With this nomination, Parkway Towers will be included as a contributing resource in the district, making it eligible for the Federal Historic Tax Credit. The Capitol Hill Redevelopment District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on March 23, 2026.



**Channing Greene**, for his cemetery repair work in Rutledge, TN. Greene learned proper cemetery repair and restored a marker for a Confederate soldier at the Greenlee Cemetery in Rutledge.



**Kathy Barnes**, for her successful cemetery workshop at the Roadman Cemetery in Newport, TN. After years of neglect, Barnes hosted a well-attended cemetery workshop. At the workshop, they cleaned headstones with D2, repairing a broken headstone, and clearing brush.



**Robertson County Historical Society**, for the restoration of the U.S. Post Office building, now the site of the Robertson County History Museum in Springfield, TN. Constructed between 1913 and 1915, the building served as a U.S. Post Office until 1998 and has since served the community as a museum. This past year, the building's original hardwood floors were uncovered and restored.



**Friends of Two Rivers**, for their work restoring Two Rivers Mansion in Nashville, TN. With this project, interior rooms were restored to their 1859 appearance for better interpretation, and the exterior porch was restored.



**Reagan Design + Construction**, for their successful Federal Historic Tax Credit project restoring the Vose School in Alcoa, TN. Following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the school was successfully rehabilitated the building into an adaptive reuse project, now serving the community as apartments.

The **Book or Public Programming** category recognizes notable achievements toward advancing the study of Tennessee history through certain types of books or public programming. The 2026 awards in this category go to:

**A Century of Health: Transforming Lives in Tennessee**. This traveling exhibit created by the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County interprets the development of the Tennessee Department of Health from 1923 to 2023.

**Chet Atkins: Mr. Guitar**, written by Dr. Don Cusic, this first of its kind biography highlights the works of the legendary guitarist.



**Anita King McCollum**, for her editorial works with the Greenback Historical Society's newsletter The Chronicler. Through each newsletter, McCollum promotes the history of Greenback and surrounding communities.



**Howdy!: The Minnie Pearl Story**, written by Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel and Dr. Don Cusic, this novel explores the life and career of Tennessee's most infamous woman in entertainment, Sarah Ophelia Cannon.

**Preserving Place, Empowering Community: Germantown's Fight for Its Future**, a public history program put on by the Historic Germantown Neighborhood Association. Commemorating the 35th anniversary of Germantown's 1990 Auto Emissions Site Protest and the community's confrontation with Kroger — two pivotal moments that helped protect Nashville's oldest historic neighborhood from industrial encroachment and displacement.



Continued on page 6

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NEWS

By J. Ethan Holden, National Register Coordinator

## Eleven Tennessee Properties Added to the National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. It is part of a nationwide program that coordinates and supports efforts to identify, evaluate and protect historic resources. The State Historic Preservation Office administers the program in Tennessee. The state's new listings are:

### McFerren Grocery and Oil Company

Listed April 17, 2016

(Somerville — Fayetteville County)

The McFerren Grocery and Oil Company is located near Somerville, Fayette County, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 17, 2026 at the state level of significance for the role it played in the Fayette County Civil Rights Movement (FCCRM). Beginning in 1959, members of the movement sponsored voter registration drives for African Americans in Fayette County. In response, white business leaders and the all-white Fayette County Democratic Executive Committee orchestrated a series of embargoes and other forms of retaliation to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote. This included the eviction of African American sharecroppers who attempted to register to vote, which led to the events of the Tent City in Fayette and Haywood Counties. The nominated store, owned by John and Viola McFerren,



Photograph courtesy of Kelsey Lamkin. July, 2022.

quickly became the headquarters for the movement. When white businesses denied local African Americans access to goods and services in retaliation for their efforts to register to vote, McFerren Grocery and Oil provided the groceries, gasoline, and other general goods necessary for black-listed community members to live. The store also served as the meeting place for local leaders and the starting point for direct action marches to the nearby Fayette County Courthouse. Today, the property is owned by John and Viola's daughters, who intend to preserve the property and share its powerful story.

## MERIT AWARD RECIPIENTS

Continued from page 5

The **Commissioners' Special Commendation** category recognizes achievements that relate to the promotion of historic preservation or history, but do not satisfy all the criteria for a Historic Preservation Award or a Book or Public Programming Award. The 2026 awards in this category go to:



**Maury County Historical Society**, for their time capsule project placed at the cornerstone of the Maury County Judicial Center. This project created a two-volume county history from 1807 to 2024 that was distributed to members of the public as an educational tool and will be opened in 100 years.

**Mayor Dwayne Cole**, for his efforts to revitalize the business district of Munford, TN. Mayor Cole established the Munford Downtown Development Commission. Through these efforts, many properties underwent façade restoration.



**Ann and Pat Mann**, for the numerous efforts to preserve history in Brownsville, TN. From the preservation and relocation of the Walpole House to the restoration of the Masonic Lodge to educational programming, the Manns have made a lasting impact on Brownsville history. Although Pat Mann passed away in April 2026, Ann Mann, their son David, and several members of the Haywood Heritage Foundation were in attendance at our awards ceremony to honor him.



