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McMinn, Meigs counties rich in history

Both McMinn and Meigs counties abound with rich local history. Here's a look at how each was founded and flourished over the years.

Historically, McMinn County's main industry was agriculture, particularly dairy and poultry. Other farming enterprises include beef cattle, tobacco, hay and feed grains and timber.

In the past 50 years, the county's industrial base has become diversified and products made by the local work force include newsprint, fiberglass shingles, motors, hosiery, clothing, plastic goods and chemicals. More recently, industrial plants have produced car seats, spas, and automotive components.

Incorporated cities within McMinn County include Athens (the county seat), Etowah, Calhoun, Englewood and Niota.

Several unincorporated communities including Claxton, Goodsprings, Idlewild, Nonaburg, Riceville, Rogers Creek and Tranquillity are located in the outlying areas of the county.

McMinn County's history is unique, exhibiting the same spirit of exceptional strength, perseverance and integrity which has pulsed throughout each succeeding generation.

Early McMinn settlers came here following the Revolutionary War, and later in the early 1800s once Cherokees ceded land through a series of treaties. The Cherokees were uprooted from their homeland in 1836 and forced to relocate to reservations in Oklahoma during the infamous Trail of Tears.

The county was named in honor of Gov. Joseph McMinn, who resided in Calhoun after leaving office. The Pennsylvania native served as governor from 1815 through 1821. Athens later became the center of McMinn government. In 1875, the historic McMinn County Courthouse was built in Athens by the influential architect Samuel Cleage. The original building was destroyed by fire on Nov. 2, 1964, and the current Courthouse was built in its place, anchoring Athens' downtown square.

The Civil War is probably the major crisis point in McMinn history.

Tennessee was among the Southern states to secede from the Union, but sentiments were far from unanimous in the state. On June 8, 1861, Tennessee seceded from the Union: 56 percent of McMinn County citizens voted against the move and the county remained divided on the issue throughout the war. The Union Army actually ended up drawing the support of 35,000 East Tennesseans. McMinn County itself formed 10 Confederate companies and 12 Union ones.

Railroads played a prominent part in economic development before the war, but were more so a key to growth in the post-war period. Etowah, the second largest city in McMinn County, was born of the rich heritage of railroading. Established in 1905, it officially became a city in 1909 with its early stages geared to the heartbeat of the railway. While the L&N Depot is no longer booking passages, it still stands as a representation of the town's spirit to survive and serves as a museum and community center.

Niota, too, had its origins as a railroad town – but on a small scale. The city sprang up around a train station on Mouse Creek. The Niota Depot Preservation Committee is in the midst of a project to preserve and restore the depot as a focal point and heritage centerpiece.

The town's most famous son is Harry T. Burn, a state legislator from a prominent industrialist family who cast the deciding vote on the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution giving women the right to vote.

Englewood also flourished in its location along the railroad, but it was mining and textiles that turned the Tellico Junction stop into a chartered municipality. The town's history is recorded in the Englewood Textile Museum, which is operated by the Community Action Group of Englewood. CAGE founded the museum and, later, The Company Store, in celebration of Tennessee's Homecoming '86.

U.S. Highway 411 serves the eastern section of McMinn County as a major north-south corridor. McMinn is bordered

to the south by the Hiwassee River, one of the most scenic waterways in the state, and to the east by the Cherokee National Forest.

Meigs County is primarily linked to the Tennessee River and Watts Bar Lake, separating Meigs from Rhea County. Highway 58 links Meigs County to Roane County to the north and Chattanooga to the south. While Highway 68 spans the Tennessee River along Watts Bar Dam, the location of a Tennessee Valley Authority hydroelectric and nuclear power plant, travelers may cross the Tennessee River by bridges on Highways 60 and 30.

While McMinn County is named after a former governor, Meigs County is named after a former Revolutionary War hero, Col. Return Jonathan Meigs. Meigs was a spokesman of the Cherokee and served as Indian Agent from 1801 until his death on Jan. 28, 1823.

Meigs County was formed in 1835 after splitting from Rhea County, now its neighbor to the west. The county seat was set up in Decatur, which was incorporated in 1838. The town was named in honor of Stephen Decatur, a naval commander born in Maryland in 1779, who distinguished himself in the War of 1812.

While Decatur is the only incorporated municipality in Meigs County, several communities, including Cottonport, Big Spring, Georgetown, Ten Mile, and others, are home to many residents. While Meigs County's shore along the Tennessee River is a draw for residents of all ages, the area has been particularly popular with retirees. However, they are not the only ones looking for a quiet area with a lower cost of living.

The Meigs County Courthouse, built in 1904, still stands today at the intersection of Highways 30 and 58 in Decatur.

The building, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, underwent extensive renovations a few years ago to bring it into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It continues to be viewed as a symbol of the community.

McMinn County government offers many services

As with other counties in Tennessee, McMinn's government is composed of elected offices established by the state Constitution and other appointed positions. All of the agencies combine to serve the county's more than 52,000 residents.

McMinn County Commission

The McMinn County Commission is the legislative branch of county government composed of 10 members who represent the five districts in the county. The panel's primary functions are budget approval and policy-making.

Members are elected to four-year terms.

Commission members are: District 1 – Brent Carter and Tracey "Tad" Simpson; District 2 – Jerry Millsaps and J.W. McPhail; District 3 – Roger Masingale and Tim King; District 4 – Scott Cass and Charles Slack; and District 5 – Travis Crisp and Scott Curtis.

The Commission meets the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Blue Room, located in the basement of the McMinn County Courthouse.

For information call 745-7634.

County Mayor

The county mayor serves as chief administrator of McMinn County and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the general fund.

The county mayor is elected to a four-year term. John Gentry is the current office-holder.

Gentry's office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the courthouse. The office is located on the main floor of the courthouse.

The office can be reached at 745-7634.

County Clerk

Duties of the county clerk range from serving as secretary to the County Commission to keeper of various public records to conducting a great deal of taxation activities within the county. The office also offers driver's license renewals.

The county clerk is elected to a four-year term and Melinda King serves as the county clerk.

The office is located in the

McMinn County Courthouse Annex in Downtown Athens. The office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, call 745-4440.

Register of Deeds

The register of deeds records real estate conveyances, deeds of trust, leases, charters, bonds of county officials, contracts and other documents, making certified copies of these forms when needed. The register of deeds is elected to a four-year term. Cheryl Ingram holds the office.

The office is located on the main floor of the Courthouse. It is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, call 745-1232.

Trustee

The trustee receives and disburses all monies that are paid to the county by other county officials as well as state and federal funds, and collects property taxes, personal taxes and public utility taxes.

The trustee is elected to a four-year term. Phil Tuggle is the office-holder.

The office is located on the main floor of the Courthouse. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The office can be reached at 745-1291.

Assessor of Property

The property assessor inventories all parcels of real estate and all tangible, real and intangible personal property in McMinn County. The property assessor also maintains tax maps and property cards, collects tax receipts and prepares tax books and notices.

The property assessor is elected to a four-year term. Keith Price is the current officeholder. The office is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Courthouse.

To contact the office, call 745-2743.

Finance and Purchasing

The director of finance oversees expenditures and budgeting for county departments. The director of finance is appointed by the County

Commission and serves at the will of its Budget Committee.

Jason Luallen is the director of finance.

The office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Courthouse. The office is located on the main floor of the Courthouse.

For more information, call 745-4103.

Veterans Affairs

The veterans service officer assists Tennessee veterans and their families obtain state and federal benefits.

Justin Weir is the officeholder.

The office is located in the McMinn County Courthouse Annex. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, call 744-1605.

Election Commission

The McMinn County Election Commission and the administrator of elections oversee the holding of local elections and voter registration.

Election commissioners serve two-year terms. Members of the panel are recommended by state legislators and appointed by the Tennessee Election Commission.

The Election Commission members are appointed on a partisan basis. There are currently two Democrats and three Republicans serving on the commission.

The administrator of elections serves at the pleasure of the Election Commission.

The Election Commission's members currently are Chairman Todd Watson, Secretary Bobby Goodman, Stephen Miller, Brenda Ratledge and Amber Robinson. Bridgett Prichard serves as the administrator of elections.

The Election Commission meets the third Tuesday of the month at 5 p.m. at the McMinn County Courthouse.

The office is currently located in the McMinn County Courthouse in Downtown Athens. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday

McMinn Govt

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through Friday.

For more information, call 745-0843, visit <https://www.mcminnelections.com> or e-mail elections@mcminnelections.com

Emergency Preparedness

Tom Trotter is McMinn County's Emergency Management Agency director. The department oversees civil defense and emergency preparedness.

The department can be reached at 744-5256.

Highway Department

The Highway Department is responsible for building and maintaining county roads and bridges.

The head of the department, the Highway Commissioner, is elected to a four-year term. Dan Evans is the office-holder. Located on Old Niota Road in Athens, the office is open in the spring and summer from 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday until the first week of September. The office will then be open regular hours Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For more information, call 745-1820.

Sheriff

The sheriff oversees the administration of law enforcement and operations at the McMinn County Justice Center. The sheriff and deputies conduct criminal investigations, serve warrants and provide officers for court security.

The sheriff is elected to a four-year term. Joe Guy is the office-holder. The Justice Center is located at 1319 S. White St., in Athens.

For more information, call 745-5622.

District Attorney General

The District Attorney General is the chief law enforcement officer for McMinn, Bradley, Polk and Monroe counties, which make up the 10th Judicial District. The district attorney also is specifically charged with preparing and prosecuting all criminal cases and other cases in which the state has an interest. The district attorney is elected to an eight-year term.

The office, located at 130 Washington Ave., Athens, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except



holidays. On Friday, it closes at 4 p.m.

For more information, call 744-2830.

Public Defender

The public defender serves as the court-appointed legal representative for indigent defendants involved in criminal cases in McMinn, Bradley, Polk and Monroe counties.

The public defender is elected to an eight-year term. Donald Shahan is the current office-holder.

The main office is located in Cleveland at 53A Central Ave. The Madisonville office is at 4263 Highway 411 N. Both offices are open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays.

For more information, call the Madisonville office at (423) 442-3162. The Cleveland office can be reached at (423) 478-0348.

Judges

Chancery and Circuit court judges try civil cases such as negligence, personal injury, malpractice and product liability and non-jury cases. Chancery Court, the court of equity, specializes in contractual law, insurance and worker's compensation matters.

Criminal Court judges have jurisdiction in criminal cases which originate in the city courts, General Sessions Court and from the Grand Jury.

The trial-level judges serve McMinn, Monroe, Polk and Bradley counties.

General Sessions Court is a small claims court with jurisdiction limited to \$3,000. Misdemeanor criminal and juvenile trials are also held here, as

well as probable cause hearings in felony cases.

All judges are elected to eight-year terms. Current office-holders are Chancellor Jerri Bryant, Criminal Court Judge Sandra Donaghy, and Circuit Court Judges Larry Puckett, Mike Sharp and Andrew Freiberg. Judge Wylie Richardson presides over General Sessions Court and Juvenile Court.

Bryant maintains an office in the courthouse and can be reached at 746-5412. Donaghy and Puckett can be reached at 745-1923; Sharp at 423-476-0536; and Freiberg at 744-2835.

Circuit Court Clerk

The Circuit Court clerk is responsible for all records generated in Circuit, Criminal, General Sessions, Probate and Juvenile courts and the Grand Jury. The clerk also issues warrants and collects fines.

The circuit court clerk is elected for a four-year term. Rhonda Cooley is the current office-holder.

The office is currently located at the McMinn County Judicial Complex, located at 1317 S. White St. It is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and is closed on Fridays from noon to 1 p.m.

For more information, call 745-1923.

Clerk and Master

The clerk and master is responsible for all records generated from Chancery Court. The position is appointed to a six-year term.

Patty Gaines is the current clerk and master. The office is located on the top floor of the courthouse. It is open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday.

For more information, call 745-1281.

Juvenile Services

The McMinn County Department of Juvenile Services provides preventive and rehabilitative services to juveniles and their families.

Melissa Hughes is the director of Juvenile Services. The department's office is located on the second floor of the McMinn County Courthouse Annex.

For more information, call the office at 745-8782.



Athens is McMinn County seat

Nestled at the foothills of the Smokies and convenient to the Ocoee and Hiwassee rivers, outdoor recreation has always been a major pastime for Athenians.

A rural community with easy access to metropolitan areas and unmatched natural resources, Athens is the place that more and more people want to live. The population of Athens is growing with over 14,120 residents now and suburban development continuing to spring up in the city's 15.51 square miles.

Closer to home, the Athens Regional Park anchors the city's recreational activities.

The City of Athens is organized by the council-manager form of government, based on the corporate model, and is the lasting legacy from the Battle of Athens (1946).

The elected city council consists of five members, with one of those five selected by the council to serve as mayor. Each council member serves a four-year term.

The city council includes Mayor Steve Sherlin, Vice Mayor Larry Eaton and Council members Dick Pelley, Jordan Curtis and Frances Witt-McMahan.

The 10 main city departments each have a director or supervisor who deals with the day-to-day operations under the supervision of the city manager.

The hours for the general office operations are from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and all can be reached at (423) 744-2700.

The departments include:

Administration: Randy Dowling, city manager. The city manager is the administrative head of the municipal government and oversees all departments and advises the city council on legislative issues.

Finance Department: Mike Keith, finance director. The finance director oversees all financial matters, collection of taxes, issuing business

licenses, refuse billing and budgeting.

Police Department: Fred Schultz, chief of police. The department enforces all laws and is charged with the protection of lives and property in the city.

Fire Department: Brandon Ainsworth, fire chief. The department fights fires, makes regular fire inspections, conducts medical response and makes suggestions and recommendations on how to prevent fires.

Public Works: Ben Burchfield, director of public works. The department constructs, maintains and cleans streets. Other main duties include garbage pick-up and disposal, correcting drainage problems and animal shelter. The city's largest department, professional and administrative engineering work are also duties.

SEE ATHENS, Page 7



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Athens

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Community Development: Anthony Casteel, community development director. The office enforces zoning, structural codes and community development activities, as well as applying for and directing government grants.

Parks and Recreation: Matt Siniard, director. The agency conducts a comprehensive leisure services program for all groups and ages as well as developing and maintaining the city's park system.

Human Resources: Nina Edmonds, director. The

office implements the city's personnel policies and handles payroll, insurance and other benefits for city employees.

