

# Tennessee Archivist

SUMMER ISSUE, 1999

DAVID SOWELL, EDITOR

**TENNESSEE ARCHIVIST**  
is the newsletter of the  
**Society of Tennessee  
Archivists.**

Members of the Society of Tennessee Archivists and others are encouraged to submit articles and information on recent acquisitions, publications, exhibits, special programs, grant projects, personnel changes and employment opportunities of interest to the archival community for inclusion in this newsletter.

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**Newsletter Editor**

David R. Sowell  
c/o Tennessee State  
Library and Archives  
Archives Technical  
Services  
403 Seventh Ave. North  
Nashville, TN  
37243-0312  
(615) 253-3471  
[drsowell@earthlink.net](mailto:drsowell@earthlink.net)

## KNOX COUNTY RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION OF DATA PROCESSING TEN YEARS OF SERVICE: 1989 - 1999

County and municipal governments throughout the State of Tennessee have, for some time, struggled with issues that surround creation, maintenance, access, and disposition of public records. "What do we keep?," "How long do we keep it?," and "Where can we keep it?" are questions for which many local governments have no answers or the wrong answers.

Knox County made an effort to alleviate storage problems caused by inactive records by creating, in 1941, the Old Records Department. This agency consisted of one staff member and storage space in the Knox County Courthouse.

In the early 1970's, lack of adequate storage space had again reached a crisis point. Minutes of the County Public Records Commission indicate that several discussions took place regarding where the County's inactive records could be safely housed. Locations such as the old General Hospital, Knoxville City Hall (the original Tennessee School for the Deaf), Lawson McGhee Library, and the 1870's-era Federal Post Office/Customs House were all considered.

Eventually, the Federal Post Office/Customs House on the corner of Clinch and Market Streets in downtown Knoxville became the location of the Knox County Archives, the successor agency of the Old Records Department. The Knox County Archives is part of the County Public Library System and houses and services exclusively the permanent-value documents of Knox County government agencies.

But problems remained. A huge vexation was that County agencies were using the Archives as a "dump" for temporary-value records. Temporary-value records and some permanent-value records were also being stored, often under deplorable conditions, in various abandoned schools and other buildings. It is to be noted that ignorance of and failure to apply retention schedules contributed greatly to the dilemma. In response to a mid-1980's record disposal request, the County Executive wrote, "It is high time that Knox County cleaned out old files." Fortunately, the Knox County Archivist, Doris Martinson, began to regularly submit disposal requests for temporary-value documents which were wasting space in the archives.



In 1988, Knox County hired a consultant to examine the ever-increasing difficulty with providing orderly and secure storage, retrieval, and disposition of documents. The consultant wrote

a grant proposal which was submitted in early 1989 to the Tennessee Historical Records Advisory Board (THRAB). This body approved and forwarded the grant proposal to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a grant-making agency of the National Archives and Records Administration.

The grant proposal was approved, and Knox County received a total of \$79,400 in Federal funds for a two-year effort to get a records management program up and running. The County's financial contribution to the project totaled \$179,952. Most of this money was used to pay the salaries of two records analysts and one clerical support staff person. A records manager, Linda Williams (Linda Williams Clark), had been hired in early 1989 prior to receiving the grant.

In the first years of its existence, the records management program was a division of the County's General Services Administration. In late 1994, a reorganization occurred and Records Management became a division of the Knox County Data Processing Department which is a general government agency under the County Executive. It is advantageous for the program to be a component of the department which is responsible for information technology.

The records analysts and clerical support came aboard in late October of 1989. The first task was to conduct an inventory of documents that were stored in offices and off-site. The purpose of the inventory is two-fold. Estimates need to be made of the total volume of documents. Also, inventory is used to produce a comprehensive list of the numerous record series in existence so that retention schedules can be updated.

At the end of the initial two-year period, the County continued its commitment to the records program by providing full funding. In 1992, the renovation of a building which had been purchased from Sears, Roebuck & Co. was completed. Offices and an approximately 40,000 square foot area for record storage were then available. The facility is located within one and one-half miles of the City-County Building which houses the administrative offices, courts, and other agencies of Knox County Government.