The Tennessee Historical Commission was pleased to host a well-attended awards ceremony for these recipients on May 15, 2026. Applications for the 2027 Certificate of Merit Awards are available on our website. Start thinking about projects completed this year to submit!

### Johnson's Mill

Listed March 23, 2026

(New Tazwell — Claiborne County)

Listed in the National Register on March 23, 2026, Johnson's Mill is eligible for the role it played as a commercially significant milling complex in New Tazwell and Claiborne County. The first mill constructed on the site was built in the late 1800s by the current owner's great-great-grandfather. Ledgers from 1911 indicate it was a prosperous business that sold both flour and other general store goods. A catastrophic flood in 1916 destroyed the mill and claimed the lives of the owners. Their son quickly rebuilt the mill that same year, which was later expanded in 1940 and 1980 to accommodate the business's growth and the evolving needs of the community. Farmers in the mountainous region relied on Johnson's Mill to transform their corn and wheat crops into the flour needed for daily living. The Tennessee Home Food Supply Program recognized the importance of Johnson's Mill when they awarded the owners the Certificate of Recognition in 1942. In later years, the mill switched to producing animal feed in response to shifting market demands. Regardless, the mill



Photograph courtesy of Dr. Rebecca Schmitt. September, 2025.

has not ceased production for any significant amount of time since it opened. In 2002, the mill was identified as one of only four surviving mills in Claiborne County, and the only one still in operation. The Johnson family continues to own and operate the mill, ensuring it remains a significant historical site in the community.

### Walden's Ridge Civic Center

Listed January 26, 2026

(Walden — Hamilton County)

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 26, 2026, the Walden's Ridge Civic Center is eligible for its significance in social history and community planning and development. The nominated building was originally constructed in 1921 to serve as the auditorium for the Fairmount Grammar School. After the school closed, the Walden's Ridge Civic League (WRCL) assumed stewardship of the building in 1946. The building and property thus became the headquarters for the WRCL, an important organization that orchestrated locally significant community improvement projects. Examples of important projects include the installation of water lines and road improvements. The league also hosted community enrichment



Photograph Courtesy of Karen Stone. December, 2025.

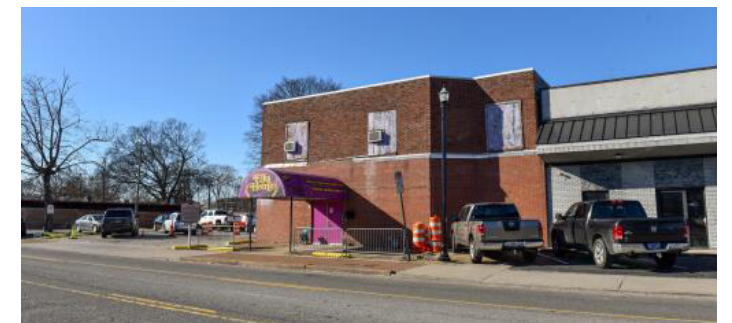
activities, including recreational events, entertainment, and important social clubs like the Boy Scouts and Women's Demonstration Group. Later, in 1979, the Mountain Opry hosted its shows in the auditorium. The WRCL continues to preserve the building and host community events on its grounds.

### Club Baron

Listed March 20, 2026

(Nashville — Davidson County)

Club Baron, listed on March 12, 2026, was nominated for its significance as the heart of Nashville's African American entertainment district. The building was originally constructed to serve as a pharmacy in 1951. Club Baron officially opened in 1955. During the day, the building housed the only skating rink in Nashville for African American patrons. At night, Club Baron converted the rink into a nightclub. The second floor housed a restaurant and casino. Club Baron housed numerous up-and-coming and established African American performers including Fats Domino, Muddy Waters, Etta James, Ray Charles, Jimi Hendricks, Ide and Tina Turner, and Marvin Gaye. The legendary guitar duel between local blues artist Johnny Jones



Photograph courtesy of Mary Cat Mosher. February, 2025.

and Jimi Hendrix also took place there in 1963. The construction of Interstate 40 destroyed much of Jefferson Street, though Club Baron survived. It was renovated into an Elk Lodge in 1967. Lodge and community members continue to preserve the building and its legacy.

## Capitol Hill Redevelopment District

Listed March 23, 2026  
(Nashville — Davidson County)

The Capitol Hill Redevelopment District is located in Nashville, Davidson County. Listed on March 23, 2026, the District is locally significant for its role as a federally funded urban renewal project. Beginning in 1949, city and state leaders coordinated to redevelop the land north of the Tennessee State Capitol in an effort to revitalize the area and increase tax revenue. This plan involved the widespread demolition of neighborhoods to the east, north, and west of the State Capitol. These cleared lots would

then be sold to private developers for commercial properties. The idea was that increased tax revenue would allow the city to recoup its expenses and encourage new development. The master plan for the district was developed by landscape architecture firm Clark, Capuano, and Holleran, who designed the district with the pre-existing Tennessee State Capitol and newly built state government buildings as the district's nucleus. Though the redevelopment created a new district of residential and commercial buildings characterized by a parking lots and a new curved roadway named James Robertson Parkway, it also destroyed a majority-African American neighborhood. Members of the



Photograph Courtesy of Jane-Coleman Cottone. April, 2025

neighborhoods were not consulted during the planning process, and any lawsuits filed against the city were quickly dismissed. The city ceased administrative operations for the district in 1974. It remains an important part of Nashville's downtown landscape and embodies the complex legacy of mid-20th century urban renewal in the United States.