Technology: Steven Croft is the IT director. The Technology Department works to create effective and efficient use of the city's resources by handling information and technology needs for staff and the public, the department also houses the Geographic Information System (GIS) for the city.



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McMinn, Meigs home to a variety of historic sites

The newest Tennessee Historical Commission marker belongs to the Englewood Water Tower.

“When the Depression-era Public Works Administration program offered funding to build a public water system for the town, 97% of the community approved. The water tower was erected in 1937, using the most advanced design available, which combined an elliptical bottom with a conical top. The new system not only supplied the community, but it helped in reviving Englewood by bringing in new industry. The water tower is no longer used by the town and a local preservation group has been established to preserve the structure,” states the Tennessee Historical Commission.

- On Knoxville Avenue across from the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA, a site commemorating the former community of Free Hill, which was founded by freed slaves in the 1850s. St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Church was the first church erected by and for African-Americans in McMinn County.

- A Tennessee Historical Commission marker near the intersection of College and White Streets in Downtown Athens and a nearby mural along White Street adjacent to Carter Insurance and Valley Title Services commemorates the Battle of Athens. On Election Day, Aug. 1, 1946, a large group of McMinn County citizens – many of whom were World War II veterans still fresh from the battlefields overseas – joined together in an armed revolt against potential voter fraud at the hands of machine politics that had ruled for decades. This event gained national attention and became known as “The Battle of Athens.”

- Gov. Joseph McMinn’s grave site located in the old Presbyterian Church cemetery in Calhoun. The county is named for the governor, Joseph McMinn, who served three terms from 1815 to 1821.

McMinn was a member of the state Constitutional Convention of

1796, when the state was formed; a member of the state Senate; and speaker of the Senate. Upon his retirement as governor he was appointed agent in charge of the Cherokee Indian Agency.

- L&N Depot, located in Downtown Etowah, the building was dedicated in April 1906. Etowah officially came into being once the depot was in place. The building is now the centerpiece of the community, and serves as a meeting place that hosts many town events including the Etowah Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration.

- Niota Depot, located in Downtown Niota. The Depot, the oldest in the state, was built in 1854 on land transferred by the Willson heirs to East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, which had maintained service through Niota for 78 years.

The Depot currently serves as governmental offices and is open during regular business hours Monday through Friday.

- Samuel Cleage Building located on North Jackson Street across from Mars Hill Presbyterian Church. The building reflects early 19th Century architecture and in 1836 served as the central office for the Hiwassee Railroad, one of the first railroads in Tennessee.

The building was constructed by Samuel Clegg, a contractor who had settled in the Mouse Creek community in 1825. Clegg, whose name was spelled Cleage after the Civil War, contributed to the architecture of East Tennessee.

In recent years, the building was converted – the lower half is a storefront and the upstairs half is a private residence.

- General James T. Lane grave, located off Highway 30 in Athens just East of Interstate 75, is home of the only Civil War general buried in McMinn County.

- Cedar Grove Cemetery, located near Downtown Athens, is home to many historic graves.

- Old College Building, an antebellum architectural building,

located at Tennessee Wesleyan University. The 1850s-era building was the original building on the school’s campus.

In 1854, the McMinn County Chapter of the Odd Fellows had obtained a charter from the state of Tennessee to operate a college. Later, the college became the property of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church in 1857.

The Old College building also served as a hospital during the Civil War.

- “The Little White House” located just behind the Englewood Textile Museum. Donated in 2001 to the Community Action Group of Englewood, the building was originally the James W. Chesnutt Home. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, “The Little White House” is part of the museum’s property and hosts several programs and exhibits throughout the year.

- Mars Hill Presbyterian Church, located on North Jackson Street. The oldest church in Athens was built by Samuel Clegg and organized in 1823 by the Rev. William Eagleton. In 1878, members decided to tear down the church and rebuild it. It was heavily damaged by fire in 1942 but was later restored.

- First United Presbyterian Church, located on North Jackson Street, the historic black church was built by the Rev. J.L. Cook in 1892. Designed in the early Gothic Revival style, the building – which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places – still maintains many of its original features, most of which have remained untouched and unaltered in the last century.

- Clear Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church, located east of Calhoun off Highway 163, is McMinn County’s newest addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The church was built around 1860 and has had few changes since that time. The

History

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one-story gable-front church building, a cemetery and a baptismal pool were all included in the National Register listing. While regular services aren't held at the church, it hosts homecoming in June and a revival in October.

- M.E. Trew General Merchandise Store, known as Trew's Store, located on Highway 163. The store, operated by Mortimer E. and Oneta Trew, is no longer in operation. The store came into existence in 1890 and provided services ranging from a feed store, farm equipment center and post office to a cotton gin, shoe store and grocery store.

- Beth Salem Cumberland Presbyterian Church, located just off Highway 30 about half-way between Athens and Etowah. The church was organized in 1866 by the Rev. George Waterhouse and Jake Armstrong and was the first African-American church in McMinn, Meigs and Polk counties. Every August, people return for "August Meeting" to remember ancestors and celebrate Beth Salem's history with preaching, singing and dinner on the grounds.

Meigs Sites

- Meigs County Courthouse, located on the square in Decatur.

Erected in 1903, the courthouse has served as a church, school and a bank. The building was updated in early 2005 to make it handicap-accessible. The courthouse currently houses governmental offices and is open for business on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and on Saturdays

from 9 a.m. until noon.

- Decatur United Methodist Church, located on Vernon Street. The church was organized soon after the town was established in 1837 and some of the early meetings were held in the county courthouse. The present sanctuary is the original church, was built in 1857.

- Robert H. Smith, Culvahouse Law Office, located off Main Street. Its design, with an emphasis on the Gothic Revival architectural style, represents one of three pre-1900 examples of a commercial building in Decatur. The building was originally located on the courthouse square but has been moved twice. It has been restored as part of the county's museum.

- Mt. Zion Church, located near McMinn County and Big Sewee Creek. Established in the 1830s as a Baptist church, it appeared on post-Civil War records as a Methodist church. The original church was a log structure, but the current church is made of heart pine and was built in 1908.

- Blythe's Ferry, located off of Highway 60. During the Trail of Tears deportation thousands of Cherokee emigrants crossed the Tennessee River at the ferry. The location is now home to the Cherokee Memorial Park, a commemorative and interpretive area where visitors can view outdoor exhibits which chronicle the Cherokee experience across the rift of the 1838 removal.

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Meigs government led by mayor, commission

Meigs County government is based in Decatur, the sole incorporated city in the county. Offices established by the state constitution serve the county's more than 11,000 residents.

The county offices are filled by the following people:

County Mayor

Eddie Jewell serves as the county mayor. Elected to a four-year term, he oversees the operation of general fund departments and day-to-day operations of the courthouse.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5850.

County Commission

The county commission serves as the legislative body of the county. The panel's responsibilities include setting county resolutions and policies. The commission meets the third Thursday of each month for a regular meeting and the second Thursday of each month for a workshop in the Pete Jennings Assembly Room in the courthouse at 7 p.m. both nights.

Commissioners are elected to four-year terms.

The commission includes: District 1, Jeff Howard and Dustin Lankford; District 2, Andrew Howard and Ralph "Dude" Minnis; District 3, Chris Finnell, Jerry Harris and Stanley Welch; District 4, Rick Vaughn and Doug O'Daniel; and District 5, Wanda Morrow and Zach England.

Commissioners can be contacted through the county mayor's office on the first floor of the courthouse at 334-5850.

County Clerk

The county clerk's duties include issuing vehicle registration and renewals, boat registration, fishing and hunting license, marriage license, notary bonds, beer bonds and permits. The clerk is also responsible for keeping the minutes of county commission and beer board meetings, as well as records of county business and beer taxes.

The county clerk is elected to a four-year term. Janie Myers is the current office-holder. Located on the first floor of the courthouse, call 334-5747.

Election Commission

The Meigs County Election

Commission is responsible for voter registration and conducting elections.

Election commission members are recommended by local legislators and are appointed to two-year terms by the State Election Commission. Election commission members include Chairman Johnny Aikman, Melvin Holmes, Vice Chairman Vance Hughes, Secretary Patricia Harris and Tommy Creasman. Judy McAllister currently serves as administrator of elections.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse. Call 334-5866 for information.

Register of Deeds

The register of deeds is responsible for recording warranty deeds, deeds of trust, releases judgment liens, tax liens, wills, military discharges, easements, powers of attorney and land contracts.

The register of deeds is elected to a four-year term. Madison S. Carden is the current office-holder.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5228.

Trustee

The duties of the trustee include collecting property taxes and handling all funds for office holders including the Highway Department and School System.

The trustee is elected to a four-year term. Stacie Goforth Hyde is the current county Trustee.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5119.

Assessor of Property

The assessor of property appraises each piece of property as to value and changes ownership names when deeds are recorded to new owners. Other responsibilities include making additions to tax rolls for any new construction and preparation of a tax roll for officials in Nashville and for the Trustee's office.

The tax assessor is elected to a four-year term. Billy Breeden is the current officeholder.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5231.

Finance Department

The office serves as the purchasing agency for the county offices and highway department. The agency also is responsible for maintaining financial records and manages the budget.

The finance committee is made up of appointed members; county commissioners representing each district serve on the committee. Lesley Lyle is the finance director for the county.

Located on the first floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5846.

Highway Department

The highway department builds and maintains county roads and bridges. The head of the department, the highways commissioner, is elected to a four-year term. Jimmy "Butch" Nelson is the current officeholder.

Located at 583 Jones St., the office can be reached at 334-5157.

Sheriff's Department

The sheriff's duties include overseeing law enforcement and jail operations. The sheriff is elected to a four-year term. The current office-holder is Jackie Melton.

Located at 410 River Road, the sheriff's department can be reached at 334-3163 or 334-5268.

Judges

Judges in Meigs County hear criminal cases, civil lawsuits and jury trials. Sessions Court, a small claims court, hears misdemeanor criminal cases, domestic cases and probable cause hearings for felony cases.

Chancery Court primarily hears non-jury equity cases, such as contract disputes, workman's compensation and divorce.

Judges are elected for eight-year terms. Judges in Circuit, Criminal and Chancery courts are elected from the 9th Judicial District, which includes Meigs, Roane, Loudon and Morgan counties.

Serving on the bench are Criminal Court Judge Jeff Wicks, Circuit Court Judge Mike Pemberton, Chancellor Tom McFarland and General Sessions Court, Juvenile Court and Domestic Relations Court Judge Casey Stokes.

SEE MEIGS GOVT, Page 13

Meigs Govt

Continued from Page 12

The courtroom is located on the second floor of the courthouse. For more information, call 334-5821.

Circuit Court Clerk

The Circuit Court clerk is the elected official who handles the daily affairs of the local judicial system, including records keeping for circuit, sessions, criminal and juvenile courts.

The office also is responsible for filing all warrants and subpoenas and collecting child support payments.

The Circuit Court clerk is elected to a four-year term. Darrell Davis is the current office-holder.

Located on the second floor of the courthouse, the office can be reached at 334-5821.

Clerk and Master

The clerk and master coordinates chancery court and handles records. The position, which carries a six-year term, is appointed by the chancellor. Donna Moore is the current officeholder.

The office, located on the second floor of the courthouse, can be reached at 334-5243.

Veterans Affairs

The veterans affairs officer assists Meigs County veterans and their families obtain state and federal benefits. The position is appointed by the county mayor.

The office is located in the Courthouse Annex (old VEC building) and is open Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information, call the office at 334-1631.

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Decatur is county seat of Meigs

Decatur is governed by a mayor and board of aldermen who are elected by city residents.

The aldermen also serve as commissioners overseeing various functions of municipal operations.

Currently serving in the positions are Mayor John Wayne Irwin and Aldermen John Myers, Gary Meadows, Lynn Ottinger, Connye Rowland, Bryan Peaden and Monica

Ward.

The city recorder is Laura Smith. The board meets the second Tuesday of each month in the Decatur Municipal Building at 7 p.m.

The board sets policies, ordinances and resolutions for Decatur and supervises the administration of the town's utilities including the public works department. Rusty Smith is the Public Works Director. Brandon

Crisp is the chief of the police department and Tyson Ratcliff serves as the chief of Decatur's fire department.

The Decatur Municipal Building is located at 116 North Main Street, adjacent to the Meigs County Courthouse. The building also houses the police department.

The municipal building can be reached at 334-5716.

Three chambers of commerce between McMinn, Meigs

The business communities in McMinn and Meigs counties are served by three Chambers of Commerce.

Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce is a valuable tool for businesses and offers many services to its members.

Located at 13 North Jackson Street, across from the McMinn County Courthouse on the square in Downtown Athens, the Chamber offers programs, services and resources that give member businesses a competitive edge.

Some of the services offered are:

- Leadership McMinn, a program designed to develop, train, motivate and recognize future leadership among the citizens of McMinn County, is offered each year.
- A referral service for members when requests are received for the availability of goods or services.
- A membership directory listing each member according to categories to guide buyers to their business.
- Seminars and workshops on a variety of pertinent subjects.
- Annual Benefit, an event with a well known motivational speaker that brings thousand of guests into our community. A portion of the funds raised goes to benefit our community.

• Sponsorship of the annual Jimmy Liner Memorial Christmas Parade in downtown Athens.

For more information, contact the Chamber at 423-745-0334 or visit www.athenschamber.org

Etowah Area Chamber of Commerce

Many businesses, industries, and individuals make up the membership of the Etowah Area Chamber of Commerce. The Etowah office is located at 727 Tennessee Ave. in the historic L&N Depot.

The Etowah Area Chamber's main goal is to provide every service needed to assure these businesses and industries have the opportunity to grow. The Chamber provides business classes to fit the needs of each individual business.

The Chamber provides a referral service to bring new business to each member. The Business After Hours and Business Before Hours provides businesses the opportunities to network and to create partnership with each other to grow their business. The Chamber website at www.etowahcoc.org contains a listing of each business in a variety of categories to allow web surfers to find more information on our members.

Tourism is an important part of the Chamber's mission. The Chamber maintains the visitor

center at the Historic L&N Depot which receives over 43,000 visitors each year.

The Chamber also promotes the Hiwassee River Rail Adventure, a railroad excursion that brings over 10,000 visitors to McMinn County each year. The Chamber Shopping and Dining Guide and a visitor's guide are offered to each passenger.

The Chamber sponsors and promotes many of the local events at the L&N Depot including the Annual Easter Egg Hunt, Car Shows, Old Fashion Fourth of July Celebration, Annual Arts & Crafts Fall Festival, and the Etowah Christmas Parade.

