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# Archivists

Fall 1992

Published by the Tennessee Archivists



Reelfoot Lake, girl, child and boat. Ganier Photographic Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

## ARCHIVISTS Editorial

Seventeen years ago, I was teaching junior high school English in Cedartown, Georgia. Many of the kids were already apathetic and turned off by education. In an attempt to break through the wall of indifference that surrounded most classes, I used some pretty off-the-wall stunts to get the kids' attention. I once took a class into the woods, where we spent the period foraging for roots and berries, in order to get across the resourcefulness of the Indians who once lived in the area. Another time, I brought in my album collection and listened to Rock 'n Roll while I explained how popular music reflected what was going on in society. And once, in order to liven up a section on the history of the English language, I explained how family names came about.

Teaching is an unpredictable business. You never know if you will have any influence on a child and, if you do, you can never be sure just how that influence will evidence itself.

The following letter is from a former student:

Dear Mancil,

I am starting to research family history. You helped start my love of that sort of thing years ago when you looked up all our family names in the 8th grade. If you have any pointers, please let me know.

Love,  
Joanna

Dear Joanna,

I was a bit concerned when I received your letter. Like most archivists, I have dealt with my share of genealogists and have found them to be among the most prolific users of archives.

Some are perfectly nice people and some have raised weirdness to an art form.

In order to avoid being known as old "Oh God, it's her again" by your local archivist, here are a few simple guidelines:

(1) Be patient. Research takes time. Don't be like the man who walked into the state archives on his lunch break and said, "I have an hour to kill and thought I'd look up my family."

(2) Be understanding. Archivists are public servants, which means they are overworked and underpaid. If they can't help you right away, don't start griping about being a taxpayer. So are they.

(3) Be prepared. Archivists are historians, not magicians. They can't find it for you if you don't know what you want. They can't manufacture it for you if it doesn't exist. Do your homework.

(4) Be open-minded. People, ancestors included, have a knack for doing what they damn well please. You may want Grandpa Quadfossil to be a gentleman farmer, but that won't stop him from being a bartender.

(5) Be reasonable. Some things are just not worth it. I have seen researchers refuse to budge from a microfilm reader with a fire alarm screaming in their ear.



(6) Don't take the rules personally. Unfortunately, a large percentage of the thefts in an archives are committed by genealogists. The logic goes something like this: "If my family name is in it, then it belongs to my family, therefore, I should be able to take it home with me." The rules are there for a reason. Follow them.

(7) Treat the archivists nicely. They work with this stuff every day and they know where things are. Archivists are only human. They are more likely to go that extra mile for someone who treats them with a little consideration.

(8) Don't expect us to be as excited by your research as you are. After all, it's your family.

(9) Don't expect to be treated like your ancestor. A lot of people who claim descent from royalty seem to expect to be treated like royalty.

(10) Be sensible about it. Live people are more important than dead ones. Great Uncle Dofunny has been dead 70 years. He'll keep while you take the kids to Myrtle Beach.

(11) Don't take it too seriously. This is just a hobby. The fate of the universe as we know it doesn't hang in the balance. If Great Uncle Dofunny was a saint, that's nice. If he was a sinner, that's too bad. Either way, it's his life, not yours.

The late Jane Fullerton, a great lady and a professional genealogist, once said, "It's not what we think of our ancestors that matters. It's what they would think of us."

Enjoy your research.

Love,  
Mancil



## From the President

It is time to think of what Tennessee Archivists can do for the future of archival work. I believe that we can do more towards educational benefits, consultation advice and greater public awareness of the preservation of state and regional archival materials.

The educational programs of Tennessee Archivists have been so successful and of the highest integrity. I hope they can continue this high quality. We should be able to continue the work of timely topics in the archival world for future programs. These topics could and should include consistent policies and procedures manuals, specific funding approaches or grant writing, and how to effectively recruit physical and financial support from the community.

Tennessee Archivists members have always been willing to help with suggestions and advice for the newer archival groups. Again, this has been an excellent work. I hope it too will continue to expand and assist those smaller, struggling archives across the state. I foresee and suggest that we strengthen our network of names, telephone numbers and areas of expertise. This could help Tennessee Archivists better serve those special archives in need of a specific source for answers and helpful responses.

As we move toward the bicentennial of our state, I hope that Tennessee Archivists can become more available to the public and make the public more aware of the rich heritage available through our archives. Knoxville has already seen an increase in

interest and awareness through their recent celebrations. I think this can only benefit all our archival groups across the state. I hope that Tennessee Archivists can take advantage of this interest and will grow and expand along with the work and needs of these various archival groups. Growth can be difficult to adjust to at first, but, in the long term, is well worth the effort.

As this will be my last paragraph as president of Tennessee Archivists, I want to thank all of you for your kind support this year. Without the help of everyone, this year could not have been a success. The preparation and planning of SAC took so much time and effort from so many people, but it paid off in success and admiration from the other states. Because SAC did require extra time and effort, I am afraid that other Tennessee Archivists responsibilities fell by the wayside. I have been able to keep everything running smoothly through the help of you all. Thank you again for a great year.

