

WASHINGTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



Looking out the Reading Room's Great Window

Submitted by
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By the Numbers

The following is the county archive year (July 1st, 2016-June 30th, 2017) by the numbers:

- 256,129.20 = revenue dollars raised by the archive filing fee.
- 240,000 = dollars appropriated in the department budget.
- 109,538.46 = dollars spent for archive building fire suppression system.
- 2,508 = linear feet of records moved into the archive building. [This is the equivalent length of 8.36 football fields.]
- 1,701 = number of archival storage shelves. [There are 1,702 words in *Cat in the Hat*.]
- 1,256 = visitors to archive webpage (March 8th-June 30th, 2017).
- 1,021 = number of hours contributed by others to archive. [This is the equivalent of having a full-time employee for almost 7 months.]
- 828 = number of reference inquiries handled.
- 255 = number in attendance at public presentations given on the county archive.
- 34 = number of media items about the Archives.
- 17 = number of volunteers helping archive.
- 39 = number of states from which reference inquiries were received: Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming
- 22 = number of Friends of the Archives members.
- 11 = number of foreign countries that had visitors to visit archive website.
- 2 = number of foreign countries from which research inquiries were received. (England and Korea)

Note: The photograph on the first page taken in March 2017 shows the view looking from the Reading Room looking north out the Great Window. The International Storytelling Center building is seen in the background.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The 2016-2017 fiscal year was the most eventful one yet for the county archives. Construction work on the building was finished. The department's second employee was hired. Records were moved in and organized. And the building was dedicated and opened to the public for research. A most momentous year indeed!

These events and others aspects of the archive year are examined in more detail below.

Building Improvements



Archives Reading Room

With the major building renovations completed by late spring of 2016, other improvements could proceed. Furniture and equipment were purchased for the Reading Room and offices. Equipment and furniture for the Reading Room (\$4,224.69 total cost) included a reference desk, a desk for the Register of Deeds computer, a computer for public use, and Penco security lockers. Also a large screen television monitor for displaying digital images of historic photographs, news and information, and conducting PowerPoint presentation was purchased with funds from the private donation of Elaine Cantrell. Office equipment and furniture (\$4,177.20 total cost) included a desk, bookcases, archive assistant computer, and a multifunction photocopier for office use. Other equipment and supplies purchased (\$8,419.35 total cost) included a 5-drawer map cabinet, book cart, and archival supplies.

S. B. White Company did repair work on the existing HVAC chilling system (not part of the original renovation project) in both the spring-summer of 2016 (\$6,107) and spring-summer 2017 (\$3,700). Adjustments on the new air system were done at various times during the year, but this work was done at no cost to the archive.

Planning was done for placing a fire suppression system in the archive building. After careful study, an Inergen clean agent fire suppression system manufactured by Ansul was selected as best meeting the needs of the archive. A similar system was installed by Simplex-Grinnell at Cherokee, N. C., for the tribal archives of the Cherokee Nation. Simplex-Grinnell was awarded the project at a cost of \$109,538.46. Work on installation began on June 20, 2017 and will be completed in the early part of fiscal year 2017-2018.

Planning also began on renovation of the Archive Annex with window enclosures, new lighting system, new HVAC system, and any necessary electrical upgrade. Work on this project is expected to begin during fiscal year 2017-2018.

A grant application was made with the Tennessee Historical Commission for restoration of the archive building's front roof pediment. It was learned just prior to the close of the fiscal year that the grant was not funded. This was the third attempt made by Dr. William E. Kennedy and archive staff to secure this funding.

Collection Development

With the completion of the archive building renovation in the spring of 2016, county records could finally be moved into the building. On the morning of Tuesday, July 12th, 2016, the first records moved in from the County Clerk's office. The first volume moved was the Watauga Purchase book of 1775. That would be followed over the course of the next several months by more than 2,500 linear feet of records. If stretched out, the records would equal the length of over eight football fields!

Many important early records that had left the courthouse in Jonesborough over the years came home. In early August 2016, a large collection of county records that had been moved to East Tennessee State University in 1958 were returned. This consisted of over 800 linear feet of records, including 468 boxes and 1,042 volumes, covering a time span from 1779 to 1955. And most significantly, some of the county's oldest records dating from the county's founding in the 1770s were returned from Nashville by the Tennessee State Library and Archives just in time for the dedication of the Washington County Archives building. Those records, which included the earliest original minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, had been removed to Nashville for safe-keeping in 1886.



County Archivist Ned Irwin and Kelly Wilkerson of the Tennessee State Library and Archives carry early county records into the archive building, March 30th, 2017.

