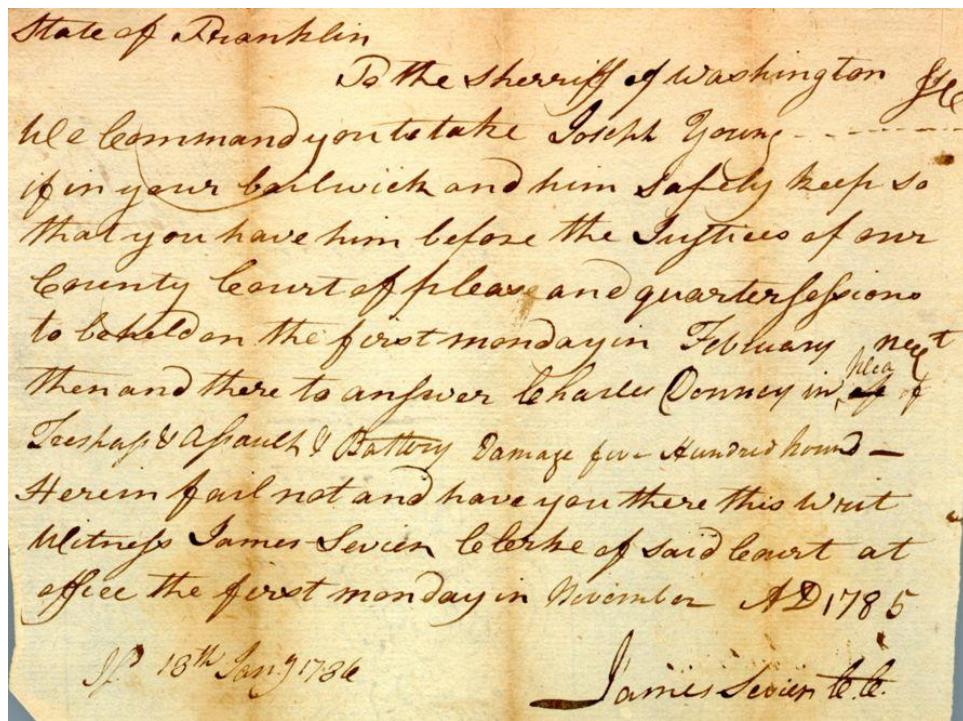


WASHINGTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

TWELFTH ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



State of Franklin court document signed by James Sevier, County Clerk and son of Franklin's governor, John Sevier, 1785. Document returned by TSLA in 2023.

Submitted by
Ned Irwin
County Archivist and Records Manager
July 2024

WASHINGTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

ANNUAL REPORT, 2023-2024

By the Numbers

The following is the county archive year (July 1st, 2023-June 30th, 2024) by the numbers:

- 291,740 = dollars appropriated in the department budget. (See page 3.)
- 258,673.23 = revenue dollars raised by the archive filing fee. (See page 3.)
- 107,725 = loose marriage licenses in the archives (1778-1980). (See page 8.)
- 106,286.92 = amount held in archive reserve fund. (See page 3.)
- 66,178 = number of individuals viewing Facebook posts. (See page 15.)
- 11,507 = number of website visitors. (See page 15.)
- 10,182 = linear feet of records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 7,772 = boxes of county records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 5,459 = volumes of county records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 1,855 = number of reference inquiries handled. (See page 13.)
- 1,439 = letterheads found in county records and scanned of different individuals and businesses in Washington County.
- 1,317.5 = number of hours contributed by volunteers to the archives. (See page 17.)
- 1,209 = volumes in Book Collection. (See page 10.)
- 604 = maps housed in the archives. (See page 11.)
- 337 = number of marriage license reference inquiries. (See page 13.)
- 102 = number of filing cabinets. (See page 5.)
- 82 = number in attendance at public presentations given by archive staff. (See page 14.)
- 57 = number of Facebook posts. (See page 15.)
- 54 = number of countries viewing website. (See page 15.)
- 36 = number of states from which reference inquiries were received. (See page 13.)
- 12 = number of archive volunteers. (See page 17.)
- 5 = number of foreign countries from which research inquiries were received. (See page 13.)
- 3 = number of media items about the archives.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

