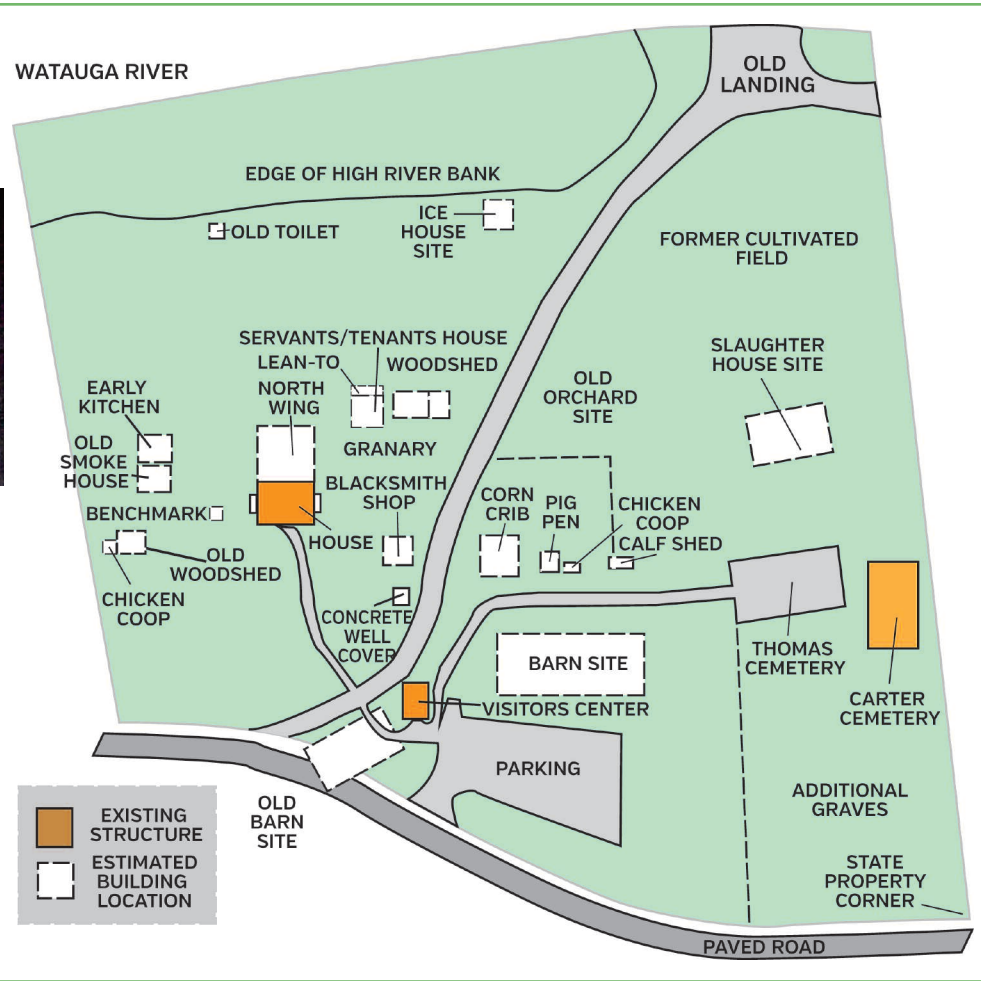


# The Carter Mansion



LANDON CARTER



## Directions

From Interstate 81, take Exit 57 to I-26 into Johnson City to Exit 24. Then take Highway 321/67 traveling approximately 6 miles into Elizabethton. After passing Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park on the left, continue to the fifth traffic light and bear left onto Broad Street. Continue to the fourth traffic light and proceed straight. The Carter Mansion will be on your left. For special event information or to inquire about house tours, please call Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park.

## We're Mobile!

The Tennessee State Parks Pocket Ranger app is available at the Apple app store and Google Play.



Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation authorization no. 327152, 10,000 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of .06 per copy. April 2015.