Sincerely,

Carol Roberts, President



## From the Cover



### *Photos from the Albert Franklin Ganier Sr. Photographic Collection*

The Albert Franklin Ganier Sr. Photographic Collection (MSS ac. no. 89-114a) and its addition (MSS ac. no. 91-217) consist of the personal photographs of Albert Franklin Ganier Sr. (1883-1973), a noted civil engineer, historian, ornithologist and long-time resident of Nashville. This collection contains approximately 1100 items and contains numerous photographs of field trips of the Tennessee Ornithological Society (of which Ganier was a co-founder); old residences and buildings located in Tennessee and the Southeast; the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; Reelfoot Lake State Park and Samburg, Tennessee; "The Narrows" in Cheatham County; Standing Stone State Park in Overton County; Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky; and of research into the story of Alvin C. York, conducted for Warner Brothers Studio in preparation for the filming of the motion picture "Sergeant York." Ganier also had several interesting prints of his travels to California in 1939 for the American Ornithological Union meeting; while there, Ganier visited the San Francisco Exposition. Numerous photographs of birds and bird habitats are included, giving evidence for the reference to Ganier as the "John James Audubon of Tennessee." An interesting print relating to the steamboat wharf in Nashville (ca. 1907) is included in this collection, as are several photographic negatives of the Ganier family.

This collection was processed by David R. Sowell, assistant archivist, Technical Services Section, Tennessee State Library and Archives, and was donated by Winfred L. Smith, professor of biology, University of Tennessee at Martin.

*Right: A. F. Ganier examining mountain vegetation during a ornithological society field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains, ca. 1937.*

## New Officers Nominated

The Nominating Committee recently announced their 1992-1993 slate of candidates to head Tennessee Archivists. They are:

### **Vice-President/President-Elect**

Steve Cotham

### **Secretary**

Ken Fieth

### **Treasurer**

David McWhirter

The Nominating Committee's members were Sally Polhemus, John Thweatt and Ann Phillips. Barbara Flanary, this past year's vice-president/president-elect will, of course, take the helm as president.



# Spotlight on ...

## Metropolitan Nashville –Davidson County Archives

**Address:** 1113 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210  
**Telephone:** (615) 862-5880  
**Hours:** 8 AM to 4 PM, Monday – Friday (excluding holidays)

**Parking:** Free parking available on site.

**Access:** Stacks are closed. General public may request needed materials for use in reading room. Microfilm readers are available to researchers and copies of documents on microfilm can be reproduced on staff reader/printer. For a nominal fee, phone and letter requests may be accepted for limited reference and copy services.

**Restrictions:** At present, all records are open to researchers.

**Copy Facilities:** A paper copier is available for use by patrons.

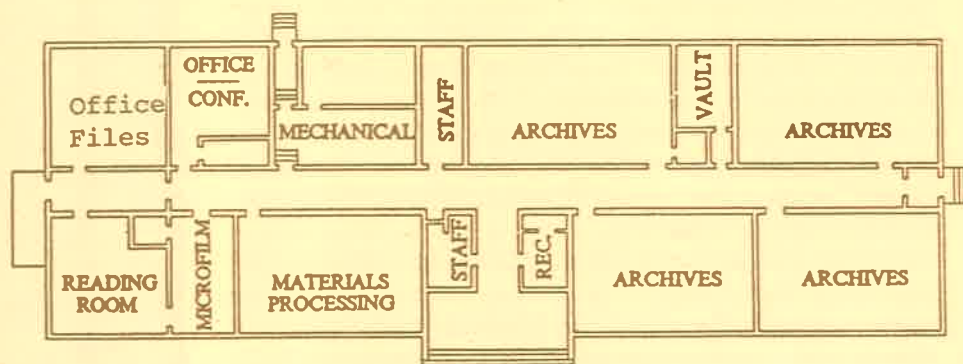
**Major Subjects:** The emphasis of Metro Archives is on official records of Nashville and Davidson County. The records include original marriage bonds/licenses, wills, court minutes, loose papers of the Chancery Court from 1846–1938, as well as vertical files on schools, churches, businesses, and persons or events related to Nashville – Davidson County history.

**Accession Policy:** Space constraints have made it necessary to limit sizable acquisitions. Small collections of personal papers, photographs, etc. are accepted.

**Director:** Virginia R. Lyle, CA, Metro Archivist

The Metropolitan Government Archives of Nashville and Davidson County was opened to the public in May 1986. The archives is organized to accomplish a number of purposes:

- to centralize official historic records of Nashville as a community;
- to collect, preserve and maintain photographs, manuscripts and documents concerning our city;
- to document the formation and implementation of our consolidated city–county form of government;
- to preserve the retired papers of mayors, council members and other officials; and
- to serve the general public and government employees as a research facility.



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES

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**TENNESSEE ARCHIVISTS FALL MEETING**  
**November 19-20, 1992**  
**Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library**  
**Chattanooga, Tennessee**

*NOTE: The library does not open until 9:00 a.m.; however, registered meeting participants will be admitted at 8:00 a.m.*

**Thursday, November 19, 1992**

**8:00-8:30 a.m. -- Coffee**

**8:30-11:00 a.m. -- Pre-conference workshops. Two concurrent sessions, choose either Beginning or Advanced session.**

**BEGINNING -- "Processing and Arrangement of Records"**  
Shirley Wilson, Vice-chair of Sumner County  
Records Commission and certified genealogist.