## St. Marks United Methodist Church

Listed March 23, 2026  
(Chattanooga — Hamilton County)

Listed in the National Register on March 23, 2026, St. Marks United Methodist Church is locally significant as an outstanding and rare example of Spanish Revival architecture in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Spanish Revival style, sometimes referred to as Spanish Eclectic or Spanish Colonial Revival, was popular in the early twentieth century after the Panama-California Exposition in 1915. Inspired by Indigenous American and Spanish influences, character defining features of the style include clay tile

roofs, round arch openings for doors and windows, carved wood doors, eaves with little to no overhang, stucco exterior, and porch arcades. John A. Patten played an important role in the final design of St. Marks UMC. Born two years after the Civil War, Patten was a successful merchant and major donor to the construction of St. Mark's new church. Patten was inspired by the architecture he saw during a trip to Spain. He contracted with architect William Hatfield Sears, a graduate of Columbia University, to bring his vision to life. Construction began in 1912 and was completed in 1921. The cream-color stucco over brick construction, asymmetrical façade, arched door and window openings,



Photograph courtesy of Stefanie Haire. March, 2025

exposed interior wood rafters, prominent bell tower, and pressed tin roof of St. Marks place the building firmly within the Spanish Revival tradition. Over a hundred years later, St. Marks still stands as an important architectural landmark in Chattanooga.

## Flynn's Lick Methodist Church

Listed March 23, 2026  
(Gainesboro — Jackson County)

Flynn's Lick Methodist Church, located in rural Jackson County, was listed on March 23, 2026, for its significance as an important example of Folk Vernacular architecture. Constructed in 1880, the congregation itself was established in 1804 in the small community of Flynn's Lick. Though the community once boasted a school and general store, the nominated church is all that remains of this early settlement. Unlike other architectural styles, Folk Vernacular

churches in the United States cannot be tied to a particular architect or plan books. Instead, access to cheap lumber and pattern books, like *A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages* (1853) shaped the overall form and appearance of rural religious architecture. The most prevalent Folk Vernacular church designs included a center-steeple design, wood cladding, stone foundation, symmetrical fenestration, and gable roof. Flynn's Lick Methodist Church typifies the Folk Vernacular design. Its one-story construction, wood cladding, symmetrical windows, and center steeple design all align with these broader national trends.



Photograph courtesy of Angie Thiel. November, 2024

The church stopped operating as a place of worship in 2009. The current owner acquired the property in 2019 and has since adapted the church as a recording studio and residency, all while preserving the architectural integrity of the building.

## Dr. C.B. Jones House

Listed March 23, 2026  
(Knoxville — Knox County)

The Dr. C.B. Jones House in Knoxville was listed on March 23, 2026 for its architectural significance. The house was designed for Dr. C.B. Jones, a pioneering specialist in diseases of the eye, ear, nose, and throat. Constructed in 1925, the house was designed by the regionally recognized architectural firm of Baumann and Baumann and exhibits an integrated fusion of popular twentieth century architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, Georgian, Tudor Revival, and Craftsman. The Jones House was constructed during the Eclectic Era, a period that encompassed the early twentieth century through the Great Depression. Eclectic Era houses drew inspiration from the past and the future. Unlike other houses, the Jones House combined many of the character defining features of popular Eclectic Era houses into one cohesive design. The two-and-one-half story height, symmetrical design, and classical elements present as Colonial Revival in nature. However, other elements such as the arched interior entries and the sunroom with a barrel-vault



Photograph courtesy of Jenny Andrews. September, 2025.

ceiling are more reminiscent of Tudor Revival and Craftsman style homes, respectively. Upon its completion, it was heralded in the newspaper as an excellent example of the "high type of modern dwelling" associated with Knoxville's increased prosperity. The current owners sought National Register status to recognize the history of the house and are committed to preserving its unique architectural features.