The Chamber provides a monthly newsletter. Call 423-263-2228 or e-mail info@etowahcoc.org

Meigs County-Decatur Chamber of Commerce

The membership of the Meigs County-Decatur Chamber of Commerce, located in the Decatur Municipal Building, includes business, civic and community leaders from Meigs and neighboring counties.

Chamber members work together to promote the advancement of agricultural, commercial, industrial, recreational, civic and general interests of Meigs County and surrounding areas.

For additional information, visit <https://meigschamber.org>



CSCC has a home in Athens

Cleveland State Community College is a fully-accredited public comprehensive two-year community college operating within the governance of the Tennessee Board of Regents and approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

Cleveland State celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017. Its mission focuses upon responsive delivery of the highest quality education and training at the lowest possible cost in support of work force development, liberal arts transfer and cultural enrichment for the people of Bradley, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe and Polk counties.

The main campus is located between Exits 25 and 27 in Cleveland, off Interstate 75, approximately 30 miles south of Athens. It enrolls more than 3,000 students in a typical fall semester.

Besides the main campus, CSCC also has off-campus sites, including sites in McMinn and Monroe counties.

The Athens campus is located in the McMinn Higher Education Center at 2345 Denso Drive and can be reached via telephone at 745-8486.

The college has more than 200

employees and 75 full-time faculty. Ninety percent of the faculty have master's or doctorate degrees. The student/teacher ratio is 18 to 1.

The 105-acre campus has 11 major buildings housing modern classrooms, laboratories and student activity centers. Additional features include an excellent library, a multimedia production studio, dynamic classrooms, computer laboratories, a 400-seat theatre, a 3,000-seat gymnasium, athletic fields, a small business development center, a workforce readiness center, and a full-service student center with a bookstore and student lounge areas. In addition, the college recently opened the new state-of-the-art Health and Science Center, the first new academic building for the college in over 46 years.

Programs offered at the college, include the associate of arts/science transfer and on campus credit/non-credit associate of applied science, off-campus credit/noncredit certificates of credit.

Popular courses for business and industry include applications on microcomputer, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation graphics, internet web page design and internet, e-mail in program-

ming in visual basic and computer aided-design, accounting, business, management, marketing, small business management, and entrepreneurship.

Refresher courses are offered in reading, writing, mathematics as well as courses in public speaking and ethics. Accreditation is received from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, for the awarding of Associate Degrees.

The college offers a registered nursing (RN) program and industrial technologies and also provides a 12-week law enforcement training academy.

Course work completed at Cleveland State can be transferred to other four-year colleges, such as those in the University of Tennessee system and all Tennessee Board of Regents schools.

Cleveland State Community College is an equal-opportunity institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age or disability.

For more information on Cleveland State Community College, visit www.clevelandstateecc.edu or call 1-800-604-CSCC or 423-472-7141.

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Tennessee Wesleyan University is located in Athens on a beautiful 40-acre campus bordering downtown.

As a liberal arts institution, TWU provides a wide variety of degree options, with over 30 academic programs and master's degrees in Business, Nursing, Education, and Occupational Therapy.

TWU provides an environment for students that balances academic challenge and support. Students, regardless of their major, have access to academic services ranging from success coaching, peer tutoring, hands-on learning experiences, study abroad opportunities, and more. Faculty and staff take pride in supporting each

individual student to reach their educational and career goals.

Knoxville is the home to two instructional sites, Nursing in West Knoxville and Master of Occupational Therapy downtown. Through partnership with Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, TWU Nursing and MOT students are trained in hands-on and clinical settings.

TWU not only serves traditional undergraduate and graduate students, but also those looking to complete their degree. The Management Excellence (ME) program allows students to finish a Bachelor's in Management, the Professional Leadership in Criminal Justice (PLCJ) program provides a Bachelor's



in Criminal Justice, and the RN to BSN program gives registered nurses the ability to complete their Bachelor's in Nursing. All three programs are fully online.

Tennessee Wesleyan is a member of the Appalachian Athletic Conference (AAC) of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and has more than 20 athletic teams for men

and women. Teams consistently compete on the conference, regional and national levels.

In addition to athletics, students can choose from more than 25 clubs and organizations, including music and theatre opportunities, Greek life, and more. For more information, visit tnwesleyan.edu or call 423-745-7504.

Lee University has campus near area

More than 5,000 students attend Lee University, whose main campus is located in Cleveland. Students come from 49 states and 52 countries.

Lee is known for its music programs and for the Helen DeVos College of Education. More than a dozen vocal and instrumental ensembles travel around the country and the world, ministering to congregations one evening, performing in concert halls on another.

As for the College of Education, with more than 800 students seeking certification through the teacher education program, its impact on school systems in the area is significant.

While those are the more recognizable features, the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Nursing, and School of Religion continue to train exceptional scholars, professionals and ministers.

Students have the option of choosing from more than 100 degree programs, with 52 majors ranging from Bible to business and from computers to chemistry.

Lee also offers several graduate programs in seven major areas of instruction. The school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is a member of the Appalachian College Association, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, the Council for Independent Colleges, and Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association.

Lee is ranked in the "Top Tier" (regional universities of the South) by US News & World Report, and "Best in Southeast" by the Princeton Review.

All Lee students participate in the school's award-winning community service program. Agencies

such as the YMCA, Habitat for Humanity, Bread Ministry, Missions Alive, Backyard and Inner Seed are a few of the hands-on projects that encourage a lifestyle of service to the local community.

Since 2006, Lee's service-learning program has consistently ranked among the Top 100 colleges in the nation, appearing several years on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll With Distinction, a recognition conferred by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

To gain a global perspective, Lee students travel abroad to all parts of the world, immersing themselves in a variety of cultures and peoples. This aspect of the curriculum at Lee is also recognized widely as one of the most comprehensive in America.

Regardless of their individual majors, students have the opportunity to participate in between 25 to 30 global perspective trips, led by Lee's credentialed faculty, as an economical and rewarding cross-cultural experience.

On campus, student life is what you might expect from a top-ranked university. Lee has more than 100 academic, social, Greek, athletic and service organizations. As a residential campus students may live in modern residence halls and apartment buildings which offer all of the comforts of home, such as computer labs, television rooms, pool tables, kitchens, lounges and laundry facilities.

Lee also boasts a nationally-competitive athletic program including 18 inter-collegiate sports competing in the NCAA Division II.

For more information, call the office of admissions at 423-614-8500 or visit leeuniversity.edu

McMinn EDA leads industry expansion

The McMinn County Economic Development Authority (EDA) is the community's sole organization for the recruitment, retention and expansion of industrial jobs and investment.

The EDA offers services to companies looking to locate or expand. They own and manage over 600 acres of industrial property in three industrial parks: Athens McMinn Interstate Industrial Park, Mt. Verd Industrial Park and North Etowah Industrial Park. All these sites are prime for industrial growth.

The North Etowah Industrial Park has a 271-acre rail-served site that is certified by both CSX Select and Select TN Sites as having the necessary due diligence to expedite industrial development.

The EDA also assists private property owners, such as

the owners of the 75 Regional Commerce Park in the McMinn County portion of Sweetwater, to market their industrial properties.

The EDA partners with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, Tennessee Valley Authority, Southeast Industrial Development Association, and the Greater Chattanooga Economic Partnership to broaden its marketing capabilities.

McMinn County has become a cluster community for the automotive supply sector. With the concentration of original equipment manufacturers in the state and region, the area continues to be a hot spot for suppliers. However, the EDA is focused on diversifying the industrial sector in the county.

Over 80% of new business growth comes from existing

industries. The EDA provides support to McMinn County's existing manufacturing base by assisting them with expansions and retention of existing jobs.

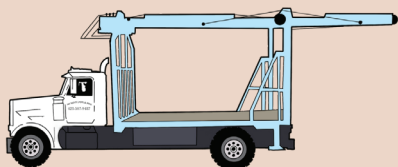
Expansions do not just happen, as most industries are competing with sister plants for those capital dollars.

Economic development organizations throughout the nation, including the EDA, have had to become more active in workforce development programs. As companies are experiencing challenges in finding skilled labor, the EDA along with local educators and employers are finding new ways to develop the workforce that is required in this technology age.

In 2024, the EDA brought tourism under the organization. This is the first county-wide tourism

SEE EDA, Page 23

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Etowah sits on Highway 411

Etowah started as a one-industry town but has grown over the last century to become far more than just a community centered around a railroad.

The current government – a city manager and commission form of government – is composed of five city commissioners, including a mayor and a city manager.

The Commission consists of Mayor Burke Garwood, Diana Elrod, Steve Fain, Gene Keller and Vice Mayor Laura Floyd.

The mayor is chosen from the five members of the commission. The commission meets the fourth Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Etowah Community Center.

Etowah's city manager is Russ Blair.

The town of Etowah has a strong association with the railroad industry. At the turn of the century, officials with the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad wanted a direct route from Chicago, Ill., to Atlanta, Ga., by way of Cincinnati, Ohio, Lexington, Ky., and Knoxville. Officials with the L&N wanted to reach the Atlantic Ocean farther South as well as locations on the Gulf Coast. In 1903, L&N purchased the old AK&N Railroad which ran from Knoxville to Atlanta.

Along this route is the location where Etowah would come to be.

The property finally picked for the establishment of the railroad facility was a tract of land between the community of Grady, where Starr Regional Medical Center is today, and the Cambria community.

A century ago, the area where Etowah is today was farmland.

Col. Mike McKinney had been through the area earlier installing telegraph lines through what was then the Knoxville Southern right-of-way. McKinney found it difficult setting telegraph poles in the area because of the mud he encountered on the farm of W.T. Peck, which was later chosen as the site for the depot. McKinney described the area as "a God-awful place."

However, along with the mud the area also had an ample water supply and rich resources for timber.

At \$10 to \$20 per acre, 1,454 acres of land was purchased from various area farmers and in 1904, construction crews moved to the area from

Cartersville, Ga. The crews lived in box cars along the line while the initial construction began.

In April 1906 the depot in Etowah was dedicated. Etowah officially came into being once the depot was in place.

In planning a layout for Etowah, L&N civil engineers laid the town out in a grid with avenues running north and south that were named after states. For streets running east to west, the streets were in numerical order. The layout of the town was designed to make it easier for railroad employees to walk to work each morning.

Ten brick stores and 50 houses had been constructed by February 1907, and construction was booming throughout the town.

In 1909, Etowah officially incorporated and formed a commission form of government. A.J. McKinney was elected the first chairman of the board for the town.

L&N shops located in Blue Ridge, Ga., along with Atlanta Divisional Headquarters for the railroad all moved to Etowah during the initial phases of the town's construction.

The town thrived and grew and Etowah became an essential key to the war effort when World War I broke out in 1917. The federal government took over authority of the rail system during the war years. During the years between 1917 and 1920, improvements were seen in the rail system to keep the rail workers from going on strike. During this time the average yearly income increased from \$1,004 to \$1,820. The improvements seen by workers and the prosperity seen by the rail system ended with the war.

Etowah began as a town to support one industry and that industry was suffering with the nation. In order to survive, Etowah had to diversify as a community and fill the gap left by the consolidation of the railroad. As other industries came into the area, the gap left in the community by the railroad was eased.

Community investment in the 1940s and 1950s created the Jolly Manufacturing building, the Blocksom building and an industrial park.

In 1959, daylight passenger train service to Etowah was abandoned.

Passenger service in Etowah would continue for nine more years until the last train left the station in April 1968.

As the final passenger train pulled out of the station, the community had changed from town dependent on one industry, to a thriving community with many industries offering employment.

Beaunit Fibers, which later became Johns Manville, became Etowah's largest employer with 1,500 employees in the late 1960s.

In 1974, the railroad abandoned the once majestic Depot. The Depot was in a state of ill repair. Its windows had been broken out and boarded up, painted walls began to peel and the building which once had been the central hub of the community was now an eyesore.

Two years later interest in the Depot would be restored. Etowah was planning a great Bicentennial Celebration in 1976.

Edythe Burgess, who was the chairwoman for the celebration planning committee, led the way in the effort to restore the Depot in order to use it for Bicentennial events. A committee of local residents, along with the Tennessee Historical Commission, offered to buy the Depot property from the railroad. L&N agreed to sell it for \$35,000.

In the years to follow, the Depot was restored and now houses the Etowah Chamber of Commerce and the Tennessee Overhill Association, as well as a railroad museum.

Etowah continues to thrive and grow. An industrial park north of town has opened opportunities for more industry to call Etowah home.

The modern city of Etowah operates the usual city services, including a Department of Public Safety – fire and police protection – as well as garbage pickup.

Recreation is on the forefront in Etowah with the recent addition of an expansive community center off of State Highway 30.

Tennessee Avenue, the name given for U.S. Highway 411 through Etowah, is the main street of the town's business district.

Office hours at Etowah City Hall are from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number at city hall is 263-2202.



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Towns across McMinn have a lot to offer

Our smaller towns have their own unique character. There are three smaller incorporated towns in McMinn County: Calhoun, Niota and Englewood. Each is administered by its own elected mayor and board of commissioners.

In accordance with the respective city charters, each commissioner has one or more general oversight responsibilities in connection with various functions of the city government, such as law enforcement, fire protection, sanitation and other public works.

Calhoun

Calhoun is the oldest town in McMinn County and one of the oldest in East Tennessee.

Founded on the banks of the Hiwassee River on the county's southern border, the town was carved out of land owned by the Cherokee Indians.

Twelve Cherokee chiefs met with John C. Calhoun, then the U.S. Secretary of War, to sign the treaty turning the land over to the federal government in 1819. The town was named in Calhoun's honor.

Gov. Joseph McMinn, for whom McMinn County was named, operated a tavern in Calhoun after leaving the governor's office and also served as Indian Agent for the area. He was one of the town's first settlers. McMinn is buried in the old Presbyterian Cemetery located next to Hiwassee Meadowlands Park.

McMinn County was organized in Calhoun in the home of John Walker. Later, Pumpkintown, which was to become Athens, was designated the county seat.

Calhoun has an estimated population of 500 people, many of whom moved to the area in 1954 when Bowater – now known as Resolute Forest Products – established its paper mill there.

Calhoun has been an incorporated city since 1961 and is a Hiwassee Blueway Access Point.

The city park and facilities are available for rental for a nominal fee. Application is available at city hall.