**"Conservation and Preservation of Records"**  
Carol Roberts, Documents Conservator,  
Tennessee State Library and Archives

**ADVANCED -- "Ethical, Legal, and Other Questions When  
Starting a County Archives"**  
Doris Martinson, Head, Knox County Archives.

**"North Carolina's Local Records Program"**  
Frank Gatton, Assistant State Records  
Administrator for the State of North Carolina.

**11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. -- Lunch**

**12:30-1:00 p.m. -- Registration**

**1:00-1:15 p.m. -- Welcome**

**1:15-3:30 p.m. -- "Spotlight on Chattanooga Area Archives"**

**"Fellowship of Southern Writers Archives"**  
Dr. Joseph Jackson, Dean of Libraries, University of  
Tennessee at Chattanooga.

**"The Thomas Memorial Collection: A Look at a Southern  
Civil War Collection"**  
Peg Bennett, Director of Libraries, Southern College.

**"Insuring Survivability of Historical Records in a Rapidly  
Changing Organization"**  
Michael Scalf, Archivist, Tennessee Valley Authority.

3:30 p.m. -- Board shuttle for tour of Aquarium

4:00-5:45 p.m. -- Aquarium tour

5:45-6:00 p.m. -- Board shuttle for return trip (Shuttle stops running at 6:00 p.m.)

6:30 p.m. -- Eating Out in Chattanooga. Sign up sheets and menus available at meeting.

**Friday, November 20, 1992**

8:00-8:15 a.m. -- Coffee

8:15-9:30 a.m. -- Keynote Address

David B. Gracy II, Gov. Bill Daniel Professor of Archival Enterprise, University of Texas at Austin and past president of the Society of American Archivists.

9:30-10:30 a.m. -- "A Bicentennial Tribute to Tennessee Women"

Ilene Cornwell, compiler/editor of *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly*.

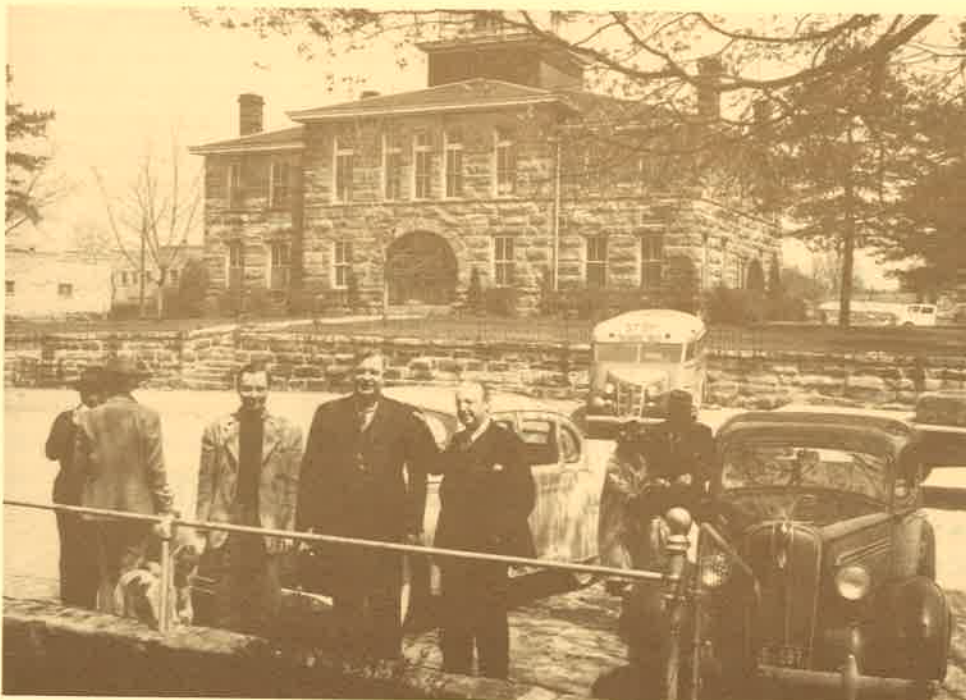
10:30-10:45 a.m. -- Break

10:45-11:45 a.m. -- Goal Setting

11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. -- Business Meeting

Election of officers

Update on the historical records survey  
Legislative developments



*Left: "Next morning, Alvin York joined the party in front of the hotel." From the Alvin C. York Story, Ganier Photographic Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives.*

## HOUSING

The Radisson Read House is the designated hotel for the meeting. A block of rooms is being held for members of Tennessee Archivists. The rates are \$72.00 suite, \$62.00 room, and \$33.00 for employees eligible for the state rate.

