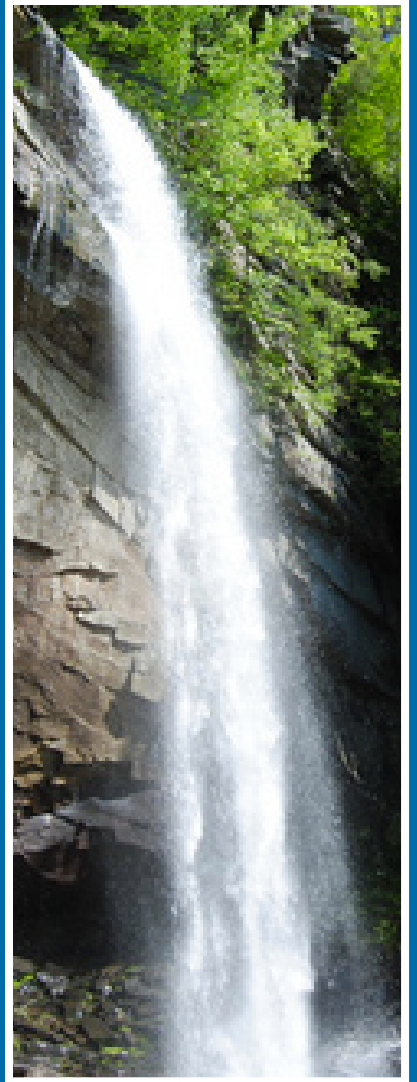
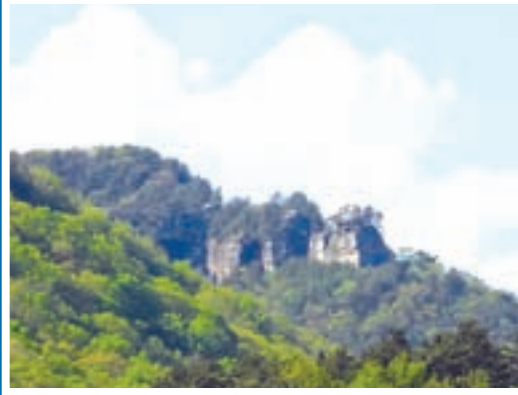


RHEA REVEALED 2021



A special visitor's guide showcasing Rhea County's rich heritage, unique shopping, festivals, unmatched scenery and outdoor recreation.

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Welcome to Rhea County, Tennessee

Welcome to Rhea County. Whether you're a history buff looking to explore pivotal moments in American history such as the 1925 Scopes Trial or the Trail of Tears or love the outdoors and spending time on hiking trails or lounging along the shores of Watts Bar Lake, you've come to the right place.

Nestled between the Tennessee River and the Cumberland Plateau and only a short drive from major cities such as Knoxville and Chattanooga, Rhea County offers visitors convenient fun for the entire family.

Visitors can stroll through the newly-renovated Rhea Heritage

and Scopes Trial Museum in the basement of the Rhea County Courthouse, site of the 1925 Scopes Trial, and learn the story behind one of the most famous trials in world history.

Or perhaps you want to delve into the arts. Then take in a play at Spring City's Tennessee Valley Theatre, which produces and performs not only nationally known plays but locally written plays as well.

Are you the outdoors type? Rhea County is home to Watts Bar Lake and Chickamauga Lake, both replete with lakeside retreats and fishing hotspots sure to provide a relaxing day on the

water. Or you can take a stroll through the Laurel-Snow State Natural Area, which has an abundance of hiking trails, streams and rivers and provides some of the most beautiful scenery in Tennessee.

In this eighth edition of Rhea County Revealed, you'll find information that will help you discover all the fun and natural beauty that Rhea County has to offer. The Herald-News is proud to provide visitors with the only guide that will ensure your visit to Rhea County is an enjoyable one.

We look forward to your next visit!

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The Herald-News

Rhea County's hometown newspaper since 1898

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2021 Rhea County Revealed editorial content provided by Becky Tucker, Reed Johnson, and Pat Guffey.

Photos courtesy of Tad Rees Photography.

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ATTRACTIONS

There's no shortage of fun things to do when visiting Rhea County!

Whether it's a night out at the theater or an afternoon visiting local museums, there is no shortage of attractions in Rhea County.

Visitors can also take a hike through the Laurel-Snow State Natural Area or visit local farms and historic trails.

No matter where you go in Rhea County, you are sure to find something fun for every member of your family.

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area is a 2,259-acre natural area located in Rhea County. The natural area occurs on the Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau and contains a section of gorge that is deeply dissected by Morgan, Henderson, Laurel and Richland Creeks.

The site is named after two scenic waterfalls, Laurel Falls (80 feet) and Snow Falls (35 feet)

and features two prominent overlooks, Buzzard Point and Bryan Overlook.

The natural area also has scenic creeks, steep gorges, geologic features, a small stand of virgin timber and a wide variety of plants.

After about 1.5 miles of hiking into the natural area beside Richland Creek, the trail forks. You can reach Buzzard Point and Snow Falls by following the trail as it forks to the left going west. The trail to the right leads to Laurel Snow Falls and then eventually climbs to the top of the falls. The distance for both trails is about eight miles round trip.

The land use history of this area remains evident in places. Logging and deep mining took place in some portions of the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some remnants of the mining activities can still be seen along the trail near the parking area.

Part of Richland Creek was dammed to serve as the Dayton Reservoir and was once the

water supply for the town of Dayton. The low dam across the stream can still be seen, although water is no longer collected here for the town.

