



November 25, 2024

Court System - Historical Notes

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Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee
County Technical Assistance Service
226 Anne Dallas Dudley Boulevard, Suite 400
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
615.532.3555 phone
615.532.3699 fax
www.ctas.tennessee.edu

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Board of Jury Commissioners - Jurors

The following act once affected jurors or boards of jury commissioners in Bledsoe County, but is no longer operative.

1. Private Acts of 1933, Chapter 261, created a board of jury commissioners for Bledsoe County to consist of three members, to be appointed by the judges having criminal jurisdiction, who would be discreet free-holders, not lawyers or county officials, who had no cases pending or interest in any, who would serve for two years. Vacancies would be filled in the same way. If one member should become disabled, the other two would carry on. The members must take the oath prescribed in the act, and would select their own chairman. The clerk of the criminal or circuit court would be the clerk for the board who would likewise be sworn. The commissioners would select a list of names equal to one-eighth of the number of votes cast in the preceding presidential election but would not be more than 1000 or less than 250. The clerk would provide a suitable book on which their names would be entered and then the entire list verified by all members of the commission. The names would also be placed on scrolls, or cards, and placed in a jury box which would be locked and sealed and not opened except in the presence of the commission or in open court on order of the judge. At least fifteen days before the term of court began, the box would be unlocked and a child under the age of ten would draw names in the number ordered by the court or, equal to the number of jurors required, which would be presented to the judge in open court. Five days before court opened, the list would be delivered to the sheriff who would summon the jurors to court. They would be separated into grand and petit juries and none could be excused except by the judge.

Chancery Court

The following acts form an outline of the development of equity jurisdiction in Bledsoe County, although they no longer have the force of law since they have either been superseded by general law, repealed, or failed to receive local ratification. Also referenced below are acts which repeal prior law without providing new substantive provisions.

1. Public Acts of 1822 (2nd Sess.), Chapter 13, stated that there shall be held by one of the judges of the supreme court of errors and appeals a court of equity at the present places of holding the supreme court at least once each year in the cities of Rogersville, Knoxville, Charlotte, at Sparta, on the second Monday in December, to which equitable causes in Bledsoe County would be assigned, and at Nashville and Columbia. Court would continue for two weeks or until the docket is finished, if that should occur sooner.
2. Public Acts of 1824, Chapter 14, Section 8, provided that the justices of the supreme court would make arrangements among themselves to hold the chancery court at least twice a year in each section of the state. The eastern part of the state included the courts at Greenville, Rogersville, Kingston, Carthage, Franklin, Columbia, Charlotte, and McMinnville. The counties of White, Warren, Franklin, Marion, and Bledsoe would file all suits in equity at McMinnville in Warren County where the terms of court would begin on the second Monday in June and December. Any transfer which would be in the best interests of the litigants could be effectuated under the authority of this act.
3. Public Acts of 1827, Chapter 79, divided Tennessee into two chancery divisions, the Eastern Division which included the courts held at Rogersville, Greeneville, Kingston, Carthage, and McMinnville, and the Western Division which was composed of the courts of chancery convening at Franklin, Columbia, Charlotte, Jackson, and Paris.
4. Public Acts of 1827, Chapter 88, Section 3, stated that the chancellor of the Eastern Division would hold courts of chancery at least twice a year in the cities mentioned above. The court at McMinnville for the counties of Franklin, White, Warren, Marion, and Bledsoe, would begin on the third Monday in June and December.
5. Public Acts of 1835-36, Chapter 4, divided the state into three major chancery divisions with smaller districts included in each one. The act provided for three chancellors to be appointed for terms of eight years to hold these courts rather than for the justices of the supreme court to conduct them. The eighth district of the Eastern Division contained the counties of Bledsoe, Hamilton, Marion, and Rhea. Court would be held at Pikeville on the second Monday in June and December. This act organized the chancery courts after the 1835 Constitution was adopted.
6. Acts of 1837-38, Chapter 116, Section 12, established different terms for the chancery court in