Currently, the town is governed by a city commission made up of Mayor

Victor Gregory and Commissioners Evan Thomas, Justin Evans, Mark Ledford and James Duffy. City commission meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at city hall.

The city manager position is currently held by Joe Bryan and the city recorder is Becky Jones. The city also has fire and police departments. The fire chief is Evan Thomas and the police chief is Michael Bledsoe. The city hall telephone number is 336-2348.

Niota

Niota has enjoyed a place in history because one of its native sons cast the tie-breaking vote in the Tennessee House of Representatives, resulting in the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and giving women the right to vote.

Harry T. Burn, serving his first term in the Tennessee House of Representatives, made history in August 1920 when he was encouraged by his mother to change his vote on the ratification.

To honor the role Burn played in the amendment's ratification, Niota served as a first day cancellation site in 1995 for a stamp commemorating the 19th Amendment's 75th anniversary. The Niota Post Office was also given the distinction of having a unique cancellation mark, which adds value to the stamps for collectors. The 85th anniversary celebration of the 19th Amendment was held on Aug. 19, 2005, at the Niota Depot.

As in Burn's day, Niota remains a small, quiet town. First known as Mouse Creek, Niota got its start because a station of the old East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad was located there.

However, Mouse Creek was often confused with Mossy Creek, which is now Jefferson City. Because of the confusion involving mail and freight, a decision was made to change the town's name.

Suggestions were sent in by citizens, and Niota – supposedly the name of an Indian chief in a novel being read by John Boggess – was selected.

Niota has been incorporated since 1911 and is governed by a mayor and a five-member city commission. Lois Preece is the mayor and Tony Manney, Mark Ward, David Dilbeck and Renee Brakebill are on the city commission. Jeannie Anderson is the city recorder.

The Niota chief of police is Brandon Jenkins and Travis Newberry is chief of the fire department.

Niota's city commission meets on the second Monday of each month at 6 p.m. The city office can be reached at 568-2584.

Niota has been a center of social activity in McMinn County for years because it is the home of Springbrook Golf and Country Club. The club offers a number of activities for its members, including several golf tournaments held through the spring, summer and fall months.

In 2009, the Niota Depot was added to the State Tourist and Development's Civil War Trails program. In 2011, a quilt square was added to the side of the Depot as part of the Appalachian Quilt Trail, a network of quilt patterns hanging on barns and homes on Century Farms, historic sites and other buildings from the Great Smoky Mountains to the Cumberland Plateau.

The "Crossroads" quilt painted in blue, gray and yellow represents the area's division between the North and South during the Civil War and the women on the homefront.

Englewood

Englewood was established in 1870 two miles southeast of the location where two railroad lines crossed and was originally known as Tellico Junction.

Several shops, mills and houses were built to take advantage of the railroad construction. By 1907, the Eureka Cotton Mill moved there and became the primary establishment in town.

In the following years, the town's name was changed to Englewood at the suggestion of Nancy Chesnutt

SEE TOWNS, Page 23



Towns

Continued from Page 22

because it reminded her of the home of Robin Hood she had read about when she was a child.

The Englewood City Commission members are Mayor Tony Hawn, Vice Mayor Chris Cochran and Commissioners Jerry Shirk, Dwayne Arrowood and Richard Robinson. Joe Cline is the town manager.

City commission meetings are held at 6 p.m. the second Monday of the month at the Municipal Building.

The Englewood chief of police is Mike Hayes and Billy Roach is the chief of the fire department. City departments can be reached at 887-7224.

Matters of planning and zoning nature for the area inside the Englewood city limits and out to five miles beyond the city limits are administered by the Englewood Planning Commission, under the overall supervision of the mayor and Board of Commissioners.

EDA

Continued from Page 19

initiative.

The McMinn County Economic Development Authority is a non-profit membership organization that works to attract new investment and jobs in McMinn

County and provides life-long support to our existing industries.

The current EDA Executive Director is Lindsey Ferguson. Brianna Baker is the Tourism Coordinator. Aryn Stewart is the

Office and Event Coordinator.

For more information on the McMinn County Economic Development Authority, visit their website at www.MakeItInMcMinn.org

ACS features consolidated elementary schools

Athens City Schools comprises three schools – Athens City Primary School, Athens City Intermediate School and Athens City Middle School – with an average enrollment of 1,600 students, of which 8% are tuition students. The system also operates KIDS Connection, which provides before- and after-school care for students in Pre-K through eighth grades and a camp at Watts Bar Lake – Camp Oo-Tah-Nee-Noh-Chee – for students in grades 2nd through 8th to visit for day.

ACPS and ACIS are housed at 316 McMinn Avenue in Athens with ACMS overlooking them at 255 Keith Lane in Athens. ACPS is for students in Pre-K through 2nd grade, while ACIS is for students in 3rd through 5th grades.

The system was established in 1903 when Forest Hill Grammar School was the only public school in Athens. Professor J.C. Ridenour was principal and also superintendent of the school system. In 1923, another school in north Athens, known as North City School until its closing, was added to the city school system.

In 1938, Ingleside Elementary School was constructed to accommodate an increasing population and, 12 years later in 1950, City Park School was erected. In 1955 the system was operating four 1st through 8th grade elementary schools and one 1st through 12th grade African American School, the J.L. Cook School, which was operated in conjunction with the McMinn County School System until the mid-1960s when all schools were integrated.

After much research and study, the decision was made to switch from a 1st through 8th grade structure to a kindergarten through 6th grade and 7th through 9th grade structure in 1966. This change required the construction of the Athens Junior High School, now known as Athens City Middle School. Construction continued in 1971 when Forest Hill Grammar was demolished, due to its age and need for renovation, and was replaced by

Westside School.

Other high points in the history of the school system include the addition of bus transportation in 1974, several building renovations and technology updates and the restructuring of the schools in 1993, which created two kindergarten through 3rd grade schools, two 4th through 6th grade schools and one 7th through 9th grade school. In 2011, the system was restructured to include two Pre-K to 2nd grade schools, two 3rd through 5th grade schools and one 6th through 8th grade school.

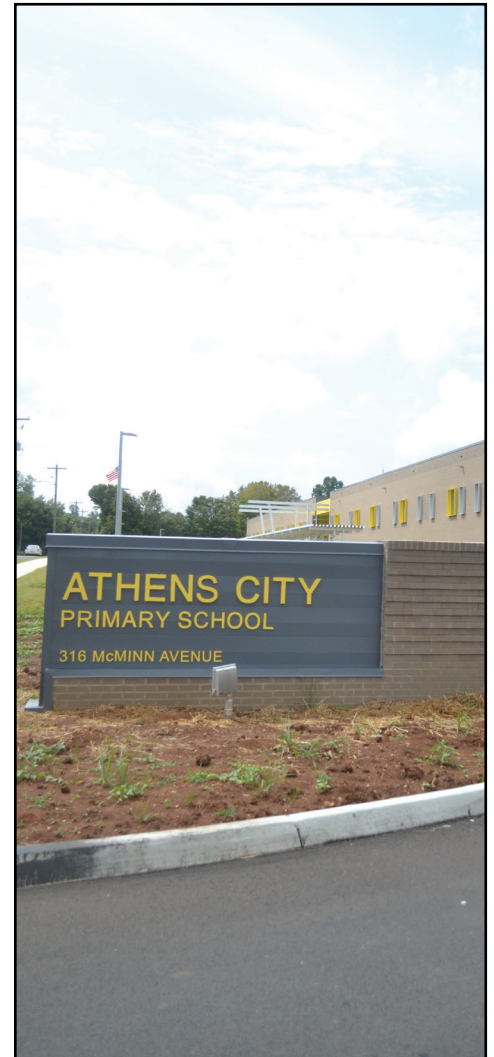
From 2022 to 2023, all four of the city's elementary schools closed to consolidate all Pre-K through 5th grade students into the new ACPS and ACIS.

Leadership for the system throughout the years has remained consistent in providing excellence for the students it serves. Superintendents for the system have included Professor J.C. Ridenour, Hazel Bacon, Professor W.F. Whitaker, Dr. Robin Pierce, Dr. Craig Rigell, Dr. Melanie Miller and Robert Greene and Joe Barnett is the current director of schools for the Athens City School System.

The Athens City Schools Board of Education, a six-member board that meets the second Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m., oversees the operation of the school system. Board members for 2023-2024 are Chris Adams (chairman), Johnny Coffman, Stan Harrison, Emily Forrest, Beth Jackson and Abby Carroll.

The board of education has received many honors and was named a Board of Distinction by the Tennessee School Boards Association (TSBA) in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In 1988, the board was named the School Board of the Year by the TSBA. In 2000, the City of Athens proclaimed one week in January each year as "School Board Appreciation Week."



Central office personnel for the system includes: Joe Barnett, director of schools; Melody Armstrong, supervisor of curriculum and instruction/assistant director of schools; Angie Newman, supervisor of food services; Andrew Kimball, supervisor of federal/specialized programs and safety; Molly McLean, supervisor of SPED/PreK/school psychologist; James McCullough, transportation supervisor; Ray Grant, assistant transportation supervisor and recruiter; Julie Lofland, family engagement/coordinated school health director; Brittany Derrick, KIDS Connection coordinator; and Lisa Cranfill, supervisor of Finance.

Niota Depot a historic site in McMinn County

As one of the oldest train depots in the country, the Niota Depot has seen considerable history throughout its lifetime.

Some of that history it has witnessed will be relived later this year as the City of Niota plans to host a Civil War re-enactment at the depot.

Niota Mayor Lois Preece recently stated that a two day Civil War re-enactment would be taking place in the city on Oct. 25 and 26.

"Our soldiers will be camping on the grounds in the park area," Preece said. "On both Friday and Saturday at 2 p.m. there will be a skirmish on Main Street."

She noted there would be demonstrations for artillery and infantry, a flag retirement ceremony, there will be displays at the depot and members of the Gem players are planned to host a performance on Saturday night.

"Our schools will also be participating, as well as the Sidesaddle Troupe, which is a group of women soldiers from Rhea County," Preece said. "We will have a speaker read a very important letter from the Civil War. We will have craft vendors out on the yard, we will have a blacksmith, we will have quilters and more."

This year marks 171 years since the depot was built, which makes it the oldest in the State of Tennessee, and it was constructed when the town was referred to as Mouse Creek.

McMinn County Sheriff Joe Guy, who is also the county historian, noted that as 1861 rolled around and the first shots of the American Civil War were made, the depot shifted from primarily civilian uses to much more heavily military purposes.

"With the Civil War came a new use for the railroad: moving military troops, supplies and equipment to and from battlefields and camps. It was the first time in world history such a thing had been done and the Mouse Creek depot was a part of this," Guy recalled. "With so much



division in McMinn County and East Tennessee, the railroad depot was again a hot point of activity. Spies closely monitored the rail lines to measure troops going and coming and often plotted to destroy bridges to bring the trains to a halt."

Even today, holes meant for rifles to poke out of them can be seen in the depot and graffiti still exists dating back to the days of the Civil War.

"At different times, depending upon whether it was Union or Confederate forces that occupied Mouse Creek, the brick depot made for a formidable fortress for wary soldiers," Guy said. "At some point,

it is believed that sections of bricks were removed from the walls to form gun ports, which today are still visible on the interior."

Preece added that all that history made this something important for town officials to highlight.

"This sounded like an event that we needed to do, to bring our natural history back to life," she said. "We are getting participation from two groups, a Union group out of Knoxville and a Confederate group out of Lenoir City. We've also had help from the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, so there is a lot to look forward to."



McMINN COUNTY CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Ten schools stretch across McMinn County

The McMinn County School System has seven elementary schools located throughout the county, two high schools, and a Career and Technical School.

The 10 schools, operated by the county board of education, have an annual budget of around \$42 million and serve approximately 5,000 students.

The elected school board meets at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the McMinn County Center for Educational Excellence, located at 3 S. Hill St., in Downtown Athens.

The 10 members of the board of education include Joe Malone, Taylor Cook, Kevin Goins, Jonathan Pierce, Dustin Prichard, Mike Cochran, Tony Allman, Donna Casteel, Bill Irvin and Tony Campbell.

During 1998, the board was recognized as one of four in Tennessee to receive the Board of Distinction Award from the Tennessee School Boards Association, and the Board was recertified for that two-year honor 13 times since then, most recently in 2023.

The board was named the TSBA's School Board of the Year in 2006, 2010 and 2014.

Again in 2010, then director of schools, Dr. John Forgety, was also named TSBA Superintendent of the Year.

The director of schools is Julie Goodin.

Patti Rogers is supervisor of the Special Education Department while Kevin Edwards is the supervisor of Career and Technical Education.

Dr. Lori Hutchinson is the attendance supervisor and Russ Barnett is the transportation supervisor. Melasawn Knight is the federal programs supervisor and Justin Wallace is the safety supervisor.

Shelby Roberts is the school health coordinator. Heath Frazier is the building and grounds supervisor. Tiffany Wells is the food service supervisor, Darren McCracken is the chief technology officer, Teresa Blevins is the Pre-K through 2nd grade supervisor and Steven Brady is the 3rd through 8th grade supervisor.

All of the county elementary schools serve students from kindergarten to eighth grade. The high schools offer classes from ninth to 12th. The schools include:

Calhoun Elementary School, located on Sherwood Avenue in Calhoun with Jon Franks as principal; E.K. Baker Elementary School, located on Clearwater Road with Robert Casteel as principal; Englewood Elementary School, located on College Street in Englewood, with Kristi Darnell as principal; Rogers Creek Elementary School, located on County Road 82, with Mandy Falls as principal; Mountain View Elementary School in Etowah

with Mindy Casteel as principal; Niota Elementary School on Union Grove Road in Niota, with David McDonald as principal; and Riceville Elementary School, located on Highway 11 in Riceville, with Glen Puryear as the principal.

McMinn Central High School is located off Highway 411 in Englewood with Jacob Slack as principal and Tiffany Farner as vice principal. McMinn County High School is on Congress Parkway in Athens and Joe Young is the principal with Ashton Innis, Angie Mayfield and Marla Cobb as vice principals.

McMinn County Career and Technical Education Center on Congress Parkway in Athens has students from both McMinn and Central. Blair Yates is the principal. Each of the 10 schools is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

In addition to the regular classroom programs, the system has pre-kindergarten classrooms in all elementary schools, funded with the assistance of state government.

The system employs about 420 professional educators and about 259 paraprofessionals. About three-quarters of the professionals have master's degrees.

For more information, contact the administrative office at 745-1612.

