First Families of the Lost State of Franklin (The First Families Project) (Volume 2)

By John C. Rigdon

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This book provides family sketches and genealogical information on the first families to settle in the area of East Tennessee that originally made up the state of Franklin. The earliest settlers date back to the mid 1700s.

By the year 1770, some 70 families had settled in the area bounded by the Watauga, Nolichucky, and Holston river valleys. Most migrated from Virginia via the Great Valley, although a few were believed to have been Regulators fleeing North Carolina after their defeat at the Battle of Alamance.

In May 1772, the Watauga and Nolichucky settlers negotiated a 10-year lease with the Cherokee Indians, and being outside the claims of any colony, established the Watauga Association to provide basic government functions. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote that the Watauga settlers were the "first men of American birth to establish a free and independent community on the continent."

Modern Counties in Tennessee which made up the State of Franklin:

- Blount County Carter County Cocke County Greene County Hamblen County Hawkins County Jefferson County Johnson County Sevier County Sullivan County Unicoi County Washington County

A convention of delegates (except for Davidson County that sent none) met on August 23, 1784 and after intense debate they declared these western counties independent of North Carolina on a unanimous vote. Several names were offered for the new state. The name Frankland was proposed since it was translatable as "the Land of the Free," however, Franklin was decided upon perhaps for gaining the favor of Benjamin Franklin. North Carolina regained control of the region in 1788 thus ending the existance of the State of Franklin.

The extant records for the State of Franklin generally reference the entire region which now covers the 12 counties of East Tennessee. This book focuses on the earliest known families in the area.

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