



## NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

“Frances Fisher Lenoir and Alexander McCulloch, Sr. -  
Dyer County, Tennessee (American) Pioneers”

**Contributor:** Laura McCulloch **Grade Level:** 4-5

**1. Identify the standards to be addressed:**

4.5.12. Era 4 -Expansion and Reform (1801-1861): Identify major events, people, and patterns in Tennessee.

4.5.12.c. Identify the accomplishments of notable Tennessee individuals such as Sam Houston, Andrew Jackson and James Polk. 7

**2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Students will learn become acquainted with the life story of Frances Fisher Lenoir McCulloch and her husband Major Alexander McCulloch, Sr. Following the lesson, students will be familiar with Frances and Alexander as early settlers of both Tennessee and western expansion settlers who helped initially settle Middle Tennessee, Alabama and West Tennessee. Formulated for Dyer County's approaching Bicentennial, it is my hope that this lesson will also provide a discussion springboard for teachers in other parts of not only Tennessee but, the United States, for understanding the way our ancestors moved and what motivated them to settle our great country.

**3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

There is very little required for this lesson as I have written a short biography detailing the major events in the lives of both Frances and Alexander. The material in this document comes directly from "The McCulloch Genealogy" written by McCulloch descendant Betty Henry. I own a copy of this book and, not only is it well documented, but the amount of material available concerning the McCulloch Family in Dyer County is vast. My husband is a direct descendant of Alexander McCulloch, Sr. and Frances Fisher Lenoir. I am including the biography to be read to the class, the few pictures available and a worksheet. I present this lesson in 1850's dressed as Frances herself and tell the story from her perspective but this is not necessary.

**4. Introduction of the topic:**

1. Ask students if they have ever moved?

2. Ask them if they have ever had to travel in a wagon or by boat to get to their new home.

3. Ask what type of roads or river did they travel on?

4. Today we are going to learn about a family that was here just as Tennessee was becoming a state. We are going to hear about how they moved from place to place and how they helped settle Middle and West Tennessee, Alabama and Texas.

**5. Procedure for instruction:**

All that is required here is the reading of the biographical sketch of Frances and Alexander McCulloch

**6. Assessment of Understanding:**

1. Ask would you like to live the pioneer life?
2. Ask do you think you would have made a good pioneer or settler?
3. Ask class if they were pioneers, what things might make them want to

Frances Fisher Lenoir

Born April 11, 1780, Dinwiddie, VA  
Died May 10, 1866, Ellis CO, TX

Alexander McCulloch, Sr.

Born August 16, 1766, Lunenburg CO, VA  
Died August 4, 1846, Dyer CO, TN

Frances Lenoir moved to Davidson County TN from Virginia with her Aunt Anne Fisher Coleman just after Tennessee became a state in 1796. While living in Davidson County she met and married the wealthy heir of Patriot Benjamin McCulloch, Alexander McCulloch September 11, 1800. (possibly 1799) Considered quite the catch, Alexander was a dashing, handsome young man who had been educated at Yale University. Wealthy and the owner of a great deal of property following the death of his father, Frances thought they would be returning to either Virginia or North Carolina to take up running the family plantation but Alexander had other plans.

Frances soon found that, even though she had been educated to be the mistress of a plantation, her future was as a pioneer woman of the Western Frontier traveling over 1,500 miles from her home following her marriage. Eventually, Frances and Alexander would have 13 children, 12 of whom survived to adulthood.

Shortly after their marriage, Frances and Alexander moved 35 miles from Davidson Co. to Rutherford County and the young community of Murfreesboro. Here Alexander was elected the first county trustee of the county and dealt in land speculation. In 1813, following the Fort Mim Indian Massacre, Alexander volunteered to serve with General John Coffee as his aide-de-camp additionally serving directly under General Andrew Jackson and Col. John Dyer. He would gain prominence through his military career serving with Generals John Coffee and Andrew Jackson at both the battle of Horseshow Bend and New Orleans. Alexander sent home many exciting and descriptive letters about both the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and the Battle of New Orleans.

While Alexander was off to war, Frances remained behind in Tennessee. It was her responsibility to care for the children, oversee the large farming operation Alexander had established and manage all his other business concerns.

Following his return to Rutherford County, Alexander and General Coffee began surveying what were known as the western lands and made the decision to move to the Muscle Shoals, Alabama area just prior to 1820. Frances packed up their household, the children, and the livestock and headed to Alabama to establish another home. A journey of approximately 150 miles.