Much time during the year was spent by archive staff and volunteers arranging the records by office on some of the 1,701 shelves in the building. Record collections organized include those of the following offices:

Circuit Court Clerk [Record Group 3], 1808-2009 = 882 linear feet (390 boxes and 458 volumes)
Clerk and Master (Chancery Court) (Record Group 4), 1777-2006 = 818 linear feet (440 boxes and 434 volumes)

County Clerk [Record Group 5], 1771-2005 = 559 linear feet (175 boxes and 707 volumes)
Superior Court of Law and Equity [Record Group 18], 1784-1835 = 11 linear feet (13 boxes and 17 volumes)

Washington County Photograph Collection [Record Group 21], 1886-1912 and undated = 3 linear feet (1 box and 5 oversized folders)

Following the inventorying and organizing of records, detailed written guides were created by archive staff to help both staff, volunteers, and researchers access the vast holdings of the department. Once the guides were completed, digital versions were created and uploaded to the departmental website where they are viewable by researchers all over the world via the Internet.

Early tax lists found in the County Clerk's office were processed during the year. These will be scanned in the coming fiscal year. With the assistance of archive volunteers, processing of loose wills formerly stored in the basement of the courthouse began during the year. A second project of typing box and folder lists of old Chancery Court case files (1831-1913 and undated) was also begun. Both projects will continue into the new fiscal year.

Jonesborough photographer Tom Pardue scanned and digitized oversized historic photographs of Washington County and Jonesborough scenes originally displayed in the courthouse. These images are now displayed in digital form on the large screen television monitor in the Reading Room.

Manuscript Collections

A small number of manuscript collections of personal papers and copies of church records have been donated to the department since its establishment. These collections were processed and written finding aids were produced. Online versions of these finding aids are found on the Archives webpage under the "Collection Guides" sub-page. The Archives does not focus on acquiring private collections but does so on rare occasions.

Among the collections presently processed are the Margret Sherfey Holley Papers (acc. 1); State of Franklin Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution Collection (acc. 2); Washington County-Johnson City Community Shelter Plan (acc. 3); Barbara Edmisten Manning Collection (acc. 4), Petitions from the Western Country to North Carolina Collection (acc. 5); Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church Minutes (acc. 6); Cherokee Baptist Church Minutes (acc. 7); and the Immanuel Lutheran Church Records (acc. 8).

Book Collection

Beginning with a handful of Tennessee *Blue Books*, the department has been building from scratch a reference book collection to supplement for researchers and staff the primary sources that are the county records. As of June 30th, 2017, the collection had grown to 227 volumes. This includes an important donation by the county attorney of the editions of the *Public Acts of Tennessee* and the *Private Acts of Tennessee* from the old law book collection of that office. The donation of a significant private book collection is anticipated in the next fiscal year.

All books in the collection either came as donations from private individuals to the archives or were purchased by the Friends of the Washington County, Tennessee Archives on behalf of the department.

Records Management

The department continued to provide records storage for various county departments and offices in the Archive Annex for records waiting retention periods before disposition. Currently, 15 county offices and departments have records stored in the Archive Annex. Advice regarding issues on records managed was provided to county officials and department heads as requested.

On August 26th, 2016, the Washington County-Jonesborough Library became the latest county department to store records with the Department. Library Director Richard Griffith transferred eight linear feet of non-current library record (2003-2015) to the Archives for storage. This became the first records of Record Group 22.

The County Commission adopted an open records policy for the county at its' May 22nd, 2017 commission meeting. This places the county in compliance with a state law that went into effect July 1, 2017 requiring all Tennessee counties to have such a policy to deal with open records requests received by county departments and offices. County Archivist Ned Irwin was consulted by the County Attorney's office as the office developed the written policy. That office will handle open records requests.

A proposal for the County Commission to formally adopt the County Technical Advisory Service records retention schedules for use by all county departments and offices will be presented in fiscal year 2017-2018 for consideration by the Public Records Commission and the County Commission.

Reference and Public Service

The two most significant events during the year with regard to public service were the opening of the Reading Room to the public for research use of the collections and the creation of a departmental website to promote the Archives and assist researchers around the world in finding and accessing what we have.

The Archives building was officially dedicated in ceremonies held at the International Storytelling Center in Jonesborough on Saturday, April 1st, 2017. Over 100 people attended the event. Tours of the building were conducted for the public. For details, see the article on the archive website "News & Events" sub-page and see photographs on the "Photo Gallery" sub-page.

The Reading Room officially opened to researchers on Monday, April 18th, 2017. Our first researchers were Korean doctors researching the life of Dr. John Heron, who practiced medicine in Jonesboro in the 1880s and then went with his wife to Korea as a

medical missionary, where he found the first medical school in the country, which has produced thousands of physicians since that time. (For more details, see the article on the archive webpage “News & Events” section). Many researchers have come to the Reading Room since.



Members of the Hawkins County Genealogical and Historical Society visited the Archives on June 8th, 2017.

A total of 828 research inquiries were received and handled by archive staff during the year. Inquiries came from 39 states and two foreign countries. This included the states of Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming, as well as England and Korea. Research inquiries increased 70% over the previous year.