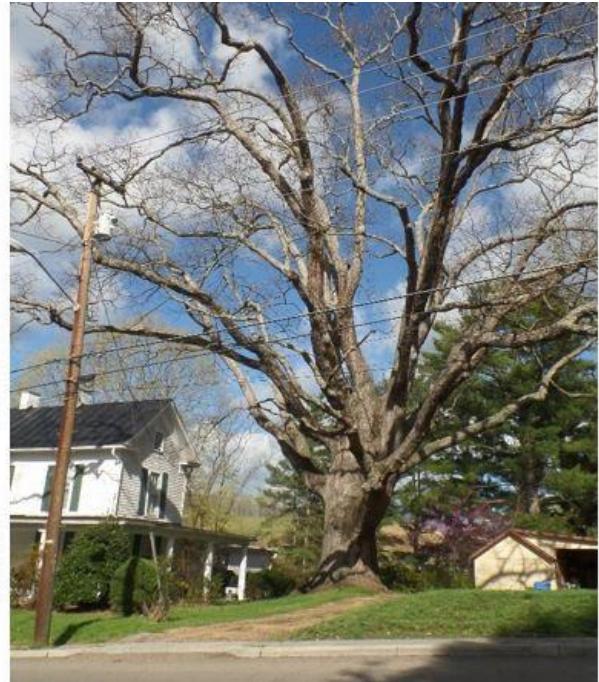
INTRODUCTION

Caring for the oldest public records in the state of Tennessee is a tremendous responsibility, which we take very seriously. Our goal is to pass these records on to the next generation, as they were passed on to us by all the generations that held them before us. How we do this is discussed in the pages that follow.

AN HISTORIC LOSS

The history of Washington County is not always told in its' documents like those found in the archives. It can also be found in the world outside the archives building. So, we think it is appropriate when discussing the documentation of Washington County's rich history that we mention here a significant loss that occurred in the summer of 2023. We reproduce here the article that appeared about it on our webpage at the time.

IN MEMORIAM: JONESBOROUGH'S GREAT OAK TREE



Jonesborough lost its' oldest living resident last week. In the wee hours of Tuesday, August 15th, 2023, the largest white oak tree in the state of Tennessee fell in a great storm at its' home at 508 West Main Street. As a town native, I cannot remember a worse storm. It took a great storm to bring down a great tree.

Its' dimensions were enormous. Its' limbs spanned over a third of a football field. To reach around its' base required a 22-foot rope. To see it fall would have been to watch a 12-storey building collapse.

Commonly called the "Shanks Oak" after the family that lived beside it for so many years, the tree was witness to all the history of the town and long before there was a town. A young Andrew Jackson passed it every day on his way to the courthouse from Christopher Taylor's cabin where he was lodging west of town. Settlers in their wagons heading west passed its' roadside. Stagecoaches passed on the stage road to its' rear. It heard the first train engine enter town in the 1850s. The tree watched Alfred E. Jackson, its' owner at one point and Confederate general, go off to war, as well as the passing of troops of both sides during the Civil War. It saw the smoke rise from the great fire of 1873, which destroyed much of the downtown of Jonesborough. The tree was here through wars and economic depressions and parades and celebrations.

To honor and protect the great oak, the Town of Jonesborough declared it a "Heritage Tree" in 2002. Articles have been written about it, and a multitude of photographs were taken over the years. The saddest images were the ones taken August 15th, 2023, as it lay sprawled across the lawns it had shaded for so long.

Jonesborough has lost its' sentinel of history.

-- Ned Irwin

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The departmental budget for 2023-2024 was \$291,740. This increase over the previous year's budget of \$281,108 was partly due to salary adjustments necessitated by inflation. This included a \$2 per hour raise initiated by the County Commission for all county employees. The archive budget is funded by revenue raised through an archival filing fee applied to various county documents generated in different county offices, including County Clerk, Circuit Court Clerk, Clerk and Master, Highway Department, and Zoning Department. Total revenue from the filing fee for the year was \$258,673.23. This compares with a revenue total of \$272,811 for 2022-2023.