Alexander continued to survey and buy and sell land while Frances ran the household, cared for the children who now numbered 7, oversaw their farming operation, and handled all Alexander's business when he was away surveying.

With Alexander, the “grass was always greener” so in 1826, Frances was called upon to pack everything up for another move. This time to Dyer County, TN where, upon his death, Alexander’s father had left him a land grant of 5,000 acres. Alexander and Frances traveled to Dyer Co. by flatboat while the eldest of their sons still living at home, Benjamin, took the livestock, household goods and farm laborer’s overland. When Frances and her children finally arrived in Dyer County, Benjamin had already built a log cabin and begun clearing land for farming. Benjamin was only 15 years old.

Frances remained in Dyer Co. with her children managing the family farm and business operations while Alexander and their oldest son, Alexander McCulloch, Jr. continued to work surveying the Western Lands of Tennessee. During these years, Frances had a constant stream of adventuring men come to her home. David Crockett and Sam Houston were the McCulloch’s good friends and frequent visitors. In fact, sons Henry and Benjamin both decided to join the fight for the Independence of Texas and followed both Crockett and Houston to Texas. Fortunately for Frances and Alexander, Ben decided in New Orleans that Henry was too young to fight and sent him home. Just a few weeks later, Ben, who was headed to the Alamo, came down with the measles and had to pause his journey to recover. He was spared from perishing at the Battle of the Alamo by his illness. Following the massacre at the Alamo, Henry returned to Texas and he and Ben joined Sam Houston in time to participate in the Battle of San Jacinto.

The Independence of Texas gave Alexander the itch to move again so, Frances once more began the process of packing up her household to make the move to Texas. Unfortunately, Alexander fell ill, and they were unable to make their final move. He died August 1, 1846, and was buried in the McCulloch family plot in Dyer County. (Now located on the Anderson Farm on Upper Finley Road in Dyer County, TN) In his will, Alexander left Frances all his goods and property with the instructions to sell everything, pay all his debts and move to Texas. Frances followed his instructions to the letter but, Henry and Ben, who had become some of the first Texas Rangers, required seven years to return to Dyer County and assist their mother.

The last business Frances McCulloch completed in Dyer County was ordering Alexander’s headstone prior to her move.

Frances McCulloch died May 10, 1866, in Ellis County, TX. She was buried in the McCulloch-Whitten Cemetery but was later moved to the Texas State Cemetery and buried with her son Benjamin. Frances has the distinction of being the only woman to have two sons reach the rank of brigadier general in the same war and she is often remembered as the “Mother of the Texas Rangers.



Frances Fisher LeNoir

HERE



REST

FRANCES LENOIR M<sup>C</sup>CULLOCH  
AND HER SON  
BENJAMIN M<sup>C</sup>CULLOCH

TWO OF THE SONS OF MCKENZIE AND FRANCES LENOIR  
M<sup>C</sup>CULLOCH - BENJAMIN AND HENRY EUSTACE - WERE  
BRIGADIER GENERALS IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY  
FRANCES LENOIR M<sup>C</sup>CULLOCH WAS BORN APRIL 11 1820  
DIED IN COLLIS COUNTY TEXAS - MAY 20 1866  
BENJAMIN M<sup>C</sup>CULLOCH WAS BORN IN TENNESSEE  
NOVEMBER 11 1822 - PRIVATE IN THE BATTLE OF  
SAN JACINTO APRIL 21 1836 - KILLED IN THE  
BATTLE OF LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS MARCH 7 1862 WHILE  
A BRIGADIER GENERAL IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY

APRIL 11 1820 - MAY 20 1866  
NOVEMBER 11 1822 - MARCH 7 1862



Frances Fisher LeNoir

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Frances Fisher Lenoir and Alexander McCulloch, Sr.

## American Pioneers

1. Where was Frances Lenoir Fisher born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What county in Tennessee did Frances move to with her Aunt? \_\_\_\_\_
3. After Frances and Alexander got married, where did they move? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many children would Frances and Alexander eventually have? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the second state the McCulloch Family moved to? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What famous battle did Alexander McCulloch participate in? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What West Tennessee county did the McCulloch's settle in? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Sam Houston and \_\_\_\_\_ were friends of the McCulloch's.
9. The last place Frances McCulloch lived was in the state of \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Sometimes Frances is called the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Texas Rangers.

### Word Bank

Dyer   Mother   Alabama   Davidson   Virginia   Battle of New Orleans  
Rutherford County   Davy Crockett   Texas   Thirteen

### Written Response

Pretend you lived 200 years ago and have been asked to move far away to the frontier. Would you go? Why or why not?