The Laurel-Snow trail was the first National Recreation Trail designated in Tennessee.

See <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/> for more information.

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area is part of the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail, and the area includes trailhead parking and an open section of the Cumberland Trail.

See <http://www.cumberlandtrail.org/> for general information and stipulations on backcountry camping in the area.

The Cumberland Trail, the state's only linear state park, when completed, will be 300 miles in length cutting through 11 Tennessee counties from the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park on the Tennessee-Virginia-Kentucky border to Signal Point near Chattanooga.



Visitors to Laurel-Snow State Natural Area can view the remains of the Dayton Coal and Iron Company that once called the area home in the early 20th century.

Public access is allowed; parking and hiking trails are provided. The natural area has 10.5 miles of hiking trails.

Backcountry camping is by permit only. Call 423-566-2229 to obtain a permit or request more information.

Tennessee Valley Theatre

Our current community theater began in Rhea County in 1989 when two members of the Spring City Women's Club initiated efforts to organize a group interested in bringing live theater to the area.

The first meeting was attended by 24 individuals whose enthusiasm led to fundraisers, corporate support and numerous volunteer hours.

With the conviction that yes, Rhea County should have a community theater, the Tennessee Valley Theatre developed.

In three short weeks the determined, can-do attitude of the core group produced a play selected by a play-reading committee, a fund-raising drive, a director and co-producers, announcement of auditions, publicity, set crew, ordering of play books, printing of tickets and posters and a place provided by a local resident.

Tennessee Valley Theatre opened with "Harvey" in June, 1989.

In addition to weekend performances, the theater produces plays for area schools.

Teachers bring students to performances, allowing elementary students to experience live theater as a part

of their school curriculum.

The theater sponsors summer children's workshops to teach various acting and theatrical production skills to area students. Workshops conclude with a public performance by the participants.

The theater showcases the many talents of area residents, provides quality arts performances for the community and prepares future performers.

The theater is a nonprofit organization dependent on extensive volunteer services of many actors and stage crewmembers.

Performances throughout the years have included seasonal classics such as "A Christmas Carol", original plays from local artists, numerous Broadway

See **ATTRACTIONS** page 9

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Attractions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

plays, monologues and musical shows.

Both local productions and presentations from area artists are included in the theater's year-round programming.

Henning Museum at Bryan College

This natural museum, begun in the 1970's as a collection of plants and animals, now holds more than 100,000 items.

Included in its collections are rocks and fossils from coal mines in Rhea County, African lions, specimens of extinct species, preserved reptiles, skulls of various animals and even a replica of the head of Tyrannosaurus rex dinosaur.

Museum hours at the campus museum are available by calling Bryan College at (423) 775-2041.

Rhea Heritage and Scopes Trial Museum

The Rhea County Historical

and Genealogical Society administers the museum located in the basement of the Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton.

The museum was established to preserve and present history related to the Scopes Trial.

The society has extended the museum exhibits to include various events and personalities important to the history of Rhea County.

The museum is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The museum is closed on Saturday during the months of January and February.



In 2018, the Rhea Heritage and Scopes Trial Museum underwent significant remodeling and redesign. The new museum designs include story boards detailing the key players and moments surrounding the 1925 Scopes Trial as well as a section of the museum that highlights other moments in Rhea County history, such as the founding of the county, the arrival of the railroad and other important events in Rhea history. The museum also features an interactive touch screen display that will further showcase the history of the Scopes Trial and Rhea County. Pictured above, former Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam tours the renovated museum in June 2018.

"The Gateway to Watts Bar Lake"

www.townofspringcitytn.com



Spring City



Spring City Museum

Located on Front Street in Spring City, the depot, originally built by the Queen and Crescent Railroad out of Cincinnati, Ohio, has been restored and now houses offices and a museum highlighting the history of the area.

The tracks of the railroad built for the purpose of extending travel and commerce to the south still carry trains through the area, but the passenger depot now tells the story of the area's past through both permanent and changing exhibits.

A museum annex in the adjoining block is used for special shows and events.



The Spring City Depot, located on Front Street in downtown Spring City, is pictured above.



Watts Bar Nuclear Plant is also located in Spring City and provides power throughout the region.

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Dayton Water and Electric Building

Inside the Dayton Electric and Water Building, located at 400 Main Street in Dayton, visitors can view original New Deal era artwork.

The canvas was painted by Bertram Hartman in 1937 as a part of the public works program initiated during The Great Depression to relieve the financial woes of the country.

The mural features picnickers on Johnson's Bluff overlooking Cranmore Cove in Rhea County.

The building is open to the public Monday through Friday during normal business hours.

Civil War Trail

Rhea County experienced skirmishes, military occupation, pillaging, looting and destruction during the war.

Even though no significant military battle was fought in Rhea County, the war was definitely felt by those whose family members joined the armies, those whose buildings were burned and those whose farms were plundered.

U.S. Gen. William T. Sherman was in Washington at one point during the war. Gen. Joseph Wheeler took his Confederate army through Rhea County on the way to their spectacular raid against Union supply lines in

the Sequatchie Valley.

Signs throughout the county designate Rhea County as a part of the national Civil War Trail.

Trail of Tears Historic Trail

Signs along highways 60 and 30 mark the route followed by Cherokees as they were forced from their ancestral lands east of the Mississippi to Indian lands in the west.

Blythe Ferry, located at the confluence of the Hiawassee River with the Tennessee River, was the transportation used to move the Cherokees into Rhea County.



