

HOLSTON TREATY STATUE
ON VOLUNTEER LANDING



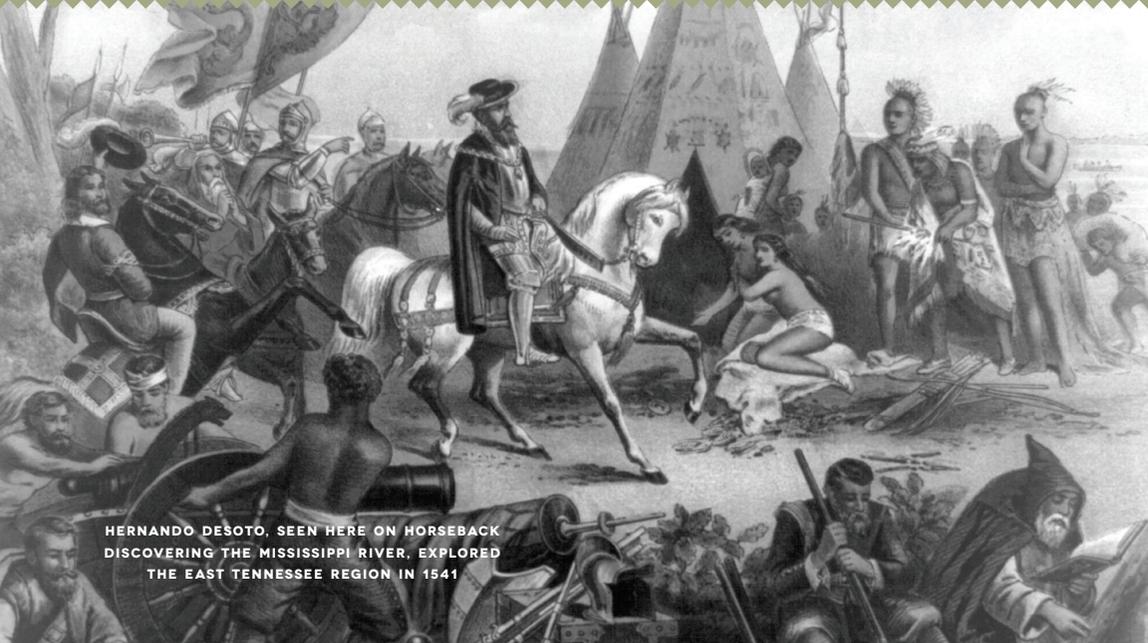
A BRIEF HISTORY OF KNOXVILLE

Before the United States, the Tennessee country was the mysterious wild place beyond the mountains, associated with Native American tribes. Prehistoric Indians of the Woodland culture settled in the immediate Knoxville area as early as 800 A.D. Much of their story is unknown. They left two mysterious mounds within what's now Knoxville's city limits.

Some centuries later, Cherokee cultures developed in the region, concentrated some 40 miles downriver along what became known as the Little Tennessee. The Cherokee probably knew the future Knoxville area mainly as a hunting ground.

Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto ventured into the area in 1541 during his famous expedition that culminated in the

European discovery of the Mississippi River. Historians surmise he came right down the north shore of the Tennessee River, directly through the future plot of Knoxville. DeSoto began 250 years of colonial-era claims by Spain, France, and England, none of whom effectively controlled the area. British explorers made their way into the region in the early 1700s, when the future Tennessee was counted as part of the Atlantic seaboard colony of North Carolina. Fort Loudoun, built in 1756 about 50 miles southwest of the future site of Knoxville, was an ill-fated attempt to establish a British fort during the French and Indian War. Hardly three years after its completion, Cherokee besieged the fort, capturing or killing most of its inhabitants.



HERNANDO DESOTO, SEEN HERE ON HORSEBACK
DISCOVERING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, EXPLORED
THE EAST TENNESSEE REGION IN 1541

