

# rchivists

Summer 1992

Published by the Tennessee Archivists



Cotton Carnival Children's Parade: Jimmy Mathes and his dog Crump. *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, May 18, 1940. Courtesy of Memphis State University, Mississippi Valley Collection. By the way, Crump the Dog lost.

## ARCHIVISTS Editorial

I suppose that I can be forgiven a certain grim sense of vindication as I watched, in fascinated horror, along with millions of other Americans, the conflagration in Los Angeles last spring.

I am no stranger to civil unrest. I had, after all, grown up in the segregated South. I had, after all, lived less than five miles from where the Freedom Riders' bus was torched. I had, after all, been visiting in Birmingham on the day that "Bull" Connor had turned the dogs and the firehoses on Dr. King's marchers. I had lived through the church bombings, the Civil Rights murders, the Klan rallies, George Wallace's stand in the school house door, Selma and Dr. King's murder. I am, after all, a Southerner. Along with most white people south of the Mason-Dixon Line, I have borne the contempt and derision of the rest of the nation with stiff-necked pride. Even today, outsiders hearing my accent automatically assume I'm a bigot.

I was raised in the segregated South. You either know what that means or you don't. If you don't, then there is no way that I can explain to you the all-encompassing role that race played in that daily existence. My father was born in 1901. He spent much of his life as a sharecropper. In many ways, he was an exemplary man, yet he shared the popular superstition of his generation. He sincerely believed that a man's worth was related to the color of his skin.

It took me years to realize that not all of the lessons that I learned while living under his roof applied to my own life. I moved on. I grew up. I went to college and became a teacher. And I learned. Children were just children, the color of their skin didn't matter. What did matter was what Dr. King called "the content of their character."

The riots of the Sixties and later happened, for the most part, someplace else. The old statutes mandating segregation, that we were either honest enough or dumb enough (depending on your point of view) to have in the legal codes, were replaced with fairer laws. The races began to make tentative contact. Slowly, slowly, the barricades began to come down. Whites and blacks worked together, went to the same schools, were on the same softball teams and bowling leagues.

Certainly, I was not naive enough to think that racism no longer existed. The private academies set up to circumvent integration still flourished in many places. The Klan still lived. You could still hear racial jokes on the courthouse steps. Blacks still went to jail in disproportionately higher numbers than whites. But slowly, things were getting better.

Or so I believed.

A few days after the L.A. riots had subsided, I dashed quickly into a bathroom in a classroom building. I was on my way to a meeting and I was late.

There scribbled on the wall was the inscription, "White is Right."

I am 44 years old, and I have been seeing garbage like



that all my life. At first I thought little about it. I washed my hands and went to my meeting. After a while though, I realized that my mind kept going back to that three-word sentence. It bothered me. Then I realized why. It was where I had found it that disturbed me.

If this simple three-word expression of ignorance and prejudice had been on the wall of the men's room in the Red Dog Saloon or the Dew Drop Inn, I could have dismissed it as the drunken ramblings of a congenital idiot. Instead I had found it in a college building.

My God, are we going to have to go through those dark and dreadful days all over again? Is it really necessary, in the dying days of the Twentieth Century, to explain once more why racial intolerance has no place in the United States? Are the future leaders of America really ready to toss the sacrifices of an entire generation on the ash heap, along with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

Let me hasten to add that the new tide of racism awash in this nation is not limited to whites. The Neo-Nazi, Skinhead and Klan visions of a "Racially Pure" America are no less ugly than the rhetoric coming from the self-appointed spokesmen of the young generation of blacks.

Young people, two wrongs don't make a right. They don't even make it even. All they prove is that madness is contagious.



## From the President

First, and most importantly, I want to thank all Tennessee Archivists members for participating in and helping to host the Southern Archivists Conference. The meeting was extremely successful, very educational and it enabled all the states to become better acquainted with one another. Tennessee Archivists has received only praise and compliments for such a well-balanced and organized meeting. This was the result of having a well-organized local arrangements committee with the excellent leadership of Bill Sumner. I want to say thanks again to Bill, Ellen Garrison, Ray Minardi, David McWhirter, Mary Teloh and Marice Wolfe for the job well done.