A state historical marker on South Market Street in Dayton records that the Trail of Tears crossed the Tennessee Valley through Rhea County.

A severe drought in the southeast during 1838 made ferry crossings difficult. Cherokees were encamped for weeks east of the river on land which today is Cherokee Removal Park.

The park is open Thursday through Sunday and includes an interpretive center and a river overlook.

Scopes Trial Tour

Twenty-seven sites in the Dayton area have been identified as places significant in the history of the 1925 Scopes Trial.

Metal historic markers have been placed by the Tennessee Historical Commission at many of the tour sites.

For more information, visit the Rhea Heritage and Scopes Trial Museum in the basement of the Rhea County Courthouse.

Dayton Farmers' Market

Every spring, summer and fall,

farmers load their trucks with produce and come to farmers on Washington Avenue in Dayton where they sell their fruits and vegetables to the public.

Sweet corn, succulent melons and juicy tomatoes are among the many locally produced items. In addition, some farmers sell regionally grown products.

Those driving through the county's rural communities will also discover many vegetable stands on family farms.

Fall in Rhea County brings the bright colors of turning leaves and the fall harvest of

orchards and farms.

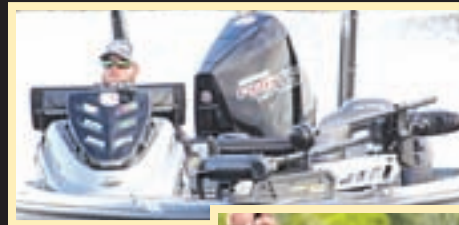
Appalachian Quilt Trail

Enjoy viewing the quilt squares as you walk through the town of Dayton or as you drive to Graysville in the southern part of the county.

The "Stars of Downtown Dayton" display eight star designs used to piece or appliqué quilts.

Replicas of the quilt squares are affixed to the exterior of downtown buildings.

Along the way, browse at the town's architecture, stop for a refreshment, visit the



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courthouse museum and discover the bargains in the stores.

The Graysville square is taken from the pattern of a local resident for her hand-sewn coverlet.

The Quilt Trail celebrates the Appalachian skill, which was both a creative expression and a functional household item.

This trail provides a reminder of an artistic treasure of our rich Appalachian heritage.

Wooden's Apple House

Many local folks travel west on Highway 30 just across the Rhea County line on Walden's Ridge to enjoy the fruits of the harvest at Wooden's Apple House.

Now under the management of the third generation of Woodens, the Apple House serves treats of apple dumplings, pies, cider and more.

The warehouse sells to the public and exports apples throughout the country.

Many families enjoy outings to Wooden's Apple House to select pumpkins for fall jack-o-lanterns.

Fishing

Rhea County's beautiful scenery and abundant shoreline make it the perfect place to spend a day fishing on the water.

Several national fishing tournaments have begun to call Dayton's Chickamauga Lake home, including the FLW Tour, Bassmaster Weekend Series and Heartland Anglers.

Portions of Chickamauga and Watts Bar Lakes and the Tennessee River snake their way through the county, and there are several types of fishing opportunities available in Rhea County reservoirs and their tributaries.

In regards to these reservoirs there are many species that may be targets for anglers such as black bass, crappie, sunfish, sauger, walleye, striped bass, catfish and trout.

With the recent increase in the number of national fishing tournaments choosing to settle in Rhea County, local tournament organizers have come to call Dayton the "New Bass Fishing Capitol of the South."

Visit www.fishdayton.com for more information about upcoming fishing tournaments, some of which have been and will be nationally televised.



Statue of William Jennings Bryan

RHEA

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Shopping

Downtown areas in Spring City and Dayton, strip malls along the highways and free-standing stores offer numerous shopping opportunities throughout Rhea County.

Souvenirs, vintage clothing and jewelry, locally-fired pottery and heritage antiques can all be found inside these stores.

Park and walk to the shops in the revitalized downtown district of Dayton or stroll into

Spring City's stores.

Find freshly-made pastries, prints and originals from local artists and unique gifts.

Stop and discover treasures in nooks and crannies of antique stores, specialty shops and gift galleries.

Rare finds from estates are often purchased at local auction houses.

Your shopping experiences can provide countless reminders of your good times in Rhea County. ■

MainStreet program helps downtown Dayton thrive

Dayton is a participant in the MainStreet program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The town was chosen to join with others across the nation to follow a strategic approach to revitalizing the downtown area. This preservation-based economic development tool enables communities to put new life into downtown districts by revitalizing their economies while preserving the character of their past.

A welcoming archway, new fences at municipal parking areas, bricked cross walks, energy efficient windows and doors and fresh coats of paint on store fronts are all visual evidence

of MainStreet Dayton's work to encourage shoppers and entrepreneurs to be a part of the downtown district.

A business resource center operated by MainStreet Dayton provides professional expertise to those considering a new downtown business.

The MainStreet program has fostered the community's planning and implementation of transforming changes to Dayton's commercial and residential areas.