## William T. Cheek, Sr., House

Listed March 20, 2026  
(Belle Meade — Davidson County)

Listed in the National Register on March 20, 2026, the William T. Cheek, Sr., House, also known as "Wrenhaven," was listed in the National Register for its architectural significance and for its association with noted Nashville businessman and civic leader William T. Cheek. Designed by Nashville architect Thomas W. Gardner and finished in 1916, Wrenhaven was one of the first houses to be built in Belle Meade. It features many of the character defining features of the Colonial Revival styles, including its formal symmetry, prominent front entrance, elliptical fanlight, and Classical detailing. Craftsman-style influences are also present, such as the exposed rafter tails, rather than the more Classically-inspired dentils found on other houses. William T. Cheek Sr. purchased the house from Foster Hume Jr. in 1919. Cheek was an established businessman in Nashville when he purchased Wrenhaven. He was an investor in the Maxwell House coffee brand and operated his family's wholesale grocery business. Though he experienced much commercial success, Cheek is perhaps best known for the roles he played in the civic improvement of Nashville. He



Photograph courtesy of Sydney School. May, 2025

was instrumental in the development of Nashville's municipal airport, served on the board of directors of numerous nonprofit organizations, and participated in committees dedicated to the civic improvement of the health and safety of Nashville's residents. The house is cared for by Cheek's son, Will Cheek Jr., who continues to preserve the house and his father's civic legacy.



## Chester County Training School (Vincent High School)

Listed March 9, 2026  
(Henderson — Chester County)

The Chester County Training School was listed on March 9, 2026, for the important role it played in the heritage, education, and social history of the local African American community. It was constructed in 1950 after the existing school burned. Originally the Chester County Training School, it was renamed Vincent High School in 1963 and served grades one through twelve. Students were offered courses in social studies, math, agriculture, home economics, and language. It was the only public high school for African American students in Chester County and was one of the few places open for social events for



Photograph Courtesy of Rebecca Schmitt, March, 2025.

the larger African American community in Henderson. When Chester County desegregated in 1969, the school continued to serve the community. Adult education courses were offered at the school, and it served as a gathering space for senior citizens in 1977. The junior high and Headstart programs also called the school home. Today, the building is used as an alternative school, while the gymnasium hosts many important community events.

## Smith-Kefauver House

Listed January 16, 2026  
(Madisonville — Monroe County)

The Smith-Kefauver House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 16, 2026, for its architectural significance. Located in Madisonville, Monroe County, the Smith-Kefauver House is an excellent example of the Federal style. Initially constructed in 1830 for James Smith, the house was purchased by R.C. Kefauver, the father of renowned Tennessee politician Estes Kefauver, in 1925. The Federal style was popular from circa 1780 to roughly 1840. Character defining features of the style include a rectangular, symmetrical plan, two-story height, double-hung windows, minimal ornamentation, and elaborate entrances. Interiors often featured graceful wood and plaster ornamentation.



Photograph Courtesy of Lane Tillner, November, 2023.

The Smith-Kefauver House, with its symmetrical facade, elaborate two-story height porch, utilitarian balustrade, and restrained ornamentation, embody these important character defining features. The current owner is in the process of restoring the house. The restoration is funded in part by the Historic Development Grant Program, which is jointly administered by the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and the Tennessee Historical Commission.

## STATE REVIEW BOARD MEETING

Want to see properties be considered for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in person? Our State Review Board meets every January, May, and September to consider nominations for listing in the National Register. Come see us for the next few meetings at 2941 Lebanon Pike Nashville, TN 37214.

- September 18, 2026 at 9:00 am CDT
- January 29, 2027 at 9:00 am CST



Published by the  
TENNESSEE HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION  
2941 Lebanon Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0442

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### Public Comment Solicited

As the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Tennessee Historical Commission is soliciting public comment and advice on its administration of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Especially, we are seeking input on such matters as geographic areas or classes of properties which may be a priority for survey and/or registration efforts, criteria and priorities which should be established for Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants, and ways and means through which local efforts at preservation of historic properties can be most effectively assisted. The HPF is the federal fund appropriated under the authority of the NHPA to assist states in carrying out the purposes of the NHPA. Comments and advice on other areas and issues of a more general nature are also encouraged. Activities carried out by SHPO under the mandate of the NHPA include efforts to survey and inventory historic properties across the state and to nominate the most significant of them the National Register of Historic Places. Other activities involve programs to protect and preserve properties once they are identified by reviewing Federal projects to determine if they will adversely affect historic properties; administering the federal historic tax credit program; awarding and administering HPF grants; and providing technical assistance and advice to local governments which are attempting to establish local programs and ordinances to protect historic properties. The comments received will be used to structure the SHPO's annual application to the National Park Service for these funds. The public input and advice which we are soliciting now will help to set both general office objectives and to establish priorities and criteria for the review of grant applications. Comments are accepted throughout the year and should be addressed to Holly Barnett, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission, 2941 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, Tennessee 37214. This program receives Federal funds from the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127 Tennessee Historical Commission, Authorization Number NA8NH1-1, 4933 copies, June 22, 2026. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$1.17 per copy.

## HISTORIC TAX CREDITS AT WORK IN TENNESSEE

Justin Heske, Historic Preservation Supervisor and Historic Tax Credit Reviewer

Historic buildings are more than architectural landmarks. They tell the story of our communities and anchor local economies. The Federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) is a key tool that supports preserving places while encouraging private investment. It provides a 20% income tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income producing historic buildings listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. By offsetting rehabilitation costs, the HTC makes it financially feasible to transform underutilized properties into housing, offices, and commercial spaces while maintaining their historic character. The program operates as a partnership between the National Park Service, Internal Revenue Service, and THC SHPO.