McMinn County features five private schools

Christ's Legacy Academy

Christ's Legacy Academy (CLA) began operation as a K-8 school in 2009; students in grades K-12 are now served. CLA is a member of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS) and a member and fully accredited school through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). It is the only school in the area to embrace classical methodology, a three-part educational process of training the mind.

CLA is currently located at 625 South Matlock Avenue in Athens. The headmaster is Dr. Shane Arnold.

For information, call 423-649-0040 or visit christlegacyacademy.org

Fairview Christian Academy

Fairview Christian Academy was founded in 1977 as a min-

istry of the Fairview Baptist Church. It employs certified teachers and is fully accredited.

FCA is a member of the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools, and is also accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The school, currently located on 261 County Road 439 in Athens, includes a low student-teacher ratio. The curriculum is Bible-based. The telephone number is 745-6781 and the website is www.fairview-christianacademy.org

Valley Christian Academy

Valley Christian Academy offers Pre-Kindergarten classes, as well as Kindergarten through 7th grade.

The school is located on the campus of Eastanallee Baptist Church, though non-church-

members are welcome to attend. The address is 482 County Road 725 in Riceville.

For more information, call 423-462-3008 or visit myvalley-christianacademy.com

Liberty Christian School

Located on S. Congress Parkway, the school is sponsored by Liberty Church of Jesus Christ. It is certified through the Accelerated Christian Education program.

For information, call 745-9248.

Antioch Christian Academy

Antioch Christian Academy offers day school and homeschool programs, K-4 through 12th grade. This is an educational ministry of Antioch Church of Jesus Christ, which is located at 1036 Highway 39E in Englewood.

For information call 423-506-5733.

Baker is director of Meigs County Schools

The Meigs County School Board sets school policies, rules and regulations and submits an annual budget for county commission approval.

The central office staff includes Director of Schools Clint Baker; Deputy Director G. David Brown; Supervisor Renae Martin; Supervisor Carmen Choat; Federal Programs Director James Boshears; CTE Director Keri Fitch; Supervisor Amy Woods; Supervisor Rachel Powell-Moore; and School Health Coordinator Ashley

Hurst.

School board members include Chairman Amber Ammons, Vice Chair Amy Swanks, Julie Boyd, Andy Andrews and Mike McKenzie.

To register for school in Meigs County, a first-time student must have had a complete physical, immunization records, birth certificate and a Social Security card.

Meigs schools include: Meigs County High School, located at 105 Abel Ave., serves students from grades 9 through 12, with John Grissom as the princi-

pal; Meigs South Elementary School, 9638 State Highway 58 South, serves students in grades K-5 and is administered by Principal Rachel Boshears; Meigs North Elementary School, 22015 State Highway 58 North, serves students in grades K-5 and is administered by Principal Justin Jennings; and Meigs Middle School at 564 N. Main St., in Decatur, serves students in grades 6-8 with Ronnie Woods as principal.

For additional information, contact the Board of Education at 334-5793.

Director, board lead Etowah School

One of the state's few remaining one-school districts is in Etowah.

Etowah City School educates students from pre-kindergarten through the eighth grade. Approximately 350 students attend the school, which is directed by a five-member school board. The school board consists of Jessica Goodin, Christie Rhodes, Debra Jones, Jeff Williams and Bob Lambert.

The director of schools is Dr. Mike Frazier. The principal is Jackie Martin.

The school employs approximately 25 teachers. The school also has a nurse, guidance counselor and a school health coordinator.

The school has a recently-expanded STEAM lab for

students to explore robotics, programming and other computer technology. Band and chorus opportunities are offered in conjunction with McMinn Central High School.

Etowah City School participates in the TN All Corps tutoring program, which provides small group tutoring during the school day to improve literacy skills for all grade levels.

All teachers, led by the instructional coach, participate in job-embedded professional learning communities which allow them to collaborate on research-based and highly-effective instructional strategies. This program provides a focus on closing educational gaps in order to meet annual measurable objectives.

TCAT offers classes in two locations

As the industrial process is revolutionized by technology, many companies are finding that skilled labor is becoming harder to come by.

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Athens is located at 1635 Technology Way, Athens, and provides valued skills training in several job fields. It also has some classes located in the McMinn Higher Education Center at 2345 Denso Drive in Athens.

The school operates day courses currently on the trimester system and provides special industry training in the evenings for local industries.

Susan Hatto is the president of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology of Athens. The courses to study at the school include collision repair, automotive technology, computer electronics, machine tool technology, practical nursing, administrative office technology, electromechanical technology, welding and pharmacy technology. Certificates and diplomas are offered in the varying fields of study.

Financial aid is available, including scholarship opportunities provided to local high school students. Also, students can qualify for a Wilder-Naifeh skills grant,

funded through the Tennessee Lottery Corp. TCAT Athens also participates in the Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect.

The basic philosophy of TCAT is that every citizen should have the privilege and opportunity to reach as high a station in life as the student is capable of reaching or desires to reach. Recognizing that all people do not have the same background, abilities or desires and therefore cannot be fitted into the same mold, the objective of TCAT is that each student is treated as an individual.

Individualized instruction is utilized to the maximum in most programs. School policy provides that a student may enter a program when a vacancy occurs, start training at the student's own level, and progress at a pace to the level desired within the limitations of the school. Individualized instruction provides the student with the highest quality instruction possible in the occupational area chosen.

The philosophy is further subscribed to that the mere development of specific skills and knowledge in an individual is not sufficient. Desirable worker characteristics are emphasized to instill character development, good work habits, reliability, honesty and

respect for authority needed for a productive society.

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology — Athens is governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents and is approved by the Council on Occupational Education

For more information, call 744-2814. The school's website is www.tcatathens.edu

TCAT Athens has been the go-to resource for technical education programs since 1965 and offers nine different areas of study:

- Administrative office technology
- Automotive technology
- Collision repair technology
- Computer electronics
- Mechanical Maintenance
- Electrical and Instrumentation
- Machine tool technology
- Practical nursing
- Welding

More information about programs is available on the website at tcatathens.edu

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Athens works directly with the McMinn County Economic Development Authority, local schools, government agencies, and manufacturing partners to develop solutions that benefit students and build strong businesses.

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Many activities available at Athens-McMinn Family YMCA

The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA includes a basketball court, walking/running track, pickleball courts, racquetball court, indoor pool, exercise and weight-training rooms, and a playground, among other facilities.

A wide variety of programs are offered including personal training (and other related fitness programs and classes), basketball camps, adult pickleball, swimming lessons (and other water-related programs) and much more.

The YMCA is open Monday-Friday from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m., Saturday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. during the fall-winter-spring seasons. Several

membership programs for individual adults, students, and families are available.

The “Y” also offers reduced-rate memberships through corporate sponsorships. Check with your employer to see if you can join through the company.

Child watch during workouts, After School Care, Schools Out Camp, and Summer Day Camp programs are also available at the YMCA. Day Camp during the summer months gives children and youth, ages K to 8th grade, an opportunity to go on field trips, play and remain active, among other activities.

The YMCA also offers income-based scholarships to youth, adults and families with the help of the United of McMinn & Meigs Counties. The organization also provides a variety of programs to aid youth in the community, in keeping with its mission of building better bodies, better minds and better spirits.

The YMCA also offers a free meal for kids year-round at certain locations, called Y on the Fly.

Bradi Sewell is the executive director. For more information, visit the YMCA's location at 205 Knoxville Avenue in Athens or call 745-4904. You can also visit athensmcminnymca.org to learn more.

TOHA in place to preserve resources

The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association (TOHA), a non-profit organization with a mission to promote and preserve the natural and cultural resources of McMinn, Polk and Monroe counties through cultural tourism, is viewed as a national model for successful cultural tourism and rural economic development.

After the three-county area was designated a national and state cultural tourism area in 1990 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the region became known as the Tennessee Overhill. The name "Overhill" was chosen to honor the Overhill Cherokees who were here prior to white settlement.

TOHA is a great resource for tourists searching for things to do in the three counties. Whether looking for a museum, historic sites, a bed & breakfast, scenic drives, outdoor fun, arts and crafts, farmers markets, or a photo opportunity, the Tennessee Overhill has the information. The Tennessee Overhill reaches tens of thousands of tourists each year through its website, www.tennesseeoverhill.com, Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram and other advertising campaigns.

The Tennessee Overhill includes the entire southern half of the Cherokee National Forest, two national scenic byways, four rivers, four lakes, more than 50 waterfalls, nine museums, several historic sites, and small towns with interesting places to shop, eat and spend the night.

There are many ways to see the Tennessee Overhill – you can explore it by car, train, mountain bike, motorcycle, horse, canoe, kayak, raft, glider plane, zip line, or on foot. Here are a few highlights of things to see and do in the Tennessee Overhill:

- **Furs to Factories Heritage Trail:** Each museum and historic site in the Tennessee Overhill has its own story to tell, but each one is linked to the others through a common heritage. This trail explores the Industrial Revolution as it played out in this part of the Southern Appalachians. The story begins with the Overhill Cherokee fur trade and unfolds with the coming of railroads, textile mills, mines, logging, and farming. The Furs to Factories Heritage Trail leads modern day explorers to places where this compelling story played out.

- **Hiwassee River Rail Adventure:** Step back in time as you ride a restored vintage passenger train alongside the Scenic Hiwassee River, into the remote Hiwassee Gorge, and over the famous Hiwassee Rail Loop, the third-longest rail loop in the world. Two trips are available. The Hiwassee Loop Trip is a 3 1/2 hour train ride from Etowah to the Loop. The Copperhill Special is a full-day trip, beginning in Etowah with a lay-over in Copperhill for lunch and shopping. Trains run from April through November.

- **Unicoi Turnpike Trail:** This auto and pedestrian trail follows an historic trade and war path between Vonore and Murphy, N.C., which predates written history. Along the way you can stop to visit historic sites and museums that reveal the many layers of history that unfolded on this ancient route. A restored 2-1/2 mile section of the original path allows you to walk in the footsteps of Indians, European explorers, British and French soldiers, livestock drovers and more. In 1838 the section from Murphy, North Carolina, to Tellico Plains was the first portion of the Trail of Tears for the North Carolina Cherokee people who were interred at Fort Butler.

- **Trail of Tears:** Drive the routes of the 1838 Trail of Tears through Monroe and McMinn counties.

In mid-June 1838, contingents of North Carolina Cherokees were marched from Fort Butler, North Carolina to Fort Cass in Tennessee, present-day Charleston. These contingents moved by a couple of different routes through the counties, Downtown Athens, and to Calhoun where they crossed the Hiwassee River. For a map or more information, call 1-877-510-5765.

- **Battle of Athens, Aug. 1-2, 1946:** Walk through historic Downtown Athens and see the locations where the significant events of the battle took place as a result of the tumultuous election of 1946. For a map or more information, call 1-877-510-5765.

- **Four Rivers: Four Unique Experiences:** There are four scenic rivers in the Tennessee Overhill – the Ocoee, Hiwassee, Tellico and Conasauga Rivers. All four are within a short driving distance of each other but each one offers a different

experience. The Ocoee River, with its Class III & IV rapids draws more than 300,000 visitors a year. The Hiwassee River, Tennessee's first State Scenic River is famous for funyaking, fishing and hiking. The Tellico is known for its pristine waters and waterfalls as well as a premiere trout stream. The Conasauga River is home to the Conasauga Fish Viewing Area where snorkelers can view a variety of colorful darters and other fish unique to the area.

- **Cherochala Skyway:** This mountain highway, 38 years in the making, connects Tellico Plains to Robbinsville, North Carolina, and offers beautiful views of the Cherokee and the Nantahala national forests. This road provides access to Bald River Falls on Forest Service Road 210, a state trout hatchery, Indian Boundary and Green Cove, a popular spot for tourists and fishermen. The skyway soars more than 5,400 feet above sea level and always a different experience, especially in the fall!

- **The Lost Sea:** The world's largest underground lake featuring guided tours, boat rides and a unique peek at cave marine life. Located on Highway 68 in Monroe County. For more information, call 423-337-6616.

- **Ducktown Basin Museum:** Located in Polk County on the grounds of the historic Burra Burra Copper Mine, the museum exhibits guide visitors through the history of the environmental and cultural history of Tennessee's only copper district. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the museum also offers great photo opportunities from its overlook. Nearby worker villages and historic mine structures can be found in other parts of Ducktown and in the neighboring towns of Copperhill and Isabella. Call 423-496-5778.

- **Sequoyah Birthplace Museum:** Located on the banks of the Tellico River in Vonore in Monroe County, this museum traces the history of Native Americans in the Little Tennessee River Valley and Sequoyah, creator of the Cherokee syllabary. They also have lectures, workshops, and living history events year-round. For more information, call 423-884-6246, or visit online at www.sequoyah-museum.org

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- **Fort Loudoun State Historic Area:** Located in Vonore, this reconstructed fort was the first British outpost west of the southern Appalachian mountains. Along with access to Tellico Lake for water sports, beach and hiking, historical reenactments are also offered year-round.

- **Hiwassee River:** Canoeing, kayaking, rafting and tubing are all popular in Polk County. Known for its excellent fishing, the Hiwassee River is regularly

stocked with trout. Visit www.tn.gov/twra.com for a trout stocking schedule. A list of commercial outfitters and fishing guides is available by contacting the Tennessee Overhill at 423-263-7232, the Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger station at 423-338-3300 or the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation at 423-263-0050.

- **Ocoee River:** The site of the 1996 Summer Olympics Whitewater

events. It is an international favorite for white-water enthusiasts with several commercial river outfitters and expert guides to help capture the excitement of the Class III-IV rapids. The Ocoee Whitewater Center offers hiking and biking trails in addition to picnicking, native gardens and walk-ways. For a list of white-water outfitters, call the Tennessee Overhill and ask for the Outdoor Recreation Brochure, 423-

263-7232.

Contact the Tennessee Overhill by phone at 877-510-5765, by email at info@tennesseeoverhill.com or stop by the office at the L&N Depot in Etowah for a free visitor's guide.

Check out the website at www.tennesseeoverhill.com

Post your own comments on the Tennessee Overhill Facebook page.

Sign up for the Tennessee Overhill Twitter at @tn_overhill

L&N Depot a centerpiece in Etowah

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Etowah Depot, once described as "the finest L&N passenger station between Knoxville and Atlanta," houses a museum, the Hiwassee River Rail Adventures ticket office, a gift shop, and the offices of the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association and Etowah Chamber of Commerce.

