



Bristol Va. - Tenn. Where Two States Meet



From Pioneer Adventures to the Present

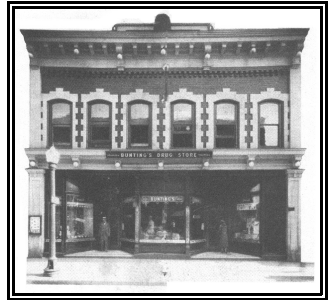


BRISTOL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Bristol Historical Association is dedicated to the identification, preservation, interpretation, and presentation of local history.

1979 Bristol Historical Association received its charter and adopted as its logo, the image of a 1938 button depicting the downtown State Street business district and iconic Bristol Sign.

1980 BHA advocated for the preservation of Bunting's Drug Store. Bunting's was the oldest drug store in the state of Tennessee at the time of its unfortunate demolition in 1984. BHA has the original sign salvaged from the building's former location on State Street. BHA also began interviews with senior Bristolians about Bristol's history, and along with Virginia



Intermont College's merchandising department, sponsored a fashion show featuring styles from 1900-1955.



In November of 1980, the Bristol Union Railway Station was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Both Bristols largely owe their existence to the railroad. Prior to the beginning of rail service to the area, Bristol, then known as "Goodson," VA, was little more than a hamlet situated on the state line

with a population of only eight hundred. The first train arrived in Bristol from Lynchburg on October 1, 1856, and the hamlet immediately began to grow into the twin-cities of today.

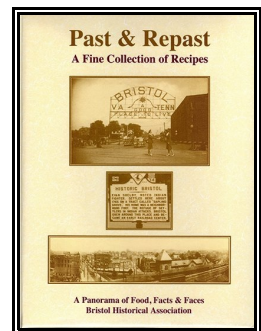
1981 BHA sponsored an exhibit in Anderson Park entitled “Toys from Grandma’s Attic.”

The National Trust’s Michael Ainslie presented a program encouraging restoration of downtown Bristol’s historic buildings. Ainslie stated “The Bristol Sign should be the center of revitalization in Bristol.” Tennessee Historic Commission representatives Herbert Harper and Elizabeth Straw inspected the Bristol Sign which would be described in its listing on the National Register of Historic Places as having “its feet in two states.”

1984 A video of landmark buildings in both Bristol, Virginia, and Bristol, Tennessee was made.

1985 Bristol Historical Association received tax-exempt status. As a part of Celebrate Tennessee, Bristol, Virginia, honored its sister city with a homecoming celebration featuring a parade, food, and celebrity guests Minnie Pearl, Alex Haley, and Tennessee Ernie Ford.

1985-2014 Publications relating to Bristol history were released. These included *History of the Bristol Sign 1910-1920* by Shelby Edwards, *A Brief History of Bristol 1850-1989* by Joyce Kistner, and *The Train From Lynchburg to Bristol* by Fred Dimit. Other important publications over the years were *A Pictorial History* 1985, *The Passing Years* 1993, *Honoring Our Heritage Sesquicentennial Edition* 2006, *Past and Repast: A Fine Collection of Recipes* 2014.



1986 Bryan Mitchell of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources visited Bristol to observe the prominence of the landmark Bristol Sign and learn its history.

1987 BHA installed protective posts and chains around the graves of Colonel James King and family at the Ordway Cemetery.



1990 BHA and the City of Bristol, Virginia, placed several historic markers in the cities. A bronze marker was placed at the grave site in East Hill Cemetery of Colonel Samuel E. Goodson, Founder of Bristol, VA, and member of the General Assembly. Bristol, Virginia, placed a Founder's Stone with a bronze plaque mounted on a limestone boulder at the

Bristol Virginia Courthouse for the founding of the city in 1856. Two markers on marble bases, one in each state, were placed for the Bristol Slogan Sign and dedicated in a State

Street ceremony attended by city council members of both Bristols. The Bristol Slogan Sign is the only sign of its kind on the National Register of Historic Places and in two states.

1991 BHA purchased the birthplace of Tennessee Ernie Ford and began restoring the home as a house museum dedicated to Ford and his legacy. Completed in 2007, the house is open for tours by appointment.



1993 BHA developed a program, "History of Bristol," for teaching local history to fourth grade students in the public and private schools on both sides of the state line.

1994 Through the efforts of BHA members, the home of early Bristol's largest landowner, Colonel James King, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the "King-Lancaster-McCoy-Mitchell House." Built c. 1820, the home underwent



several additions by subsequent property owners, John J. Lancaster, H.E. McCoy, and Joseph D. Mitchell, which encased and preserved the original house, including the original brick wall that rises past the second floor to the attic alongside a winding staircase. King owned 50,000 acres across what is now both sides of Bristol. The

last owner, Margaret Mitchell, was born in the house in 1902, and lived there until her death at 102 years old. David Edwards, architectural historian for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, described the property much like a time capsule. In the 1994 nomination form, he stated that Margaret "Not only maintained the house's turn-of-the-century architectural integrity, but she also preserved in situ the house's early-twentieth century furnishings, accessories, interior decorative treatments, etc.... The house is remarkable for its well-preserved museum-like quality and integrity....interior; furnishings, fixtures, wall treatments, and accessories have remained little altered since the early twentieth century."

2004 BHA acquired the historic Robert Preston House in order to save the home, one of the oldest homes in Washington County, from demolition. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places August 11, 2004. Restoration efforts are ongoing.



2005 BHA entered the digital age through a newly created website, www.BristolHistoricalAssociation.com.

2023 BHA moved into a new office located at 8 Sixth Street in Bristol, TN.

1979-2023 Adding Bristol-related magazines, maps, city directories, and postcards to its archives and collections along with artifacts, antiques, and other memorabilia is part of BHA's ongoing mission.



