

## Decherd Timeline

- 1831: Peter Skyler Decherd, a lawyer from Virginia, joins his family (father, mother brothers and sisters) already living on a plantation just south of Winchester.
- 1845: The Nashville & Chattanooga railroad is chartered by the State of Tennessee.<sup>i</sup> Peter S. Decherd becomes a member of the Board of Directors.<sup>ii</sup>
- 1849: August, Court of Chancery held at Winchester, as part of a dispute between Wm. Sharp and Richard Sharp sell at public auction, a tract of land to Dr. S.W. Houghton for \$996.04. This land would become the town of Decherd.<sup>iii</sup>
- 1850: The Tennessee legislature charters the Winchester & Alabama railroad.<sup>iv</sup> This railroad will start in Decherd as a connection line to Huntsville Alabama.
- 1851: The Nashville & Chattanooga railroad is completed through Decherd and the Decherd depot established. Joseph Carter is made agent and a Mrs. Jane Davidson was put in charge of an eating-house for the railroad company. Exact dates unknown. The only house in the area at that time is a log cabin in which Richard Holder was living.
- 1852: Construction of the Winchester & Alabama RR is started in Decherd. On February 22, the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad's **Cumberland Tunnel** south of Cowan was completed.<sup>v</sup> On August 20, partners Peter S. Decherd and Ezekiel D. Sanford acquire property from Dr. S.W. Houghton.
- 1853: A plan for the town of Decherd is drawn up in May showing rail lines, depot, streets, and lots. Decherd and Sanford dissolve their partnership and divide the lots on the plan between them.<sup>vi</sup> On October 15, Peter Decherd and Ezekiel Sanford transferred ownership of two strips of land to the Winchester & Alabama railroad. One being 1160 feet by 40 feet and another 1460 feet by 140 feet to the Winchester & Alabama railroad, paralleled to the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad. Some of the first settlers to Decherd were, the Lynches from Pelham, Simpson West, William Simons (who built one of the first houses), the Tuckers and Martins.<sup>vii</sup>
- 1854? The earliest merchants were Carroll Walker, John March, Aaron Lynch and Cyrus Barnes. Col. Arthur S. Colyar, an attorney, was one of the first settlers of the town and his residence with law office in the front yard was located on the site of the home of J. L. Haynes.<sup>viii</sup>
- 1856: On February 14, the thirty-first General Assembly of the state of Tennessee

incorporates the town of Decherd with all the rights and privileges as the town of Cookeville, which was also incorporated at that time. (This is the only record of Decherd's 1<sup>st</sup> incorporation. No record of mayor, councilmen or laws passed.)

1859: The Winchester & Alabama RR from Decherd to Fayetteville is completed.

1861: On May 1, 1200 soldiers board a train in Decherd to aid "Jeff Davis and the Southern Confederacy",<sup>ix</sup> one month before Tennessee seceded from the union. On June 8, Tennessee is the last southern state to secede from the union and join the Confederate States of America.

1862: Federal troops arrived in Franklin County, although Confederates reestablished control.

1863: After the Confederate defeat at Murfreesboro in January 1863, the Southern army retreated to Tullahoma.  
On June 29, Col. John Wilder and the US mounted infantry entered Decherd, which was garrisoned by about 80 Confederate soldiers. After a sharp skirmish, they were pushed back to a wooded ravine and while they were pinned down, the rest of his command burned the depot, toppled the water tank and tore up three hundred yards of track. However, Southern reinforcements came up and Wilder retreated into the edge of the mountains. In July Gen. Bragg abandoned Middle Tennessee for Chattanooga, exiting along local roads. Thereafter Franklin County remained under Federal control, with the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad serving as the primary supply line for operation against Chattanooga and Atlanta. Decherd was headquarters for Gen. Alpheus S. Williams U.S.A.<sup>x</sup>

1865: The Civil War ends in the spring.

1866: Tennessee is readmitted into the Union thus escaping the military reconstruction that was imposed on the rest of the seceding states in 1867.

1868: On January 30, the thirty-fifth General Assembly of the state of Tennessee again incorporates Decherd. This time with the more encompassing charter of the town of Harrison, which was also incorporated at that time. (This is the only record of this 2<sup>nd</sup> incorporation of Decherd. No record of who was mayor, councilmen or laws passed.)

