



Tennessee Archivists: The Newsletter

Volume 41, Number 1

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Society of Tennessee Archivists

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FALL 2020

Message from the President: Sarah Calise

Hello STA members and friends!

I have typed and deleted an opening statement several times now, but I cannot come up with an eloquent way to put it: 2020 has been difficult. We have collectively experienced a version of one of my favorite children's books, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Except we should change "day" to "year." And it is not even over yet!

Okay, enough of the negativity. There have been some silver linings and good archival work happening across the state of Tennessee. The University of Memphis Libraries recently acquired the Mid-South LGBTQ+ Archive, and they published Memphis' queer newspapers online (dating from 1975 to 2009) through a partnership with Rhodes College. The University of Tennessee at Knoxville's Special Collections was one of several institutions to lead the way in documenting the pandemic through an online questionnaire and the acquisition of born-digital creative works. Of course, some of the most exciting

projects I have seen this year have commemorated the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. We all know Tennessee's unique role in this history, and I have greatly enjoyed seeing



Sarah Calise, Archivist, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Society President

exhibits, programs, digital collections, lecture series, and more from archives in every little corner of our state. Both the Tennessee State Library & Archives and the Tennessee State Museum have done outstanding online and onsite work to celebrate and reflect upon the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Finally, I am also thankful for the leadership of cultural institutions like the

National Civil Rights Museum and the Highlander Center as well as the grassroots organizers and activists that have confronted oppression inside and outside the archives, and pushed all of us to be better human beings.

This brings us to our upcoming virtual annual meeting. I am proud of the work that the STA executive committee has completed thus far on bringing you an exciting and meaningful conference under the theme, "It's Your Right! Archives and Documenting Dissent." The suffragists from over one hundred years ago inspired this year's theme, but it goes beyond that history. As we know, the 19th Amendment did not grant voting rights to all women in the United States. Women of color were left out, and Jim Crow segregation disenfranchised Black men, too. It took decades of activism to bring down such barriers. Dissenters throughout our history have shaped, challenged, and improved our nation to be a more inclusive, equal, and welcoming place. Archivists, librarians, curators, and other kinds of information professionals have played an important part in documenting and preserving these dissenters,



Front cover of Gaze, OUT Memphis Collection, in the Mid-

“As Tennessee residents found photographs and personal papers, they wanted to help reunite them with their original owners.”

protesters, and voices of the oppressed. However, sometimes our institutions have been the oppressors, and neglected to preserve the history of marginalized communities. These actions left silences and gaps in our collections. Today, we must strive to correct and repair these relationships. Our virtual meeting will feature presenters who are working toward a more inclusive collective memory, and I know we will all learn valuable practices that we will take back to our own institutions. I look forward to seeing you all virtually on November 19th! Until then, please take care.

Found in the Storm

By Megan Atkinson, University Archivist , Tennessee Tech University

A critical moment in Putnam County history occurred on March 3rd when an EF-4 tornado shocked the region. The tornado killed 19 people, destroyed more than a 100 structures, and damaged countless others in the county. As Middle Tennessee residents inspected their homes in the daylight, many found debris in their yards, some found debris as far away from the tornado as Jefferson City, Celina, and Crawford, Tennessee. People found insulation decorating their trees like a bad Spanish moss and when they looked through their lawns, some found photographs and memories from families miles away.

As Tennessee residents found photographs and personal papers, they wanted to help reunite them with their original owners.

Volunteers quickly created Facebook pages like the “Found in the Storm: Putnam County Tornado,” where Facebook users posted their finds and searched for owners. Users tagged potential owners of the materials and shared the posts to their Facebook pages and other groups. Meanwhile, community members were also taking the belongings they found to Soul Craft Coffee, the Cookeville Community

Center, and other locations around the county for families to look through and claim as their own.