Prominent People and Places in the History of Bristol

The Reverend James King, a prominent landowner and Presbyterian minister, gifted land for a college campus to be built in Bristol in 1866. The new institution was named King College in his honor.

Evan Shelby, frontiersman, trader, and militia officer, emigrated from Wales to America in 1735, arriving in 1771, in what is now Bristol where he built Shelby's Fort which became an important stop for pioneers during the westward expansion of the United States. In 1781, Shelby was elected a member of the North Carolina Senate. BHA restored Shelby's iron slab grave marker in East Hill Cemetery in 1979.



Isaac Shelby, son of the Revolutionary War patriot, Evan Shelby, was elected to represent Washington County in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1779. He became the first governor of Kentucky in 1791.

Joseph R. Anderson, the founder of Bristol, TN, and Samuel E. Goodson, the founder of Bristol, VA, are buried in East Hill Cemetery.

The Pemberton Oak was a large tree located near Bristol. Beneath its branches in 1780, the Overmountain Men, under the leadership of Colonel Isaac Shelby, assembled and then marched across the mountain to win the first decisive victory for the Patriot Militia at the Battle of Kings Mountain. This historic white oak was over six hundred years old when it fell during a severe storm in late 2004.

Historic Places to Visit

Birthplace of Country Music Museum - 101 Country Music Way
Bristol, VA (Ticketed entry)



Bristol Union Railway
Station - 101 Martin Luther
King Blvd. Bristol, VA (Event venue)

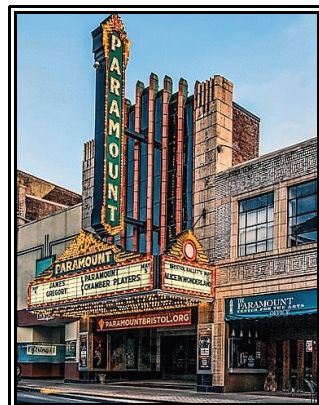


I.C.Fowler House - 417 Spencer St.
Bristol, VA (Private residence)

Ordway Cemetery - Cemetery Rd. Bristol, TN - Burial site of Colonel James King and family

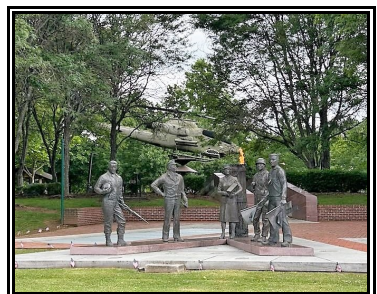
Bristol Motor Speedway - NASCAR's most popular short track venue, Bristol Motor Speedway, located in Bristol, Tennessee, was constructed in 1960. With an original seating capacity of 18,000, its first race was held on July 30, 1961. The track has expanded over the years, and the seating capacity is now 153,000.

Paramount Theater - 518 State St. Bristol, TN (Ticketed entry for events)



Robert Preston House - 21412 Fentriss Rd. Bristol, VA (Preservation)

Cumberland Square Park and Bristol Veterans Memorial - 200 Lee St. Bristol, VA - Located at the corner of Lee and Cumberland Streets, this memorial features five 6'2" bronze statues representing men and women of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. A Vietnam era helicopter provides a backdrop for the Memorial Walkway, fountain, and Eternal Flame of Freedom.



The park is also home to “Take the Stage,” a bronze sculpture commemorating Bristol’s country music heritage. Installed in 2014, just across from the Birthplace of Country Music Museum, this life-size interactive exhibit was designed and created by artist Val Lyle.



Stone Castle

Bristol Tennessee High School’s Stone Castle athletic stadium was completed in 1937. Constructed during the Great Depression by the Public Works Administration, its original cost was \$34,000. The venue hosts local high school sports activities and a band festival.



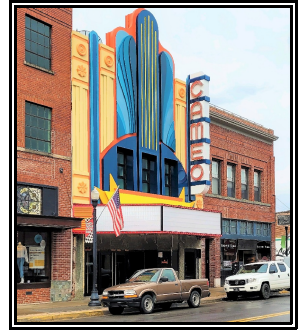
Gateway Arches

A pair of stone arches, built in 1936, flank the road between Bristol and Blountville. Constructed of limestone mined from Beaver Creek, they stand like silent sentinels marking the entryway into the city.



Cameo Theater

The Cameo Theater, located on State Street in Bristol, Virginia, is one of the 15 oldest theaters in Virginia. It began entertaining the region in 1925, and in 2021, reopened after undergoing a major renovation.



King University

King University, formerly known as King College, was established in 1867 by the Presbyterian Church on land donated by the Rev. James King for whom the school was named.



Iron Works

A historical marker on the King University campus commemorates the 1784 ironworks built by Colonel James King.

Country Music Distribution Monument

This monument, erected in 1971, and located on State Street in Bristol, Tennessee, singles out musicians Jimmy Rodgers and the Carter Family for praise, calling their recordings “the first Country and Western music to be distributed nationwide.”

Birthplace of Country Music Mural

Located at the Downtown Center, 810 State Street, this mural, created by musician and artist Tim White, celebrates the 1927 Bristol Sessions, a series of recordings made over a period of 12 days by Victor Talking



Machine Company producer Ralph Peer, which have come to be known as the “Big Bang” of country music. The mural was restored in 2020.



NASCAR Mural

This mural, completed in 2001, is located in Bristol, VA, across the street from the Country Music Mural at the Bristol TN Downtown Center. It features two of NASCAR’s greatest stars, Dale Earnhardt Sr. and Richard Petty.

Daniel Boone

Daniel Boone was an important frontiersman who visited Shelby's Fort in Bristol. He was a "Long Hunter” who, along with his ox men, traded pelts for gunpowder, food, and clothing.





Bristol Historical Association
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