Recent projects across Tennessee highlight the impact of this program:

### Chattanooga Bank Building (736 Broad Street / 737 Market Street, Chattanooga)

The Chattanooga Bank Building, located at 736 Broad Street and 737 Market Street, was constructed between 1927 and 1928 and designed by noted Chattanooga architect R.H. Hunt (1862–1937).

Rising ten stories, the building reflects a stylistic transition from Classical design to the emerging Art Deco movement. Its exterior features distinctive decorative elements, including arched windows, wave motifs, and stylized eagles, which underscore its original role as a prominent financial institution.

Inside, the building retains several historic features, including original brass elevator doors, quatrefoil ceiling detailing, marble wall cladding, terrazzo floors, and decorative staircases, all of which highlight the craftsmanship of the period.

Today, the building has been thoughtfully rehabilitated and repurposed as The Waymark Chattanooga, one of downtown Chattanooga's newest hotels, blending historic character with modern use.



### Hessig-Ellis Drug Company (107 S. Main Street, Memphis)

Built around 1900 and located in the Gayoso-Peabody Historic District, this building originally supported wholesale pharmaceutical operations. Its cast iron detailing and second-story colonnettes were designed to maximize natural light and reflect the functional design of early commercial architecture.

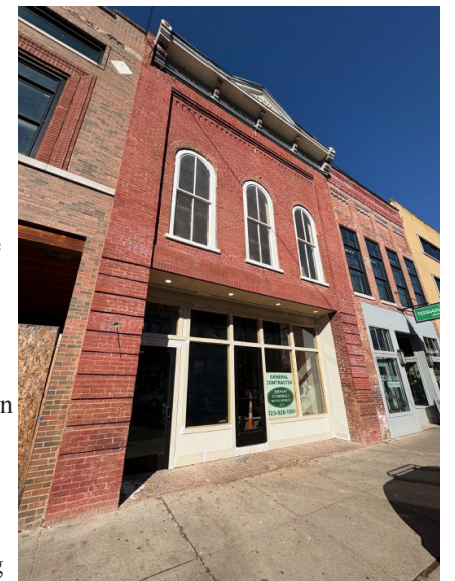
The building has been repurposed as commercial office/retail space, contributing to the continued revitalization of downtown Memphis.



### J.W. Hunter Building (219 E. Main Street, Johnson City)

Dating from circa 1895–1910, this Italianate-style commercial building once housed a hardware business and remains a contributing structure within the Johnson City Commercial Historic District. Its rehabilitation has transformed the property into mixed-use residential and commercial space, supporting both housing and economic activity in downtown Johnson City.

Together, these projects demonstrate how the HTC helps communities retain their historic identity while fostering economic growth. By making preservation financially viable, the HTC ensures that historic buildings continue to serve as active, valuable assets for generations to come.



## Two Tennessee Wars Commission Grant Opportunities

The Tennessee Wars Commission, a division of the Tennessee Historical Commission, is pleased to offer two unique grant fund opportunities to further Tennessee's military history. Visit our website to learn more about the grants and to apply!

- Civil War Sites Preservation Fund accepting applications August 10, 2026 through October 31, 2026.
- Tennessee Wars Commission Grant Fund accepting applications August 31, 2026 through November 14, 2026.

# LINDA T. WYNN RETIRES AFTER OVER FIFTY YEARS OF STATE SERVICE

Our Assistant Director for State Programs, Mrs. Linda T. Wynn, retired from our agency in April 2026. Mrs. Wynn joined the THC staff in September, 1974, after earning B.S. and M.S. degrees in History and a Master's in Public Administration from Tennessee State University. In addition to serving as a history professor at Fisk University, her many accomplishments include co-founding the Nashville Conference on African-American History and Culture, writing countless articles, serving as a consultant to the State Museum, the Nashville Public Library Foundation, and currently as the Chair of the Metro Historical Commission. You may remember, she was voted Best Historian by the Nashville Scene in 2025.

As you well know, Mrs. Wynn has been an invaluable part of our staff and a tremendous resource to the State and our community for over 50 years. Please congratulate Mrs. Wynn on her remarkable career and wishing her the best in her retirement.



## STAFF NEWS

David Britton joins the Tennessee Historical Commission after a distinguished 20-year career with Tennessee State Parks. Most recently, he served as the Park Manager for Port Royal State Historic Park and Dunbar Cave State Park. In this capacity, David managed significant state assets, overseeing million-dollar operational budgets and leading teams to ensure the preservation, protection, and sharing of Tennessee's unique historical and natural resources.

Throughout his two decades of public service, David has been a leader in heritage preservation and interpretation. He successfully spearheaded the restoration of the 1859 Masonic Lodge and General Store at Port Royal — a project that earned him a Certificate of Merit from the Tennessee Historical Commission in 2024. His work focuses on making Tennessee's history accessible to all citizens through practical preservation, facility improvements, and the use of technology like Virtual Reality to enhance the visitor experience.