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation is committed to principles of equal opportunity, equal access and affirmative action. Contact the EEO/AA Coordinator at 1-888-867-7455 or the ADA Coordinator at 1-866-253-5827 for further information. Hearing impaired callers may use the Tennessee Relay Service [1-800-848-0298].

The Carter Mansion  
1031 Broad Street  
Elizabethton, Tennessee 37643

Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park  
1651 West Elk Avenue  
Elizabethton, TN 37643  
423-543-5808

[www.tnstatesparks.com](http://www.tnstatesparks.com)

## Volunteer Opportunities

Friends of Sycamore Shoals and volunteers assist in protecting, preserving and promoting the cultural and natural resources of Sycamore Shoals. Many do this by giving of their time and talents to ensure the park's integrity for future generations to enjoy. It's easy to show your support - join Friends of Sycamore Shoals.



[www.friendsofsycamoreshoals.org](http://www.friendsofsycamoreshoals.org)

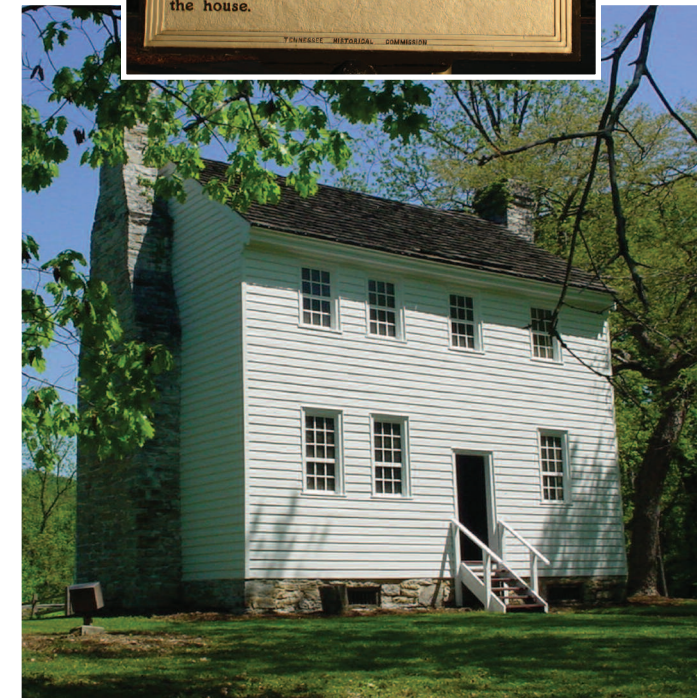
To learn more about volunteer opportunities in your area, please visit [www.tnstateparks.com](http://www.tnstateparks.com).



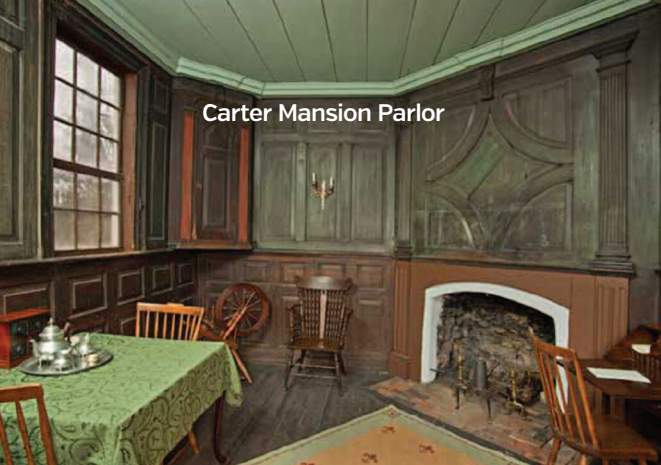
T E N N E S S E E  
State Parks

# The Carter Mansion

SYCAMORE SHOALS  
STATE HISTORIC PARK  
T E N N E S S E E



The Oldest Frame House  
in Tennessee  
1775-1781



Carter Mansion Parlor

### Family History

John Carter moved from Virginia into the wilderness in 1770 and opened a trading post on the Holston River with a man named William Parker. The area they settled is called Carter's Valley.

