On this day in 1784, four counties in western North Carolina declared their independence as the state of Franklin. The counties lay in what would eventually become Tennessee.

The previous April, the state of North Carolina had ceded its western land claims between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi River to the United States Congress. The settlers in this area, known as the Cumberland River Valley, had formed their own independent government from 1772 to 1777 and were concerned that Congress would sell the territory to Spain or France as a means of paying off some of the government's war debt. As a result, North Carolina retracted its cession and began to organize an administration for the territory.

Simultaneously, representatives from Washington, Sullivan, Spencer (modern-day Hawkins) and Greene counties declared their independence from North Carolina. The following May, the counties petitioned for statehood as “Frankland” to the United States Congress. A simple majority of states favored acceptance of the petition, but it fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to pass, even after the counties changed their proposed name to “Franklin” in an attempt to curry Benjamin Franklin’s and others’ favor.

In defiance of Congress, Franklin survived as an independent nation for four years with its own constitution, Indian treaties and legislated system of barter in lieu of currency, though after only two years, North Carolina set up its own parallel government in the region. Finally, Franklin’s weak economy forced its governor, John Sevier, to approach the Spanish for aid. North Carolina, terrified of having a Spanish client state on its border, arrested Sevier. When Cherokee, Chickamauga and Chickasaw began to attack settlements within Franklin’s borders in 1788, it quickly rejoined North Carolina to gain its militia’s protection from attack.

1968 — Communist forces renew offensive

Communist forces launch rocket and mortar attacks on numerous cities, provincial capitals, and military installations. The heaviest shelling was on the U.S. airfield at Da Nang, the cities of Hue and Quang Tri. North Vietnamese forces numbering between 1200 and 1500 troops attacked the U.S. Special Forces camp at Duc Lap, 130 miles northeast of Saigon near the Cambodian border. The camp fell but was re-taken by an allied relief column commanded by U.S. Special Forces on August 25. A reported 643 North Vietnamese troops were killed in the battle.

2000 — First “Survivor” finale airs

On this day in 2000, Richard Hatch, a 39-year-old corporate trainer from Rhode Island, wins the season-one finale of the reality television show “Survivor” and takes home the promised $1 million prize. In a four-to-three vote by his fellow contestants, Hatch, who was known for walking around naked on the island in Indonesia where the show was shot, was named Sole Survivor over the river raft guide Kelly Wiglesworth. “Survivor,” whose slogan is “Outwit, Outplay, Outlast,” was a huge ratings success and spawned numerous imitators in the reality-competition genre.

Produced by Mark Burnett (“The Apprentice,” “Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?”), Survivor premiered on May 31, 2000, on CBS. The show centers around a group of sixteen strangers who are stranded for 39 days in a remote location where they must find food, water and shelter and compete in various challenges to win rewards and immunity from being voted out of the competition by their fellow contestants. The voting takes place at the so-called “Tribal Council” ceremony and after a contestant is voted off, the show’s host Jeff Probst informs that person that “the tribe has spoken” and asks the evictee to extinguish his or her torch.

In 2006, season-one winner Richard Hatch was found guilty of tax evasion for failing to report his “Survivor” prize money to the IRS. He was sentenced to more than four years in prison. Other former “Survivor” contestants have gone on to reap more success from their appearance on the reality show: Season one’s Colleen Haskell landed a co-starring role in the forgettable 2001 comedy The Animal, while season two’s Elisabeth Hasselbeck (nee Filarski) went on to become a co-host of the daytime TV talk show “The View.”

— This Day in History is courtesy of History.com.

Chinese eggplants, nicknamed “Orient Charm”, are an example of what can be bought at the Farmers Market in the UT Gardens. UT Farmers Market is held every Wednesday from 4-7 p.m. at the UT Gardens until the fall.