Take a stroll through downtown Dayton, visit the shops and see what exactly the MainStreet program has to offer. ■



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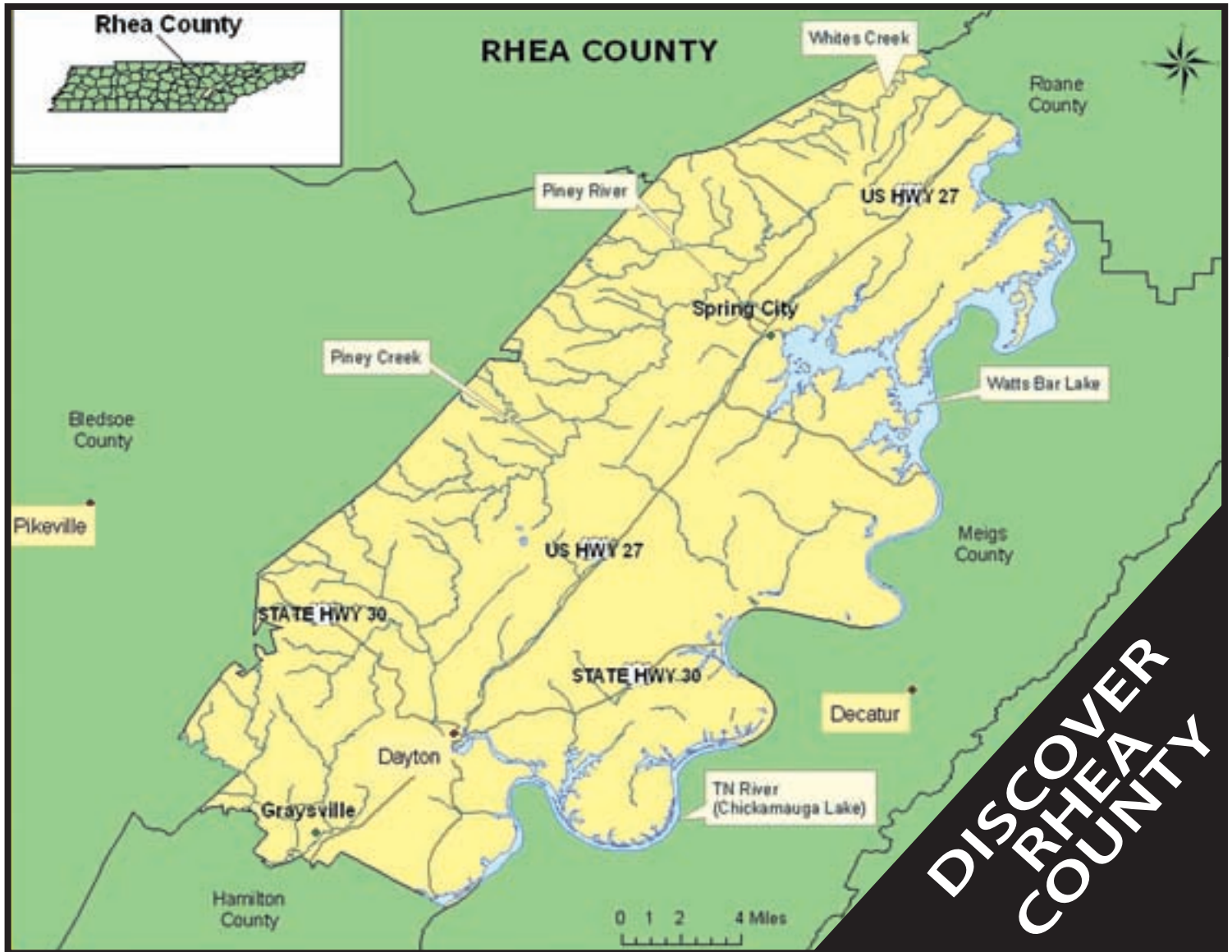
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Getting around Rhea County



ROADS

Rhea County is served by an excellent highway transportation system. U.S. Highway 27 is a four-lane highway that runs completely through the county, connecting to Interstate 40 in Harriman, Tenn., and Interstates 24 and 75 in Chattanooga.

State highways 30 and 60 connect U. S. Highway 27 to Interstate 75 in Athens, Tenn., and Cleveland, Tenn., respectively.

A Tennessee River bridge was constructed in 1998 on both state highways 30 and 60, which improved access to U.S. Highway 27.

The drives times are as follows: Chattanooga — 40 minutes; Knoxville — 90 minutes; Nashville — 2 1/2 to 3 hours; and Atlanta — 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

AIRPORTS

The City of Dayton's state-licensed Mark Anton Municipal

Airport is located five miles east of the city. Classified as a general utility airport, it has a single 5,000x100-foot asphalt runway. The paved asphalt runway is used on a regular basis by general aviation.

The airport, winner of several awards from the State of Tennessee, including "Most Improved Airport of the Year," "Airport Manager of the Year" and "Governing Body of the Year," has been the

recipient of the "Front Door Award" for the past several years.

WATERWAYS

Year-round navigable waterways connecting Rhea County to major markets include the Hiwassee and Tennessee Rivers. Both rivers feature nine-foot minimum depth channels and the Tennessee Valley Authority hydroelectric dams, which provide the area with power and

reservoirs for water supplies.

The Tennessee River runs parallel with the county, acting as a natural boundary between Rhea and Meigs counties.

The nearest navigable port is in Calhoun, which is on the Hiwassee River.

The Tennessee River is accessed in Rhea County and is less than five minutes drive from many points in Rhea County. ■



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Downtown Revitalization

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Dining in Rhea County

From snacks and quick meals to fine dining, find it all in Rhea County.

For those here in the wintertime, warm up with a hot chocolate, coffee or latte coupled with a hearty soup or hot sandwich.

On a summer afternoon, enjoy a glass of iced tea while overlooking the river from a restaurant patio or have a cone of ice cream sitting on a park bench under the shade of oaks.

Blackened salmon, wonton soup and prime rib are available to those ready to relax for an evening meal.

Drive-through windows of national chains and local sandwich shops provide fast service for those eager to refuel before their next adventure.