The Cherokee Indians preferred that these men travel to their villages with their trading goods. When Carter and Parker refused, the Indians raided their outpost.

John Carter moved into the Watauga River Valley by 1772. This area was the western frontier, Indian Territory, and by King George III's Proclamation of 1763, off-limits to settlers.

John Carter joined earlier settlers in forming the Watauga Association, the first democratic association of free American-born men west of the Appalachians. Serving as chairman of the court, Carter quickly became a prominent leader.

Carter purchased 640 acres of land in the "Watauga Old Fields", an area cleared for agriculture by the Indians long before the settlers had arrived. Between 1775 and 1781 (when John Carter died of smallpox) the Mansion was built near the bank of the Watauga River.

After John died, his son, Landon, assumed his leading role in the community. Both John and Landon served as representatives from the Watauga District to the North Carolina General Assembly. Landon served as Secretary of State for the short-lived State of Franklin (1784-1789), the first entity ever to be named for America's great statesman and inventor, Benjamin Franklin. Carter County is named for Landon Carter and Elizabeth for his wife, Elizabeth MacLin Carter.

### The House

Try to block out the sights and sounds of modern American society as you explore the grounds. Remember, when this house was built the United States did not even exist! Great Britain still made the laws, including a law prohibiting settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. Imagine how isolated these settlers were from the luxuries of colonial life. Most people on the frontier were living in log cabins with chimneys made of sticks, mud and fieldstone. The Carter Mansion is an exception. The oldest frame house in Tennessee, the Mansion is decorated throughout with hand-carved panels, crown molding and chair rails. Two rooms boast landscape paintings on the wooden panel directly above the fireplace, a rare survival in early American homes. These are considered the earliest paintings executed in Tennessee.

The property was acquired by the State of Tennessee in 1973 from the Thomas family who lived in this house from 1870 until the late 1960s. Only 4.2 acres of the original 640 remain with the house. In 1973 and 1977 archaeologists from the Tennessee Department of Conservation excavated areas around the house and in the vicinity of some outbuildings.

During 1978, in an effort to preserve the house, the siding was replaced and one chimney top was rebuilt. One piece of original siding was found wedged behind the chimney; it was used as a model for the siding on the house today.

Over 90 percent of the materials in the interior of the house are original! A wing had been added to the north side of the house in the mid-1800s. This wing was in very bad repair and threatened the rest of the structure.

### The Grounds

Life on the frontier was by no means easy, even if you could afford to build a house this luxurious. While exploring the grounds with the map, keep in mind the reasons each of these outbuildings would be necessary. There has never been plumbing in the house! The occupants in 1966 used an outhouse and carried water from the well, just like the occupants in 1780.

The smokehouse and the icehouse were needed to preserve food. There were no freezers or refrigerators to store food. Meat was smoked or salted to save for the winter. Dairy products were kept cool in the icehouse. Fruits and vegetables were picked or canned and stored in the cellar.

There was nothing like a general store on the frontier, so people depended on local craftsmen or their own skills. John Carter had a blacksmith's shed on his property. Spinning and weaving of wool and flax were constant endeavors. Clothes made from this homespun cloth were colored with natural dyes: the berries of the poke plant, which grow on the river banks were used for a pink or purple dye; walnut hulls were used for brown colors, and goldenrod for gold. This area around the house would have been continuously busy as members of the household, including slaves, performed all the tasks necessary to ensure comfort throughout the year.

Take a few minutes to walk through the cemetery. Within the stone walls and behind them are the Thomas family graves. Along the walls to the right (near the fence) are Carter family graves, including Landon, Elizabeth and some of their children. The large stone monument in the cemetery honors the achievements of the Carter family.

Many architectural features in the house suggest that John Carter of Tennessee came from the Tidewater plantation region near Williamsburg, Virginia. He may have been a relative of Robert "King" Carter, at one time the richest man in the colony of Virginia, but the kinship has never been proven.

For special event information or to inquire about house tours, please call Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park.



John Carter's Office