A native Tennessean, David holds a B.S. in History from Austin Peay State University and is completing graduate work in Public History at Middle Tennessee State University in May 2026. His thesis examines the story of the Clarksville, TN contraband camp during the Civil War and its enduring legacy on the landscape, and its impact on Clarksville today. His research on early Tennessee has been featured in the Tennessee Historical Quarterly and in other academic publications.

## HISTORICAL MARKERS

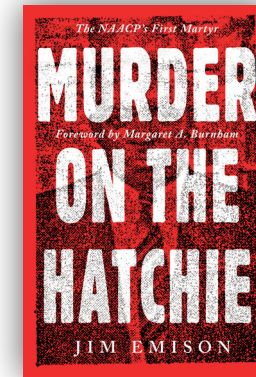
At its meeting on February 20, 2026, the Tennessee Historical Commission approved thirteen historical markers: *The Medal of Honor Awarded To Captain Larry Lowe Taylor* and *James H. Robinson*, Knox County; *Borden Milk Processing Plant*, Lincoln County; *Belltown Mill* and *Hawassee College*, Monroe County; *Virginia's Café*, Montgomery County; *Cherokee Oak*, Putnam County; *Civil War Skirmish At Pilot Knob*, *Civil War Skirmish At Saundersville*, *Civil War Skirmish War At Drake's Creek*, *Civil War Skirmish at Mansker's Creek* and *Hendersonville, Louisville & Nashville Railroad Depot*, Sumner County; and *Sherrill's Station*, Washington County. Those interested in submitting proposed texts for markers should complete the form on our website.



## PUBLICATIONS TO NOTE

By Linda T. Wynn, Assistant Director for State Programs

Attorney Jim Emison's forthcoming book, **Murder on the Hatchie: The NAACP's First Martyr**, provides a comprehensive examination of Elbert Williams, a resident of Brownsville (Haywood County), Tennessee. Williams, along with fellow founding members of the newly established NAACP chapter, pursued measures to assert their voting rights. The publication advocates for reconsideration of the historical timeline of voting rights, the Southern region's context, the ramifications of local violence on African American communities, and the shortcomings of federal government's intervention.



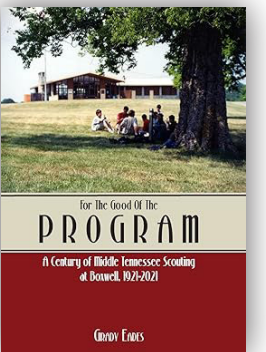
Williams' vigilante killing in 1940 constitutes a significant event in voting rights history, paralleling incidents such as the Wilmington Massacre of 1898, the assassination of Medgar (the first major NAACP official murdered) in 1963, and the "Bloody Sunday" march at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965—all indicative of efforts to undermine African Americans' access to the ballot. Enabled by Tennessee U.S. Senator Kenneth Douglas McKellar (the first popularly elected U. S senator from Tennessee in 1917) and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, the lynching of Elbert Williams remained largely unacknowledged in the annals of voting rights progression. Before writing *Murder of the Hatchie*, Emison, a civil rights attorney, promoted recognition of Elbert Williams' legacy by sponsoring a Tennessee historical marker near the Brownsville Town Square. This initiative contrasts with the Samuel McElwee marker, originally placed in Haywood County in 1981 but subsequently relocated to Fisk University—his alma mater—due to objections from notable local individuals.

Emison's *Murder on the Hatchie: The NAACP's First Martyr* adds valuable insight to studies on lynching and African American voting rights, offering a fresh perspective by focusing on Elbert Williams, who lost his life for taking part in the democratic process. This book is highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of African American movements for civil, human, and voting rights, as well as the ways these rights have been challenged—even into the 21st century. Emison, a lifelong resident of nearby Alamo, Tennessee, repositions Brownsville as a pivotal site in civil rights history and exposes how voter suppression, racial terror, and government complicity helped shape democracy today. **Hardback, \$29.99**

Clovercroft Publishing published *For the Good of the Program: A Century of Middle Tennessee Scouting at Boxwell, 1921 to 2021* by Grady Eades. Utilizing newspaper articles and hours of personal interviews, inclusive of the Council's own

records, the author argues that as society and scouting changed, the summer camp program offered by the local Scout Council also altered its programing. In its earliest days, the summer camp was a democratic training ground, building citizens from youth. Over the following decades, the camp program reflected changing values in American society, from an emphasis on fatherhood and family in the 1950s to stressing individual achievement by the 1980s. *For the Good of the Program* is first book written on the history of the Boy Scouts' summer camp program in Tennessee and the second on the history of middle Tennessee Scouting. Prior to the publishing of this work, Eades and others wrote an article in the 2018 Winter issue of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* entitle, "The Boy Scouts & Camp Boxwell at the Narrows of the Harpeth, 1930-1948." Composed of ten chapters, *For the Good of the Program: A Century of Middle Tennessee Scouting at Boxwell, 1921 to 2021* is an interesting read for those desiring to learn about Scouting at Boxwell. **Paperback, \$30.00.**