Some restaurants schedule gospel singing groups during dinner hours.

Check advertisements for menu items, hours of operation and special features of restaurants. The wide variety of menu choices combined with excellent food quality make meals in Rhea County a special treat.

View the list of advertisers on page 3 for further dining suggestions.



Festivals

Rhea County has a lot to celebrate, from national holidays like Independence Day and Christmas to the area's rich history and culture involving agriculture and world-famous crops.

Tennessee Strawberry Festival

The Tennessee Strawberry Festival is by far the biggest event in Rhea County.

From its beginnings in the 1940s when it was only a one-day festival sponsored by the Dayton Lions Club, the festival has turned into a 10-day extravaganza each May full of events and activities, many of which are sponsored by the Dayton Chamber of Commerce.

The festival's genesis was brought about after Rhea County boasted strawberry production as one of its principal businesses for

almost half a century.

The county was known as the "Strawberry Capital of the World," but production waned as the soil's nutrients became exhausted.

Although the Lions Club had started the festival while the crops were dwindling, festivities continued and are going strong today.

The Strawberry Parade is the biggest crowd gatherer, as thousands of spectators come out from Rhea County and beyond to see a long lineup of floats, horses and everything in between.

Other much-anticipated events include the Strawberry

Pageant, which kicks off the festivities, the Ed Gentry Memorial Run, Family Fun Night, an old-fashioned carnival, the strawberry pie and cake baking contest, Strawberry Shortcake Night at Centennial Park, a plethora of local entertainment and gospel singing, food, crafts, an auction, a cruise-in, a pancake breakfast and the Distinguished Young Woman of Rhea County Scholarship Program, which polishes off the festival.

The festival typically begins the second week of May. For more information on the Strawberry Festival, visit www.daytonchamber.org/tnsf.



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PumpkinFest

Pumpkinfest is an annual tradition in downtown Dayton.

The festivities offer children an alternative to traditional Halloween activities that can include karaoke contests, live music, entertainment, prizes, inflatable bound houses, booths, games, a quilting competition and exhibit, face painting, mini train rides, a petting zoo and pony rides.

A pumpkin pie eating contest, costume contest and hayrides also highlight the festival as well as a free movie in Centennial Park.

PumpkinFest is held at the end of October.

Scopes Trial Play and Festival

The annual Scopes Festival commemorates Dayton's claim to fame — the Scopes Trial — with old time festivities such as antique car shows, vintage films and 1920s music.

The Scopes Festival takes place in July every year and begins on July 19 in 2019.

The 1925 Scopes Trial is what is called "the world's most famous court trial," in which John T. Scopes was tried for teaching the theory

evolution in his Rhea County classroom. His prosecutor was the three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, and the defense was led by renowned attorney Clarence Darrow.

Visitors to the festival can get a taste of what Dayton was like in the 1920s as they watch a play about the trial, shop at downtown stores for "vintage" prices, peruse craft booths and enjoy other period tributes.



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Spring City Christmas Parade

Spring City offers a Christmas parade on Front Street, which features floats, horses and school bands. Spectators can enjoy food and crafts the whole day.

Typically a week before the Christmas parade, citizens can peruse the Parade of Trees at the History Museum Annex and vote on their favorite tree made by Spring City Elementary School students.

The parade is usually held the second weekend of the month of December.



Dayton Christmas Celebrations

Despite the oft-nippy weather, Christmas time brings out flocks of locals to enjoy outdoor festivities in their towns.

Christmas downtown is typically held the first weekend in December, along Market Street. Special sales events are available at downtown stores, and festival-goers can view artists' showcases at several businesses downtown as well.

Downtown Dayton hosts photos with Santa Claus. And the highlight of the day is the horse and carriage Christmas parade, held at 4:30 p.m. and followed by candlelight caroling in front of the Rhea

County Courthouse.

The Rhea-diant Holiday Celebration is held each year in November, at the National Guard Armory in Dayton.

The celebration features unique activities including a VIP Reception, musical entertainment, a Holiday Shoppe, photos with Santa and children's activities.

Over 1,100 guests are expected to walk through a winter wonderland filled with creatively decorated trees, browse among beautifully decorated wreaths, tablescapes, gift baskets and centerpieces as they select those items they want to bid on in the silent auction.

Join Us



**August 4th
thru
August 8th**

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Shake the Lake

Shake the Lake is Spring City's Fourth of July celebration, normally held at Veterans Park during the holiday weekend.

The festivities typically begin in the morning with musical groups entertaining visitors to the park, followed by an assortment of races and contests throughout the day, including the annual Mr. and Miss Firecracker Pageant, an informal pageant open to all children.

A fireworks show begins at dark.

Freedom Fest

FreedomFest is the City of Graysville's Independence Day celebration, sponsored by the Graysville Fire Department and held at the city's park, Kristopher's Kingdom.

The event features food, music and water activities. Fireworks start at about 9:45 p.m., followed by more live music and a bonfire.

Rhea County Fair

The Rhea County Fair was instituted in 2008 after Rhea County commissioners approached the University of Tennessee Extension Office with the idea of developing the fairgrounds in Evensville.

Their efforts turned into the building of a picnic pavilion, youth exhibit building and a gazebo, along with the property's original barn, all of which help promote and educate locals about agricultural

and rural living in Rhea County.

The annual fair has even won numerous state awards.

Activities and events during the fair include an antique car show and parade, horse show, chili cook-off, lawn mower races, pageants, old timers' day, a patty drop, inflatable games, concessions and music.