Second, I want to encourage everyone to make your suggestions known pertaining to future SAC meetings. The enclosed brief questionnaire could make planning easier for the next SAC meeting in Mississippi. Please return these recommendations to me at TSLA, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37243-0312.

It is time for Tennessee Archivists to begin planning for the future. Archival groups throughout the United States are planning, preparing and changing to meet the needs of the archival field. Tennessee Archivists can help lead the various archives of Tennessee through these changes. We need to begin by determining how to develop projects to help advance archival work. Tennessee Archivists can begin with areas of leadership, information networks and assistance for the small archives. These smaller groups generally do not have opportunities for SAA, National Archives or other national education programs. We can do more to help these groups through the talents of our membership.

*President's Message continued next page*



Finally, the fall meeting is progressing very well under the leadership of Barbara Flanary, program chairperson, and Clara Swann, local arrangements chairperson. The fall meeting is developing around themes of county archives, small archives and programs for upcoming state bicentennial celebrations. The meeting is scheduled for mid-November in Chattanooga.

Carole Roberts, President

#### Future SAC Meeting Recommendations SURVEY

Complete and mail to: *Carole Roberts*  
*Tennessee State Library & Archives*  
*403 Seventh Avenue North*  
*Nashville, TN 37243-0312*

1. What was the most successful aspect of the spring SAC meeting?
2. What was the least helpful aspect of the meeting?
3. Should the length of the meeting be extended?
4. Do you feel the expenses and registration fees are reasonable? If not, what would be reasonable?
5. In other professional groups associated with your work, what is standard practice for financial responsibilities for members who participate in the program (i.e. travel, hotel accommodations, waivers of registration, all of the above, none of the above)?
6. List one or several topics for future programs and explain them briefly.
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)

## Southern Archivists Conference Meets in Nashville

The third biennial meeting of the Southern Archivists Conference met in Nashville on May 13, 14 and 15. The conference was hosted by Tennessee Archivists and was held at the Southern Baptist Conference Building.

Two pre-conference workshops were offered. Ellen Garrison, Ph.D., of the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University conducted a session on the arrangement of archival materials. Tracey Berezansky of the Alabama Department of Archives and History presented a workshop on records management.

Vanderbilt University Special Collections hosted a reception featuring Nashville area storytellers.

As the conference got underway, sessions on documenting southern religion, developing volunteer programs for archives, archives and historic preservation and the joys of newsletter editing were offered, along with sessions on music collections, archives and archaeology and a session presented by the American Association of State and Local History.

Tours of local archives were available to interested participants. The Vanderbilt Television News Archives, the Country Music Hall of Fame Library and Archives and the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives were favorably reviewed by those archivists from other states.

The next meeting of the Southern Archivists Conference in 1994 will be hosted by Mississippi. With recent inclusion of Louisiana, the SAC now includes four states. Organizationally, SAC is still a loose-knit confederacy of state associations. Nevertheless, the conference in Nashville bodes well for the future of this professional organization.

## Future of Television News Archives Uncertain

The future of the Vanderbilt Television News Archives is in question due to financial difficulties. The archives, which tapes all network newscasts and major news events, has been operating in the red for the past several years, according to Associate Director John Lynch.

The archives was designed to be a break-even proposition. Its budget was to come from donations and users' fees. In 1968, when the Television News Archives first opened its doors, such financing was adequate. Since then, however, the operation has grown so rapidly that Vanderbilt University can no longer underwrite the annual \$300,000 to \$400,000 deficits of recent years.

A number of plans are under consideration. According to Lynch, an endowment of at least \$5 million is needed to guarantee the archives' future. Private foundations are being approached for contributions. Meanwhile, other plans are being considered, including possibly discontinuing academic discounts and raising the price of user fees. The very real possibility exists that the Television News Archives will be forced to move from Nashville if some solution to the present crisis is not found.