Any surplus revenue goes into a dedicated archive reserve fund. We began the year on July 1, 2023 with a balance in the archive reserve fund of \$127,867.60. As of June 30, 2024, the reserve fund totaled \$106,286.92.

In 2013, the department began paying off a 12-year bond note of \$530,000, which monies had funded the renovation of the building at 103 West Main Street in Jonesborough for the county archive building. In 2024, the last large annual payment of \$49,000 was made. In 2025, a final bond payment of \$3,225 will be made. With this financial burden lifted off our shoulders, the department will have approximately \$50,000 for other archival uses in the years ahead.

BUILDIING MANAGEMENT

The department manages two facilities: the archive building itself at 103 West Main Street in Jonesborough and the Archive Annex in the former county jail space at the rear of the Washington County Courthouse. The first is a 1915 bank building renovated in 2015-2016, a perfect place for securing and preserving historic county records. The annex was constructed originally in 1964 as the county jail and renovated in 2012 and 2018-2019 as an archival storage facility, again a wonderfully secure place to preserve county records. Total building square footage under the department's management is nearly 20,000 square feet of space (19,248 square feet, to be exact). This is 9,000 square feet for the archive building and 10,248 square feet for the Archive Annex. Of this total, 16,248 square feet is usable space.



The archives building with Ned Irwin on the bench, July 2nd, 2024.

Water seems to be a recurring theme regarding building issues this year. On July 20th, 2023, Ricky Poore, county maintenance director, did repair work on roof leaks sustained on the 2nd floor near the mechanical room entrance wall during a severe thunderstorm and flash flood in downtown Jonesborough on the morning of Friday, July 14th, 2023. This work saved the money that would otherwise have been paid to an outside roofing contractor.

On Tuesday, May 21st, 2024, a sump pump discharge pipe separated in the spring well in the basement and had to be fixed. This leak temporarily flooded a small portion of the basement, but no damage was done. Poore replaced cracked PVC pipe and dried the flooded area.

Poore also repaired as necessary air units in the building and heat pumps supplying heat and air to the Archive Annex.

Issues related to water penetration of the westside Reading Room walls was examined by a project manager and a mason with Burleson Construction Company. This issue involves problems with the exterior wall of the archive building that runs alongside the alleyway. Some sort of repair will be needed, but no proposal and estimate for such a project has been received at the close of this fiscal year.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

The department manages seven distinct collections: County Records, Artifact Collection, Book Collection, Manuscripts Collection, Map Collection, Microfilm Collection, and Photograph Collection. These are discussed below.

Annual Census of Records

At the end of the fiscal year, a census was taken of all records held by the department in both the archive building and the Archive Annex. Here are the results:

- Boxes = 7,772
- Volumes = 5,459
- Filing Cabinets = 102
- Shelves used = 3,256
- Shelves unused = 838
- Linear feet of records stored = 10,182 (equivalent to the length of 34 football fields!)

County Records

The primary function of the department is the preservation of records created by the various offices and departments of Washington County government having permanent

value. A secondary function of the department is arranging these records and making them accessible to anyone who may require their use. Archive staff works closely with office-holders and department heads to ensure records needing the care and attention of the archives receive it. Records cover a wide array of information, including that related to marriages, court cases, taxes, probate, property assessments, and many other record types.

