

Recommended East Tennessee Resources Part 1: Some I Just Cannot Live Without

by Paula Gammell

Whenever a new issue or question arises there's a certain few sources I turn to first, almost automatically, because I know from experience I am likely to find the answer, it is likely to be correct, and it is likely to be documented.

Here, in no particular order, are some of them.

You can be sure anything Byron Sistler and Associates compiled is top quality both in accuracy and ease of use. I find these most useful:

- *Tennessee Wills and Administrations, 1779-1861*, published in 1990, is a statewide alphabetical index to all the wills. I refer to this book at least once a day.

- *Early East Tennessee Marriages*, in two volumes, published in 1990, is an East Tennessee alphabetical list of all early marriages. (They also published Middle and West Tennessee marriages.)

- *Index to Early Tennessee Tax Lists*, published in 1977, is a statewide alphabetical list to many tax lists.

- *Early East Tennessee Taxpayers*, compiled by Pollyanna Creekmore, was published in 1980 by the Southern Historical Press. These lists (unlike those in the Sistlers' book, above) are presented by county with a master index thereto.

Of all the published tax list books, I refer to this book by far the most. It is helpful to use in conjunction with the Sistlers' tax book, but if you must choose one, choose this one, primarily for Miss Creekmore's plentiful footnotes. For instance, she included over 200 useful footnotes for Knox County's 1806 tax list.

- *Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee, From Its Earliest Settlement Up to the Year 1796, Including the Boundaries of the State*, by John Haywood, first published in 1823, is among the earliest histories of this area – and the one I turn to first.

Haywood, attorney and later judge, was intimately involved in North Carolina politics and government before he moved to Tennessee about 1802. So understand that this book is heavy on early history from

North Carolina's point of view, and all-too-scant on history from our point of view, until about 1802.

There *are* a few mistakes in this book, sorry to say. However, I have found that most of them he made prior to his own knowledge. For example, the date he attributed to the Boyd's Creek expedition is off by a year. This mistake becomes understandable when you realize that Haywood was quite busy in the North Carolina legislature at the time.

Haywood's history has been reprinted numerous times. The version with the index added is a must.

- *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, by Samuel Cole Williams, was first printed in 1924. A revised edition was printed in 1933 which was reprinted in 1993 by the Overmountain Press.

Samuel Cole Williams was a prolific writer and did, generally speaking, a quality job. Although a few of his works fall short, this is one of the best histories of Franklin that I know of.

Unfortunately, the only claims not extensively, and informatively, footnoted are the biographies, of both pro- and anti-Franklinites. Also, the bibliography, while long, falls short in its completeness - but you can eventually figure out most of it.

- *Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, by J.G.M. Ramsey, first published in 1853.

Actually, I include this book here primarily to caution you about it. Somehow this has come to be regarded as the definitive source for early Tennessee history – and that's unfortunate because it contains numerous errors. Therefore the only version you should use is the one reprinted first in 1967 by the East Tennessee Historical Society, which includes over 25 pages of corrections and annotations to Ramsey's mistakes. Be aware that all the errors aren't addressed, though. So use this book, but with caution.

- And one of the best resources is "East Tennessee Roots" Magazine! Why not subscribe?