While many families were able to recover their belongings using the posts in Facebook groups, it was evident that Facebook’s algorithm, the sheer volume of posts and duplication, and not all victims being on Facebook meant that the posts were not reaching everyone they needed to or were causing additional confusion. On March 5th, the staff in the Tennessee Tech Archives began working to build trust and connections with the community to adver-



Early photograph of display wall that gradually expanded to all the halls of the Cookeville Community Center

tise the Archives as a centralized, long-term place that could reunite found photographs and with their owners. The Archives' goals were to clean and house the personal belongings according to archival best practices, and digitize the photographs and other materials into an easy to browse and search online location to minimize the need for families to look in multiple physical and social media locations until they could be claimed. The Archives' intent was also to minimize the strain on the affected families, many of whom were already overwhelmed from needing to focus on applying for FEMA aid, working with insurance, and finding new homes rather than tracking down disparate personal belongings. The ideal plan for Tech included working with the numerous drop off locations, picking up the photographs, and bringing them back to Tennessee Tech for cleaning, digitization, storage, and hosting on an online platform. The Archives launched the online platform and got working.

Lots of our early work was volunteering at the Cookeville Community Center. Numerous volunteers, from Tech and not, worked to assist in displaying photographs so their owners could easily browse while the photographs resided at the Center. Volunteers also worked to make sure the photographs were dry, bagged, and ready to be brought to Tennessee Tech in the future. The Archives began working on moving the photographs on

March 12 and simultaneously brought in volunteers to assist with photograph processing at Tennessee Tech. What started as something small, maybe 100 photographs, turned into something big.

Then COVID-19 happened. The Community Center closed. The University closed. All the materials moved from the Community Center to the Archives. Volunteers brought boxes of photographs home to process. The archivist brought the completed photographs home for distribution to survivors. The sheer volume of photographs and social distancing protocols resulted in the photographs being available online slower than predicted. The archives also had to scale back some of its standards such as decent digitization, description, and rehousing. Although this was problematic, the Archives knew that a central location was best for discovery and storage. Although unplanned, the Community Center closing sooner than expected made our central location even more helpful.

As of August 3rd and back in the University, the Archives still reunites photographs and personal papers weekly and photographs still come in the mail weekly. The current database has over 2500 photographs with materials being reunited with their owners weekly. Tennessee Tech Archives handled over 3700 photographs. We are still reaching out to survivors

and have hundreds of photographs for some families waiting for return. The operation was a success and relieved some of the burden for survivors. Archival practices such as providing access and discovery aided in recovery efforts and provided a sustainable plan. This project brought Archives a higher community profile and also enabled us to build trust with many of the community members.

After the semester starts, the recovery effort will connect to victims to west of Putnam County to notify victims of the photograph database. Since photographs belonging to Putnam County residents were found as far as 130 miles away, it is assumed that the Archives likely holds photographs from as far west as Mount Juliet. If you know anyone affected by the March 3 tornado, please inform them of this project. The website showing the photographs is password protected and given to tornado victims or designated family members. This is because the photographs are personal and private. Those wishing for access can contact Tennessee Tech Archives at archives@tntech.edu.

Photograph wall, Cookeville Community Center



TSLA's New Building Update & Society's Manuscript Collection

David R. Sowell, Assistant Archivist, Tennessee State Library and Archives



(Above) Rendering, New TSLA building (below right) Ariel view of building construction.

"This world-class facility will blend the necessity of historic preservation with the ever-increasing demand for digital access."

Construction continues on the new Tennessee State Library and Archives Building in Nashville. Completion of the project has been delayed due to damage received during the March 2020 tornado in north Nashville and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The \$123.8 million building, designed by a joint venture of Tuck-Hinton Architects LLC and Thomas, Miller & Partners, LLC, was funded during the Haslam administration in 2017. Ground-breaking for the facility was held December 11, 2017 on the north end of Bicentennial Mall State Park in Nashville, at the intersection of Sixth Avenue North and Jefferson Street. The new 165,000 sq ft facility will house the State Library

and its holdings, the manuscripts and state government records collections of the State Archives, the Library for Accessible Books and Media, as well as a state-of-the-art robotic retrieval system. There will be classrooms for teaching students and meeting space for training librarians and archivists.