**When making your reservation, you will need to indicate if you are eligible for the state rate and have a state I. D.**

To reserve lodging, contact the Read House at 1-800-333-3333 or (615) 266-4121, or mail in the enclosed reservation card. The mailing address is P. O. Box 11165, M. L. King Blvd. and Broad Street, Chattanooga, TN 37402. **Reservations must be received by October 21, 1992.**

*Other hotels within walking distance of the Bicentennial Library:*

Marriott at the Convention Center  
2 Carter Plaza  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(615) 756-0002

Days Inn Rivergate  
901 Carter Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(615) 266-7331

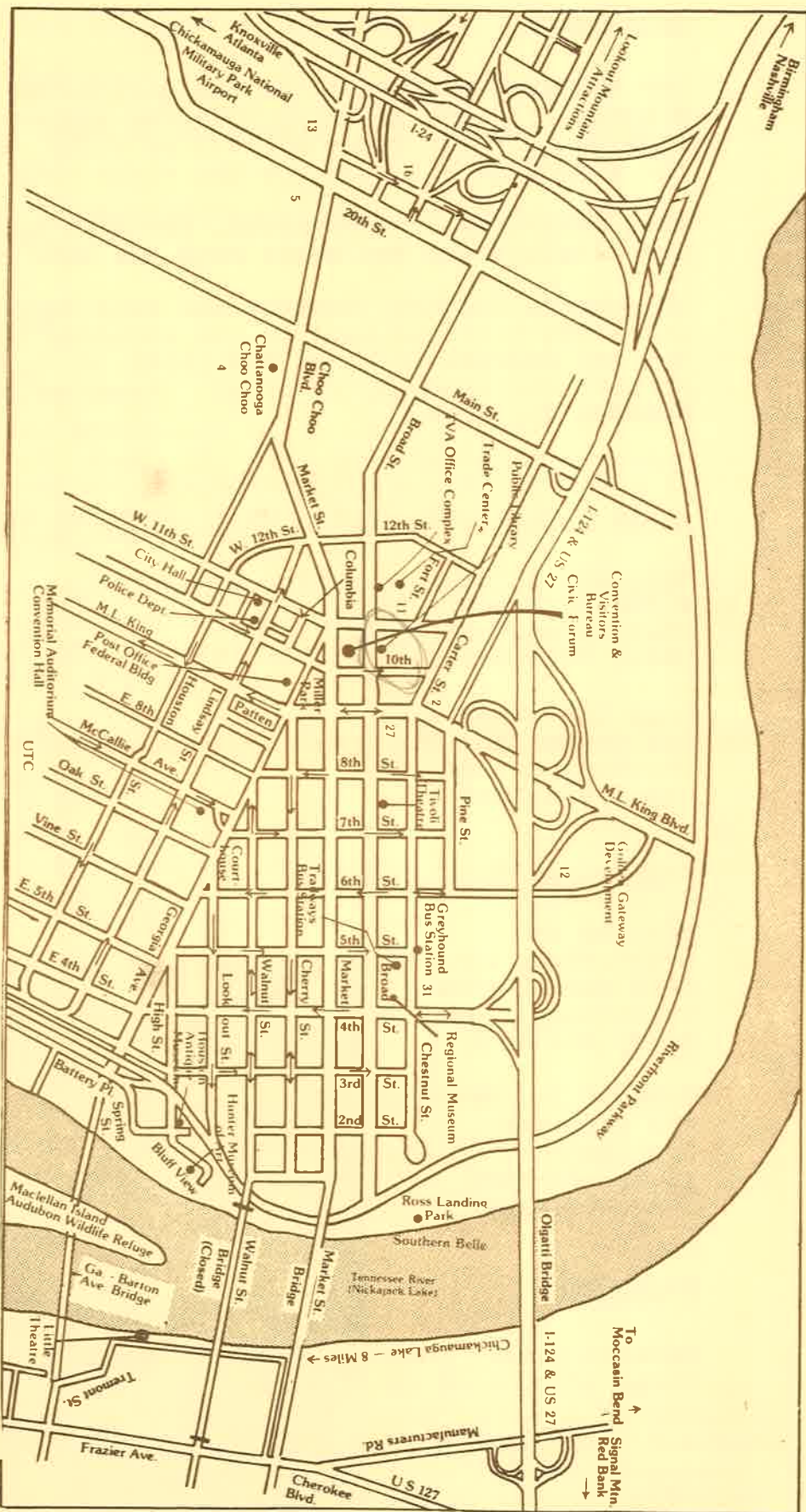
*Other area hotels/motels:*

Holiday Inn  
Chattanooga Choo Choo  
1400 Market Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37408  
(615) 266-5000

Comfort Inn Riverplaza  
407 Chestnut  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(615) 756-5150  
1-800-221-2222

## PARKING

Several public parking areas are located near the library. Rates range from \$1.50 to \$2.25 per day.



## DIRECTIONS

From I-24 or I-75, follow signs marked Chattanooga/Hwy. 27 North to the M. L. King Blvd. exit. Go right on to M. L. King Blvd for two blocks. The Radisson Read House will be on the left at the corner of M. L. King Blvd. and Broad Street. The Library is one block south on Broad Street at the corner of 10th.