1876: The Tennessee State Gazetteer lists the following:  
A rising village of 500 inhabitants and station on the N. C. & St. Ry., at its junction with the Alabama and Winchester R.R. It is located in Franklin county, 3 miles east of Winchester, the county seat, 69 from Chattanooga and

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82 southwest of Nashville. It contains 6 stores, a drug store, a good hotel and has other business interests, with a steadily growing trade. The surrounding county comprises good farming lands, and corn, wheat, hay, hogs, cattle, etc., are shipped. Daily stage line to Winchester, and daily mail. Mrs. J. W. Brown, postmistress.

Business Directory

Austell, C. B. & Co., general store

Banks, G. E., boots and shoes

Bennett, J. K., general store

Camey, John, saloon

Carney, Mrs., hotel

Carroll, P., blacksmith

Carter, Joseph, station agent N. C. & St. RR

Farris, Wm., boots and shoes

Lenehan & Bass, drugs, paints and oils

Lenehan & Holland, general store

McBrown, H. C., station agent W. & Ala. R.R.

Martin, W. W., blacksmith

Moore & Co., blacksmiths

Morris, J. C., saloon

Plummer, Hessey & Co., general store

Ragsdale & Conn, wagonmakers

Sloan, F. B., physician

Thomas, I., saloon

Wade, F. B., wagonmaker

1885: Chapter 137 of the Acts of the State of Tennessee enacted the repeal of the incorporation of the town of Decherd effective June 1, 1885. It is commonly believed the town requested this because of the "Four Mile Law" however, there is no reason given in the official state record.

1889: James W. Terrill opens Terrill College in Decherd. W.H. Featherston establishes Decherd's first bank, The Bank of Decherd.

1890: Tennessee State Gazetteer and Business Directory:

"Franklin County – N. C. & St. L. R. R.

Junction of Fayetteville branch. 3 miles northeast of its county town,

Winchester, 69 miles from Chattanooga and 82 miles from Nashville. It

contains 1 flour mill, cotton press and grist mill. 1 hotel, 2 churches –

Presbyterian and Christian – a fine college, lately created, and 2 free schools –

1 white and 1 colored. Population, 1,000. Exp., Southern. Mrs. M. W. Brown,

postmaster.

Bass George C, druggist

Baumgartner John, furniture

Bennett John K, general store

Bratton J M & Co (Joseph M and Jefferson Bratton, Benjamin F Bennett),  
sawmill  
Champion James k, general store  
Cherry Frederick T D, physician  
Decherd Headlight (weekly, Ind) W R Murrell editor and propr.  
Decherd Mills, Mrs T E Lenehan propr, W H Featherston mngr, flour.  
Faris R W & Co (Richard W Faris), lumber mnfrs.”

1893: Decherd Masonic Lodge is chartered.

1895: From a pamphlet published to promote real estate in Decherd:  
“Six commodious passenger trains on the main line and four on the  
connecting branches call at Decherd each day. These trains, under the  
efficient management of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway  
system, come and go with such promptness and regularity as to accurately  
indicate standard time to all concerned. Long through and local freights come  
and go every few hours.

Decherd and the surrounding country enjoy means of transportation of a  
most reliable character. Indeed, no town outside of great railway centers has  
better facilities than Decherd.

The population of Decherd is about one thousand, all told. We have one good  
hotel near the depot, and many excellent boarding houses in Terrill Addition  
that are extensively patronized by students from many states who attend  
Terrill College. Besides, in this Addition are many nice residences, occupied  
by good families for the special purpose of sending their children to school.  
Most of the businessmen, and many others, own and occupy residences in  
Col. Sanford’s Addition, which is well laid off: and each Addition has many  
desirable lots for sale at reasonable prices.

We have one bank, one livery and sale stable, two furniture stores, one  
hardware store, five dry goods and general supply stores, two drug stores,  
two grocery stores, two meat shops, two blacksmith, wagon and wood shops,  
one tin shop, two shoe shops, one jeweler, two barbers, one milliner, two  
dentists, two physicians, and last but not least, *Decherd has no saloon*, and,  
with that fixedness of purpose that knows no compromise, she deliberately  
determined not to have saloons.”

1898: April 25 – August 12, Spanish American War.