# Findings of Historical Records Survey

By Angie Parrott, Project Archivist

From July 1, 1991 to June 30, 1992, Angie Parrott and John Thweatt conducted a survey of Tennessee's historic records. An NHPRC grant had been awarded to Tennessee to conduct this survey. At the time the grant was awarded, Tennessee was one of only two states that had no survey of the historic records in the state.

Surveys were sent out to county governments, libraries, universities, historical societies and archives. The results of these surveys indicate that we are not where we want to be in terms of preserving the past in this state.

## Summary of Findings

### *I. Organization and Staffing*

- Over two-thirds (67.21%) of the responses indicated that there were no funds budgeted for records management.
- Slightly less than half (49.38%) of the responses indicated that funding is adequate for their purposes.
- Over 40% (45.29%) of the responses revealed no FTE staff for records.
- More than half (56.5%) of the responses indicated less than one FTE paid employee.
- Only 7.26% of respondents have had any graduate training.
- Well over half (62.9%) of the respon-

dents indicated that employees and volunteers have had no specialized training.

### *II. Records Management*

- Over 80% (84.02%) of responses indicated adherence to state records management regulations.
- Over 90% (91.48%) of the responses indicated that state records management regulations meet their office needs.
- Nearly half (46.08%) of responding offices indicated that 76-100% of their records have retention schedules.
- While just over 40% (42.19%) of the responding counties have established public records commissions, only 46.15% of those commissions have been active.

### *III. Archives*

- More than half (56.71%) of records held in offices date from 1900 to the present.
- Almost 5% (4.85%) of all archival

## Spotlight on ...

### Memphis and Shelby County Archives

A section of the History Department, Memphis and Shelby County Public Library and Information System

- Address:** 33 South Front Street, Memphis, TN 38103  
Telephone: (901) 526-1713  
Telephone is answered by the history department staff when the archivist is not on the premises.
- Parking:** Limited parking is available at the archives; in addition, several commercial lots are located nearby.
- Access:** Stacks are closed to the general public. Researchers have access to the materials through pre-arrangement. A copier is available. Limited reference service and copying are also available for a nominal fee. Phone and letter requests are accepted.
- Restrictions:** Except for public defender records and court expungements, all holdings are open to public use.
- History:** The archives was founded in 1967 when the library's director saved materials from being destroyed.
- Holdings:** Files and other materials generated by city and county offices, including mayors' papers, court records, wills, death records and marriage records. Also, at the request of the donors, the Senator Kenneth D. McKellar Collection. 13,000 cu. ft. total holdings.
- Staff:** One person part-time, with other assistance coming from the history department staff as required. Eight part-time volunteers assist in processing and indexing records and in preservation.
- Director:** Barbara Flanary, Ph.D., under the supervision of Jim Johnson, Ph.D., manager of the history department, Memphis and Shelby County Public Library.



records predate 1800.

- Over half of responding offices (51.34%) indicated that they were unable to estimate the volume of their records, with 14.72% having no knowledge of an inventory.
- Over 61% (61.04%) of the responding archives do not have an inventory of their records.
- Only one-fifth (19.28%) of the responses indicated that archival records have been transferred to the State Library and Archives.
- Almost one-half (49.8%) of responses indicated that no records have been transferred from the office of origin.
- More than one-third (34.24%) of the responses indicate no conservation measures in their archives.
- Almost one-third (31.51%) of responses indicate that records have been microfilmed for preservation.
- Almost 80% (78.63%) of responses indicated no disaster plan.
- Over one-fourth (26.38%) of responses indicated a loss of records.
- More than two-thirds (69.79%) of responses indicated no loss of records.

#### IV. Research Use

- Almost all (97.15%) offices reporting permit research use of their records.
- More than two-thirds (66.53%) of offices reporting observe operating hours of between 31 and 40 hours per week.
- Nearly all (97.89%) of the archives are open between 31 and 50 hours per week.
- Office employees are the largest users of local records (26.32%).
- Almost all (99.16%) offices permit researchers to make copies of their records.
- Almost half (49.34%) of offices report an increase in research use of their records.
- Research use at responding institutions has increased or stayed the same in all but 3.08% of the facilities.