- the Eastern Division. For the eighth district at Pikeville the court would meet on the second Monday in March and September.
7. Acts of 1839-40, Chapter 21, left the meeting dates for the chancery court at Pikeville on the second Monday in March and September but transferred these courts to the fourth district of the Eastern Division.
 8. Acts of 1843-44, Chapter 169, Section 2, stated that the chancery cases now pending in the chancery courts at Pikeville and Cleveland but which originated in Hamilton County may be transferred to the chancery court at Harrison in that county. The clerk and master of the two courts will transfer all records and transcripts to Harrison within forty days after being properly requested to do so.
 9. Acts of 1851-52, Chapter 308, declared that the citizens of Marion County may file their bills in chancery in the court at Pikeville in Bledsoe County, or at the court in Winchester in Franklin County, whichever may suit them.
 10. Acts of 1853-54, Chapter 38, Section 2, reset the starting dates for the chancery courts in several counties including Bledsoe County whose next term of court would begin on the first Wednesday after the first Monday in March in Pikeville.
 11. Acts of 1853-54, Chapter 54, created the fifth and sixth chancery divisions in Tennessee. The fifth division contained the chancery counts which met at Maryville, Kingston, Madisonville, Athens, Benton, Cleveland, Washington, Harrison, Pikeville, Jasper, Sparta, and Livingston. A chancellor who resided in that district would be appointed to serve until a chancellor could be elected by popular vote.
 12. Acts of 1855-56, Chapter 112, Section 3, changed the terms of the chancery courts in the 5th chancery division scheduling the court at Pikeville to begin its terms on the third Monday of March and September.
 13. Public Acts of 1857-58, Chapter 88, divided the state into the Eastern, Middle, Western, fourth, fifth, and sixth chancery divisions. The fifth division consisted of the counties of Polk, McMinn, Bradley, Hamilton, Marion, Cumberland, White, Overton, Fentress, Scott, Morgan, Roane, Meigs, Rhea, Blount, Monroe, and Bledsoe whose courts would open in Pikeville on the third Monday in March and September.
 14. Private Acts of 1857-58, Chapter 93, Section 4, created a new chancery court section for Cumberland County and directed the clerks and masters of the courts in Washington, Pikeville, Sparta, Jamestown, and Montgomery who had causes pending in their courts which originated in Cumberland County to transfer the same with all the records therein to Crossville.
 15. Public Acts of 1870, Chapter 32, reorganized the lower court system of the state into twelve chancery districts. The third chancery district contained the counties of Polk, McMinn, Meigs, Rhea, Cumberland, Bledsoe, Sequatchie, Marion, Hamilton, Bradley, and the special court at Chattanooga.
 16. Public Acts of 1870, Chapter 47, scheduled the starting dates for the chancery courts of all the counties in the state. Bledsoe County would open its chancery court terms on the first Monday in April, and the second Monday in October.
 17. Public Acts of 1870-71, Chapter 40, changed the terms of court for all the counties in the third chancery division. Bledsoe would start the chancery courts on the Thursday after the third Monday in March and September at Pikeville and all outstanding process would be made to conform to the change.
 18. Public Acts of 1883, Chapter 34, rescheduled the terms of the chancery courts in all the counties of the third chancery division changing Bledsoe County's Courts to the second Monday in April and October.
 19. Acts of 1885, Extra Session, Chapter 20, reassembled the entire lower judicial system into eleven chancery divisions. The third chancery division had in it the counties of Bradley, Polk, Rhea, Marion, McMinn, Hamilton, James, Monroe, Meigs, Bledsoe, Sequatchie, Van Buren, Coffee, and Grundy. Courts would meet in Pikeville on the second Monday in April and October. This act was part of the litigation in the case of *Flynn v. State*, 203 Tenn. 341, 313 S.W.2d 249 (1958).
 20. Public Acts of 1887, Chapter 13, stated that the chancellor of the third chancery division would also hold the special terms of the circuit court in the counties of the third chancery division. Section 8 provided for two terms of the chancery court in Bledsoe and Sequatchie counties. Section 10 fixed the terms for all the counties. In Bledsoe County there would be two terms a year to be held at the same time as the circuit courts and any be presided over by the circuit

judge.

21. Public Acts of 1889, Chapter 13, changed the opening dates for the terms of the chancery court in the third chancery division with Bledsoe County being assigned to the second Monday in April and October.
22. Acts of 1891 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 6, moved Franklin County from the fourth to the third chancery division and changed court terms in Hamilton, Sequatchie, and Bledsoe counties. Bledsoe would commence chancery court on the first Monday in March and September with all process being made to conform to those dates.
23. Public Acts of 1899, Chapter 427, reorganized the entire lower judicial system in every county of the state. Ten chancery divisions were created of which the third division contained the counties of Franklin, Rhea, Bradley, James, Marion, Coffee, Bledsoe, Sequatchie, Grundy, McMinn, Moore, Warren, Monroe, Polk, Meigs, and Hamilton. Chancery court for Bledsoe County would convene in Pikeville on the first Monday in March and September.
24. Private Acts of 1911, Chapter 435, created the twelfth chancery division out of the third chancery division by removing all the counties in the third chancery division to the twelfth division except Hamilton County which would thereafter constitute the third chancery division alone. All the courts would continue to meet at their currently assigned times. The governor would appoint a chancellor to serve until September 1, 1912, when the chancellor elected by the people would assume office.
25. Public Acts of 1931, Second Extra Session, Chapter 38, reorganized the state into fourteen chancery divisions. The twelfth division contained the counties of Rhea, McMinn, Warren, Sequatchie, Marion, Van Buren, Bradley, Meigs, Polk, Grundy, Coffee, Monroe, Franklin, and Bledsoe whose courts would take up their chancery docket on the first Monday in March and September.