## LODGING CODE

- 2--Days Inn Rivergate
- 4--Holiday Inn, Chattanooga Choo Choo
- 11--Marriott at the Convention Center
- 27--Radisson Read House
- 31--Comfort Inn Riverplaza

615  
266-7331

**TENNESSEE ARCHIVISTS FALL MEETING  
REGISTRATION FORM**

November 19-20, 1992  
Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INSTITUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Registration (\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Tennessee Aquarium Tour (\$7.75) \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-conference Workshops (choose one)

Beginning \_\_\_\_\_

Advanced \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** \_\_\_\_\_

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Make checks payable to "Tennessee Archivists" and mail  
registration form and fee to:

Clara W. Swann/Ned Irwin  
Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library  
Local History and Genealogy Department  
1001 Broad Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(615) 757-5317

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**Deadline for registration is November 1, 1992**

# The Knox County Two Centuries Photograph Project



by Sally R. Polhemus  
Special Materials Archivist  
McClung Historical Collection



In 1991, when the Knox County Bicentennial Steering Committee solicited ideas for celebrating the county's 200th birthday, Steve Cotham, head of the McClung Historical Collection, developed a proposal for a project to copy original, historically interesting photographs owned by Knox Countians and submitted it for consideration. It was both a surprise and a delight when the project received full funding and support. The Knox County Two Centuries Celebration was allotted \$25,000 for the project and the Knox County Public Library System contributed to it by providing McClung Collection staff and equipment and by allowing library branches to serve as the principal sites for copying photographs around the county.

The goal of the Knox County Two Centuries Photograph Project is to preserve a photographic record of Knox County's past, from the early days of photography up to the 1970s. Recognition of the rapid growth and changes in Knox County mixed with concern over the loss of many fragile and historically valuable photographic images of Knox County places and people prompted the McClung Collection to develop the project. McClung Collection staff members and one volunteer travelled over 950 miles to 28 Knox County sites on 44 days from January through July 1992. Community centers and churches allowed the project to use their facilities while the library's branch managers were especially helpful and gracious in hosting the project and in encouraging community involvement. Over 225 people participated in the project and approximately 4,000 photographs were copied.

The central premise of the project was to copy selected Knox County photographs on site, so that the original

photographs did not have to leave the possession of their owners. By creating a new negative, the image can be preserved. In order to do this, McClung Collection darkroom technician Jan Lynch travelled to every site (the only participant to go on every visit) with a camera, copy stand, lights and a filter to enhance faded images.

Staff members examined the photos brought in and selected those which were to be copied. The donor filled out an agreement form, giving the McClung Collection permission to copy the photographs and to allow them to be used for research purposes. A staff member then interviewed the donor about each picture to be copied, getting the basic identification information, as well as interesting stories or facts about the picture. The photographs were then handed over to Jan Lynch for copying and were usually returned to the donor in a matter of minutes.

McClung Collection staff members Steve Cotham, Sally Polhemus and Melanie Reseigh devoted up to two days a week to the project. Volunteer David Babelay deserves special mention for accompanying the staff on many of the visits. He transported equipment, helped with exhibits, interviewed donors and contributed over 330 of his own excellent photographs for inclusion in the project.

Although the on-site copying visits are now over, much remains to be done. Major construction activity in the East Tennessee Historical Center has limited the times when the darkroom is available for printing. All of the negatives from the project will be printed as time permits and will eventually be available for viewing in the McClung Collection. The goal for completion of this phase of the project is late 1993.

In the meantime, selected photographs are on exhibit in the basement of the Knox County Courthouse through December 1992. An exhibit of additional photos from the project was available for viewing in the Jacobs Building at the TVA&I Fair in September and a number of slide presentations featuring project photographs have been given throughout the county. The most permanent and far-reaching result of the project will be a book of approximately 200 photographs to be published in late 1992.

Both McClung Collection staff and the many project participants have rated the Knox County Two Centuries Photograph Project a great success. The long hours of planning and work have been rewarded by the end result — a rich and varied addition to the photographic record of Knox County's past.

## Conservation Corner

[Editor's Note: It never rains, but it pours. Due to the large number of deadlines this month, this issue of Conservation Corner will consist of several short articles on conservation. —MJ]

### Encapsulation Setback

While encapsulation remains one of the most affordable methods of preserving fragile documents, recent discoveries have raised some questions about this procedure. Double-sided tape, used to seal mylar in the encapsulation process, has been found to damage documents which come in contact with it. Damage has been found on materials encapsulated with less than one half inch between seal and document and on items which weigh enough to slide inside the mylar and thus come into contact with the tape when stored vertically. To prevent damage to encapsulated documents, (1) never store encapsulated items vertically, (2) always leave at least one half inch between seal and document, (3) check all encapsulated items annually for damage, and (4) inventory all previously encapsulated items. [From *The Dusty Shelf*]

### Packing with Popcorn

Some book vendors and audiovisual equipment suppliers have been experimenting with real popcorn as a packing material. In an attempt to be environmentally conscious, these shippers were seeking an affordable replacement for styrofoam. Real popcorn was found to be less than satisfactory when it was discovered that it is flammable, weighs eight times more than styrofoam, is more

expensive than styrofoam, contains oil which damages the items it is supposed to protect, provides food for insects and rodents and loses all value as a packing material when wet. [Abby Newsletter via Primary Source]

#### Dustbunnies to the Rescue

DuPont has developed a non-linting, scratch-free, inexpensive, reusable dusting material that has no chemical additives. The product, called the Dustbunny, is made from a Tyvek substrate stitched with nylon fibers. The resulting fabric has a slight static charge, which attracts and holds dust. To clean the Dustbunny, simply wash in a mild detergent and dry at a low temperature. The Dustbunny costs about \$4.95 and is available from most conservation suppliers. [Abby Newsletter via Primary Source]

## Moving Image Archivists Association Offers Charter Memberships

Film and television archivists from the United States and Canada have joined together to form a new North American professional organization — the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) — dedicated to ensuring the survival of our moving image heritage. AMIA is now offering charter memberships in 1992 and invites all interested professionals to become a part of the community of archivists, producers, manufacturers, scholars and concerned supporters involved in moving image preservation.

