Name_____   Date_____

Tennessee

Tennessee is located in the eastern United States and is surrounded by eight other states: Kentucky to the north; North Carolina to the east; Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia to the south; plus Arkansas and Missouri to the west. The Mississippi River forms the boundary between Tennessee and its neighbors to the west while the Appalachian Mountains divide North Carolina and Tennessee.

Early History

The Mississippian culture of Native Americans called eastern Tennessee home. The Mississippians originally resided in the Mississippi River valley and eventually spread their influence throughout the central United States. The Mississippian culture flourished from around 900 to 1450 CE. Mississippians like their predecessors the Woodland people, built earthen burial mounds which survive in preserved areas today. Today's name for an ancient Mississippian city in Tennessee is Mound Bottom, located on the Harpeth River. This city was once home to thousands of Native American people and was an agricultural and trade center. However, the Mississippian culture disappeared.

Other groups moved into Tennessee, occupying every corner of the present-day state. The Cherokee people lived in the Appalachian Mountains of the east where some Cherokees remain today. To their north was a small tribe known as the Yuchi. The Creek nation claimed land in south central Tennessee. The southwest corner was occupied by Chickasaws while the Shawnee lived north of the Cumberland River. These were the groups living in Tennessee at the time of European exploration.

The first European explorer to enter Tennessee territory was Hernando de Soto, a Spaniard, who sailed to Florida in 1540. He traversed much of the southeastern United States on his journey of exploration. His trip included the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee; then south through present-day Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi; and then exploring the Mississippi River at the western edge of Tennessee. By 1567, there were two more Spanish explorations into Tennessee, looking for gold and treasures that did not exist.

Even though only a few hundred Europeans had come in contact with the Native Americans in Tennessee, it was enough to transmit European diseases like

smallpox, measles and chicken pox to the native people who had no immunity to such diseases. Thousands of people began dying from these new diseases.

While Spanish explorers came from the south, French explorers arrived from the north traveling through the Great Lakes from Canada. In 1673, Marquette and Joliet traversed the length of the Mississippi River beginning in present-day Illinois. They stopped near present-day Memphis, Tennessee but the Chickasaw people were not receptive to their presence. The next French explorer, La Salle, was successful in building a fort on the Mississippi River in Tennessee and began trading with the Native Americans in the vicinity.

Towards Statehood

Meanwhile settlers were populating the British colonies on the east coast of North America. Also in 1673, two British emissaries of Virginia merchant Abraham Wood went to Tennessee to begin trade with the Cherokees. During the French and Indian War, an alliance of French soldiers and Native American warriors fought the British for control of the lands in present-day Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio. However, the Cherokees remained loyal to their trade partners, the British. The British won the war and gained control of the disputed land but instructed colonists to remain east of the Appalachian Mountains.

However, around 1770 a group of settlers farmed land near the Watauga River. They wrote a constitution in 1772, creating an independent government, called the Watauga Association, for their small area. However, in 1783, after the Revolutionary War, Tennessee was under the control of the new United States government.

There was an internal struggle for control of Tennessee. It was claimed by North Carolina which sold the land to speculators who bought 4 million acres in northeastern Tennessee. These investors decided to form a new state and call it Franklin. The U.S. Congress refused to admit Franklin as a state and returned control to North Carolina. North Carolina then ceded the land of Tennessee to the federal government in order to form the Southwest Territory.

In 1795, a territorial census showed that the population of the territory was large enough to apply for statehood. Leaders convened a constitutional convention the following year and in 1796 George Washington admitted Tennessee as a state.

Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False Missouri, Alabama and Georgia form Tennessee's southern border.

2. True False The Mississippian culture of Native Americans originally resided in the Mississippi River valley and eventually spread their influence throughout the central United States.

3. True False The Cherokee people lived in the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Tennessee where some Cherokees remain today.

4. True False Even though the land in Tennessee is far inland from any seacoast, both Spanish and French explorers visited Tennessee in the 1500s and 1600s.

5. True False Thousands of Native Americans in Tennessee died from smallpox and other European diseases because they had no immunity to them.

6. True False During the French and Indian War, French soldiers and warriors from all the Native American tribes in Tennessee fought against the British.

7. True False The Watauga Association was a confederation of Native Americans who resided in the vicinity of the Mississippi River in Tennessee.

8. True False Leaders in northeastern Tennessee attempted to create a new state and called it Washington after President George Washington.

9. True False The Southwest Territory formed by the U.S. Congress included not only Tennessee but also Arizona and New Mexico.

10. True False George Washington was President when Tennessee became a state.

Answers

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. False
9. False
10. True