#### V. Records Storage

- Over one-half (51.24%) of responses reported inadequate storage space for current records.
- Over one-half (54.25%) of responses reported inadequate storage space for non-current records.
- Almost one-third (31.62%) of responding offices report the use of air-conditioning for their primary records storage area.
- Almost one-third (33.21%) of offices report that no off-site storage is used for their records.

- Almost one-fourth (21.94%) of responding offices reported off-site storage of records to include records in boxes stored on the floor.
- Almost one-third (31.29%) of offices reporting use of off-site storage for records report that records are stored in boxes on shelves.

#### VI. Microfilming

- Slightly above one-fourth (27%) of responding offices reported that records were placed on microfilm.
- Nearly three-fourths (73%) of all local records archives have no microfilming program.
- More than one-half (51.67%) of reporting offices which do microfilm their records do so by means of contract.
- More than four-fifths (84.21%) of offices which do microfilm their records provide for film quality control.
- Over three-fourths (76.47%) of offices which film their records retain the original records after microfilming.
- Only 41.41% of the offices which microfilm their records report a microfilm reader on which to read it.

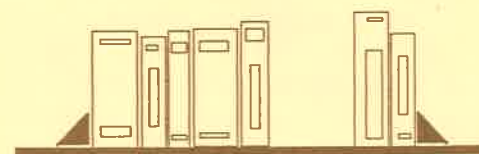
#### VII. Computer Records

- More than one-third (39.26%) of responding offices use computers to generate records.
- Over 60% (60.74%) of respondents reported no computer-generated record-keeping.
- Over one-third (34.09%) of offices using computers reported that their computer files were not backed up.
- Half (50%) of offices using computers make provisions for management of computer reports.

#### VIII. Needs and Services

- Almost one-third (32.78%) of offices seek advice from a state agency.
- The three greatest records problems reported were: (1) records storage space (24.38%), (2) development of disaster plan (11.43%), and (3) microfilming (10.67%).
- More than one-quarter (28.11%) of offices reported that the service most likely to be used is microfilming.
- Well over two-thirds (72.43%) of offices reported that they would cooperate with other offices in meeting their needs and services.
- Less than one-fifth (17.09%) of respondents have regular contact with the

- Tennessee State Library and Archives.
- More than four-fifths (82.91%) of the offices reported having no contact with the Tennessee State Library and Archives.
- More than four-fifths (82.46%) of responding offices said that the state should provide more assistance in the management and preservation of their records.



## From the Bookshelf

• *Caring for Your Microfilm Collection: The Next Step in Preservation* is a free 13-minute video now available to librarians and archivists from University Microfilms International's Preservation Division. The video includes information about proper storage and handling of microforms, temperature and humidity guidelines, etc. Available in VHS format only. For more information or to order, call: 1-800-521-0600, Extension 3801. (Courtesy of Mid-Atlantic Archivist, Winter 1992).

• *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers* by Lewis and Lynn Lady Bellardo. This is a part of the Archival Fundamentals Series and replaces the *SAA Basic Glossary*. To order, contact SAA, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60605. Price is \$19 for SAA members, \$25 for non-members.

• *Guide to the Basic Technical Equipment Required by Audio, Film and Television Archives* issued by the coordinating committee for the Technical Commissions of International Organizations for Audio, Film and Television Archives, with support of UNESCO. Available from Belfer Audio Lab at Syracuse University. To order send \$15 to Karen Stevenson Edgar, Belfer Audio Lab, Syracuse University, 222 Waverly Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244.



## Emergency Plans for Archives



By Mancil Johnson

**D**oes your institution have a plan in case of an emergency? What is your policy towards theft? What do you do in case of a bomb threat? Who do you call if you see a patron vandalizing a document? Who is accountable in case of a medical emergency?