University of Tennessee Press, 323 Hodges Library, 1015 Volunteer Boulevard, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996, published Theresa Laurence's *Sister Sandra, A Black Catholic Nun and the Struggle for Equality in Church and Community*. Laurence introduces the reader to Sandra Smithson who first joined the School Sisters of St. Francis in 1954, one of the few orders of nuns that accepted African American women during the mid-twentieth century. She made it her mission to confront the status quo in her communal domain and her community of faith, even at great personal cost. A native Nashvillian, Smithson attended Catholic academies through college, including Nashville's St Vincent de Paul Catholic School and Church and Immaculate Mother Academy. Smithson continued her post-secondary education at Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, the nation's first and only Catholic Historically Black College University. After graduating with honors from Xavier University, Fisk University granted Smithson a teaching fellowship to work toward a master's degree in literature.



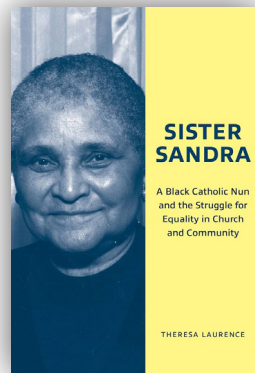
She later became a host on WSOK (now WVOL), Nashville's first African American radio station, inaugurating an extremely popular show called "A Woman Speaks." In *Sister Sandra*, readers are treated to an account of Smithson's expansive life and legacy, from her educational ministry in Central America, to co-founding a nonprofit in Middle Tennessee that served children and advocated for policy change in public education. Laurence's, tome compliments, Dr. Shannen Dee

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Williams' *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle* (2022). Laurence, an award-winning journalist with 20 years of experience identifying and telling stories that matter, is a contributing author to *Tennessee's New Abolitionists: The Fight to End the Death Penalty in the Volunteer State*.

Sister Sandra Smithson, a Black Franciscan nun from Tennessee, lived her extraordinary life on the frontline of transformation and revolutions in her nation and her religious affiliation. In the days before the movement for civil rights, she insisted on joining one of the few racially desegregated religious orders in America. During the beginning of the 1960s Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, she was laboring to change the social structures repressing and subjugating the underprivileged. In her home state of Tennessee, she founded an independent non-profit organization to work directly with children growing up in a culture of poverty.



Laurence's *Sister Sandra* provides a unique examination of the long life and work of an African American nun during the tumultuous winds of vicissitude in both America and the global South. It weaves together an intimate personal narrative of Smithson's life while also documenting the history of African American Catholic history of Nashville, making this text a singular and essential resource on Catholic Church history

in Tennessee, the South, and the United States comprehensively. For those interested in the history of Catholicism in America, inclusive of Nashville, the state of Tennessee, and the nation, this is a must read, especially since America has the third largest population of those practicing Catholicism in the world. **Paperback, \$19.95**

**Vanderbilt University Press**, PMB 401813, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37240-1813 has published several books, including *In Her Place: Nashville Artists in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Kathryn E. Delmez and Laura Hutson Hunter; *Expelled: James Lawson Jr. and Vanderbilt University* by Benjamin Houston; and *Nashville's New Americans: Tracing the Journeys of Our Immigrant Neighbors* by Sheri Lea Sellmeyer.

*In Her Place: Nashville Artists in the Twenty-First Century* displays women artists living in Nashville, Tennessee, highlighting the diversity in their styles, themes, and chosen mediums. The similarities and distinctions among these creators

reflect the intricate qualities of Southern identity. Traditionally, the American South has been shaped by contradictions and is often described by what it is not, just as women have historically been defined in relation to men.

The artists featured in *In Her Place* represent a broad range of backgrounds: included are a sculptor originally from Tehran who works with Tennessee red clay, an Arkansas-based artist employing cardboard to evoke historical narratives, and a Nashville painter whose portrayals of civil rights-era sit-ins maintain significant contemporary relevance. The commonality among these artists extends beyond gender or regional origin; it lies in their collective.



Women have long been at the center of Nashville's vibrant visual arts community. Especially now, during the city's current period of growth, an outsized number of local women artists are receiving prestigious grants, residencies, and awards; are written about by respected critics; and are showing their work across the globe. Many have also dedicated years, even decades, to teaching or building impactful community organizations

The editor of *Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage and Murals of North Nashville Now*, Kathryn E. Delmez, a curator at the Frist Art Museum since 2001, has organized numerous exhibitions, including *In Her Place: Nashville Artists in the Twenty-First Century*; *Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage*; and *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, among other exhibitions at the Frist Art Museum. Writer, editor, and curator, Laura Hutson Hunter, graduated from New York University with the individualized major of Art History and Cultural Anthropology. Her work has appeared in *Vice* and *Art in America*.