Addition To County Records

County records were transferred to the archives from the following offices and individuals:

- On August 18th, 2023 and November 22nd, 2023, Richard Griffith, library director, transferred four boxes of library records, which were added to Record Group 22: Washington County Library Records. This included financial records (2019-2020), grant records, and library board minutes (1968-2017).
- On November 8th, 2023, Dr. James T. Dykes of Johnson City, Tenn., donated a 1783 North Carolina land grant made to Bartholomew Woods, Jr. This was added to Record Group 15: Register of Deeds Records.
- On January 11th, 2024, loose marriage licenses from 1976-1980 were transferred from the County Clerk's office to the archives and were added to the existing collection of these records held by the department. This consisted of 9 boxes (15 linear feet.)
- For the last few years, we have used monies donated by the Friends of the Archives and the Watauga Association of Genealogists to purchase electronic copies of Tennessee State Supreme Court case files from the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA). These are cases that originated in Washington County courts and were appealed. The TSLA now has a policy of once someone pays them to have a case file digitized, they then make the file available on their website for free to everyone. So, this year we began to take advantage of this policy. We downloaded and printed cases files for 12 court cases. These files have been added to the existing Record Group 24: Tennessee State Court Records collection. And we got these new records for free. It's always wonderful to get something free. In total, if we had had to pay for the files, it would have cost us \$720.50! We plan to continue this as an on-going collection project as the TSLA uploads new case files.

Recovery of County Records

Our replevin efforts to recover county records that have for whatever reason left county custody continues. The following records were returned:

- On September 13th, 2023, **46** documents were returned by the Tennessee State Library and Archives. These included State of Franklin documents and John Sevier documents from his time as County Clerk of Washington County.
- On May 21st, 2024, Donna Briggs and Britney Helton traveled to Special Collections at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and recovered **42** Washington County documents found in various collections. The documents spanned the period 1778-1848 and included bonds, slave documents, writs, testimony, indentures, and other legal documents.
- On June 7th, 2024, Dr. William Kennedy donated a 1780 court document in the case Robert Sevier vs. Thomas Morrison. The document contains a rare signature of Jesse Walton, founder of Jonesborough.

Please note that all these wandering documents have been returned to their appropriate location in the records of Washington County.



Donna Briggs (left) receives county documents returned by Jennifer Beals of Special Collections, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, May 21st, 2024.

Processing Projects

A significant milestone was reached on October 18th, 2023. With the completion of the processing of Circuit Court Clerk Administrative Records, the processing of all the records in the archive building, except for a few small record groups, was done. This is a remarkable feat accomplished in about six-years-time. The first records moved into building on July 12th, 2016, with the first processing project (loose wills) beginning on January 24th, 2017.

Henceforth, we have begun to focus on processing records housed in the Archive Annex. Since there are two floors of such records, much work for many years lies ahead. A new long-term project began in the fall of 2023 with the processing started on the Chancery Court case files housed in the Archive Annex. It will occupy staff and volunteers in the coming years. By June 2024, Chancery Court case files from 1836-1919 had been processed. Case descriptions had been completed for files from 1836-1899. Volunteers had begun processing of case files of the 1920s.

Other processing projects included the following:

- In October 2023, we began re-sorting processed Chancery Court case files (266 boxes) in the archives building from alphabetical order to chronological order by decade and then by year, so that ultimately it is done like the case files in other courts. One thing archivists do, as an aid to researchers, is enhancement of the records. In the case of these Chancery Court case files, we used the opportunity of the files being reorganized to study the case and determine what the case was about and to put this in the note field of the collection guide. Thus, if a researcher is studying a particular topic, such as the Civil War, they can determine through a keyword search of the guide any cases that involve that subject and that might help them in their research.
- On May 29th, 2024, Britney Helton, Archive Associate, completed the project of typing all the marriages (through 1980) into a database and putting the massive completed marriage index online. She started the project on May 16th, 2023, so it took one year! Researchers now have access online to 107,725 marriages from 1778-1980. The URL to the site is: www.wctnarchives.org. Britney is to be commended for accomplishing this exacting task.
- Records in the following record groups were processed during the year by staff and volunteers: Circuit Court Clerk Records (RG3); Clerk and Master Records (RG4); County Clerk Records (RG5).