These emergencies are not as dramatic, perhaps, as the more spectacular varieties of disaster that we all think of when we consider disaster planning, but they are no less likely to occur than are flood, fire or earthquake.

If your institution does not have a policies and procedures manual which includes a plan of action in case of such emergencies, then one should be developed and all employees should be familiar with it. This will save not only time, when time is of the essence, but it could also prevent the loss of valuable historical materials, tragedy and possible litigation.

Here are some suggestions.

### In Case of Bomb Threats

If a staff member receives a bomb threat, he or she should remain calm and try to secure answers to the following questions:

1. What time will the bomb explode?
2. Where is the bomb?
3. When was it planted?
4. What does it look like?
5. What kind of bomb is it?

The staff member should note the following:

1. The caller's exact words
2. Explicit motive or threat
3. Quality of voice. Is the caller young, old, male, female, nervous? Does the caller have an accent?

The staff member should then:

1. Notify local authorities.
2. Notify his or her superiors.
3. Evacuate the archives and stay away until given the all clear by police or fire officials.

Do not attempt to locate or remove the bomb yourself. Such a call might well be a hoax, but what if it's not? Take the threat seriously, even if you think it's somebody's idea of a joke.

### In Case of Theft

The Tennessee Code Annotated provides that any person taking, concealing or being in possession of library materials (including manuscripts and archival materials) without authorization may be detained and have his possessions searched by library employees with probable cause. (39-31107)

Any person found in possession of library/archives materials without authorization can be punished with the same penalties as shoplifters, i.e. a fine of not more than \$300 and imprisonment for not more than six months. (39-1124) In addition, the penalty for stealing valuable papers in Tennessee is imprisonment from three to fifteen years. (39-3-1107)

If a researcher or other person is suspected of theft, the employee should notify the archivist in charge, who will politely, but firmly, request to examine the patron's belongings.

1. Only an archivist or staff member over 18 should be allowed to detain the patron.
2. The archivist should have probable cause. Ideally, the archivist or employee should have seen the person take the material, conceal it and pass the last check point.

a) The archivist should never rely on the word of another patron as a basis for probable cause.

b) A reasonable investigation should be conducted before detention, if possible.

3. The detention should be effected in a reasonable manner. This means avoiding a scene, if at all possible. Shouting matches and defamatory language should be avoided.

4. Once an individual is detained, the archivist should inform the patron of the reason for detention. This will allow the person a chance to exonerate him- or herself.

5. Local authorities should be notified, along with the archivist's superiors. Any search or interrogation must be conducted in a reasonable manner and must not be conducted against the patron's will. The patron should be informed that he or she does not have to answer questions or submit to a search. If the patron refuses, nothing further can be done until the police arrive.

6. The archivist or detaining employee should keep in mind that the suspect is entitled to have his or her rights protected. Detention and search should be conducted in such a manner that there is no question regarding its reasonableness.

Section D of State Code 39-3-1135 provides that any library/archives official who, with probable cause, detains a suspect may conduct a search of the suspect's belongings. The official is immune from liability, provided he or she acts in a reasonable manner.

At this point the archivist has done all that the law permits him or her to do. It now becomes a matter of the institution's will to protect its historical records. All too often a thief is released with no real consequences because of age, family connections or other political considerations. I would argue that such a policy is a betrayal of the very reasons that archives exist.

I would hasten to add, at this point, that I am not a lawyer. Talk to your superiors. Find out what the policies are. Cover yourself. There is no lonelier feeling than making a decision based on your best professional judgement only to find yourself being disavowed by your superiors. Be reasonable, be professional and be prepared.

### In Case of Vandalism

In cases of minor, thoughtless vandalism (i.e. tracing a map, underlining a sentence, etc.), ask the patron to stop, then explain your reasons.



In cases of deliberate vandalism, determine who was the last person to use the material in question and observe that person closely from that point on. Ideally, all material should be inspected as soon as it is returned by the researcher.

In cases of observed vandalism, do not confront the person. Notify the police and your superiors.

