

# DANDRIDGE HISTORY

## Appalachian Frontier Town

The earliest pioneers began exploration into the interior of our great county and by the close of the American Revolution in 1783 permanent settlers, many of Scots-Irish decent, had set up western outposts along the banks of the French Broad River in the area that would later become Dandridge. In 1792, William Blount, Governor of the Territory South of the Ohio River, carved out a new county named Jefferson in honor of the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson. Frances Dean supplied 50 acres of land for the new county seat of Dandridge, named to honor our country's first First Lady, Martha Dandridge Washington. A courthouse was built and the town prospered with some of the earliest businesses being taverns or ordinaries. These taverns provided overnight lodging to those traveling from Knoxville to Abingdon, Virginia and on to "Washington City".



## Dam Waters Threaten Dandridge

In early 1940's, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) constructed a dam on the French Broad River forming Douglas Lake to provide hydro-electric power for the atomic bomb, "The Manhattan Project" while providing electricity to the rural communities of Jefferson County (prior to completion only 3 of every 100 homes had electricity.) Committed Dandridge officials and citizens met with TVA representatives in September 1941 to discuss the feasibility of constructing a dike. While creating Douglas Dam, TVA spent one million dollars building an earthen dike to save the Jefferson County Seat, "The Town of Dandridge", from being flooded by the waters of the newly formed lake.



## Dandridge Today

Dandridge, a National Historic District and certified Main Street Community, is a delightful mixture of old and new. History buffs can enjoy a walking tour of the Town and Revolutionary War Graveyard; genealogists can explore their roots at the Archives Department or the museum, both located at the Jefferson County Courthouse; visitors can walk through four Taverns or Ordinaries that are home to businesses, Town Hall, and an Inn that will again become a future Bed and Breakfast; and the Jefferson County Courthouse is now home to county archives and a museum. Seasonal festivals, a farmers market, and water activities are enjoyed by locals and visitors to Dandridge. Mountain and lake views offer a beautiful backdrop to everyday shopping and dining in this historic American small town. It is a genuine place that is a respite from the hustle and bustle of more glitzy resort destinations.



**2011 Distinctive  
Destination**

NATIONAL TRUST FOR  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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