The process of transferring documents to the record center began immediately. Policies and procedures were established to help insure the orderly transfer of documents. The retention schedules were used to identify those temporary-value documents which could be destroyed. There is no statute or ordinance which requires agencies of Knox County Government to participate in the records management program. Fortunately, support from elected and appointed officials was present from the inception. This support continues.

Since the opening of the record center, Knox County's records management program has evolved and grown. Agencies served include the Courts, Register of Deeds, School system, Sheriff's Department, Trustee, County Clerk, as well as other agencies under the County Executive and agencies which are funded by both the City of Knoxville and Knox County. Current staff includes the Records Manager, an Administrative Assistant, Micrographics Technician, and three Records Clerks. Services provided are:

- Storage, retrieval, delivery, pick-up, and refiling of original documents for customer departments and agencies. Photo and fax copies are also provided. There is no charge to government agencies for these services. Minimal fees are charged to the public for photocopies. On average, Records Management receives 850 requests per month for original or photocopied documents.
- Microfilming of permanent-value documents
- Disposal (i.e., destruction) of temporary-value documents in accordance with the statute

For more information on the Knox County Records Management program, please contact:

John H. Woodard, Jr., Records Manager  
Knox County Records Management  
Division of Data Processing  
1000 N. Central Street, Box 2  
Knoxville, TN 37917  
Phone: 423-215-5656 FAX: 423-215-5665  
E-mail: records@esper.com  
Web Site: [www.kornnet.org/knox/records](http://www.kornnet.org/knox/records)

## TEL FOR TENNESSEE: IT'S TIME

The Tennessee Electronic Library (TEL) is nearing reality. Rooted in a vision of TENN-SHARE, a library organization dedicated to greater resource sharing among libraries, and established as a priority of the Tennessee Advisory Council on Libraries, TEL took form through the work of a subcommittee of the Advisory Council chaired by Frank P. Grisham, former director of the Vanderbilt University Library in Nashville and the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) in Atlanta.

Drawing upon the TENN-SHARE proposal, "The Tennessee Electronic Library: A Proposal for Delivering Information Resources to Local Communities" (1997), the subcommittee developed a concept document that captured the idea of the TEL in two pages. This concept document was, in turn, converted into a bill sponsored by Senator Ward Crutchfield and Representative Matt Kisber (SB 418/HB442). Here are a few key paragraphs from the bill:

*There is hereby created the Tennessee electronic library which shall be administered by the office of the secretary of state, division of Tennessee State Library and Archives, which shall have authority to coordinate the delivery of electronic databases and other similar services to all libraries, both public and private, within the state of Tennessee which desire to participate in the Tennessee electronic library. . . .*

*The Tennessee electronic library . . . shall be composed of four (4) integrated components:*

- 1) Subscriptions to commercial online products of general interest to all Tennesseans available to all libraries and other subscriptions of specific interest paid for by libraries participating in the Tennessee electronic library;*
- 2) Organization and technical support for start-up and ongoing services;*
- 3) Computing storage capacity; and*
- 4) Training for Tennessee librarians and library users.*

*The Tennessee electronic library may provide access to, but shall not be limited to:*

- \* Available online catalogs of the holdings of participating libraries in Tennessee;*
- \* Local[ly] produced databases of special collections in Tennessee; and*
- \* Other holdings, collections, and subscriptions deemed appropriate by the participating libraries and agencies.*

*Participants in the Tennessee electronic library shall be limited to Tennessee public and not-for-profit academic and school libraries within Tennessee, and any agency of state government whose mission is to provide support services to public and educational libraries.*

The estimated total cost of TEL is \$2,225,000, \$540,000 of which will be paid for out of funds from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) through the State Library and Archives. At this writing the bill has passed the House and the Senate and additional funding has been recommended by the Governor's office and Senate Finance Ways and Means Committee, subject to the availability of improvement funds for FY 1999/2000. To the extent that first-year funding falls short of the goal, the staff of the State Library and Archives, with the support of Secretary of State Riley Darnell and assisted by such groups as the TENN-SHARE, the Advisory Council, and a state-wide Database Selection Committee, is committed to press ahead with the program while working for full funding.

