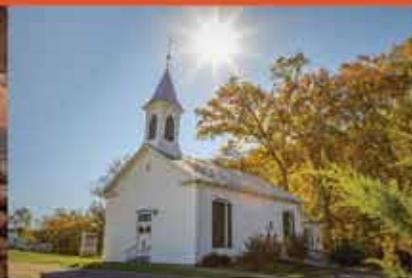


# MIDDLE PRONG Fall Driving Tour



**DOWNTOWN SEVIERVILLE**

START

Court Ave, Sevierville, TN 37862

**BATTLE OF FAIR GARDEN**

**MURPHY'S CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**\*SWINGING BRIDGE AT THE ROBERTSON FARMSTEAD**

**\*DARIUS AND MARY ROBERTSON HOUSE**

**\*McMAHAN CANTILEVER BARN**

**OLD RICHARDSON COVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**PITTMAN CENTER MISSION**

**FREDERICK EMERT COVERED BRIDGE**

END

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

2306 E Parkway,  
Sevierville, TN 37876



\* PLEASE REMEMBER, SOME POINTS OF INTEREST ON THE SELF-GUIDED FALL DRIVING TOUR ARE PRIVATE.  
PLEASE ENJOY THEIR HISTORY AND THE VIEW FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR VEHICLE.

# MIDDLE PRONG Fall Driving Tour

For a few glorious weeks, autumn crowns the Smoky Mountains with spectacular color. It's a sight well worth traveling to see – especially when you take a few roads less traveled. This year, consider an alternative scenic drive with plenty of foliage along the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River.

The Middle Prong originates near Mount Guyot (elevation 6,621 ft.) in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It winds through Pittman Center and Richardson Cove, before picking up the East Prong and many small streams along the way: flowing about 20 miles and dropping 5,721 feet to get to Sevierville where the two prongs (east and west) meet.

## 1. Historic Downtown Sevierville

Begin your tour in downtown Sevierville where a must-see for visitors is the Dolly Parton Statue located on the lawn of the iconic Sevier County Courthouse at 125 Court Avenue. Built in 1896, the courthouse is an excellent example of Victorian architecture and houses a recently refurbished four-sided Seth Thomas clock in its tower. The statue of Parton was sculpted by Jim Gray and erected in honor of Sevierville native Dolly Parton, an internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter, instrumentalist, actress, author, and philanthropist. In the fall, the century-old trees surrounding the courthouse turn brilliant hues of yellow and red.

## 2. Battle of Fair Garden

Leave Sevierville traveling east on Dolly Parton Parkway (# 411) to the junction of Pittman Center Road (# 416) and turn right. Be sure to stop at the campus of Walters State Community College to see the interpretive marker explaining the Battle of Fair Garden- the largest battle fought in Sevier County during the Civil War. The well-

marked site is part of the Tennessee Civil War Trails. The program is part of a five- state system that invites you to explore both well- known and less-familiar sites associated with America's greatest drama.

## 3. Murphy's Chapel United Methodist Church

Exit Walters State parking lot onto Pittman Center Road (Highway #416). Continue 0.3 miles to the historic Murphy's Chapel United Methodist Church located on your right. Built by Elbert Early and his brother William in 1885, the white clap-board church with green shutters on the bank of the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River has long been a favorite of artists and photographers. For a stunning view of the church with its colorful backdrop, get out of the car and walk across the street a short distance to the little cemetery.

## 4. Swinging Bridge at the Robertson Farmstead\*

Continue on Pittman Center Road 0.2 miles to see one of the few remaining swinging bridges crossing the Little Pigeon River at the Robertson farmstead. Until about 1900, most travel was by foot or horseback. Roads were so scarce and poor that even horse drawn wagons were limited. If possible, the streams were forded on horseback or in wagons. On smaller streams foot logs were used. Pedestrians needed better means to cross the larger prongs of the Little Pigeon River and swinging bridges such as this were the solution. There were many built in earlier times.

## 5. Darius & Mary Robertson House\*

Located across the road from the swinging bridge, the Darius and Mary Robertson House is believed to be the first house constructed by Lewis Buckner, an African-American carpenter and furniture maker. Built around 1880, Buckner added lively embellishments to the dwelling such as decorative window crowns; Italianate eave brackets on the house and porch; chamfered porch columns; and sawn work porch brackets. The two-story frame I- house features two exterior-end chimneys.

## 6. McMahan Cantilever Barn\*

Continue left at the forks of Pittman Center Road (#416) and Birds Creek Rd. (#454) where you will enter the Richardson Cove Community. Just after you pass the fire department look on your left to see the McMahan Cantilever Barn, built around 1880, it is the largest two-crib/ double-cantilever type barn in Sevier County. Cantilever barns were the dominant construction method of barns throughout the county in the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth century.

## 7. Old Richardson Cove Baptist Church

Just past the McMahan Barn, the old Richardson Cove Baptist Church will come into view on your right. Built in 1930, the white weather-boarded church was used for worship until a new brick church was built about a mile away in 2007. On December 17, 1936, the first wedding was held in the church. The couple was Frankie King and Lydia Franks of Louisville, Kentucky. Later, Frankie, who was known by his nickname Pee- Wee King, wrote the music for the "Tennessee Waltz."

## 8. Pittman Center Mission

Continue on Pittman Center Road approximately 5 miles where a bridge crosses the river affording beautiful views both upstream and downstream. In about 1.5 miles after you cross the bridge turn right onto Webb's Creek Road. In about 500 feet the remains of Pittman Center Mission will come in to view. Founded in 1920 by the Methodist Conference of Elmira, New York, the mission educated students, provided spiritual guidance and a medical clinic operated by Dr. Robert F. Thomas. The school, good will store, post office, medical clinic, farm, and orchards existed on the campus of Pittman Community Center. While activities of the Center ceased as a missionary outpost, the name Pittman Center remained. Sevier County Board of Education purchased the school in 1955.

On your left, Eugene Huskey Environmental Center is located on the hillside. Each sixth grade class in the Sevier County School System

comes to the Environmental Center for a two-day, one-night visit. Students are engaged in the practical application of Stream Ecology, a study of the plants and animals of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, as well as experiences with Appalachian Culture such as mountain music, arts, and crafts.

## 9. Frederick Emert Covered Bridge

Backtrack to Pittman Center Road and turn left. In about 0.5 miles, turn right onto Emert's Cove Road. Roll down your windows and listen to the roar of the swift water splashing against ancient boulders until you come to the Frederick Emert Covered Bridge. It was built in 2000 to honor the earliest settler in the area, who came in 1790, Frederick Emert. The covered bridge houses a single lane for automobiles and a nice separated walkway overlooking the river. Emert was a soldier of the Revolutionary War and had lived in Pennsylvania prior to and during his service. While serving in the American Army, Frederick Emert served under the command of General George Washington and Colonel Anthony Wayne from Berks County, PA. After the war he migrated to Sevier County. This area came to be known as Emert's Cove. Turn right and drive through the bridge.

Continue 0.8 miles to Highway #321. If you want to, continue to follow the Middle Prong before returning to Sevierville. Cross the highway and enter the Greenbrier section of Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Once a thriving farming community, nature has reclaimed this lovely valley which some consider among the most beautiful in the park.