Clerk and Master

The reference list below contains acts which once applied to the clerk and master in Bledsoe County. Also referenced below are acts which repeal prior law without providing new substantive provisions.

1. Private Acts of 1915, Chapter 671, stated that the clerk and master of the chancery court in Bledsoe County, identified by the use of the 1910 Federal Census figures, shall receive an annual salary of \$600.00 provided the clerk and master shall file a sworn, itemized statement with the county judge, or chairman, showing the amount of fees collected by that office. If the fees were less than the above salary, the county would make up the difference, but, if the fees were more than the salary, the clerk and master could retain them as his own.
2. Private Acts of 1929, Chapter 556, provided that the sheriff of Bledsoe County shall receive an annual salary of \$2,000.00, and the clerk and master of Bledsoe County shall be paid a yearly wage of \$1,000.00 out of the county treasury on the warrant of the county judge, or chairman. All fees collected in the offices would be reported quarterly and paid over to the county trustee as part of the county funds. This act shall in no way effect the amount allowed the sheriff for feeding and maintaining prisoners as they are fixed by law.

Circuit Court

The following acts were once applicable to the circuit court of Bledsoe County but now have no effect, having been repealed, superseded, or having failed to win local approval. Also referenced below are acts which repeal prior law without providing new substantive provisions.

1. Acts of 1809, First Session, Chapter 49, divided Tennessee into five judicial circuits. The second judicial circuit contained the counties of Cocke, Jefferson, Sevier, Blount, Knox, Anderson, Roane, Rhea, and Bledsoe whose courts met on the third Monday in March and September at the courthouse.
2. Acts of 1812, Chapter 68, Section 5, changed the starting dates for the terms of the circuit court in Rhea and Bledsoe County which went to the fourth Monday in March and September of each year.
3. Acts of 1817, Chapter 38, Section 14, was the act which created Morgan County and assigned it to the second judicial circuit and in Section 14 transferred Bledsoe County to the third judicial circuit.
4. Acts of 1817, Chapter 138, established the court dates for the terms of circuit courts in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth judicial circuits. The Bledsoe County Circuit Court would convene on the fourth Monday in February and August.
5. Public Acts of 1819, Chapter 72, created a new seventh judicial circuit assigning to it the counties

