

John Sevier Chapter

The Life of John Sevier Time Line

Including Family Origins & World Events, 1506 - 1815

(Thanks to Lance Sevier and JohnSevier.com for this Time Line)

In 1780, during the American Revolution, John Sevier and Isaac Shelby, leading 240 militiamen from Sullivan and Washington counties in North Carolina (now Tennessee), joined other colonial militiamen at Sycamore Shoals.

These "Overmountain Men" marched south to attack Maj. Patrick Ferguson's Corps, which was protecting the left flank of Lord Cornwallis' army. Known as the Battle of Kings Mountain, it was the turning point against Britain's southern campaign during the Revolution.

- 1506 -** Sevier Family Origin: (St.) Francis of noble parentage was born, 7 April 1506, in the castle of Xavier, in Navarre, in the French Pyrenees. Educated at the College of St. Barbe, Paris, Francis was one of founders of the Order of the Jesuits and Missionary to the East (Japan and many of the Islands). He baptized ten thousand natives in a single month in the little kingdom of Travancore (Turner, Francis Marion, *Life of General John Sevier*).
- 1552 -** (St.) Francis (Xavier) died on way to undertake a mission to China (Turner).
- 1622 -** St. Francis (generally known as the "Apostle of the Indies") canonized by the Roman Church (Turner).
- 1685 -** Some of the family of St. Francis Xavier, living at Xavier, and bearing the name of the town as a family name, had embraced the Protestant religion, and one of them, a devout young Huguenot, Don Jaun Xavier, left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) by Louis XIV. He settled in London, gradually changed the family name to Sevier, pronounced like the English adjective "severe," and his first name to John. He married a London girl named Smith. This was the grandfather of General John Sevier (Folmsbee, Stanley J. *John Sevier Empire Builder*).
- 1702 -** Valentine Sevier the Immigrant, father of General John Sevier, was born in London. The date of his birth was estimated by his grandsons as about 1702 (Sevier, Cora Bales and Nancy S. Madden, *Sevier Family History*), making him 101 years old at the time of his death in 1803. Records show that a John Xavier married a Mary Smith on August 6th, 1708 at Hoxton Chapel in Cripplegate, London. If these were Valentine's parents, it is probable that Valentine was born sometime after 1708.
- 1740 -** Valentine Sevier the Immigrant, with his brother William ran away to America (from England) arriving in Baltimore. He pushed on west into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where he married Joanna Goade and became a tavern keeper, Indian trader, and land speculator.

- 1745 -** General John Sevier was born near Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Virginia, September 23, 1745, near the current site of Newmarket, Virginia. He was the first son of Valentine Sevier, the immigrant and Joanna Goade. There would eventually be seven children, five boys and two girls.
- 1750's -** General John Sevier was a student for some time in the academy at Staunton, Virginia. Acquired a good knowledge of English, as his subsequent correspondence shows. During this time at Staunton, he fell into a mill race one day and would have been drowned had he not been rescued by two ladies, sisters, one of whom was later the wife of Governor Matthews of Georgia. As long as he lived, whenever opportunity offered, he showed his gratitude to these ladies for their rescue of him in his youth (Turner).
- 1761 -** (General) John Sevier Married, at the early age of sixteen, Sarah Hawkins, a girl of a good family. One of her sisters married John Crocket the father of David Crockett. They had a farm in Shenandoah County, Virginia (Folmsbee).
- 1771 -** (General) John Sevier, "Lured to the Holston Valley by tales of the good land brought back by traders. He probably visited the settlements on the Watauga River in 1771 and 1772 soon after they had been made by William Bean and his companions from Virginia and James Robertson and his fellow "Regulators" from the Piedmont region of North Carolina, and at about the time Jacob Brown led his group of settlers to the banks of the Nolichucky. These settlers had to negotiate a lease of their lands from the Cherokee Indians who claimed this country although their towns were some distance away along the Little Tennessee River" (Folmsbee).
- 1773 -** John served as a Captain of the Colonial Militia under then Col. George Washington in Governor Dunmore's war against the indians, 1773 (and also in 1774) (Folmsbee).
- In December he moved with his family, his parents, and his brothers and their families to settle on the Holston River in Tennessee country. He and his wife Sarah Hawkins had seven children, Valentine the youngest was born in 1773 and just a few month old at the time of the move. They settled north of the Holston near their friends, the Shelbys. This northern settlement was governed as a part of Virginia until 1779 (Sevier and Madden).
- 1775 -** (General) John Sevier moved to the Watauga River probably in 1775 and a few years later to the south bank of the Nolichucky (River) within the bounds of the present Greene County, thus acquiring the nickname "Chucky Jack". He became the clerk of the Watauga Association, and rose quickly to leadership not only in governmental affairs but also in military defense. April 1775, the Revolutionary War began. June 1775, General George Washington takes command of the Continental armies. The Watauga Association changed its name to the Washington District and replaced its court of five with a Committee of Safety of thirteen members, of which (General John) Sevier was one of the most prominent.
- 1777-1780 -** Served as county clerk and district judge, 1777-1780