1901: On April 22, the Tennessee General Assembly incorporates Decherd again.  
J.F. McGill becomes first mayor, R. Ross Powell is first Recorder. No list of  
first aldermen is known. The first 43 Ordinances are passed between June  
and July 1901. All elected officials are for a term of one year.<sup>xi</sup>

1905: R.R. Powell elected mayor with R.B. Winford as recorder. No list of aldermen  
is known.

- 1907: Rufus B. Sublett is elected mayor with R.B. Winford as recorder. No list of aldermen is known.
- 1908: Charles E. Murray is elected mayor with R.B. Winford as recorder. No list of aldermen is known.
- 1909: On April 30 at 12:15 am, an F2 tornado struck Decherd. Twenty-three homes were destroyed, and a hotel and the depot were unroofed causing \$150,000 damage. The damage path was 22 miles in length and 1760 yards wide. Six people were killed and 30 were injured.
- 1910: July 6, E.A. Best is elected mayor. No recorder or list of aldermen is known.
- 1911: On April 11, Governor Ben Hooper approves Senate Bill number 518. Decherd Charter changes election terms of office from one year to three years.<sup>xii</sup> Bedford C. McGill is elected mayor with R.R. Powell as recorder. No list of aldermen is known for this year.
- 1912: R.R. Powell, Thomas Cowan and R.E.L. Taylor are elected aldermen.
- 1913: Lee Taylor and B.F. Knight are elected aldermen.
- 1914: J.D. Roseburrow, G.W. Bonner/G.W. Goolsby, Lewis Hessey and W.T. Sewel are elected aldermen.  
April 8, A committee consisting of R.E.L. Taylor, W.T. Sewel, R.R. Powell, Wm. Shelley and B.C. McGill recommends the buying of 10 acres of land belonging to Sam Eckles and wife to be used as a cemetery for \$2000.00. "As the old cemetery is full." This cemetery is named Mt. Garner Cemetery. A stone arch is erected at its entrance on 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.<sup>xiii</sup>
- 1916: William H. Shelly is elected mayor with R.B. Winford as recorder and J.D. Roseburrow, G.W. Bonner/G.W. Goolsby, Lewis Hessey and W.T. Sewel, aldermen.
- 1917: On April 6, The United States enters World War I.
- 1918: John Dickenson, W.J. Hines, I.N. Hamilton and M.T. Cherry are elected aldermen.  
November 18, World War I ends.
- 1920: Bedford C. McGill is elected mayor with W.J. Prince as recorder and T.N. Nicholson, John Mason, Henry Williams and Dr. G.W. Taylor, aldermen.
- 1922: Tolivar K. Williams is elected mayor with Bedford C. McGill as recorder and T.N. Nicholson, John Mason, Henry Williams and Dr. G.W. Taylor, aldermen.

- 1923: Robert Ross Powell is elected mayor with Bedford C. McGill as recorder and W.O. Bell, C.V. Champion, J.S. Jones and J.B. Gipson, aldermen.  
April 6, Cemetery Committee of three created with R. Ross Powell, W.B. Knight and Joe Bill Power first appointees. City Charter is amended to include creation of Cemetery Committee.
- 1926: Thomas Norman Nickolson is elected mayor with Bedford C. McGill as recorder and James F. Ikard, R.B. Holland and F.I. Cowan, aldermen.
- 1929: L. Gordon Gill is elected mayor with Bedford C. McGill as recorder and Lloyd Myrick, E.S. Stevenson, C.V. Champion, R. Spence and Roy Delzell/J.B. Henley, aldermen.  
October, the "Wall St. Crash" and the beginning of the "Great Depression".
- 1931: C.C. Shelley becomes recorder.
- 1932: J.B. Henley, Gus Brune, T.N. Nicholson and George Neal Bass elected aldermen.
- 1935: June 3, City annex's old city cemetery to be cared for by the Cemetery Committee.
- 1938: Ben. I. Heinkens is elected mayor with Roy Delzell as recorder. No list of aldermen is known for this time.
- 1939: September 1, Germany invades Poland and World War II begins.
- 1940: J.M. Brewer, F.M. Moore, Hence Winton and L.S. Myrick are elected aldermen.
- 1941: June, Patton's Army arrives in Decherd to begin tank maneuvers on land now occupied by the Nissan plant.  
December 7, Japanese attack American fleet at Pearl Harbor resulting in the United States entering World War II.
- 1944: Willian Willis Collins is elected mayor with Roy Delzell as recorder. No list of aldermen is known for this time.  
June 6, "D-Day", allied forces invade German occupied France.
- 1945: May 8, V-E Day, Germany surrenders resulting in the end of war in Europe.  
September 2, V-J Day, the surrender of Japan, thus ending World War II.
- 1947: Frank C. Powell is elected mayor with Roy Delzell as recorder with Olis L. Garner, Hubert A. Nickolson, M.F. Green and Grady Arnold, aldermen.
- 1949: B.F. Arnold becomes recorder.