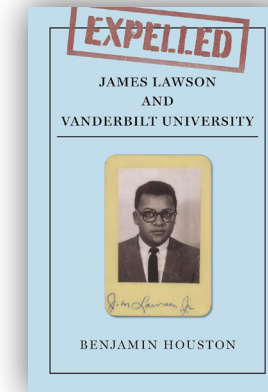
Place is becoming more significant, influencing how people act and providing context. For artists, it anchors their perspective and grows in importance, even as its nature changes over time. **Hardback \$50.00.**

*Expelled: James Lawson Jr. and Vanderbilt University* by Benjamin Houston whose first book, *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in A Southern City*, filled a gap in civil rights and southern historiography, he continues his foray into the Nashville Civil Rights Movement by focusing on the Reverend James Lawson and Vanderbilt University's disputations. In 1958, when Lawson enrolled, Vanderbilt was mostly segregated and viewed as separate from Nashville, which was considered racially moderate but still segregated. Lawson, a divinity student at Vanderbilt Divinity

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School, played a pivotal role in shaping the discipline and philosophical underpinning of the Nashville student movement. He organized workshops that emphasized the importance of maintaining composure in the face of hostility, practicing nonviolent responses to verbal and physical attacks. These training sessions not only prepared activists for direct action and the potential for being physically harmed by those wanting to maintain the racial status quo but they also fostered a sense of unity and purpose among participants, strengthening the movement's resolve and effectiveness.



Civil rights activists such as John Lewis, Diane Nash, the Rev. C. T. Vivian, Bernard Lafayette, and Kwame Lillard among others, who came into their own during Nashville's desegregation era were devotees of the philosophical nonviolent direct-action form of protest. Nashville's civil rights activists practiced two forms of nonviolent direct-action, the Normative Nonviolent protest that included peaceful rallies and marches and the Nonnormative Nonviolent form that was disruptive but peaceful civil disobedience, like the sit-ins. The use of nonnormative nonviolent protest effectively demanded attention and supported a cause by appearing both demanding (disruptive) and well-intentioned (constructive), making them highly effective at gaining policy decisions. Lawson taught these different philosophical tenets that became the underpinning of the Nashville Student Movement to the student warriors of the Nashville sit-in movement.

Houston advances his examination of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement by focusing on Reverend James Lawson and the contentious events at Vanderbilt University. In 1958, when Lawson enrolled, Vanderbilt remained largely segregated and maintained a distinct identity from the city of Nashville, which was regarded as racially moderate yet continued to enforce segregation. The controversy at Vanderbilt began on March 2, following a report in the Nashville Banner alleging that Lawson intended to advise students to "violate the law." Although Lawson denied making this statement, Chancellor Harvie Branscomb presented him with a choice: expulsion or withdrawal from his leadership role in the sit-ins. Lawson opted for expulsion, a decision subsequently ratified by the university's Board of Trustees. In response to Lawson's expulsion due to his involvement in the lunch counter sit-ins, eleven faculty members from the Vanderbilt Divinity School, including Dean J. Robert Nelson, resigned in protest.

The resulting dispute at Vanderbilt persisted for several months. The impact of this crisis on Vanderbilt's reputation should not be underestimated. Houston's work illustrates how the incident exposed varying viewpoints within the university community. Outside the campus, both segregationists and white liberals engaged in discussions regarding the broader ramifications of the case. Ongoing media coverage ensured that these developments attracted international attention.

Benjamin Houston, a senior lecturer at Newcastle University's School of History, Classics, and Archaeology in the United Kingdom, deepens our insight into the "Vanderbilt Affair" with his book *Expelled: James Lawson and Vanderbilt University*. The work explores how this event affected Nashville, Vanderbilt University, and other areas. **Hardback, \$21.95.**

Sheri Lea Sellmeyer's *Nashville's New Americans: Tracing the Journeys of Our Immigrant Neighbors* presents profiles of thirty-nine immigrants representing thirty-eight countries spanning Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Australia. The book serves as a case study illustrating the contributions of immigrants to both the cultural landscape and economic development of Nashville, one of the nation's most rapidly expanding cities. Immigrants are transforming Nashville into a vibrant, multicultural city, moving it beyond its reputation as a mid-sized hub for country music. They contribute by building skyscrapers, managing restaurants, researching diseases, performing music, cleaning hotel rooms, and serving as public officials.

Sellmeyer vividly tells the stories of people from separate places across the globe who have settled in Nashville. Her work sheds light on the experiences of immigrants working in fields ranging from academia to essential services. She thoughtfully examines why they chose Nashville, always emphasizing the universal aspects of their humanity.

Immigrants are often used as examples in political debates instead of being seen as people. *Nashville's New Americans* shares personal stories to illustrate immigrants are more than their status. This work will appeal to anyone interested in learning about their neighbors from other countries who have chosen Nashville as their home and contributions to their new community and home. **Paperback, \$27.95.**





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ON THE COVER: Belmont Mansion, Nashville, TN. Photograph courtesy of Caty Dirksen, THC Outreach Coordinator, April 2026.