At this point, it again becomes a matter of the institution's will to protect its documents. At the very least, the vandal, once proven guilty, will lose his or her research privileges in the archives, regardless of any criminal action taken against the vandal.

### Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, you should call 911, notify your superiors and try to make the victim as comfortable as possible until help arrives. Tennessee does have a Good Samaritan Law, so there is some protection for the well-intentioned. Still, unless you are certified in first aid or CPR, it is probably a good idea to administer only necessary, life-saving assistance. Even the well-intentioned can be sued. If your institution can afford it, it's probably a good idea to have the staff take classes and get certified in first aid and CPR.

As in all dealings with the public, these everyday emergencies require archivists to be professional, reasonable and prepared. Your life will be much simpler if you know what your superiors expect of you, and if you know what to expect from them. Plan ahead.

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## National News



**COLLEGE PARK, MD** — Construction on Archives II continues. This project has been planned as both an office building and storage facility for the National Archives and Records Administration. The research complex, situated on 33 acres at the University of Maryland, can accommodate 390 researchers at one time, spans 5 floors and provides more than 60,000 square feet for reading rooms and research areas. There are 21 stack areas, each containing nearly 65,000 cubic feet of records. Archives II will contain 520 miles of moveable shelving.

**MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA** — The Society of American Archivists will sponsor a pre-conference workshop at the International Archivists Conference. Sessions will include an introduction to archives, managing photographic collections, electronic records management and managing historical agencies in hard times. The workshops will begin Sept. 6, 1992.

**NATACHITOCHES, LA** — Northwestern State University is seeking papers at its third Kate Chopin Conference in Natchitoches, Louisiana, April 1-3, 1993. Papers related to Chopin's first novel, *At Fault*, as well as to her short fiction, *Bayou Folk*, *A Night in Arcadie* and *A Vocation and a Voice* are sought. Contributors should send the paper or a considerable abstract. Please include a mailing address. Submissions should be postmarked by Nov. 1, 1992. For further information, contact: Ada A. Jarred, Director of Libraries, Watson Library, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA 71497.

**WASHINGTON, D. C.** — Several bills were introduced in the last session of Congress to extend Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 to unpublished material. The section presently allows "fair use" of published works. The bills died in committee, in part due to opposition from the software industry.

## State News



**CHATTANOOGA** — Ned Irwin, Clara Swann and Barbara Flanary are busily planning for the Tennessee Archivists fall meeting. While a location for the meeting has yet to be announced, the committee is investigating the possibility of a tour of the new Tennessee Aquarium. This will be the first TA meeting to be held in Chattanooga. Numerous Civil War sites, museums, historic homes, as well as the famous Chattanooga Choo-Choo, are all added attractions. The meeting is scheduled for November 18-20.

**DUES** — David McWhirter wishes to remind you that it is never too late to pay your membership dues if you have not yet done so.

**JOHNSON CITY** — Norma Myers has announced that the Archives of Appalachia has been forced to limit publication of its newsletter to once yearly because of budget cutbacks.

**NASHVILLE** — Mary Barns of the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) has won the Daughters of the American Revolution Scholarship to the Modern Archives Institutes. Mary spent June 8 through 19 at the National Archives in Washington, D. C. Congratulations are in order for Mary, TSLA and Tennessee Archivists. Only one scholarship is awarded each year. Mary's selection reflects well on all Tennessee archivists.

**NASHVILLE** — Florence Langford, a long-time employee of TSLA, has retired. Florence, who went to work at TSLA in October of 1961, plans on becoming a professional genealogist after taking a long vacation.

**NASHVILLE** — Angie Parrott has left TSLA. The NHPRC grant that funded the year-long historic records survey which she conducted expired on June 30. Angie has moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where she plans to be married.

**MEMPHIS** — Michelle Fagan of the Memphis State University Special Collections Department will have an article in the

*State News continued on page 7*



## Yet Another Acquisition Trip From Heck



By Mancil Johnson

Several years after assuming my present position at the Tennessee Tech University archives, I received a call from a professor who had heard rumors among his older colleagues of papers stored in the basement beneath a classroom building. Supposedly, these documents related to a defunct elementary school that had once been attached to the university.