The Rhea County Fair is typically held toward the end of August or the beginning of September.



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OUR HISTORY

History-lovers from all over the world visit Rhea County to take in the area's rich past

An act of the Tennessee state legislature established Rhea County in 1807. The Tellico Treaties of 1798 and 1805 between European settlers and Cherokee Native Americans ceded various Cherokee lands in East Tennessee, opening the frontier.

Original boundary lines of Rhea County showed land taken from the established Roane County to the east and newly acquired Cherokee lands extending from Walden's Ridge to the Hiwassee River. Numerous acts, as late as 1889, have adjusted the size of Rhea County cutting out land to form the county of Meigs and parts of Hamilton County and moving individual farms into or out of adjoining counties.

The county was named for John A. Rhea, an early statesman who served as a delegate to the federal and state constitutional conventions, a U. S. Congressman and an

official holding various local government positions. Rhea was one of the founders of Blount College, later to become the University of Tennessee.

Washington: The beginning of Rhea County

Early development of the county was in the area adjacent to the Tennessee River in a planned town named Washington. The town, which was established in 1812, was the first seat of county government. Tennessee Academy, incorporated by an act of 1809 of the state legislature, opened in Washington in 1818, providing a classical curriculum to students throughout the area. Monmouth Presbyterian Church, organized in 1820, constructed the first church building, which was shared with members

of other denominations who settled in Washington.

President Andrew Jackson held a land grant in Washington.

Judge David Campbell, an early resident of Washington, was a

celebrated Revolutionary War veteran whose leadership led to a prominent judicial career, serving as a Superior Judge of the State of Franklin, the Territory South of the Ohio River and the Supreme Court



of Tennessee.

At the time of his death in 1824, Campbell was preparing for a move west to accept President James Madison's appointment to become Superior Court Judge of the Southwest Territory in present day Mississippi.

A historic roadside marker in Washington designates the place of burial of Judge Campbell.

The Civil War was both divisive and destructive to Rhea County. Military records indicate that a large majority of Rhea County's enlisted men fought for the Confederacy. However, from 1863 until the end of the war, the county was under the control of Union troops. Productive farms in the Tennessee Valley were plundered by troops seeking food. Buildings were burned. Neighbors were divided in their political loyalties.

A group of young women in Washington organized a military company called The Spartans.

This female company of Confederate sympathizers was not involved in combat but rather provided food, enemy-troop information and encouragement to family and friends.

The Union army, tired of The Spartans' activities, arrested the company and had them tried in Chattanooga.

The Union judge



Rhea County was named for John Rhea, above, a statesman and U.S. Congressman.

ordered the women to disband and to take an oath of allegiance to the country. The same judge ordered the arresting officers to provide a meal for the women and return them to Rhea County.

The judge further reprimanded the officers for their frivolous actions in arresting the women.

The town of Washington, which had served the county as the center of government, commerce, education and culture during the early and middle 18th century, exhibited the ravages of war and defeat following the Civil War.

Reconstruction in Rhea County was greatly affected by the route of

the Cincinnati Southern Railroad.

The laying of the tracks through the valley towards Chattanooga completely bypassed Washington and ran instead through the area where the county's three incorporated towns developed.

Washington, once thriving and prosperous, never recovered from the devastation. The town was never rebuilt. Today, only a memorial monument along Highway 30 gives any evidence of the existence of the bustling town of Washington of the 1800's.

Spring City

In the mid 1800's, Spring City, located in the

northern part of the county, was a sparsely populated farming community called Walnut Grove.

The fertile land attracted settlers who expanded the development of the area and changed the name of the settlement to Spring City. The name may have been chosen because of nearby Rhea Springs, which provided water for the area.

Regularly scheduled stops by the railroad began in Spring City in 1880. The convenient transportation provided an efficient means of exporting agricultural products.

The work of Spring City farmers was an important part of the growing Rhea County strawberry industry. This area became a national leader in the production of strawberries, reporting annual exports as high as \$500,000.

Several industrial operations also enjoyed the benefits of the rail service.

Lumber, tanbark, lime, flour and furniture were exports of the area.

Spring City Cannery, Spring City Hosiery Mill and Southern Silk Mill were all significant employers in the development of the area.

The construction of Watts Bar Dam by the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1940's marked the highpoint of economic

growth for the Spring City area.

The abundance of jobs and the influx of new families greatly impacted the development of the area.

Flood control, electricity production and recreational sites were benefits of the completion of the dam.

Today, many enjoy camping and fishing on the lakes and shorelines throughout the Watts Bar area.

Residents profit financially from the business opportunities provided by the lakes, rivers and shores.

Dayton

The history of Dayton began with the 1820 purchase of 60 acres of land by



Downtown Spring City is pictured above in the mid-20th century.



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Rhea County Historical and Genealogical Society

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Rhea County History

Meetings are 3rd Sunday of January, March, May, July, September and November at the Rhea County Courthouse at 2:30pm.

Massachusetts native, William R. Smith and the development of a settlement mentioned in 1835 records as Smith's Crossroads.

Again, the railroad is credited with being a major influence in the growth of the area.

In the 1870's, railroad officials identified the depot stop as Sequatchie. The locals balked, changing the name instead to Dayton.

Growth of the Dayton area led to the decision by the county's residents to move the seat of county government from Washington to Dayton.

Rail traffic trumped riverboat transportation, further reducing the prominence of Washington. Additionally, Washington never recovered from its devastation during the Civil War.