The records of the Society of Tennessee Archivists have a permanent home in the collections of TSLA. This collection will be maintained by the Society's archivist.

According to Secretary of State Tre Hargett, whose office oversees TSLA, "The new building ensures Tennessee's history will be preserved for generations while making it more accessible. This world-class facility will blend the necessity of

historic preservation with the ever-increasing demand for digital access."

The relocation of the collections of the State Library and Archives will begin in February, 2021. It is anticipated that there will be closures of the current building, however staff will remain committed to response to online queries.

The grand opening of the new State Library and Archives building is anticipated in the Spring of 2021.



Gay switchboard business card (below), Memphis, Tn. OUT Memphis Collection, University of Memphis Libraries

GAY. ?
NEED TO TALK?
NEED INFO.?
NEED HELP?
We Have The Answers.
GAY SWITCHBOARD 726-4299

The Importance of Documenting Dissent

Brigitte Billeaudeau, Special Collections Librarian & Archivist, University of Memphis Libraries

In a previous executive board meeting of the Society of Tennessee Archivists, President Sarah Calise mentioned that sometimes merely existing is an act of dissent. The comment was made while the board was discussing the Archive's month poster. For those that have

seen the poster already, you will know that it features images of men and women in protest. Most of the images revolve around the right to exercise our voting rights. And that is because at different periods of our American and Tennessee history, attempting or merely

wanting to vote was an act of dissent. For some of the people in these images, the act of existing, at one time or another in our nation's history, was also act of dissent.

In recent weeks we lost a large voice of dissent

in our nation in Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In the days after her passing, I thought of what Sarah mentioned in that board meeting. We are a nation of dissenters. Our own declaration of independence was a scathing dissent of the ideals of monarchy that long governed the colonies. In Tennessee, there have been great moments of dissent that have played out. My recent favorite is the story of the Battle of Athens. A quick google search will reveal that it was an effort of the citizens of Athens and Etowah, Tennessee to overthrow a corrupted local government and take on voter intimidation. Another favorite story of Tennessee's dissenting spirit comes from Fayette and Haywood counties where local sharecroppers were displaced from their farms because they wished to vote. This resulted in the creation of a "tent city" sometimes referred to as Freedom Village.

Stories of dissent, and more, are found throughout the archives of our state. Next month, our organization will commemorate dissent in our annual meeting, "It's your right! Archives and documenting dissent." This will be a first for the Society of Tennessee Archivists, as we will hold this annual meeting live through Zoom. In many ways, this is an act of dissent from pandemic naysayers who see no issue with gathering in groups of more than ten people.

Sarah's statement also resonated so deeply with me because of the collection that I have been processing while working remotely for most of this year. OUT Memphis, the Mid-South's premier community center for LGBTQ+ people, is the seed collection for the Mid-South LGBTQ+ Archive. The activities of the community center and other materials about queer Memphis history make up the collection. The collection covers about fifty-one years of the homosexual community of Memphis and the Mid-South. Originally named the Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center (MGLCC), the center has been around since 1989. The collection is made up of organizational materials along with materials donated by members of the gay community. It is in the spirit of MGLCC's initial work to build a queer archive, that we hope to grow the Mid-South LGBTQ+ Archive. Since taking possession of this initial collection University of Memphis Libraries Special Collections has taken a second collection for the Mid-South LGBTQ+ archive.

We live in a time where reexamining history is important. Adding the experiences of minorities and women are seen as valuable additions to the historical record. In the late 1960s, where the oldest parts of the OUT Memphis collection originate, Memphis

city ordinances made dressing as the alternate sex an offense that came with jail time and fines. These and other ordinances of the time made the notion of living out a dangerous and, at times, scary. What I have discovered in processing this collection is that the homosexual community has been active since the inception of the MGLCC, now OUT Memphis. I have seen the community provide support to its members in discrete ways, support that celebrates its community through Pride, and supports its community through providing information. This is history worth knowing.