Scanning and Transcription Projects

A long-term goal of the department is to make as many of our records available digitally as possible. Many pre-1800 documents have already been scanned and can be found under “Digital Collections” on our website. The following are projects undertaken this year:

- On August 1st, 2023, a new project was begun with the help of Peggy Doughtery, a volunteer working remotely from her home in California, in which written transcriptions are being made of the county’s early tax lists. Digital copies of the original tax lists have been available for some time on our website, but the old handwriting can be difficult for researchers to decipher. We hope this project will help them find an ancestor and learn more of their family history.
- On January 3rd, 2024, Archive Associate Britney Helton finished uploading 50 historic postcards of Washington County scenes taken from the TSLA digital collections, along with postcards held by the department in the “Postcard Collection”.
- On February 14th, 2024, Archive Associate Britney Helton began scanning and digitizing Deed Book A (the county and Tennessee’s first book of land records). When completed, the volume will be viewable on our website. To assist with the project, we acquired Photoshop Elements software in February 2024. Earlier, volunteer Carolyn Andrews created an index to this volume that is viewable on our website.
- Kristina McInturff, a Johnson City teacher and Ph.D. candidate at Liberty University, as part of her coursework, provided written transcriptions of several Watauga Association Era documents held by the archives. These completed transcriptions were posted on the archive website alongside the digital version of the documents for the use of researchers. We thank her for her contribution to the department and hope to work with her more in the future.

Artifact Collection

Artifacts are distinct from paper-based documents, having three-dimensions. We do not actively seek artifacts, but sometimes they are found in the county records. The collection currently consists of nine items and includes such pieces as a Boone Tree gavel, souvenir courthouse plates, embossing stamps, and a jury selection box. A guide to this collection is found on the archive’s website. The following items were added this year:

- Autograph book of Luda Couch Hale (circa 1882), a Washington County resident. The book was passed down through the family, ending with descendant, Donna P. Saltarelli, Palm Desert, California, who donated it to our collection on December 14th, 2023.



- A hundred-year-old dead fly found in a 1923 Chancery Court case file! This surely proves we don't throw anything away in the archives.

Book Collection

This is a reference collection focused on Washington County and local history and genealogy. Most of the books in the collection have been donated or purchased for the department by the Friends of the Washington County Archives (FOA). The final book count was **1,209**, an increase of 201 books from last year.

The following individuals donated books or journals to the department this year: James Arrowood; Donna Cox Briggs; State Senator Rusty Crowe; Friends of the Washington County Archives; Richard Griffith, Jonesborough-Washington County Library; Margaret Hougland; Betty Jane Hylton; Dr. William Kennedy; Munsey Preschool; Carol Salinas; Mary Lee Smith and Sherry Whitson; and Cheryl Story, County Clerk. We thank them for their donations.

Manuscripts Collection

The Manuscripts Collection comprises collections of personal and family papers donated by private individuals to the department rather than records generated by county offices. Processing was completed on the George L. Carter Collection (Mss. Acc. 12). The following items were added this year:

- An 1883 postcard of Reverend J. M. Hilbert was donated by Dr. James T. Dykes, Johnson City, Tenn., on November 8th, 2023 and added to Accession 16: Postcard Collection.
- A vertical file of material on Jonesboro and Jonesboro High School was donated by Maria Hale, assistant librarian at Science Hill High School, Johnson City, Tenn., on March 12th, 2024 and added to the Jonesboro High School file in Record Group 5.D: Education Records and the “Jonesborough” vertical reference file maintained in the archive office.

Map Collection

The Map Collection now contains **604** maps either in paper or digital format. Zachary Harris, on behalf of the Johnson City Public Library, donated the 1986 Washington County Cemetery Location map that was created as part of the Tennessee Homecoming '86 celebration. For a complete listing, see the collection guide on the archive's website.

Microfilm Collection

The Microfilm Collections consists of **44** reels of microfilm. No new microfilm was added during the year. The film contains microfilmed copies of historical county records such as Deed Book A (“Watauga Purchase Book”), other deed books, land grants, tax books, early county newspapers, etc. For a complete listing, see the collection guide on the archive's website.