1780 - Sarah Hawkins Sevier died shortly after the birth of their 10th child, Spring 1780. John married Catherine "Bonny Kate" Sherrill, August 14, 1780.

September 25, 1780, John Sevier, two of his sons, his younger brothers Robert and Valentine, and more than 300 of his neighbors gathered at Sycamore Shoals in what is now Tennessee. These Overmountain men mustered there with patriots and soldiers from Virginia and North Carolina, about a thousand in all.

They intended to fight for the newly formed United States, and to answer a message sent by British Major Patrick Ferguson, "that if they did not desist from their opposition to the British arms, and take protection under his standard, he would march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword." On October 7th, they met Ferguson and his loyalist forces at King's Mountain South Carolina, where the patriots won an overwhelming victory. It was a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

1783 - Moved to the South bank of the Nolichucky River a place he called "Mount Pleasant," Fall 1783. The Nolichucky River is within the bounds of present day Greene County. It's from this river that John Sevier acquired the nickname "Chucky Jack."

1784-1888 - Many of the North Carolina citizens living on the western side of the Smoky Mountains and south of the Ohio river (Tennessee Valley) gathered to organize this territory as the State of Franklin and petitioned Congress for admittance to the United States of America. John Sevier was elected Governor of "the proclaimed" State of Franklin in March 1785. The Franklin Legislature held their final meeting in Sevier County in 1788.

1789 - John Sevier was elected as a Democrat from North Carolina to the First Congress. During this year, George Washington began his two term tenure as President of the United States, serving until March of 1797.

1791 - Appointed as Brigadier General of militia for the Washington District of the Territory South of the Ohio, February, 1791.

1796-1801 - First Governor of Tennessee, 1796-1801.

1798 - Appointed Brigadier General of the Provisional Army, 1798.

1803-1809 - Governor of Tennessee (again) from 1803-1809.

1811-1815 - General John Sevier was elected to the House of Representatives, from Tennessee, serving from March 4, 1811 until his death. He served in the 12th, 13th and 14th congresses. Records of his participation in early US politics can be found in the [*Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*](#), [*Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1789-1873*](#), and the [*Journal of the executive proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America, 1789-1873*](#).

The Library of Congress has these collections and many others available online, and

searchable, through it's [*A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: US Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1873*](#) home page.

- 1815 -** General John Sevier dies near Fort Decatur, Alabama while fulfilling a presidential appointment as commissioner to determine the boundary between Georgia and the Creek territory in Alabama. He is buried at Fort Decatur (Sevier and Madden).

- 1889 -** The body of General John Sevier is brought from Fort Decatur, Alabama to the courthouse lawn, at Knoxville, Tennessee and reinterred beneath a monument erected in his honor, June 15, 1889. A special train carrying the body, was escorted by the governors of Alabama and Tennessee. An estimated 30,000 people attended the ceremony (Turner).