TEL represents a major step, not just for libraries in the state, but for users of those libraries and all who need and seek further resources in this information age. It is an efficient and economical means of providing current and reliable information to all Tennesseans, regardless of age, income status, place of residence—for communities rural and urban, large and small. TEL can be the great equalizer. TEL for Tennessee. It's time.

*Edwin S. Gleaves  
State Librarian & Archivist*

# Congratulations!



**THE FRANKLIN COUNTY ARCHIVES NEW FACILITY  
at 304 First Avenue NW  
Winchester, Tennessee**

## **DR. BARBARA FLANARY ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM THE MEMPHIS/SHELBY COUNTY ARCHIVES**

The Society wishes to congratulate Dr. Barbara Flanary on her well deserved recent retirement. After raising five children and earning a Ph.D. in History, Bobby (as we all affectionately know her) began working for the Memphis/Shelby County Public Library in 1982. In March 1985 she added the duties of Memphis/Shelby County Archivist to her responsibilities. From that time until her retirement on January 15, 1999 the Memphis/Shelby County Archives has grown dramatically under her guidance.

During Bobby's tenure, a focus was placed on increasing public access through education, organization, indexing, and microfilming. In addition to teaching dozens of local preservation workshops for interested individuals, Bobby assisted several local organizations in starting their own archives. Under her guidance, the Archives staff and volunteers produced a comprehensive inventory, created dozens of item level/every name genealogical indexes, completed folder level finding aids for five major political collections, and prepared for microfilming some 500 rolls of material, while increasing customer requests filled by 1000%.

Bobby and her husband plans to move back home to their native Virginia in the next couple of years. We will all miss the leadership given by this former STA president and current THRAB member.

*John Dougan  
Vice-President  
Society of Tennessee Archivists*

## REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL NAGARA MEETING, COLUMBUS, OHIO

At the *National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators* meeting, your reporter was struck by several things: (1) Some of our neighboring states—Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Missouri, and Kentucky in particular—seem further along in state-wide local archival development programs and have stronger state government support than does Tennessee. Some have regional records centers and field workers employed by the state archives, and they offer archives and records management workshops several times a year. Some have annual budget investments exceeding a million dollars. (2) All states are grappling with the issue of electronic records. Archivists see the difference between simulated documents and original transactional records as to their inherent ability to inspire public confidence, but information systems managers increasingly talk as if faithful reproduction were the key to records integrity. (3) Several states seem to have had some success with an archives week to celebrate the contributions of archives to their commonwealths. In some cases, this has led to increased cooperation between archives, historical societies, museums, and libraries. (4) There was also a very good presentation by Kermit Hall, Provost of NC State and member of the board that reviewed the Kennedy assassination papers—on the work of the board and the kinds of criteria used to evaluate whether a record should or should not be kept under seal from public inspection.

*William W. Moss*  
Assistant State Archivist

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am really excited about our November 1999 Annual SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE ARCHIVISTS Meeting. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, we are sponsoring a **Local Archives Workshop for Tennessee Counties and Municipalities** – for those already with an established facility and those in the process of establishing a local government archives. This Local Archives Workshop is **FREE** and is an excellent introduction for anyone new to the archives profession. So many of you have volunteered to give presentations at our November annual meeting. I wish we could extend our meeting another day to include all the great suggested topics. We are very fortunate to have so many dedicated and gifted Tennessee archivists. Each of you has a story to share about your archival work and experiences. I hope you will do this on Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup> during our session on “Sharing What’s New in Your Archives World.”

Henry Horton State Park is centrally located in Tennessee, and should make it possible for a large gathering of archivists from all corners of the State. Suzanne Dewberry, an archivist with the Southeast Region of the National Archives, has promised a humorous and entertaining insight into Southern Federal Records at our November 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday evening banquet. I encourage all of you to make plans for this special STA Annual Meeting. If you have not attended one of our annual meetings, you are in for a treat. It is a great way to meet other archivists and share experiences. We all have stories tell!