Built in 1906, the Etowah Depot holds 16 rooms on two floors. The building is larger than most small town depots because it was intended to serve as both a passenger station and headquarters for the Louisville

and Nashville Railroad's Atlanta Division. The downstairs was designed to serve passengers while the upstairs was devoted to offices for the division headquarters.

The City of Etowah acquired the property from the L&N Railroad in 1978. After restoration, the building was opened to the public in 1981.

The Etowah Depot is a favorite community gathering place, with special events taking place throughout the year. The grounds include a large lawn, bandstand, walking trail and picnic area.

A permanent exhibit, "Growing

Up With The L&N: Life And Times In A Railroad Town," located on the ground floor of the building, discusses the ways in which the L&N Railroad shaped the history and culture of the Etowah area.

Tickets to ride the Old Line Railroad, a passenger train traveling a historic route into neighboring Polk County, are now available by calling the L&N Depot.

Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with free admission.

For more information, call 263-7840.

Aviation showcase at Swift Museum

Located at the McMinn County Airport, the Swift Museum houses vintage Swift aircraft and exhibits. Located just off Highway 30 between Athens and Etowah, the museum sponsors several annual events.

The museum is open Monday-Friday from

9 a.m.-5 p.m. and by appointment on weekends. Visitors are encouraged to contact the museum to ensure tour guide availability.

For more information, call the museum at 745-9547. You can also visit www.swiftmuseumfoundation.org to learn more.



Textile museum contains Englewood history

The Englewood Textile Museum takes all the strings of the town's history, from the textile mill boom to its decline and ongoing resurgence, and ties them all together to present a town with a rich background.

The women and their work in the textile mills have been the backbone of Englewood since the very beginning.

Many longtime residents of the town have always known it all got started with a single mill founded by John J. Dixon in the mid-1800s on the banks of Chestuee Creek. The Brient family took over the mill after Dixon's death in the 1870s, expanding it and moving it up the hill to absorb the Tellico Junction community and be closer to the railroad tracks.

It was named after a reference to Robin Hood's legendary home located

"deep in the forests of Englewood" by Nannie Chesnutt, a sister-in-law of the Brient family.

The whole story was covered in "Then and Now: The Women of Englewood's Textile Mills," a Community Action Group of Englewood-sponsored book published in 1993, but never before in any sort of permanent public display until the textile museum opened in March 1994.

Situated in two buildings in Downtown Englewood, the museum traces the history of the textile industry and the town that grew around it. A mural depicting the history of the town from 1850 to 1925 graces the museum's large exterior wall facing the Garden of Memories, where commemorative bricks purchased by the public are placed.

The James. W. Chesnutt House was donated to the Community Action Group of Englewood in May 2001 by the Chesnutt-Brient Estate.

"The Little White House" behind the museum was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001 and restoration was completed in 2004. It is used for exhibit and class space.

Next door to the museum is "The Company Store," an antique mall with space for dealers in fine antiques, collectibles and quality crafts. The store, like the museum, is a project of the Community Action Group of Englewood. The hours for the museum and store are Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. No admission is charged.

For more information, call 887-5455.

Variety of exhibits at Living Heritage Museum

Housed since 1989 in the former McMinn County High School building at 522 West Madison Avenue in Athens, the McMinn County Living Heritage Museum originally opened in 1982 in the historic Old College building on the campus of Tennessee Wesleyan University.

The move came following a year of renovation done to the old high school building with the help of the Mayfield family of Athens, the State of Tennessee and the many supporters of the capital campaign fund.

Today, the museum offers more than 30 permanent exhibits. In total, there are more than 10,000 artifacts from McMinn and surrounding counties dating from 1745 to the 1940s housed in the building.

The museum's range of permanent exhibits expanded in 1994 with

the addition of a collection of antique glassware donated by Dr. and Mrs. Chalmer Chastain of Cleveland. Other permanent exhibits include "The Battle of Athens," "Women's Suffrage" and a timeline tracing the history of McMinn County beginning with the Cherokee Indians and early settlers.

The museum's Holiday House, sponsored by the McMinn County Living Heritage Museum Guild, has become a Christmas tradition in McMinn County. The second major fundraiser is the annual Trash and Treasure Sale, a huge sale of items donated by the community with all proceeds going to the museum.

The museum is handicapped-accessible and houses its displays and exhibits in a climate-controlled environment. The museum's gift shop offers a variety of items, as well as books

by local and regional authors.

Brett King is executive director.

The museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays (during which it hosts many of its popular "Heritage School" programs) and is closed Sundays, Mondays and major holidays.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for seniors and students. Annual museum memberships are available at a cost of \$45 for families, \$15 for individuals, \$15 for senior adults, and \$10 for students.

For more information, call the museum's main office at 745-0329 or visit www.livingheritagemuseum.com



Saulpaw Mill Dam to remain landmark in Calhoun

The Saulpaw Mill Dam in Calhoun has long been an integral part of life for residents as it has stood for multiple generations.

The existence of the dam came into question recently, as the Tennessee Valley Authority recently evaluated whether or not it should be removed.

According to TVA, the potential removal was planned “to address negative environmental impacts and potential safety hazards to the recreating public. Removal of the dam is part of a larger partnership with the Tennessee Aquatic Connectivity Team to remove barriers to aquatic life in the Tennessee River basin.”

There was quick and considerable pushback to those considerations from residents in the town who did not want to see the dam go.

In late 2023, TVA held a public input period on the possible removal and a petition was circulated among Calhoun residents to speak out against the action. The city commission also passed a resolution discouraging the removal.

The resolution stated that the dam has a “major historical significance to the City of Calhoun, McMinn County and the surrounding areas” and it “provides a place of scenic beauty.”

Calhoun City Manager Joe Bryan noted the importance of the dam in December of 2023.

“The Saulpaw Mill Dam is a local landmark that needs to be preserved. It is a focal point of local history,” he said at the time. “Residents have enjoyed its scenic beauty



for more than 150 years. The most important thing we can do is to preserve our history. So many historic sites have disappeared over the years. The Saulpaw Mill Dam is a vital part of the Hiwassee River Blueway.”

The dam is currently owned by TVA, but it has stood for 156 years and is in an allotment that was reserved for Major John Walker, grandson of Nancy Ward and the man who established Calhoun in 1819.

The dam eventually came to be in the possession of George Washington Saulpaw, born a New Yorker in 1819 who moved to the area before

his death in 1898.

In 1869, Saulpaw and his wife Emeline bought the farm containing the mill from a family and then upgraded the mill to begin manufacturing Silver Queen flour.

According to The Athens Post in a story on Friday, Sept. 26, 1873, the mill was “capable of grinding 600 bushels of grain every 24 hours” and was “acquiring a fine reputation.”

The Saulpaw Mill, powered by the flow of the Oostanaula Creek into the Hiwassee River, was one of the most financially successful businesses in McMinn County from 1870 until 1938.

There have been recent considerations of getting the Saulpaw Mill Dam added to the National Register of Historic Place.

Ultimately, TVA chose to let the dam remain.

According to TVA Media Senior Specialist Adam May, there would be “no significant environmental impact if the dam, which is not a TVA operational asset, were to be removed. However, based on budget prioritizations, TVA is not taking any action at this time to remove the dam.”

He added that warning signs will be placed around the dam to alert people to the “potential hazards.”

Meigs museum features local history

In January 1990, the Meigs County Historical Society successfully raised enough money through its active fund raising campaigns to open the first Meigs County Museum, which was located in the Old Culvahouse Law Office on Smith Avenue, off Main Street in Decatur. Thanks to a \$100,000 gift to the historical society in January 2001, a new museum building opened on Dec. 13, 2002, directly beside the old facility. A major landscape project around the new and old facilities was completed in 2004.

Volunteers are always sought to help staff the museum throughout the year, and anyone interested can contact the museum. The museum is open 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays and at other times by appointment.

For information, call 334-4424, or e-mail meigsmuseum@meigsmuseum.com

You can also visit <http://meigscounthistoricalmuseum.homestead.com> to learn more.

The Meigs County Historical Society hosted the opening of the Meigs

County Archives on April 26, 1998. The Archives Room is located in the Meigs County Museum building. Old books and documents were retrieved from the Courthouse attic, cleaned and organized by Historical Society members.

View the archive books and records during regular museum hours, which are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays.

For more information, contact the museum or the Meigs County Historical Society, P.O. Box 43, Decatur, TN 37322.

Six libraries across McMinn County

One of the greatest assets in any community is its public library. Locally, six public libraries are available to residents.

- **Calhoun Library:** Located in the Calhoun Municipal Building on Highway 163, the Calhoun City Library is open to anyone living in McMinn County and surrounding areas. Hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. The library is closed on Saturday and Sunday. For more information, call the library at 423-336-2348.

- **Etowah Carnegie Library:** Located at 723 Ohio Ave., in Etowah, the Carnegie Library offers regular services. Regular library hours are Monday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m.

to 8 p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The library is closed on Sunday. The Etowah Carnegie Library celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2015. For more information, call Library Director Briana Pagdon at 263-9475 or visit www.etowahlibrary.com

- **Meigs-Decatur Public Library:** Located at 120 E. Memorial Drive, across from the Meigs County Courthouse, the library offers several services to the community. Hours are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and it is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. For more information, call 423-334-3332 or visit <https://www.meigscounty-decaturpubliclibrary.com> or find them on Facebook.

- **E.G. Fisher Public Library:**

Located at 1289 Ingleside Ave., in Athens, the E.G. Fisher Public Library offers library services, programs and a 70,000-item collection free of charge to McMinn County residents. Library hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library is closed on Sunday and the first Wednesday of each month. For more information, call 745-7782 or visit www.fisherlibrary.org

- **Englewood Public Library:** Located in the Municipal Building at 105 Carroll St., hours are Monday through Friday from noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is closed on Sundays. For more information, call 887-7152.

Take flight at McMinn County airport

When local residents took wing in McMinn County in the 1940s, they did so from a grass airstrip owned by a local doctor.

Today the McMinn County Airport is home to several corporate aircraft, helicopters, privately owned aircraft, the Swift Museum Foundation and flight instructors.

The site of the airport is the location where more than 50 years ago, Dr. Lester Shields constructed an airstrip at his home for his personal flights, according to a historical account in the reference, "Aviation in Tennessee," by Jim Fulbright.

McMinn County officials began

making plans for a municipal airport and purchased the Shields property by 1949 where an 1,800-foot turf strip was graded and marked out for day flying.

During the 1950s, the county decided to extend the runway to 3,500 feet and build a large storage hangar. Shortly after that, private funding was secured for the construction of a lean-to office and terminal facility, and in the 1960s, the runway was again extended, then paved for 4,000 feet along with lights, taxiways, a ramp and several "T" hangars.

At the end of 2006, the lights and runway extensions were completed. The runway is now 6,450 feet long and

100 feet wide.

There are currently 40 "T" hangars at the airport. A new maintenance facility has recently been added to store large aircraft and perform aircraft maintenance.

The first "fixed base operation" (FBO) was established in 1961 by Marvin K. Farris and by the mid-1960s the FBO contract had been sold to J.C. Garrison. Operators over the years who followed included Charlie Nelson, Bill Johnson, Jim Sliger, John Scruggs and Larry Womack. Nancy Dailey took over as FBO and operated it for almost

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Airport

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20 years before she died in a plane crash in 1994. Athens Air Inc. commercial aviator Kristy Gentry-Cox is the current FBO and has served in the position since 2006.

The airport is vital to the county's industrial life and continues to see more and more air traffic.

Local industries including Waupaca Foundry, Thomas & Betts, Johnson Controls, Dean Foods/Mayfield Dairy, and DENSO Manufacturing Athens Tennessee are among the most frequent commercial users of the airport.

Commercial retailers such as Belk Department Store

and Dollar General Stores utilize the airport when monitoring their stores in the region.

The airport has been the recipient of the state's Front Door Award since 1993. The Front Door Award recognizes Tennessee airports with facilities that reflect community pride, commitment to quality and make a good first impression when visitors to McMinn County arrive by air.

The McMinn County Airport was also the 2017 recipient of the Tennessee Aeronautics Award of Excellence for Significant Airport Project.

Arts a major part of McMinn County life

Local arts organizations – ranging from theatre troupes to visual artists, musicians and more – are an important cultural resource for the area. A partial listing of arts groups includes:

- **Athens Area Council for the Arts:** The Athens Area Council for the Arts serves as the core organization for promoting artistic events in the community. It represents the combined efforts of the area's artists and patrons of the arts. AACA offerings include a professional performing arts season and a concert series featuring local performers; community theater; exhibits; art classes; The Artisan Corner, featuring local artists' work for sale; and arts in education opportunities for area schools. The Arts Center's facilities are also available to rent for family and community events. The board of directors meets the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at The Athens Arts Center at 320 N. White St., in Downtown Athens. Contact Executive Director Lauren Brown at 745-8781 for more information, or visit online at www.athensartscouncil.org

- **Athens Community Theater:** A program of Athens Area Council for the Arts, the volunteer group presents a season of plays and musicals annually. The home of the troupe is the Sue E. Trotter Theater at The Arts Center, located at 320 N. White St., in Downtown Athens. For more information, call 745-8781 or visit online at www.athensartscouncil.org

- **Community Artists' League:** Meets the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Room of E.G. Fisher Public Library. It is one of the oldest arts organizations in the



Courtesy of Leslie Claire Photography

area. Each June the group holds a competitive art show that often draws many artists from several Southeast states. The group also has a changing monthly exhibit featuring local artists at the public library's Goldie Mayfield Gallery and a continuous show and sale at The Arts Center in Downtown Athens. New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Becky Pico at hispaintbrush@msn.com

- **Etowah Arts Commission:** The Etowah Arts Commission serves as the core organization for promoting many artistic and historical events in the community. Based in the historic Gem Theater Building on Tennessee Avenue, it represents the combined efforts of the area's artists and patrons of the arts. For more information, call 263-7608 or visit www.EtowahArts.org

- **Thursday Music Study Club of Etowah:** Sponsors monthly music programs, hosts a public program

for National Music Week, presents awards to McMinn Central High School choir and band members each year and makes an annual donation of a music-oriented book to the Etowah Carnegie Library, a McMinn County School or Etowah City School. The club meets the first Thursday of every month from September to May at 7 p.m. at members' homes. For more information, e-mail etowahmusicclub@gmail.com

- **Gem Players:** Closely associated with the Etowah Arts Commission, the Gem Theatre Players are made up of volunteers interested in the performing arts and in the preservation and promotion of the Gem Theater in Etowah. The group is the resident theater company of Etowah and plans a schedule of community theater productions each year. For more information, call the Gem Players at 263-3270 or check their Facebook page by searching for Gem Players.