AMIA was established to provide a means for cooperation among individuals concerned with the collection, preserva-

tion, exhibition and use of moving image materials. The objectives of AMIA are to exchange information, promote archival activities and professional standards, facilitate research and encourage public awareness of film and video preservation. Membership is open to any interested individual, institution, organization or corporation. Membership dues are \$50 for individuals, \$150 for non-profit institutions and \$300 for for-profit institutions.

Since the late 1960s, representatives from moving image archives have recognized the value of regular meetings to exchange information and experiences. Over the years, this group of archivists, originally known as the Film and Television Archives Advisory Committee (F/TAAC), has evolved to include several hundred archivists from over 100 national, regional and local institutions from the United States and Canada working in film and television/video preservation. The name of the group was changed to the Association of Moving Image Archivists and the organization voted to formalize as an individual-based professional association. Two standing committees were created: the AMIA Preservation Committee and the AMIA Cataloging and Documentation Committee.

According to AMIA President William Murphy, "The establishment of the Association of Moving Image Archivists is a natural and logical step toward accommodating the tremendous growth of interest in the preservation of moving images, from news footage to Hollywood feature films, from documentary films to music videos, all the genres that have become part of our moving-image heritage. Yet no one should assume that the fragile audiovisual media containing our national and regional history will be preserved and will endure from one generation to the next. Preservation is, in many respects, a race against the ravages of time and the instability of the original recording media."

AMIA represents a broad cross-section of film and television/video media, including classical and contemporary Hollywood productions, newsreels and



*Above: Knox County Two Centuries Photograph Project staff. From l-r, David Babelay, Sally R. Polhemus, Steve Cotham, Melanie Reeseigh, and Jan Lynch.*

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television news and entertainment programming. There are also a number of significant specialized collections, including independently produced film and video art, film and television programs reflecting ethnic and minority experiences, local and regional film and television productions and anthropological films.

Recently elected founding officers of the association are: President — William T. Murphy, Chief of the Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch of the National Archives and Records Administration; Vice-President — Jan-Christopher Horak, Senior Curator of Film, International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House; Secretary — Gregory Lukow, Deputy Director, National Center for Film and Video Preservation; and Treasurer — Karan Sheldon, Co-Founder, Northeast Historic Film. The National Center for Film and Video Preservation at the American Film Institute serves as secretariat for the association.

"The members of AMIA will have a unique opportunity to obtain guidance on archival standards and procedures, as well as share their own experience for the benefit of all," Murphy said. "The initial applications for membership in AMIA from archivists, librarians, curators, preservationists and others from across the United States and Canada have been very gratifying."

AMIA members are entitled to receive the AMIA NEWSLETTER free of charge, invitations to all AMIA meetings and events, and the benefits of affiliation with the North American professional organization of moving image archivists. Individual members are entitled to vote, hold office and participate in all AMIA activities. Any number of individuals from the same institution can join.

The 1992 AMIA Conference will be held in San Francisco December 8-12, 1992, at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel at Fisherman's Wharf. Conference sessions will cover such topics as *The Role and Mission of Moving Image Archives, Public Policy and National Planning for Moving Image Preservation, Future Technologies for Moving Image Preservation, Licensing Policies and Practices in Moving Image Archives, Managing Moving Image Archives, New Sound Restoration Technologies, and Studio Archives Operations.*

A special workshop on moving image cataloging has also been scheduled and various working groups and committees will meet during the five-day conference.

The AMIA NEWSLETTER is also available at an annual subscription rate of \$15. For further information on the 1992 AMIA Conference and membership, please contact the AMIA secretariat at the following address: Association of Moving Image Archivists, c/o National Center for Film and Video Preservation, The American Film Institute, P.O. Box 27999, 2021 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90027, or call 213/856-7637.

## National News



**FRANKLIN, KY** — Former Governor Wallace Wilkinson released to the Kentucky State Archives more than 300 cubic feet of public records that he had taken with him when he left office. Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives officials had made repeated efforts to arrange for transfer of the records, but apparent misunderstandings led to the former governor's actions. [NAGARA Clearinghouse]

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** — The three-year probation sentence of a convicted thief of rare maps is currently being evaluated by a Philadelphia judge. Charles L. Glaser was found inside a library building at Lehigh University before staff had opened the building. He pled guilty and received his sentence. The library was not notified of his court date, however, and was not able to contribute any input into the judge's original decision. [American Libraries via Primary Source]

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — The annual report for the National Archives has recently been published. Copies are available by writing to:  
NARA Annual Report  
Room 107  
National Archives  
Washington, D.C. 20408

## State News

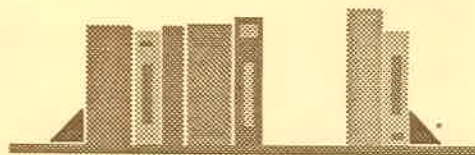


**CHATTANOOGA** — The fall meeting of Tennessee Archivists is scheduled for November 19-20 at the Bicentennial Library.

**NASHVILLE** — David McWhirter wishes to remind you that membership dues will be accepted at any time.

**NASHVILLE** — Officers for the upcoming year have been nominated. They are: Steve Cotham, vice-president/president-elect; Ken Fieth, secretary; and David McWhirter, treasurer. Barbara Flanary, last year's vice-president/president-elect, will be serving as president.