- of Roane, Rhea, Marion, Hamilton, McMinn, Monroe, and Bledsoe whose court would meet on the fourth Monday of March and September. The judge of the new circuit would be elected by the ballot of both houses of the general assembly.
6. Public Acts of 1823, Chapter 41, Section 6, made it lawful for the circuit judge who may hereafter preside over the circuit court of Bledsoe County to appoint a time for holding one, or more, special terms of the said court, for the purpose of trying the cases pending and, when the time may be fixed on for so doing, it shall be publicly announced during the regular term to all parties concerned.
 7. Private Acts of 1823, Chapter 63, stated that the circuit court which begins on Monday next in Bledsoe County shall continue in session for two weeks if the business before it is not finished sooner and the next March term shall likewise be held under the same conditions.
 8. Private Acts of 1827, Chapter 5, Section 2, changed the circuit court terms in Rhea, Marion, Hamilton, McMinn, Monroe, and Bledsoe counties. Bledsoe County was scheduled to start on the first Monday in April and October.
 9. Public Acts of 1829-30, Chapter 46, Section 2, stated that all appeals from the circuit courts of Bledsoe and Marion counties shall be returned to the supreme court at Sparta and be determined under the same rules and regulations as are other cases. Public Acts of 1829-30, Chapter 48, Section 2, does the same thing.
 10. Public Acts of 1835-36, Chapter 5, organized the lower judicial system of the state into eleven judicial circuits, and provided for three terms each year. The third judicial circuit was composed of the counties of Roane, Rhea, Meigs, Marion, Hamilton, McMinn, Monroe, and Bledsoe, where the courts would meet in Pikeville on the second Monday in March, July, and November.
 11. Public Acts of 1857-58, Chapter 95, created the sixteenth judicial circuit with the counties of White, Scott, Morgan, Cumberland, Marion, Sequatchie, Fentress, Overton, and Bledsoe in it. Bledsoe's circuit court terms were scheduled to begin on the fourth Monday in February, June, and October in Pikeville.
 12. Public Acts of 1857-58, Chapter 98, created sixteen judicial circuits for the state. The fifth circuit was made up of the counties of Cumberland, White, Sequatchie, Marion, Morgan, Scott, Fentress, Overton, and Bledsoe. The circuit court would begin in Pikeville on the first Monday in April, August, and December.
 13. Public Acts of 1870, Chapter 31, divided the state into fifteen regular, and one special, judicial circuits. The fourth judicial circuit was composed of the counties of McMinn, Polk, Meigs, Bradley, Rhea, Hamilton, Marion, Sequatchie, Bledsoe, and a special court in Chattanooga.
 14. Public Acts of 1870, Chapter 46, fixed the starting date for the terms of the circuit courts in all the counties of the state. Bledsoe County would begin the circuit court on the third Monday in February, June, and October.
 15. Public Acts of 1870, Chapter 106, changed court terms for some of the counties in the fourth judicial circuit but Bledsoe's courts would continue to start on the third Monday in February, June, and October.
 16. Public Acts of 1883, Chapter 34, Section 2, rearranged the schedules of the circuit courts in the fourth judicial circuit assigning Bledsoe County to the second Monday in March, July, and November.
 17. Acts of 1885, Extra Session, Chapter 20, reorganized the entire lower judicial system of the state, creating fourteen regular, and one special, judicial circuits. The fourth judicial circuit was made up of Bradley, Polk, Meigs, Rhea, Bledsoe, Sequatchie, Marion, Hamilton, McMinn, and James counties. Circuit court terms in Bledsoe County would commence on the second Monday in March, July, and November.
 18. Public Acts of 1887, Chapter 13, Section 11, set the terms of the circuit court in Bledsoe County to start on the first Monday in April, and the second Monday in September, holding only two terms, instead of three.
 19. Public Acts of 1889, Chapter 13, Section 3, changed the circuit court terms in the fourth judicial circuit authorizing three terms again for Bledsoe which begin on the third Monday in March, July, November, and all conflicting laws were repealed.
 20. Public Acts of 1889, Chapter 167, reset the terms of the circuit courts in the fourth judicial circuit, delegating Bledsoe County to the third Monday in March, July, and November, requiring all bonds and process to conform to these new dates which will be observed by all the clerks.
 21. Acts of 1891, Extra Session, Chapter 2, detached Bledsoe County from the fourth judicial circuit

and attached it to the sixth judicial circuit and Franklin County was taken out of the sixth judicial circuit and placed in the fourth. Court would open in Bledsoe on the first Monday in April, August, and December. Court would be held by the judge of the sixth judicial circuit but the attorney-general of the fourth judicial circuit would continue to prosecute the crimes therein.

22. Public Acts of 1899, Chapter 427, divided Tennessee into fourteen judicial circuits. The seventh circuit was made up of the counties of Van Buren, Grundy, Coffee, Warren, Moore, DeKalb, Bledsoe, Rhea, and Lincoln. The Bledsoe County Circuit Court was scheduled to start on the first Monday in April, August, and December.
23. Acts of 1903, Chapter 580, rearranged the schedule of circuit court terms in the seventh judicial circuit assigning the court in Bledsoe to start on the Tuesday after the first Monday in April, August, and December.
24. Acts of 1909, Chapter 540, changed the court terms of the circuit court in Grundy and Rhea counties in the seventh judicial circuit but did not change any others.
25. Public Acts of 1915, Chapter 19, created the eighteenth judicial circuit for the state.
26. Private Acts of 1927, Chapter 348, amended Public Acts of 1915, Chapter 19, so that the court terms of the circuit court in Bledsoe County was changed to the fourth Monday in January, May, and September.
27. Public Acts of 1931, Second Extra Session, Chapter 38, was devoted to a complete revision of the lower court system in the state. Twenty judicial circuits were fashioned and the eighteenth circuit consisted of the counties of Franklin, Sequatchie, Marion, Grundy, Meigs, Rhea, and Bledsoe where the circuit court terms would begin on the fourth Monday in January, May, and September.
28. Public Acts of 1963, Chapter 248, created an additional office of the judge for the eighteenth judicial circuit. The new judge would be appointed by the governor to serve until September 1, 1964, and then one would be elected to serve until September 1, 1966, and could run in 1966 for a full constitutional term. The circuit was divided into Parts 1 and 2, the senior judge being in charge of Part 1. Honorable A. F. Sloan was designated senior judge in the act but afterwards the senior judge would be the one with the most service. He was given an \$1,800 annual expense account and could appoint a stenographer to serve at his will and direction at a salary of \$100 per month, payable out of state funds.