Festivals held throughout the year

Residents and visitors to McMinn and Meigs counties look forward to a number of festivals unique to the area that celebrate the region's heritage and culture in fun and entertaining ways.

Among the annual festivals are:

Athens

- **Pumpkintown** – A Festival of History, Harvest and Heritage: Named for a former McMinn County village, Pumpkintown – held each October in Downtown Athens – brings to life the cultural history and heritage of the Athens area and East Tennessee region with historical craft demonstrations and re-enactments, along with music, food and other entertainment and attractions.

- **Old-Fashioned Downtown Christmas:** Held in late November in Downtown Athens, this celebration brings back many old holiday traditions,

along with some new ones.

- **Sounds of Summer:** Held on Saturday evenings during the summer months in Downtown Athens, this admission-free, sponsor-funded concert series features different performers in different musical genres each week.

Decatur

- **Meigs County Fair:** A week-long event held in late summer in Decatur. The fair features a wide array of events, including agricultural demonstrations and competitions, games and a carnival.

- **Downtown Summer Nights:** Held on Saturday evenings during the summer months in Downtown Decatur, this admission-free, sponsor-funded concert series features different performers in different musical genres each week.

- **Catfish Festival:** Held in June at various locations, including Watts Bar Lake

and Downtown Decatur, the festival features a variety of entertainment with a catfish theme.

Etowah

- **Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration:** Held in conjunction with the July 4th holiday at the L&N Depot Park in Downtown Etowah, this celebration features live music and entertainment, food and other attractions, culminating with an evening fireworks display.

- **Etowah Arts & Crafts Fall Festival:** Held each October, the festival features a variety of arts and crafts, as well as food and entertainment. The event is hosted annually by the Etowah Area Chamber of Commerce.

Englewood

- **Englewood Celebrates:** Held each June since 1986, Englewood Celebrates is a weekend-long festival in Downtown Englewood billed as “part hoedown,

part history lesson and part homecoming celebration,” complete with exhibits, music and other attractions.

Niota

- **Fried Green Tomato Festival:** The annual event – which features games, music, food, a pet parade, and hot air balloon rides, among other attractions – is held in September in Downtown Niota.

- **Train Day Festival** – This celebration of Niota's extensive railroad history is held in May each year, with the historic Niota Depot serving as the focal point.

Calhoun

- **River Town Festival:** The annual event is held throughout the summer at Hiwassee Meadowlands Park and on the Hiwassee Blueway. The event commemorates the Hiwassee River's role in the formation of Calhoun and features live music and entertainment.

Many attractions across local area

Our region offers festivals, scenic drives and much more sightseeing, outdoor fun, shops keep you busy all year. It is for this reason that tourism has become a major industry for McMinn and Meigs counties, and the neighboring Tennessee Overhill area. After all, when you live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country, you can expect both local residents and visitors to stop by and enjoy the view.

Both counties also offer plenty of antique shops, quaint restaurants, and great things to do and wonderful sights to see and places to stay. If you're looking for fun, entertaining and educational activities in McMinn and Meigs counties and the surrounding area, here's a list of what to see and do:

McMinn County

- **Swingin' Midway Drive-In Theater:** One of Tennessee's few remaining drive-in theaters, this historical enter-

tainment resource features a large solo screen lit with double features with digital picture and sound, and is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The theater is also the site of various events throughout the year, including flea markets and yard sales. Call 263-2632 for more information or visit www.swinginmidwaydrivein.com

- **Historic Gem Theater:** Located on Tennessee Avenue in Etowah across from the L&N Depot, this historic theater hosts various cultural and entertainment activities, including plays, concerts and the annual Cousin Jake Memorial Bluegrass Festival. The Gem Players are Etowah's resident theatre company. The Gem is a small, intimate venue reminiscent of a few Off-Broadway theaters and similar to the Barter Theater in Abingdon, Va. The theater also holds the Etowah Arts Commission offices and an art gallery. For more information, call Etowah City Hall at 263-2202.

- **Mayfield Dairy Farms Visitor Center:** Birthplace of the renowned Mayfield Dairy brand, this thriving dairy factory in Athens offers plant tours along with an enticing ice cream parlor and an exhibit on dairy farming history.

For more information, contact the center at 649-2653 to make arrangements and visit online at www.mayfielddairy.com

Meigs County

Tourism is Meigs County's second-largest industry and many who visit are history buffs interested in the Cherokee Indians.

- **The Cherokee Removal Memorial Park** is located at Blythe Ferry on 30 acres adjacent to the Hiwassee River. This site is significant to the Cherokees and the Trail of Tears because more than 9,000 Cherokee Indians camped and crossed the Tennessee River at Blythe Ferry in

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McMinn County Churches

**GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW IN ETOWAH...
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SUNDAYS
8:30AM & 11:00AM - WORSHIP
9:45AM - COMMUNITY GROUPS

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saintmaryathens.org Email:
stmaryathenstn@gmail.com



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1 Corinthians 1: 17-18

Sunday 10:30 AM & 5:30 PM
Wednesday 6:30 PM

Pastors Thomas & Melissa Climer

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East Athens
Baptist Church

Sunday School - 9:30am
Sunday Worship - 10:45am
Wednesday - 7:00pm

Rev. Mike Dannel,
Executive/Worship Pastor
Dr. Bryan Trapp, Senior Pastor
www.eastathens.org



Union McMinn
Baptist Church

-Sunday-

Sunday School: 10:00 AM
Morning Service: 11:00 AM
Evening Service: 6:30 PM

-Wednesday-

Midweek Service: 6:45 PM

314 Co Rd 316, Niota

(423) 568-2395

umbc@tds.net



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Sunday Mornings:
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Sunday School: 10am
Second Service: 11am



Wednesday Evenings: Celebrate Recovery:
Pre-Service Meal: 6:00pm Pre-Service Meal: 6:00pm
Service: 7:00pm Worship: 6:30pm

Watch live on facebook or on our website
every Sunday at 11:00am.

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Attractions

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1838. To get to Cherokee Removal Memorial Park, take Highway 58 South from Decatur to Birchwood and follow the signs. The park is about a 45-minute drive from Athens.

In addition to its Cherokee heritage, Meigs County is sprinkled with several scenic waterways, as 225 miles of shoreline sweep the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers, and Chickamauga and Watts Bar Lakes.

Both counties offer access to plenty of outdoor recreation attractions from hiking trails in the Cherokee National Forest to rafting or horseback riding along the Ocoee River, to enjoying some fishing or boating at Watts Bar Lake.

- **Watts Bar Dam and Lake:** Located in Meigs County, the lake offers spectacular fishing, boating, water skiing, camping and hiking.

A number of resorts, campgrounds and marina facilities are located on the lake, and it is not difficult to rent boats, canoes, fishing equipment or lodging. Call Meigs County Tourism at 334-5850 to obtain a brochure on campground, marina and rental listings.

- **Meigs County Courthouse:** The 1902 Courthouse in Decatur is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Renovations to make the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act were completed in early 2005. For more information, call 334-5850.

- **Jolly's Island:** Also known as Hiwassee Island, Sam Houston once lived with the Cherokees in this District 1 wildlife preserve. At one time it was the most important river crossing between Chattanooga and Knoxville. William Blythe



operated a ferry there, which remained in operation until the mid-1990s.

The road leading from this site to the mountain north of the river was known as "The Great Road" or the Kiuka War Trace. Young Sam Houston spent several years at the island home of Cherokee Chief John Jolly and was adopted into the tribe before he became governor of Tennessee and of Texas and a U.S. senator.

- **Scenic drives in Meigs County:** Three great photo opportunities of an 1857 mill and homesite off Clearwater Road and an 1885 iron truss bridge on County Road 403 are available in District 4, the Fairview community.

Agritourism

- Four wineries call the

greater McMinn and Meigs region home, including Silver Springs Vineyards in Riceville (<https://silver-springsvineyards.com>), Savannah Oaks Winery in Delano (facebook.com/savannahoakswinery), Tsali Notch Vineyard near Madisonville (tsalinotch.com) and Fox Creek Cellars north of Niota (foxcreekcellars.com).

- **Ridge Line Farms** – Offers pick-your-own blueberries and farm-raised beef with no antibiotics, preservatives or added hormones. Ridge Line Farms is located at 139 County Road 100 in Decatur.

For more information, call 507-8002 or 506-3058, or e-mail rlfarms65@gmail.com

- **Guthrie Pumpkin Farm**

and Corn Maze – This enterprise at 490 County Road 67 in Riceville includes a corn-maze, hayride to the pumpkin field, animal petting barn, obstacle course, red-neck zombie paintball and hippity hop track. Pumpkins are sold separately for 50 cents per pound September and October.

A farm shop offers country-inspired decor and Guthrie Pumpkin Farm-brand jams, jellies and butters.

For more information, call 423-650-2939 or visit www.tnpumpkinfarm.com

Please note, it is strongly suggested you contact the farm business owners before making the trip to their location – hours of operation may change throughout the growing seasons.

Various recreation options in area

Recreation enthusiasts will find a variety of activities for all members of the family in both the winter and summer seasons in McMinn and Meigs counties.

Here's just a sampling of what's available in the area:

For Children Baseball

Several of the communities in McMinn County – Athens, Niota, Riceville, Englewood and Etowah – and Meigs County have youth baseball leagues for ages 4-14 and sometimes younger associated with various national sports groups including Little League and Dizzy Dean.

Also, there are softball leagues for girls affiliated with most of those programs.

The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA has a tee-ball league for the younger players. The YMCA number is 745-4904.

Notices for tryouts and contact numbers for the various leagues are run in early March in The Daily-Post Athenian.

Football

The Sequoyah Conference is for boys and girls ages 5-14 and is divided into four age groups.

Sign-ups are held in July and the season begins with a jamboree in August and the regular season starts the following week.

Cheerleaders are also a big part of the program and each team boasts squads to lend support at each game.

The Charger Youth, Bradley, Lenoir City, Dayton, Madisonville, Loudon, Sweetwater, McMinn, Polk, Meigs, Tellico and Vonore are members of the Sequoyah Conference, which does have some weight restrictions. Their team ages are 6-7, 8-9, 10-11 and 12-14.

As with baseball, sign-up dates are announced well in advance through The Daily Post-Athenian.

Soccer

Soccer is comprised of both boys' and girls' teams in Athens, Etowah and Englewood.

There are also several independently run competitive soccer teams, including the McMinn

United Futbol Club, for girls and boys that play in leagues around the Knoxville, Cleveland and Chattanooga areas.

There are two seasons, one in the fall and again in the spring.

Again, sign-up times and contact numbers are printed in the newspaper well in advance each season.

Tennis

Athens has three sites for tennis, including the Tennessee Wesleyan University campus, Athens City Middle School and a city-operated court at Ingleside.

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department hosts the USTA (United States Tennis Association) camps in the spring, summer and fall sessions for beginning tennis players.

Etowah and Englewood also have city-operated courts. Meigs County has tennis courts in the city park.

Basketball

Athens, Englewood, Meigs County, Niota and Etowah are among the communities which have youth basketball leagues.

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department conducts a league for all boys and girls kindergarten through 6th grade. The league will begin registration in October, with practice starting in December and games in January and February.

The Etowah Junior Pro League is independently operated with separate teams for boys and girls. The Englewood league is also independently operated.

Several basketball camps are offered in Athens each summer.

Notices appear often and well in advance in The DPA.

The YMCA also offers a basketball instructional camp each summer.

Events go on throughout the summer and winter.

The YMCA is also attempting a 3-on-3 basketball league, starting in October.

Aquatic Activities

The McMinn County Summer Swim League, which holds meets at the YMCA, consists of two large teams.

The meets consist of 80 events with age groups for boys and girls ranging from 6-and-under,

8-and-under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 and 15-16.

For more information, call the YMCA at 745-4904.

There is also a year round swim team, Southeast Tennessee Swimming, that includes swimmers from across the county and competes in meets against teams from other parts of Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia and also competes with other teams in Knoxville and Chattanooga.

The largest team that the YMCA is also home to is McMinn United, the co-op, competitive middle and high school swim team that serves McMinn and all surrounding counties. It serves all local public, private and homeschool kids that want to swim for their school.

They swim as a co-op team through the regular season and if they qualify for state in high school, they represent their own schools at the state swim meet, (McMinn County High School, Christ's Legacy Academy, etc). They compete October-January each year and finish off with the state meet each February.

For more information, call the YMCA.

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department operates the only city pool, Ingleside, located on Forrest Avenue just below Ingleside School. The pool is open to the public and available for private parties.

Englewood also operates a municipal pool.

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department runs the Learn to Swim program. This program has been in operation for 62 years, originating as the Red Cross swimming lessons. This program runs the last two full weeks in June.

Athens and Etowah both operate free splash pads that are open to the public. Athens' splash pad is located inside Athens Regional Park and operates during late spring through early fall as weather permits from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day.

Girls Fastpitch Softball

In recent years, several indepen-

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Recreation

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dent girls' fastpitch softball teams have been formed in various age groups.

Notices and tryouts usually appear in the newspaper during the winter months.

Soap Box Derby

Athens sponsors a regional qualifier for the All-American Soap Box Derby for youth ages 7 to 18. Winners in the local event, which is held the Saturday after Memorial Day, advance to the International All-American Soap Box Derby World Championship held in Akron, Ohio, during July.

Athens hosts Stock and Super stock divisions in the race, as well as the Super Kids Division, a division for children with special needs.

For Adults Softball

Athens has an adult softball league that begins registration, for teams and individuals, in April and games start in June. The games are held once a week for eight weeks.

Kickball

Athens has an adult kickball league that begins registration, for teams and individuals, in July and games start in September. The games are held once a week.

Golf

McMinn and Meigs counties have five golf courses, four of which are open to the public.

Privately-owned Springbrook Golf and Country Club has an 18-hole course. The members-only club also has a swimming pool and tennis courts at its Niota facility.

Ridgewood is a public facility located midway between Athens and Etowah with an 18-hole course and driving range.

White Oaks Golf Club is an 18-hole course complete with a driving range. The public facility is located just off Highway 30 west toward Decatur.

Mouse Creek Golf Course is an 18-hole course located at the

north end of the Highway 11 bypass in Athens.