Rail service was important to the Dayton Coal and Iron

Company, an early industry in the Dayton area. Financial investments from English and Scottish entrepreneurs purchased land rich with natural resources needed for the production of pig iron.

Begun in the late 1800's the company employed as many as 2,400 individuals. In 1889, the Chattanooga Times reported a daily payroll of over \$20,000 for the company's operations.

Labor disputes, mining accidents and deaths of major investors were some of the many difficulties that led to bankruptcy, sale and eventual closure of the industry that had provided significant growth to the Dayton area.

A remaining company building was later remodeled as a restaurant. Customers at Fehn's 1891 House can see the original

chalk rail and stage used by employees' children when the restaurant was a parochial school.

Agriculture was also important to the town's economy. Rich land in the Dayton area grew large crops of strawberries. The town designated itself as the "Strawberry Capital of the World."

Beginning in 1948, the Dayton Chamber of Commerce has sponsored the annual Tennessee Strawberry Festival to celebrate the harvest. Tomatoes, apples, melons and garden vegetables are dominant crops today.

The manufacturing industry has been an important part of the area's economy.

Textiles, polymers, furniture and recreational vehicle components are among major production industries.



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Graysville

Today's municipality in the southern part of the county began as a small settlement of farmers.

The complexion of the settlement was changed by the operation of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad through Graysville, so named for an early settler, Billy Gray.

Three distinctive communities emerged in Graysville.

The Fox heirs opened a coal mine on family property. Though the company changed owners several times, the mining community provided employment and a way of life for many residents until the 1940's.

Advent Town was settled and populated by members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In addition to the church, an academy serving both local and boarding students and a large sanitarium were operated in the Adventist community.

The third area was downtown Graysville. In earlier days, the town included a state bank, a post office, train depot, a large brick school, hotel, drugstore, barber shop, restaurant, hosiery mill, doctor's office and several churches.

A short line, which local residents called the "dinky-track," provided daily transportation between Graysville and Dayton.

Two personalities stand out among Graysville's many residents.

Curly Fox (1910-1995) was celebrated as an American old-time country fiddler. Live performances throughout the country, radio and television shows and numerous records all showcased his musical talents. He and his wife, Texas Ruby, were

members of The Grand Ole Opry.

The second, Staff Sgt. Clifford Hambrick, was a highly decorated soldier whose heroic actions in the World War II invasion of North Africa reportedly helped to turn the tide for the Allies.

Trail of Tears

Rhea County played a role in the dark period of American history known as the Trail of Tears.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 declared the federal government's intent to move Native Americans off of their homelands east of the Mississippi. Despite what appeared to be a favorable ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, which would have allowed the Indians to retain their land, soldiers forced the Natives out of their homes and into stockades, where they were held in preparation for the relocation.

Many Cherokees left Red Clay, Tenn., in Bradley County for the devastating journey west.

One of the first challenges was the crossing of the Tennessee River at Blythes Ferry, an established point for transportation across the river.

William Blythes, a landowner and businessman with Cherokee ancestry, and his Cherokee wife had established the ferry in 1809.

A historic marker on Highway 60 acknowledges the importance of Blythes Ferry, replaced in 1994 by a bridge, in moving the Cherokees across the River.

Although they were not required to move, the Blythes family of Rhea County eventually joined Smith's Crossroads, which would become Dayton, in 1838

where several Cherokees were buried.

Morgan Springs on Walden's Ridge was identified as an overnight camp for Cherokees and soldiers.

Signs on Highway 60, Highway 27 and Highway 30 trace the route of the Trail of Tears through Rhea County.

Grandview Normal Institute

Grandview Academy was incorporated by the State of Tennessee in 1881 for the stated purpose of "being the intellectual and moral education and improvement of the youth of the land."

At the invitation of Grandview residents, representatives from the American Missionary Association arrived in 1884 to assume their responsibilities for operating the new educational institution at Grandview, a settlement on Walden's Ridge in the northern part of Rhea County.

The educational institution gained the reputation for providing high quality education in an outstanding academic setting.

A three-story structure, built in 1895, housed classrooms, a library, study hall and dormitory rooms, providing necessary facilities for boarding and local students.

Numerous fires in the school's wooden structures heated with wood-burning stoves resulted in building and rebuilding on the 154-acre campus in order to provide adequate facilities. Graduates of the school were prepared for immediate acceptance as students at the University of Tennessee.

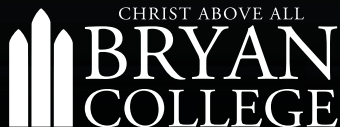
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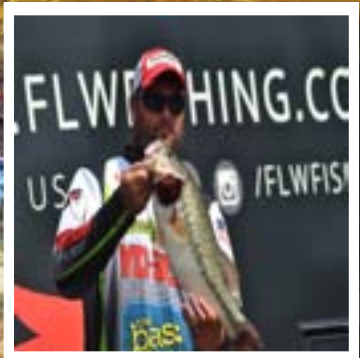
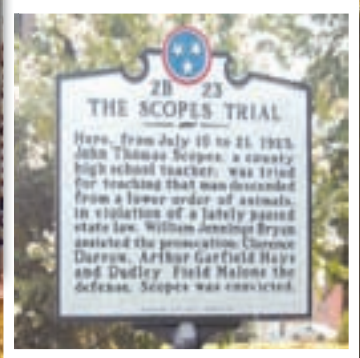


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The historic Scopes Trial drew large crowds to Dayton in 1925. Today, crowds still flock to Dayton each year for the Scopes Trial Play & Festival held each July in the same courthouse where the historic trial took place.