1950: William Frank Smith Jr. is elected mayor with B.F. Arnold as recorder and John R. Green, John Keese, Clarence Reynolds and Edwin Floyd, aldermen. June 25, North Korea invades South Korea thus beginning the “Korean Conflict”.

1952: F.C. Powell elected alderman.

1953: July, William Willis Collins elected mayor with B.F. Arnold as recorder and Sumner Rose, James E. Skidmore, W.B. Counts and Roy Delzell, aldermen. July 27, Korean Armistice Agreement is signed, thus ending the fighting but not “officially” the war in Korea.

1956: B.E. Hensley, L.E. Hessey, Harrison Ikard and T.E. Waldrep are elected aldermen.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nashville,\\_Chattanooga\\_and\\_St.\\_Louis\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nashville,_Chattanooga_and_St._Louis_Railway)

<sup>ii</sup> **Nashville Union and American** newspaper December 11, 1853 lists Peter S. Decherd as a board member.

<sup>iii</sup> Deed book V, page 359 Register’s Office of Franklin County, TN.

<sup>iv</sup> The Winchester and Alabama Railroad Company had been chartered by Tennessee in 1850 (Acts of Tennessee 1849-50, at p. 169), to build a railroad from Winchester, Tenn., in the direction of Huntsville, Ala., being subsequently authorized by Alabama to extend its line to Huntsville (Acts of Alabama 1851-52, p. 213), and by Tennessee (Acts of Tennessee 1851-52, p. 45) to extend from Winchester to a connection with the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad at Decherd; and later (Acts of Tennessee 1851-52, p. 312), to Fayetteville, Tenn. It completed a line from Decherd to Fayetteville in 1859, with funds secured by the aid of the State of Tennessee. In foreclosure of this debt, the road was sold on September 21, 1871, and was purchased by M. J. Wicks and J.J. Donnegan, officers of the Memphis and Charleston, to whom the sale was confirmed on October 2, 1871. After the abandonment of its Cincinnati Extension plans the Memphis and Charleston sold this line to the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, by deed dated July 28, 1877, and in 1888 the last named company extended and completed the line from Elora to Huntsville, Ala.

<sup>v</sup> **New Orleans Daily Crescent** March 12, 1851.

<sup>vi</sup> Deed book V, page 361 Register’s Office Franklin County, TN.

<sup>vii</sup> As appeared in the local newspaper by Mrs. F. M. Bass, April 5, 1925

<sup>viii</sup> Col. Arthur S. Colyar (1818 - 1907) was an attorney. He was involved in railroad construction and iron manufacturing after the Civil War. He served as a member of 1860 Convention, a member of the 1863 Confederate Congress, member of the State

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Legislature 1877-79 and editor of the Nashville American. At 80, he wrote **The Life and Times of Andrew Jackson - Tennessee Portrait project, TN State Museum**

<sup>ix</sup> Nashville Gazette, May 3, 1861: Mary Sharp College Club, Dr. Graves and Mary Sharp College, (Nashville, 1923).

<sup>x</sup> Tullahoma, The 1863 Campaign for the Control of Middle Tennessee, Michael R. Bradley.

<sup>xi</sup> Charter and Ordinances of the Corporation of Decherd Tennessee, Bevan-Wilson Printing Co., Tullahoma, Tennessee 1913

<sup>xii</sup> Charter and Ordinances of the Corporation of Decherd Tennessee, Bevan-Wilson Printing Co., Tullahoma, Tennessee 1913

<sup>xiii</sup> Decherd Book of City Council Minutes, January 3, 1913 – July 1, 1938