In addition, Rarity Bay, an 18-hole course is open to the public in neighboring Monroe County and affiliated with the Tellico Village Lake Resort.

Also in nearby Madisonville is a publicly-owned nine-hole course.

Cleveland in neighboring Bradley County also has three 18-hole golf facilities – the privately-owned Cleveland Golf and Country Club and publicly-owned Chatata Valley.

There is also a free putt-putt course at Prof Powers Park. Golfers with library cards may check out equipment at the E.G. Fisher Public Library or bring their own equipment.

Outdoor Recreation

- Eureka Trail: The 5.7-mile trail stretches from Athens to Englewood, with the Englewood end and trailhead, located at Don Edgemon Park

(Highway 39 at County Road 550, and the Athens trailhead at 1400 E. Madison Ave. It is a multi-purpose trail for hiking, biking or horseback riding.

- Regional Park: The park features four walking paths. The Lake Loop is .3 miles, the Park Road Loop is 1 mile, the Storybook Trail is .26 miles and the Mouse Creek Trail/Bike Trail is 3 miles.

The park also features a professionally designed 18-hole Disc Golf Course with short and long baskets for multiple play options.

- Chilhowee Rod and Gun Club: Located just outside the Athens city limits, the Chilhowee Rod and Gun Club caters to those with an interest in fishing and hunting, both with bow and gun. Call 744-3926.

River recreation

- One of the most scenic whitewater rafting venues in the nation is located in Polk County about 45 minutes from Athens.

The Ocoee River: Controlled by the Tennessee Valley Authority,

is open on most weekends and several weekdays throughout the summer to rafting, kayaking and canoeing enthusiasts.

The Ocoee was the site of whitewater competition in the 1996 Summer Olympics hosted by Atlanta.

Several whitewater and rafting outfitters are located near the river to provide supplies, guides and other essentials.

The Hiwassee River in Polk County is a good spot for trout fishing and rafting.

- Watts Bar Lake and Tennessee River: Watts Bar Lake, created by the Tennessee Valley Authority dam on the Meigs County-Rhea County line, is about a 25-minute drive from Athens.

Along with the usual activities of sunbathing and skiing, Watts Bar and the Tennessee River offer better-than-average fishing for rockfish, large and smallmouth bass, crappie and catfish.

Several marinas and boat docks service the area along with a public beach and boat ramps provided by TVA.

TVA also operates public campgrounds in the area.

The Fooshee Pass Campground may be reached at 334-9871 and the Hornsby Hollow Campground number is 334-9875.

Hunting and fishing licenses can be obtained from local sporting goods outlets such as Wal-Mart in Athens or the McMinn and Meigs courthouses.

- Fishing: There are two local bass fishing tournaments held each week starting in the spring and running through early fall: Hornsby Hollow Tuesday Night and the Middle Creek Fishing Club, which is held on Friday.

The Athens Parks and Recreation Department and TWRA also host an annual spring youth fishing event at the Athens Regional Park large lake. The lake is stocked with trout and youth ages 12 and under fish for prizes.

McMinn, Meigs feature many parks

Parks are the pride of the region and those in McMinn and Meigs counties feature an inviting range of attractions for those of all ages and stages to enjoy.

- **Rotary Park:** The newest addition to the local park system, Rotary Park was created as a “pocket park” between two existing buildings on Tennessee Avenue in Downtown Etowah. The Etowah Rotary Club and past president Russ Blair spearheaded the effort to create the space, which features a fountain, picnic tables, and benches, all made possible through community support.

- **Market Park:** This Downtown Athens park is a focal point for the entire downtown business district. Located on South Jackson, one block from the courthouse, the park features an ADA accessible public restroom and a large pavilion. The park is home to the Athens Farmers Market which is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. from May until October. The market is a fresh producers market, meaning everything sold is grown locally by the vendor. Market Park is also home to the Sounds of Summer concert series, a free concert series with a variety of musical styles.

The park saw the addition of a waterwheel, given by the crew of the U.S.S. Charles R. Ware in June 2017 to honor the member of Cmdr. Joseph Neville.

Car shows, Relay for Life, and the Athens Kiwanis Club Pancake and BBQ are just a few of the events that call Market Park home.

- **Athens Regional Park:** The largest park in the area with 165 acres. Located on Decatur Pike near Interstate 75, it is home to the city-owned Southeast Trade and Conference Center and the McMinn County Ray Layman Agriculture Center.

With five baseball fields and seven soccer fields, the park is home to McMinn County Little League, AYSO soccer, numerous weekend tournaments and one of the area's largest July 4 fireworks displays. Walkers, hikers and mountain bikers will find over

three miles of challenging nature trails and miles of sidewalks and paved walks highlighted by a third mile concrete lake loop trail and a quarter mile trail made of recycled rubber. A professionally designed disc golf course features 18 holes to challenge both beginners and experienced players.

The park's playground is the largest in the area and features play elements for all ages highlighted by a custom designed Pig in the Pipe slide featuring two 40-foot long tubes that slide into the playground from the top of the hillside. The playground has sections for 2 to 5 year olds and 5 to 12 year olds.

The park added a new splash pad in 2019 to help keep residents cool in the hot summer months.

Other parks and recreational facilities managed by the Athens Parks and Recreation Department include:

- **Prof Powers Park:** Prof Powers Park is an environmental park designed with natural play elements and is also home to Brodie Ellis Field, a lighted Little League field. A small fishing lake, playground equipment and a free miniature golf course highlight the park. Once a year the McMinn County Little League returns to the park for old timers day.

- **Ingleside Recreation Complex:** The community swimming pool, eight tennis courts and the skate park are located at Ingleside. The pool features a double slide and is home to the oldest Learn to Swim program in the state of Tennessee. The pool is available for party rentals. The Ingleside tennis courts were renovated in 2024, are lighted and are marked for junior USTA tennis play and for Pickleball. The adjacent baseball backstops, and outdoor basketball court and a community playground are available for public use.

- **Athens Skate Park:** Located at the Ingleside Recreation Complex this commercially designed and built street style skate park is home to drop ins of various heights, steps, tables and benches for skating. Admission to the park

is free and helmets are required.

- **Heritage Park:** Built in 1976 this park features playground equipment, a full size basketball court, two tennis courts, a softball/baseball field and a covered pavilion with restrooms. Located on South Jackson Street the pavilion is available for reservations and is home to numerous birthday parties and family events.

- **Cook Park:** Located on Cook Drive near the hospital this park offers lighted basketball courts, a covered pavilion with restrooms, a large playground area and paved walking paths. The park is home to the monuments and plaques honoring the site of Cook High School which was closed during school consolidation. The alumni of the school regularly host reunions on site. The pavilion is available for reservations.

- **Veterans Memorial Park:** This downtown Athens park is nationally known and is visited by thousands annually. The park features a brick walkway with 4,000 names in honor and in memory of veterans from all across the United States. Highlighting the park plaza is a 600 pound floating black granite earth ball surrounded by five monoliths in honor of each branch of service. Black granite benches etched with significant veterans events are also on the plaza. The park is home to the monument of Lt. Charles R. Ware who joined the Navy from Athens and who was a hero at the Battle of Midway where he gave his life. Lt. Ware was a Navy Cross recipient and was honored by having the USS Charles R. Ware DD-865 a Gearing class destroyer named after him. Athens and Veterans Park serve as the final home port of the USS Charles R. Ware and the ship's crew returns every three years for a reunion and celebration at the park. The park is also home to numerous other monuments in honor and in memory of local veterans.

- **Eureka Trail:** The 5.7-mile trail stretches from Athens to Englewood, with the Englewood end and trailhead, located at Don

SEE PARKS, Page 44

SRMC has campuses in Athens, Etowah

Starr Regional Medical Center, with campuses in Athens and Etowah, continues to serve as a cornerstone of healthcare excellence and community engagement in McMinn County.

Through strategic growth, technological innovation and compassionate care, the hospital remains committed to its mission of making communities healthier.

Over the past year, Starr Regional welcomed more than 100 new providers across a broad spectrum of specialties, including cardiology, emergency medicine, OB/GYN, nephrology, radiology, and telehealth. This expansion enhances access to high-quality care for residents throughout McMinn County and neighboring areas.

Investments in infrastructure and technology have been a priority. In 2025, the hospital launched its da Vinci robotic surgery program and expanded geriatric behavioral health services in Etowah. Starr also began construction on a new 10-bed intensive care unit in Athens which is expected to be open in February 2026. Tele-intensive care services were also introduced in 2025, strengthening critical care capabilities.

Imaging services saw significant upgrades, including new CT and MRI scanners, ultrasound equipment, and advanced diagnostic tools such as cardiac CT angiography, breast, intestinal and prostate MRI, and cardiac calcium scoring.

Both campuses house Emergency Departments accredited as Chest Pain Centers, ensuring rapid and expert care for cardiac emergencies. In 2025, Starr Regional earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval and the American Stroke Association's Heart-Check mark for Acute Stroke Ready Hospital Certification — affirming its dedication to high-quality stroke care.

Emergency teams are equipped to manage a wide range of medical crises, with access to specialty services like telepsychiatry and telestroke assessments.

Beyond clinical care, Starr Regional plays a vital role in the local economy and community. In 2024, the hospital contributed over \$9.7 million in local and state taxes and supported numerous organizations

and events, including the American Cancer Society, Athens and Etowah City Schools, Friendly City Festivals, Good Faith Clinic, Grace & Mercy Ministries, Isaiah 117 House, McMinn County Economic Development Authority, Living Heritage Museum, McMinn County Schools, and United Way of McMinn & Meigs Counties.

The hospital also provided nearly \$49.3 million in health services to those in need, reinforcing its commitment to accessible care for all, regardless of financial circumstances.

Starr Regional fosters a workplace where providers want to practice and employees want to grow. In 2024, it distributed more than \$46.4 million in salaries, wages, and benefits to approximately 655 employees, while investing nearly \$130,000 in professional development and tuition assistance.

Advanced imaging services include X-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound, and PET/CT. The Etowah campus offers low-dose CT screenings for patients at increased risk of lung cancer. The Starr Regional Breast Center in Athens provides 3D mammography, breast ultrasound, bone density exams with trabecular bone score, and stereotactic and ultrasound-guided core biopsies.

Cardiovascular services continue to expand, with diagnostic and treatment capabilities for heart blockages, peripheral arterial disease (PAD), and other conditions available through the cardiac cath lab. Rehabilitation programs for cardiac, pulmonary, and PAD patients offer medically supervised exercise and education tailored to individual needs.

The Rehabilitation Services Department provides inpatient and outpatient physical, occupational, and speech therapies, as well as sports medicine services. Specialized programs support recovery from orthopedic surgery, sports injuries, neurological conditions, and speech or swallowing disorders.

Surgical Services at the Athens campus offer robotic-assisted procedures for general surgery, gynecology, orthopedic joint replacement and urology, alongside traditional open and laparoscopic sur-

geries. The Surgery Center of Athens provides same-day procedures in general surgery, ophthalmology, and gastroenterology.

The Center for Women & Babies delivers prenatal and postnatal care in a supportive environment, staffed by experienced obstetricians, gynecologists, and pediatricians.

Starr Regional Health & Rehabilitation, an 88-bed licensed nursing home adjoining the Etowah campus, specializes in joint and stroke rehabilitation. It offers coordinated care through on-site physical, occupational, and speech therapies, along with daily activities and events for long-term residents.

Starr Regional Behavioral Health provides acute inpatient care for patients aged 50 and older experiencing behavioral health challenges related to cognitive disorders, dementia, loss, or other health issues. The multidisciplinary team includes nurses, social workers, therapists, and physicians.

Starr Regional Medical Group, which includes employed physician practices, provides comprehensive primary, urgent, and specialty care. Specialty services available include cardiology, cancer and hematology, general surgery, orthopedics, and sports medicine—ensuring patients receive expert care close to home.

In addition to clinical services, Starr Regional Medical Center offers several advanced programs designed to meet specific health needs. These include the Advanced Wound Care Center, Sleep Diagnostic Center, and various community wellness initiatives. Each program plays a vital role in supporting the hospital's mission to make communities healthier.

Starr Regional Medical Center continues to strengthen its commitment to the health and well-being of residents in Athens, Etowah, and surrounding communities. Through a wide range of medical services and outreach initiatives, the hospital is enhancing access to quality care for patients of all ages. For a complete list of services or to learn more about Starr Regional Medical Center, visit StarrRegional.com. To find a healthcare provider, call 423-374-6571.

Parks

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Edgemon Park (Highway 39 at County Road 550) and the Athens trailhead at 1400 E. Madison Ave. It is a multi-purpose trail for hiking, biking or horseback riding.

For more information about park facilities or special events, contact the Athens Parks and Recreation department at 744-2704.

- **Knight Park:** A pocket park in Downtown Athens, located in the triangle created by Jackson Street, White Street and College Street. There are benches in the small, shaded area.

- **Englewood Municipal Park:** Complex includes a swimming pool, splash pad, playground, walking area and basketball and tennis court.

- **L&N Depot Park:** Adjacent to the L&N Depot in Downtown Etowah, the park features a walking trail, benches, covered pavilion and restrooms.

- **8th Street Field:** Combination baseball and football fields.

- **Niota Baseball/Softball Complex:** Includes multiple fields for community and league use.

- **Kenneth Gable Memorial Park:** Located across the railroad tracks behind the Niota Depot. It has a picnic pavilion, grill, playground and volleyball net.

- **Bicentennial Park:** This park is owned and maintained by the McMinn County government and features ballfields and a playground. It is located near the entrance of the McMinn County Sanitary Landfill on County Road 750.

- **Cherokee Removal Memorial Park:** Located in Birchwood in southern Meigs County, there is a visitor's center, boardwalk and wildlife overlook shelter on top of the bluff overlooking the Tennessee River. Hours of operation are Thursday, Friday and

Saturday from 8 a.m.- 4 p.m. The park is closed Sunday-Wednesday. For more information, call 423-339-2769 or visit www.cherokeeremoval.org

- **The Hiwassee Refuge:** Operated by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, which offers seminars and activities throughout the year. TWRA is responsible for managing Tennessee fish and wildlife and draws funding from hunting and angling permits along with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation, a nonprofit, non-governmental organization.

- **Decatur City Park:** Adjacent to Meigs Middle School and the Meigs County Fairgrounds in Downtown Decatur, the park features a walking trail, picnic and activities pavilion and a disc golf course. Nearby are playground, skateboard and basketball facilities.



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