On a warm, sunny afternoon in early fall, several students and I went, armed with boxes, flashlights and book trucks, to recover these papers. We were met by the professor, who was armed with an alarming quantity of keys. After numerous attempts, the proper key was located and we entered the basement.

The fact that the hinges were rusted shut told us that these papers hadn't been disturbed in a long time. Most of what we sought was stored in cardboard boxes atop a pile of dirt along one wall. We sent the loaded carts back to the office with a couple of students and took a final look around. The professor remembered hearing that there were more papers stored in the basement than we had so far found. So, we began to explore the dark and somewhat cramped corners. Our search turned up no further documents. We were just about to give up when someone mentioned that there was a narrow passage at the back of the basement that we had not yet investigated.

The crawl space had undoubtedly been meant as an access route for plumbers, but it had not been used in quite some time, as evidenced by the lace curtains of spider webs festooned around it.

Taking both my courage and my flashlight in hand, I began crawling down the narrow corridor. Now, I am what your grandmother would have called "healthy," so I suppose that it was a good thing that I am not subject to claustrophobia. Nevertheless, I began to have visions of being trapped in there. The corridor got narrower and the ceiling dropped. Crawling along on all fours, swatting at spider webs and clenching the flashlight in my fist, I began to feel decidedly like a cork stuck in a bottle.

Just as I was beginning to think about a strategic retreat, the beam from the flashlight struck the back wall of the building. Seconds later, my head broke through into a small room and I found myself face to face with a 'possum. A very upset 'possum. A very territorial 'possum. A 'possum that must have weighed about 30 pounds. A 'possum sitting on a cardboard box stuffed with old papers.

Now, there is no truth to the rumor that I backed over three students and a full professor getting out of there. It is true, however, that we did beat a strategic retreat back to the basement to consider our options.

One student with a rodeo fixation tried to rope it. Brer 'Possum just hunkered down and hissed.

I had great hopes for the student who was a forestry major. He decided that the simple approach was best. He tried to chase the 'possum off his treasure trove, thereby learning one of natural history's greatest lessons: You can't chase something that won't run from you.

After some truly embarrassing attempts (imagine a full Ph.D. trying to coax a 'possum with a Hershey Bar), we finally managed to rig a noose and pole snare which worked. I had the privilege of dragging our hairy prize out into the sunlight, while the students snatched the papers before something else went wrong.

The snarling, struggling 'possum went limp once I managed to get him outside. While we were examining the box of papers, he managed to work free and waddled off, the very image of injured dignity.

The papers? Oh yeah. We had to destroy them, for any number of reasons.

**NOTE:** Any reader of *The Archivist* who wishes to share his or her own particular horror story about some job-related incident may write: Mancil Johnson, Editor, *The Archivist*, Tennessee Tech University, 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Association member (\$3 per year): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Renewal?      Yes \_\_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is this your home \_\_\_\_\_ or business \_\_\_\_\_ address?

Please make checks payable to Tennessee Archivists and mail to:

David McWhirter

Disciples of Christ Historical Society

1101 19th Avenue South

Nashville, TN 37212

#### State News continued from page 7

Summer issue of *The Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. The article is on "Kennedy General Hospital: The War Years, 1942-1945."

**RUGBY** — Pearl Cantrell has returned as part-time archivist at Historic Rugby. In addition to her duties as archivist, Pearl also manages Newberry House, the bed and breakfast at Rugby. Budget considerations forced the termination of the archivist's position last year. Rugby archives is now open only by appointment.

**WINCHESTER** — Jeanne Bigger and the volunteers of the Franklin County Historical Society recently completed an 11-year project. "Project Preservation" began work on a pile of boxes "20 feet tall and 10 feet deep," cleaning, sorting, cataloging and preserving materials from the early 1800's to the 1940's. Today, due to the efforts of "Project Preservation," Franklin County has a new, well-organized archives, staffed by volunteers.

### Archivists

is a 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.

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