"We live in a time where reexamining history is important. Adding the experiences of minorities and women are seen as valuable additions to the historical record."



For more information about the Mid-South LGBTQ+ Archive, email University of Memphis Libraries, Special Collections Department, Lib_sc@memphis.edu

Follow on social media:
Instagram: [@901lgbtqarchive](https://www.instagram.com/901lgbtqarchive)
Facebook:

www.facebook.com/901LGBTQArchive

Social Media Alert:



The Digital Library of Tennessee has a new Facebook page. Like @DLTenn to add excellent digital collections from across the state to your Facebook feed.

Officer Nominations

Officer nominations to serve the Society of Tennessee Archivists for 2021 are:

President - Ken Fieth

Treasurer - Aimee Saunders

Vice President - Zachary Johnson

Secretary - Megan Atkinson

Elections will be held at the annual meeting, November 19, 2020.

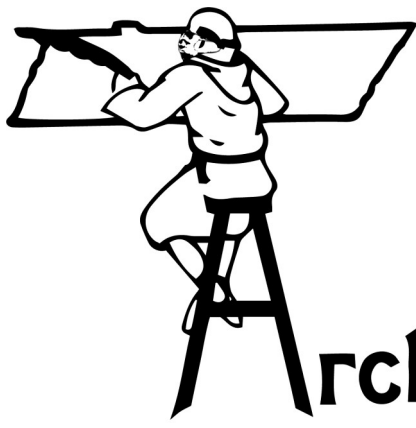
We're Number One!



Many thanks to Lori Lockhart, Society Webmaster, for her work in making the society's website number one in Google results. This has been an ongoing project, and we are thankful for all of the hard work that went into this.

Google logo, Wikimedia Commons.

Check us out, today! www.tennesseearchivists.org/



The Mad Monk wears a mask, so should you!

The Society of Tennessee Archivists for the prevention of the spread of Covid-19

The Society of Tennessee Archivists was founded to enhance the educational development and professional standing of those who work or have an interest in archives, special collections, records management, and allied disciplines.

The Society of Tennessee Archivists invites membership from all persons interested in Tennessee's archives and historical resources. Membership is on a calendar-year basis. Currently, one meeting is held each year.

The Society of Tennessee Archivists, along with organizations from the states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, is a member of the [Southern Archives Conference \(SAC\)](#). SAC meetings are held biennially, with the participating states taking turns hosting the event.

So Much To Say!

Want to contribute what's going in your archive? Have you hired a new team member? Let us know! Send newsletter submissions to Brigitte Billeaudeau, Society newsletter editor, at bbilledx@memphis.edu

Meet the Archivist: Hannah O'Daniel McCallon

The Tennessee Tech University Archives and Special Collections has a new face around! Hannah O'Daniel McCallon started the Assistant Archivist position in February 2020. Her work will include assisting researchers with locating and using what they need in the archives, transferring university records to the archives, and collecting materials that document the history of the Upper Cumberland region.

Hannah is originally from Lebanon, Kentucky. She earned a BA in History with a minor in Anthropology from

Murray State University (2014) and a MA in History from the University of Louisville (2017). She will complete a MLIS from Wayne State University in April. Hannah has experience working in archives and special collections at the Pritzker Military History Museum and Li-

brary, Northwestern University, Rotary International Archives, Newberry Library, Kentucky Historical Society, Loretto Heritage Center of the Sisters of Loretto, University of Louisville, and Murray State University.

Outside of archives and history, Hannah enjoys being outside, gardening, drawing, painting, photography, scrapbooking, and watching football. She is excited to explore the hiking opportunities and local arts in the Upper Cumberland.