Circuit Court Clerk

The following act has no current effect, but once applied to the Bledsoe County Circuit Court Clerk.

1. Acts of 1903, Chapter 255, was a statewide salary act which involved the circuit court clerks only. The annual salaries provided for the clerks were predicated upon the population of the county in which they operated, the minimum population level being 15,000. The conditions of payment were similar to preceding private acts which required the clerk to file a sworn, itemized statement with the county judge, or chairman, showing the total amount of fees collected in the office. The county would pay the difference if the fees collected failed to equal the salary, and, if the fees exceeded the salary, the clerk could retain the excess. The circuit court clerk of Bledsoe County received \$500.00 per annum. This, and similar acts, finally, culminated in the salary acts which are presently part of the Tennessee Code Annotated.

Criminal Court

The following act once pertained to the Bledsoe County Criminal Court, but is no longer current law.

1. Public Acts of 1899, Chapter 427, set the time of holding the criminal court of Bledsoe County to the first Monday in April, August and December.

District Attorney General - Assistants and Criminal Investigators

The following acts once affecting Bledsoe County are no longer in effect but are listed here for historical purposes. Also referenced below are acts which repeal prior law without providing new substantive provisions.

1. Acts of 1817, Chapter 65, laid off the State of Tennessee into ten solicitorial districts. The Counties of Bledsoe, Warren, White, Overton, and Jackson composed the fifth solicitorial District. The act provided for an attorney-general to be appointed for each of the ten districts who would prosecute offenses on behalf of the state.
2. Public Acts of 1819, Chapter 4, created a new eleventh solicitorial district and assigned the counties of Macon, Bledsoe, Warren, White, Overton, and Jackson to it.
3. Public Acts of 1927, Chapter 86, created a position of assistant attorney-general for the eighteenth judicial circuit to which Bledsoe County belonged. This act is virtually identical with

Public Acts of 1967, Chapter 82, which created an additional position of the same kind.

4. Public Acts of 1967, Chapter 82, created the office of an additional assistant district attorney general for the eighteenth judicial circuit. The district attorney general of the eighteenth judicial circuit was authorized to appoint a suitable person to the office, to serve at the pleasure of the district attorney general.
5. Public Acts of 1971, Chapter 192, created two criminal investigators for the eighteenth judicial circuit of the state, whose duties shall be to investigate crime and take statements of witnesses in felony and other cases and to perform other duties that may be assigned to them by the district attorney general. The compensation of the criminal investigators was provided by the general law of the state and they had the same authority as deputies of the county sheriff.
6. Public Acts of 1973, Chapter 176, amended Public Acts of 1971, Chapter 192, by changing "one" to "two" and making the other significant words plural instead of singular so that the eighteenth judicial circuit would have two criminal investigators instead of one.
7. Public Acts of 1976, Chapter 561, created an additional office of full-time assistant district attorney general for the eighteenth judicial circuit. The district attorney general of the eighteenth judicial circuit was authorized to appoint a suitable person to serve at the pleasure of the district attorney general.

General Sessions Court

The following act once affected the general sessions court of Bledsoe County, but is no longer in effect and is included herein for reference purposes.

1. Private Acts of 1982, Chapter 284, would have amended Private acts of 1941, Chapter 363, to vest juvenile jurisdiction in the general sessions court of Bledsoe County, transferring all pending cases to that court, and setting the salary of the judge at \$20,000. This act was considered by the Bledsoe County Legislative Body on April 4, 1982, but was not approved, thus making the same null and void.

Juvenile Court

The following act once affected juvenile courts in Bledsoe County and is included herein for reference purposes.

1. Private Acts of 1981, Chapter 91, would have created a juvenile court for Bledsoe County and provided for the appointment of a judge, clerk and other necessary court personnel, but this act was not acted upon by the county legislative body and therefore never became effective.

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