**KNOXVILLE** — Sue Lynn McGuire, formerly of Western Kentucky University, has accepted the position of Archival Specialist at the University of Tennessee.



## From the Bookshelf

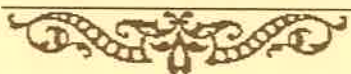
*Report on National Conference on the Development of Statewide Preservation Programs* edited by Carolyn Clark Morrow. Order from: The Commission on Preservation and Access, 1400 16th Street N.W., Suite 740, Washington D.C., 20036-2217.

*Archival Copies of Thermofax, Verifax and Other Unstable Records.* Order from: National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161, Order Number PB90-171836. Price: \$17.00 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

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## Humor

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# The Ultimate Acquisition Trip from Heck



By MANCIL JOHNSON

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In the past few issues, I have told you about acquisition trips involving cats, dogs, irate 'possums and manipulative entrepreneurs. Now it's time to tell you about the ultimate acquisition trip. I will happily deal with scheming businessmen, dogs, cats or even aggravated 'possums in the course of my work, and consider them no more than the usual occupational hazards. But, if I ever again run across another 80-year-old woman who wants to bear my child, I'll quit. Nothing can induce me to go through that again. They don't pay me enough.

There are no innocent parties in this story, but the names have been changed anyway.

Larry Lifer was a career student. After 14 years in college, he had attained his ultimate ambition. He was a graduate assistant.

In the course of his largely self-appointed duties, Larry met Major Minor. The Major was a veteran of considerable distinction. Starting as an enlisted man, the Major had risen through the ranks, served in a number of armed conflicts and participated in a number of worthwhile causes.

Shortly after he and Larry met, Major Minor crossed over the muddy waters to that big bivouac in the sky.

Whether Larry was trying to garner brownie points or was genuinely attempting to be helpful, I never knew. Regardless of his motives, the end result was a weekend trip to the Major's hometown to look over his papers for possible acquisition.

I was accompanied by Larry and several of his professors. We met the Major's widow, a pleasant enough lady in her late seventies. I inspected the papers and decided that they would indeed be appropriate for our collection. We arranged to come back and get the collection at the end of the school term.

So far, so good.

Mrs. M. did not insist on a marble bust or a 21-gun salute, so everyone connected with the university was happy.

Then it began.



Sometime in early spring, I got an Easter card from Mrs. Minor. I wrote a brief note thanking her for the nice card, saying that we would be around in June to get the Major's papers.

A bit later a note arrived. In it, Mrs. M. explained that she was cleaning out the tool shed, and did I want some of the Major's tools. Before I could reply, a second note arrived. She owned some rental property and had an extra refrigerator. Could I use it? Then came the phone call. She was cleaning out the greenhouse. Could I use any of that sort of stuff?

I declined. She insisted. I finally managed to convince her that we would discuss it when I visited in June.

The end of the school term finally arrived, with all its attendant madness. After squaring away some paperwork, I arranged for university transportation and cleared off some shelves.

Larry and I left early one morning. Since we had to travel some distance

and expected the sorting and boxing of the Major's papers to take some time, Larry had made arrangements for us to stay with one of his friends.

We arrived on schedule and got to work. Mrs. M. made no mention of her previous offers and I decided it was better to let sleeping dogs lie.

As the day drew to a close, we finished boxing the bulk of the materials and made preparations to leave.

That's when Mrs. M. made her move.



The Major had been a wily, old tactician and his widow proved to be a worthy student. Before we got to the door, she outmaneuvered us.

With tears in her eyes, she asked why I was leaving, since she had gone to a great deal of trouble to prepare the spare room for my visit. Did I really want a woman of her years to work so hard for nothing? Etc., etc. You get the idea.

There's something you need to understand at this point. My mama raised me to be a nice boy. I am a sucker for both tears and guilt. Besides, she hadn't signed the donor agreement yet.

"Well," I joked to myself, "She is nearly 80 years old. If worse comes to worse, I suppose I could always outrun her."

Larry had no sooner trundled off to his friend's house than Mrs. M. had me touring the tool sheds and out buildings. If it didn't move, she tried to give it to me.

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Rakes, shovels, sawhorses, canning jars, crowbars and homemade wine were piled indiscriminately into my arms.

I kept trying to get a word in edgewise so I could decline these gifts. When the tidal wave of generosity slowed, I tried gently, but firmly, to explain that I couldn't accept any of these things.

Again the voice quavered and the eyes brimmed with tears. If, by now, you get the idea that she was playing me like a fiddle, you'd be absolutely right.