*Doris R. Martinson, CA*  
Knox County Archives  
STA President



## HISTORIAN HARRIET OWSLEY DIES AT 97

Harriet Chappell Owsley, 97, a retired archivist for the Tennessee State Library and Archives and one of Nashville's most zealous and knowledgeable historians, died Friday, July 3, 1999 at her home of heart failure after a lengthy illness.

Mrs. Owsley was considered the "Sherlock Holmes of Tennessee history" because of her passion for tracking down local historical clues.

Her many important discoveries over the years are legend, and Mrs. Owsley, as head of the State Library and Archives Manuscripts Division, "made her department a drawing card for researchers from over the nation," *Tennessean* historical writer Louise Davis said in an extensive profile of Mrs. Owsley in 1968. The story called her "The Lady Detective of Capitol Hill."

In an old box, for example, she spotted a real jewel in the 1927 statement of an ex-slave, Coleman Davis Smith, then 84, who recalled witnessing his master, Confederate hero Sam Davis of Smyrna, being hanged by the Union Army for being a spy. Smith told of how he tried in vain to convince Davis to tell the Union authorities what they wanted to know so his life might be spared.

Mrs. Owsley was a native of Waco, Texas and a daughter of the late Charles and Clementine Chappell.

She was the widow of Frank Lawrence Owsley, a well-known former professor of history at Vanderbilt University. The couple lived on the Vanderbilt campus from 1920 to 1949, when they moved to Tuscaloosa, Ala. When the professor died in 1956, Mrs. Owsley moved back to Nashville and became an archivist with the State Library and Archives.

After she retired from her library job in 1970, she was an assistant director of the Andrew Jackson Papers at the Hermitage. She was an assistant editor of Volume I of the *Papers of Andrew Jackson* and the author of *Frank Lawrence Owsley: A Memoir*, published by Vanderbilt University Press in 1969.

Survivors include a daughter, Margaret O. Seigenthaler, Nashville; a son, Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr., Auburn, Ala.; a sister, Eloise Johnson Houston; a brother, Gordon Chappell, Montgomery, Ala.; four grandchildren; and a great-grandchild.

A memorial fund has been established at the West End United Methodist Church and the Frank L. Owsley Scholarship Fund at the University of Alabama.

*The Tennessean*  
July 4, 1999

## COSHR PLAN NATIONAL FORUM ON ARCHIVAL EDUCATION

Under a cooperative effort of the NHPRC and the AASLH, the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHR) is preparing a National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE) to be held in Decatur, Georgia (just southeast of Atlanta and accessible by Atlanta's rapid transit system), 27-30 April 2000. The aim of the invitation-only forum is to identify content and focus that will improve archival education nationwide at the grass roots level. COSHR will invite 100-odd participants, including representatives from some 45 national organizations and agencies that fund archival education and archival programs.



*William W. Moss*  
Assistant State Archivist

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY PROGRAM  
 RELEASES NEW COLLECTION:  
 ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL FAMILY PAPERS

The National Digital Library Program at the Library of Congress at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>

announces the release of Collection Number 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers at the Library of Congress from the Manuscript Division at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/bellhtml/bellhome.html>

This online collection will ultimately represent a portion selected from the original Bell Papers and will comprise approximately 4,700 items, totaling about 38,000 images. The first release contains over 1,000 items consisting of correspondence, scientific notebooks, journals, blueprints, sketches, and photographs documenting Bell's invention of the telephone and his involvement in the first telephone company, his family life, his interest in the education of the deaf, and his aeronautical and other scientific research. These manuscripts, dating from 1862 to 1939, offer a well-rounded portrayal of Alexander Graham Bell not only as an inventor and scientist but also as a teacher, humanitarian, husband, and father.