The name of the school was changed in 1887 to Grandview Normal Institute in order to more appropriately identify it as a place for training teachers, Christian workers and leaders in the educational field.

A large number of the institute's graduates became teachers in Rhea County public schools.

The American Missionary Association continued to operate the school until 1919 and continued their financial support until 1925, the year of the last graduating class.

Educational opportunities for local students were made available by the growth of public schools in Rhea

County.

A historic road sign marker on Highway 68 in the community of Grandview identifies the location and importance of Grandview Normal Institute in the county's history.

Today, a drive up the mountain to the Grandview community provides many car pullouts allowing opportunities for seeing the breath-taking view of the valley and its numerous waterways.

1925 Scopes Trial

A few hot July days during the summer of 1925 produced international renown for the small southeastern

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town of Dayton.

The Scopes Trial brought world famous lawyers, numerous journalists and spectators to the town.

The history of the trial's beginning is an example of the local people's ingenuity in responding to problems.

In the early 1900s the economy of the area depended heavily on the Dayton Coal and Iron Company. Taking ore from the mines in the Morgantown area provided jobs for many local residents. Additional jobs were available in the company's offices, the furnace and foundry.

A rail system that

connected the mines to the foundry and on to the Tennessee River at Bell's Landing employed

more men as the iron ore was changed from the raw product to a saleable good. In 1890, the population of Rhea County was growing and the area was thriving.

By 1925, mining operations were disrupted by explosions in the mines resulting in several deaths, falling market prices and labor strikes. Dayton Coal and Iron Company had changed owners, and efforts to keep the company afloat were failing.

The population of the area continued to decline

as families moved away looking for work.

Mining officials and community leaders were looking for ways to boost the sagging economy.

An event in Nashville during 1925 seemed to provide a possible answer.

In February of that year, the Tennessee state legislature had passed the Butler Act, forbidding the teaching of evolution in the public schools.

John Butler, a legislator from Middle Tennessee had become concerned about students being taught scientific theory, which contradicted his understanding of biblical teaching. Soon after the legislation was signed by

the governor, the American Civil Liberties Union advertised financial support for an individual who would test the law. George Rappleyea, a mining official, suggested that Dayton be the place for the test case of the Butler Act. A trial would bring journalists and visitors to the town with tourist dollars for immediate use.

Perhaps the publicity given to the town would show the area's strengths and convince an entrepreneur to consider an investment in Dayton.

Historical accounts indicate that it was not a concern over the



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creation versus evolution that brought the Scope's Trial to Dayton.

When the trial came to Dayton, with it came William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow, two nationally known figures of the day.

John T. Scopes, a first-year teacher at Rhea Central High, agreed to be prosecuted for the teaching of evolution.

It is questionable whether Scopes actually taught evolution since he was primarily a math teacher, and the idea for the test case came after the ending of the school year; nonetheless, Scopes admitted that he had taught evolution and was convicted of breaking the law.

It was Mr. Darrow's intent to appeal the conviction in hopes of bringing about a change in

the law. A technicality in court procedure stemming from the judge setting Scopes's fine led to the case being thrown out.

The days following the trial had an even greater impact on the future of Dayton. William Jennings Bryan died in Dayton during an afternoon nap.

The people of Dayton had developed a love for Mr. Bryan and wanted to memorialize him. Through the efforts of many across the nation, a school based on the teaching of Christian principles was established in Dayton. The school enrolled its first class in 1930.

Bryan College became the economic boost the leaders of 1925 were seeking. The 2005 economic impact statement of the college reported an annual impact of \$40 million on the

economy of the area resulting from the operation of the educational institution. The establishment of Bryan College, a direct result of the trial, has greatly impacted the community economically, educationally and culturally, beginning in the 1930's and continuing through today.

The mining operations of Dayton Coal and Iron ceased. A portion of the company's land was given to the State of Tennessee and became a part of Laurel-Snow State Natural Area, a scenic area providing beautiful hiking trails.

The Rhea County Courthouse, site of the trial, was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1976 by the National Park Service. A museum in the basement of the courthouse features personalities, events and memorabilia of the Scopes Trial.

The courtroom used for the 1925 trial is available to visitors when court is not in session. In addition, the museum has rotating exhibits of various aspects of local history.

The courthouse lawn is the hub for the annual Scopes Festival, featuring a courtroom play, local tours, folk music and related booths.

Held during the third weekend of July, the festival is an event which encourages celebration of the area's history and heritage.

Dayton's New Deal Art

A City of Dayton municipal building located on Main Street contains an art treasure from the New Deal cultural arts program of the 1930's and '40's.

In an attempt to revive the nation's depression-ridden economy, numerous types of employment were funded. The federal government's fine arts project of the Works Progress Administration authorized the creation of murals for post offices, courthouses and other public buildings.

Commissioned art work for public buildings highlighted scenes of the region, historical events significant to the area or New Deal projects.

A mural painted by Bertram Hartman in 1937 can be seen on the east wall of the municipal building, previously the Dayton Post Office. The artist depicted on canvas the view from Johnson's Bluff on Walden's Ridge in Rhea County.

The scene of picnickers overlooking the fields of Cranmore Cove with Dayton in the distance captured the look of life in Rhea County during the 1930's.

While many of the New Deal murals have been destroyed during expansions and renovations, Dayton has preserved its art treasure as a testament to the rich and diverse heritage of the area.



JOHN SCOPES

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Tennessee Highway Patrol
634-6898

Graysville Police Department
136 Harrison Ave.,
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