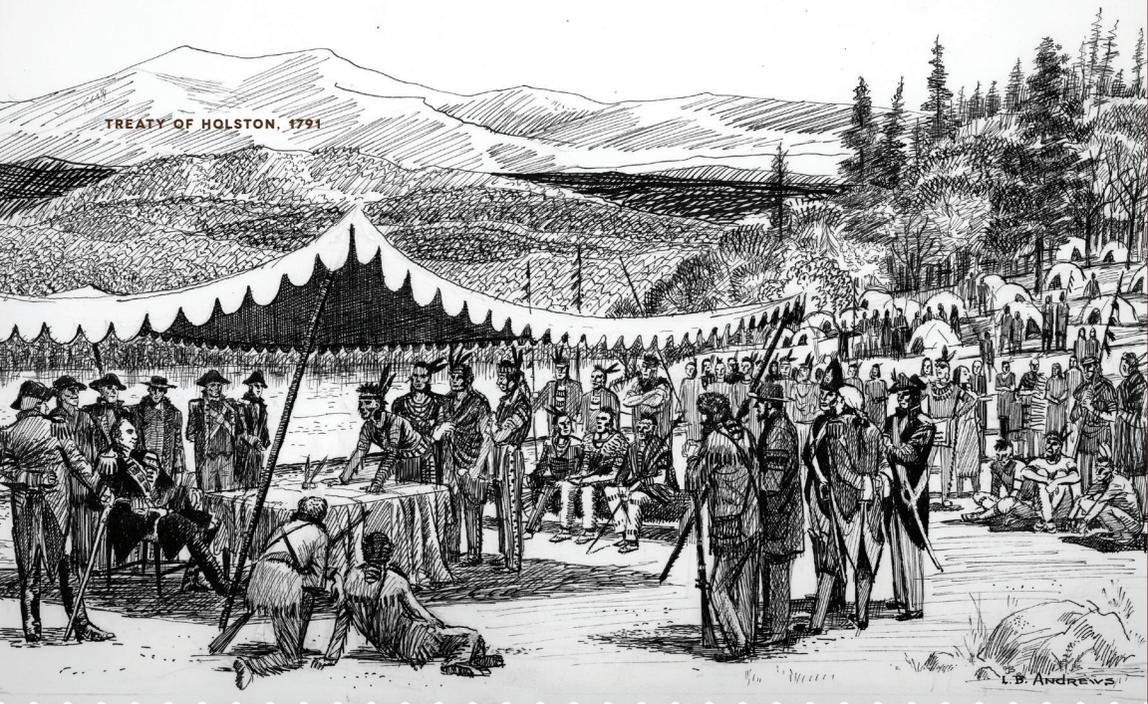
1775

REVOLUTIONARY WAR

1780
JOHN SEVIER LEADS
SETTLERS TO VICTORY
IN BATTLE OF KING'S
MOUNTAIN

1783

1786
JAMES WHITE
BUILDS HIS FORT
AND MILL



Spain maintained an interest in the Tennessee country for some years even after that, but never established a permanent presence. Neither did the British, though several familiar local place names, including Holston, Cumberland, and Loudoun, are remnants of the British colonial era.

Knoxville's first permanent settlers were a few families led by Revolutionary War veterans, notably James White. A former

militia captain from a rural area just north of Charlotte, N.C., White (1747–1821) brought his veteran's land-grant credit to this newly opened area, nominally controlled by North Carolina.

He first settled in the area in 1785, and the following year he settled along the limestone plateau that became downtown Knoxville, and built a fort and mill along a creek first known as White's Creek, later as First Creek. His extended family, as well as several other

pioneers, created a crude settlement here. For a time, White was associated with an abortive attempt to found a new state called Franklin.

In 1791, William Blount, a Revolutionary veteran from eastern North Carolina and a signer of the U.S. Constitution, was appointed governor of the Southwestern Territory—the



WILLIAM BLOUNT,
SIGNER OF THE
U.S. CONSTITUTION

region not yet known as Tennessee, and formerly considered the far-west part of North Carolina.

As a representative of President George Washington, he came to White's Fort in 1791 to negotiate the Treaty of the Holston with a remarkable convention of about 41 Cherokee leaders

to determine the future of U.S.-Cherokee relations, at least in the near term. One of several treaties of the era, it was ultimately ineffectual, but may have allayed bloodshed for a time.

Blount soon opted to establish his permanent capital at White's Fort. It was near the Cherokee settlements, important for trading and negotiations, but not so near that the town could be destroyed without warning. The new capital's location on top of a bluff provided a defensive advantage

and rendered it safe from flooding by the unpredictable river. He named it Knoxville, in honor of his immediate superior and a



REVOLUTIONARY
WAR GENERAL
HENRY KNOX

former general in the Revolution, Secretary of War Henry Knox.

Cooperating with Blount's plans for the place, James White, with substantial help from his son-in-law Charles McClung, a surveyor from Pennsylvania, laid out a city of sorts on the flat top of the bluff. Their

lottery, or allotment, of these 64 plots in October, 1791, would be remembered as the founding of Knoxville.

Blount recruited amenities like a printing press, run by George Roulstone, originally from the Boston area, who printed the territory's first law books and a newspaper called the *Knoxville Gazette*.

For the next five years, the territorial legislature met at Knoxville. Both white settlers and Native Americans—who were closer to an even match in the 1790s—had ulterior motives, and broke treaties. White soldiers under John Sevier relentlessly attacked Cherokee villages, ostensibly to defend white settlements.