Alexander Graham Bell was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on March 3, 1847. He and his parents moved to Canada in 1870, and, a year later, he moved to Boston to teach speech to deaf students. Teaching notes used and taken by Bell can be found in the Bell Papers selected to appear online.

Bell's efforts to build a multiple telegraph led instead to the invention of the telephone in 1876. Included among Bell's papers are his first sketch of the telephone and an experimental notebook with an entry from March 10, 1876, that describes the first successful experiment with the telephone, during which he spoke through the instrument to his assistant, Thomas Watson, the famous words, "Mr. Watson— Come here – I want to see you." Bell, Watson, and Bell's financial supporters, Gardiner Greene Hubbard and Thomas Sanders, formed the Bell Telephone Company the following year.

After his invention of the telephone, Bell continued to pursue his interests in deaf education and science. Bell's scientific pursuits ranged widely throughout his life and led to various inventions, such as a vacuum jacket for artificial respiration and the tetrahedral kite. He dedicated much of his research to aviation and was a member of the Aerial Experiment Association, a small group of engineers and mechanics who brought about the first flight of a heavier-than-air machine in Canada. Bell's sketches of the vacuum jacket and tetrahedral kites and notes and photographs of his aeronautical work are among the items digitized for the first release.

Of particular interest in this NDLP collection website are special presentations including: a time line, Alexander Graham Bell as inventor and scientist and a Bell Family tree. Parts of the collection being released include original typescript letters and documents, correspondence with transcripts, and other printed items. These typescript materials were converted to machine-readable form and encoded with Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML). The text of the transcripts and original typescripts has been translated to HTML for indexing and viewing on the World Wide Web.

The final release of the remainder of images from the Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers is scheduled for Fall 1999.



**A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TENNESSEE HISTORY, 1973-1996**

*edited by W. Calvin Dickinson and Eloise R. Hitchcock*

With some 6,000 entries, *A Bibliography of Tennessee History* will prove to be an invaluable resource for anyone—students, historians, librarians, genealogists—engaged in researching Tennessee's rich and colorful past. A sequel to Sam B. Smith's invaluable 1973 work, *Tennessee History: A Bibliography*, this book follows a similar format and includes published books and essays, as well as many unpublished theses and dissertations, that have become available during the intervening years.

The volume begins with sections on Reference, Natural History, and Native Americans. Its divisions then follow the major periods of the state's history. Included is a helpful subject index that points the reader to particular persons, places, incidents or topics. Substantial sections in this index highlight women's history and African American history, two areas in which scholarship has proliferated during the past two decades.

W. Calvin Dickinson is a professor of history at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. Eloise R. Hitchcock is head reference librarian at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

For more information on *A Bibliography of Tennessee History, 1973-1996* please contact Wendy West, Publicity/Promotions Manager, The University of Tennessee Press, email: [wmwest@utk.edu](mailto:wmwest@utk.edu), or phone: 1 (423) 974-3321.





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DAVID SOWELL, EDITOR  
c/o TENNESSEE STATE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES  
ARCHIVES TECHNICAL SERVICES  
403 SEVENTH AVE. NORTH  
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0312

## TENNESSEE ARCHIVIST

### MEMBERSHIP INVITATION

The Society of Tennessee Archivists invite membership from all persons interested in Tennessee's archives and historical resources. Membership is on a calendar basis. STA currently holds one meeting each year which includes the annual business meeting. STA is a member of the regional association called the Southern Archivists Conference. Currently the four southern states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee make up the conference. A SAC meeting is held every other year in conjunction with the other states and each state alternately host the meetings.

STA publishes a quarterly newsletter and invites contributions from members and non-members. Officers are elected at the annual meeting.

**Full Member (\$20/year)  Institutional Member (\$10/year)  Associate Member (\$10/year)**

Please make checks payable to: **SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE ARCHIVISTS**, and include membership information (name, address, institutional information, phone number, fax number, email address) and mail to:

David McWhirter  
Treasurer, Society of Tennessee Archivists  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society  
1101 19<sup>th</sup> Ave. South  
Nashville, Tenn. 37212-2196