I finally explained that we didn't have room in the van for all these things and that I'd have to come back for them later. By later, I meant, approximately, when Hell froze over.

It seemed to work. At least she didn't haul out any more presents. She did, however, sit me down and give me a talking to. I wish I had tape-recorded this conversation, because, years later, I still have trouble believing I actually heard what I heard.



She started out with what kind blue eyes I had, went on to how she wished I lived closer so she could cook for me, since she feared I wasn't eating right (trust me, I am not now, nor have ever been, in any danger of being anorexic) and concluded with how she just knew that the Major was in heaven pulling strings with God for me to come into her life at this moment.

I know what you're thinking. I should have stood up, explained that I was there on business and had done nothing to warrant such adulation and then got the Hell out of Dodge.

Hindsight is always 20/20. Hey, this is the '90s. I've been hit on before. I just never expected to be hit on by a woman old enough to be my grandmother. She caught me flat-footed, OK?

I finally managed to stammer that, while I was flattered, I was not interested, having recently ended a relationship. She seemed to respond gracefully, with "OK, we can just be friends then."

She asked if I'd ride with her over to one of her rental units. A tree had fallen and she wanted my advice. What was there to tell her? Find somebody with a fireplace to take care of the problem?

On the way over to the duplex, she started in again. What a shame that a nice man like me had never had any children. How she could just see the two of us with a little boy. How she still had periods so she assumed pregnancy was still possible.

To my credit, for the first time in my life, and possibly the last, I kept my big mouth shut.

I am the youngest of six children by quite a few years. I grew up with a plethora of older nieces and girl cousins. All my life, my parents said, "Don't play too rough, they're girls." I was usually on the bottom of the pile getting the mud beat out of me at the time. So I have had respect for women quite literally pounded into me. I have to admit Mrs. M. seriously strained my sense of chivalry.

After inspecting the tree, which had indeed fallen, we returned to her house. I turned in as quickly as I could.

A large chifforobe stood in the corner. I considered pulling it in front of the door, but it was too heavy.

I didn't get much sleep that night.



When the sun came up, I was packed and waiting on the back porch. To his credit, Larry was there early. We hurriedly loaded up the Major's papers, said our good-byes and left. Larry was somewhat puzzled by our haste.

On the drive home, I told him what had happened. Naturally, the first thing he did after we got back was tell everyone he knew.

In the years since, I have endured considerable ribbing. I wish I could say that was the end of my relationship with Mrs. M., but it wasn't. She pursued me for nearly a year. When she started talking about selling out and moving to Cookeville, I finally realized that I was doing her no favors by trying to spare her feelings. I had a short, blunt conversation with her that ended our association.

Even now, I sometimes wonder why I let things go on as long as they did. I suppose that I could have told her family what she was up to. But then they would have committed her to a retirement home. That would have killed her.

The man she had lived with for most of her adult life was dead, and she

didn't know where to turn. I could not get angry with her for that, no matter how much teasing my friends heaped on me, no matter how frustrated I became. Anybody who has been single long enough understands loneliness.

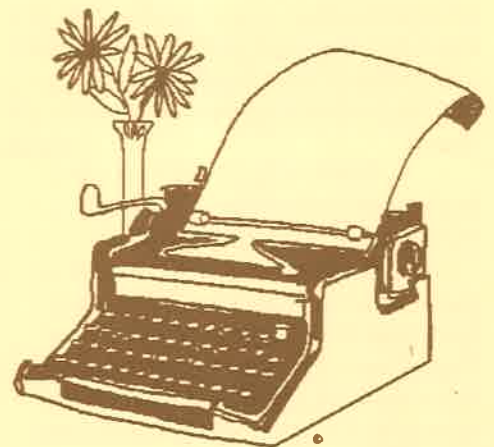
Still I wish I'd handled it better, but all you can do is try to learn from your mistakes and try to do better next time.

But, all things considered, I'd still rather face an irate 'possum.

**NOTE:** Any reader of *The Archivist* who wishes to share his or her own particular horror story about some job-related incident my write: Mancil Johnson, Editor, *The Archivist*, Tennessee Tech University, Box 5066, Cookeville TN 38505.

## Archivists

is a quarterly publication of the Tennessee Archivists. Members of the society and others are encouraged to submit brief articles, information on acquisitions, openings, publications, staff, exhibits, special programs and grant projects for inclusion in *Archivists*. The editor appreciates your suggestions and comments about the content and style of *Archivists*. Send materials to: Mancil Johnson, University Archives, Tennessee Technological University, P.O. Box 5066, Cookeville, TN 38505.



## *Invitation*

Tennessee Archivists invites membership from all persons interested in Tennessee's archives and historical resources. Membership is on a calendar-year basis. TA holds two meetings each year. The spring meeting includes the annual business meeting and is held in Middle Tennessee. The fall meetings are alternately held in East and West Tennessee. TA publishes a quarterly newsletter and invites contributions from members and non-members. Officers are elected at the spring meeting.

### **Tennessee Archivists Membership Form**

**Enclosed is my check for membership in the Tennessee Archivists as a:**

Full member (\$10 per year): \_\_\_\_\_

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