Archives staff made several presentations and tours during the year, including to Leadership 2020, the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century-Katherine Marbury Scott Chapter, Boones Creek Historical Trust, the Hawkins County Genealogical and Historical Society, and for the dedication of the archive building April 1st, 2017. A total of 255 people attended these programs or tours.

Staff designed and created an exhibit of historic county judicial documents for the annual state judicial conference visit to Jonesborough on June 14, 2017.

A descriptive brochure about the Archives was created for public distribution. Plans were made to develop a joint brochure between the Archives, the Washington County-Jonesborough Library, and the Heritage Alliance.

Ned Irwin consulted with Rhea County, Tennessee officials on their establishing a county archives.

Archive staff served on boards of the following organizations during 2016-2017: Washington County Public Records Commission, Museum at Mountain Home, Washington County Historical Association, and the Heritage Alliance of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

Website

During the last quarter of the fiscal year, archive staff planned, designed, and created a departmental website. Donna Briggs, archive assistant, took the lead role in building the website. The Friends of the Washington County Archives paid the annual fee for having the site hosted on WordPress. The website URL is: <https://wctnarchives.org/>.

The website provides general information about the department, detailed digital guides to processed collections, links to other useful sites for researchers, news and events about the Archives, a photo gallery of historic and current images about the county and the Archives and archive personnel, information for those planning a visit to the Archives, and much other useful information. The website is seen as an evolving document that will constantly be revised and improved.

Website visitation increased the public presence of the archive tremendously. Since the website went live on March 8th, 2017 to June 30th, 2017, 1,256 individuals have visited the archive webpage. This included visitors from 11 different countries, including the United States, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Ireland, Israel, Japan, and Luxembourg.

Staffing and Volunteers

Donna Cox Briggs began service as the first archive assistant in the county archives on Tuesday, July 5th, 2016. This was a part-time position working 25 hours per week. Beginning July 1, 2017, she will become a full-time archive employee.

A number of volunteers came on board during the year and were an immediate help in the Archives. A few volunteers work in the Archives on a regular basis and need to be recognized and thanked here: Mike Briggs, Georgia Greer, Janette Guinn, Shirley Hinds,

Margaret Hougland, Betty Jane Hylton, Kyle Johnson, Lisa Shockley, Jewell Susong, and Nancy Trivett. Volunteers contributed a total of 1,021 hours. This is the equivalent of having a full-time employee for almost seven months!



County Archivist Ned Irwin and Archive Assistant Donna Briggs with a group of archive volunteers in the Reading Room.

Among other projects, volunteers helped box and move records from the courthouse to the Archives; processed early tax lists; processed loose wills covering the period from the 18th century to the early 1990s; typed box and folder lists for old Chancery Court case files; and assisted staff in helping researchers.

Public Records Commission

The Washington County Public Records Commission provides advice and assistance to the Archives throughout the year. Its major effort was co-sponsorship of the dedication ceremonies for the renovated archive building held on Saturday, April 1st, 2017 in Jonesborough. Over 100 people attended the event. Members performed various tasks in planning and managing the event. Chairman Sam Humphreys spoke as part of the dedication ceremony.

The commission met on October 19, 2016, December 7, 2016, and March 1, 2017. The May 3, 2017 meeting was cancelled for lack of a quorum. Past minutes of commission meetings may be obtained from Ned Irwin, PRC secretary.

Current commission members are Dr. Sam Humphreys (Chairman), Commissioner Mike Ford (Vice-Chairman), Gene Hurdt, Ned Irwin, Register of Deeds Ginger Jilton, Dr.

William E. Kennedy, Judge John Kiener, Chancellor John Rambo, and County Clerk Kathy Storey.

Friends of the Archives

The important efforts of the Friends of the Washington County Archives (FOA) in support of the department continued in fiscal year 2016-2017. There were 22 FOA members as of June 30, 2017.

Co-sponsoring the dedication of the archive building on April 1, 2017 along with the Washington County Public Records Commission was the largest effort undertaken by the FOA during the year. This involved several months of planning and work prior to the event as well as staffing the event with volunteers to help register guests, serve refreshments, and assist with tours. The total cost of the event was \$363.14.

The FOA helped begin building a reference book collection to supplement the county record holding. They spent \$904.45 for 34 titles during the fiscal year. The group also funded the \$99 annual cost of hosting the archive website on WordPress.

The group's annual meeting was held for the first time in the archive reading room on Thursday, June 15th, 2017, where a program was presented by staff on interesting documents found in the archive holdings.

In June 2017, the FOA was the recipient of the remaining funds of \$2,008.51 from the Washington County Historical Association that dissolved in January 2017.

The Year Ahead

Issues that were noted in previous annual reports continue to be of concern. These include:

- Archive Annex needs facility improvements, including an HVAC system and new lighting. This is expected to be addressed in fiscal year 2017-2018.
- Archive Annex is nearing records storage capacity making the need for a county records storage facility as part of the records management program an increasingly urgent need.