Photograph Collection

No photographs were donated to the department during the year. There are currently **111** images in this collection. This does not include many photographs taken by archive staff and posted on the website. Most photographs, along with a guide, are viewable on the archive's website.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In July 2023, we began organizing and sorting Clerk and Master records housed in Archive Annex Vault B. Now that most of the records in archives building are processed, we are beginning to shift focus to the records in the Annex. Determining and separating non-permanent records from permanent, we will be able to identify to Sarah Lawson, Clerk and Master, records that she can dispose of based on the CTAS retention schedules. This will free up valuable records storage space. In the sorting process, we discovered Johnson

City Law Court and Circuit Court files mixed in some of the Chancery Court boxes and moved these to their proper location.

In September 2023, we met with Scott Chapman of Zoning Department and advised on records retention for their older records in storage.

In February 2024, the Circuit Court Clerk's office shredded 185 boxes of non-permanent records that had reached the end of their retention period. This freed shelving space, which was soon filled by 175 additional boxes from the clerk's office at the Justice Center.

In March 2024, we began a major new inventory project of all records in the various county offices. This updates a similar inventory that was conducted in 2012. By June 2024, we had completed inventories for the following offices: County Clerk, Register of Deeds, Trustee, and Clerk and Master. Other offices will be inventoried in the first part of fiscal year 2024-2025. One reason for the inventory is to help determine the possible need for establishment of an additional county records center.

REFERENCE AND PUBLIC SERVICE



For the second year, English researcher Robert Wells spent a productive day in the Reading Room with the staff, April 8th, 2024.

Reference Service

After the preservation of county records, our most important job is making these records available to researchers through our reference service. We noticed a considerable increase in inquiries this year over last. This year there were a total of 1,855 research inquiries, 468 more than the 1,387 of 2022-2023. We believe an increased awareness of our website and a push to increase public awareness in general about the department explains some of this **34% increase**, a rather remarkable amount of growth year-over-year. Inquiries came from 36 different states and 5 foreign countries, compared to 29 states and 1 foreign country the previous year.

Now that we have accomplished so much in processing and conserving the county's historic records over the last several years, we began a new emphasis on outreach and making a greater effort to let people, especially in the community and visitors to Jonesborough, know about the archives and its' treasures. Signage about the department and its' resources have been placed in several locations, including the courthouse, Jonesborough Visitors Center, International Storytelling Center, the Chester Inn Museum, and the Johnson City Public Library. Staff is also actively making presentations to various groups to encourage visits to the archives. This so far has included meetings with the Jonesborough tourism and visitors center staff, and the staff of the Jonesborough and Johnson City public libraries. More presentations will be made in the coming year. Deputy County Archivist Donna Briggs and Archive Associate Britney Helton are to be commended for spearheading these on-going public relation efforts.

Inquiries came either in-person or via mail, email, and telephone from the following locales: Tennessee, Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia, as well as from Canada, England, Germany, Greece, and South Africa.

There were 606 in-person visitors to the department's Reading Room. Last year it was 583. So, there was a slight increase this year. Visitors came from 20 states, including Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The greatest number of visitors were, of course, from Tennessee (542). There were also researchers from four other countries: Canada, England, Germany, and South Africa!

Included in these statistics were 337 inquiries related to individuals needing copies of their marriage licenses, an increase of 61 over the 252 of last year. At \$5 per duplicate certificate (which is what the County Clerk charges) this equals \$1,685 in revenue for the department had we been able to collect it instead.

Public Service

During the year, the county archivist and staff provided archival consultation and advice to several individuals and organizations, primarily from those seeking to develop archival programs in their own Tennessee counties or to improve existing archives, as well as making public presentations (82 attendees) about the department and county records. This included the following:

- July 28th, 2023- Consulted in Elizabethton with Carter County Historian Lisa Germain, county commissioners, and masonic leadership about using the Masonic Lodge as the Carter County Archives building. The building has since been purchased for this purpose.
- September 5th, 2023- Ned Irwin and Donna Briggs gave a presentation on the “Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project” to the Watauga Association of Genealogists at the Johnson City Public Library. (14 attendees)
- January 18th, 2024- Gave presentation to the Johnson City Chamber of Commerce Leadership 2024 class (24 attendees)
- February 28th, 2024- ETSU Historical Research Methods class of Dr. Constanze Weise held class and did research in the archives. (13 attendees)
- February-March 2024- Assisted Joshua Arrowood on his Ph.D. dissertation on the State of Franklin.
- May 3rd, 2024- Loudon County Historian Darrell Tuck toured department and consulted on starting a county archive, as Loudon County, Tennessee is in the planning stages for establishing an archive.
- May 31st, 2024- Donna Briggs and Britney Helton met with staff at the Jonesborough Visitors Center to make them aware of the resources we have for visitors and to encourage staff to direct interested individuals to the archives. (8 attendees)
- June 27th, 2024- Donna Briggs met with staff of Johnson City Public Library about the archives. (9 attendees)
- June 28th, 2024- Donna Briggs met with staff at International Storytelling Center about the archives. (11 attendees)

Displays

Two displays were installed in the Reading Room during the year. The first one pinpointed on a county map various historic structures and locations in Washington County. The idea was to encourage visitors to seek out these sites. It was replaced by a second display using postcards held by the department that show various buildings and locations in Washington County. In addition, the department maintains two display cases

in the main lobby of the historic courthouse document. Presently, these document the history of the various courthouses that have stood on the site.

Website and Social Media

The department's website (www.wctnarchives.org) provides the key entry point to the archives for researchers. Here they can find contact, location, and other visitor information; guides to records; digital collections; archive news; and much more. The department also uses social media postings such as on Facebook to reach the public. Statistics reveal that the website continues to grow its' audience. There were **11,507** website visitors, compared to 9,138 the previous year. They viewed various website pages and documents a total of **78,163** times, compared to 82,027 views in 2022-2023.

Visitors to the website were located in **54** countries, compared to 38 countries last year. The following countries were represented: Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Guatemala, Hong Kong SAR China, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar (Burma), Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, and Vietnam. This was a considerable increase.

Regarding social media, there were **57** postings to the Friends of the Archives Facebook page, just three fewer than last year. This included items of department news and interesting archival "finds" made throughout the year. The most popular posting was one of November 14th, 2023 describing the discovery of a court document signed by Andrew Jackson. A total of **66,178** individuals saw these posts.

The Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project

Deputy County Archivist Donna Briggs and volunteer Gordon Edwards continued their wonderful work on identifying the location of properties held by early landowners in Washington County and upper East Tennessee. The project shows where our early pioneers lived in relation to present-day locations. This project illustrates some of the creative ways in which our county's records can be used to document its' history and its' people. Several new pioneers were studied and documented, including David Hughes, John Chisholm, Christopher Choate, Christopher Taylor, Colonel John Tipton, John Sevier, and Isaac Bacon. Since the project began in the fall of 2022, twenty-two individuals have been featured as part of this on-going project. Donna and Gordon are to be thanked for all their hard work, which is proving a real boon to researchers.

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

Staff



Ned Irwin, Donna Briggs, and Britney Helton holding the hand-hooked table runner created by Donna for the archives Reading Room, July 9th, 2024.

The department has three full-time employees: Ned Irwin, County Archivist and Records Manager; Donna Cox Briggs, Deputy County Archivist; and Britney Helton, Archives Associate.

Ned Irwin contributed articles to the *Bulletin* of the Watauga Association of Genealogists (WAGS) and the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. Donna Briggs also contributed articles to the WAGS *Bulletin*.

Staff development is a continuing process in the department. This year saw Archive Associate Britney Helton attend in April 2024 the second of the three-year Tennessee Archives Institute diploma program. Conducted in Nashville by the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA), it draws participants from across the state who work in the archival field professionally. Britney wrote about this years' experience in an article that can be found on the department website.

Volunteers

Twelve people volunteered their time and service to the archives during the year. They contributed **1,317.5** hours to the archives this year. This compares with 1,820.5 hours in fiscal year 2022-2023. The volunteer effort was the equivalent of the department having another full-time employee for two-thirds of the year (at no cost).

Two new volunteers joined us in 2023: Maria Corwin and Peggy Dougherty. Peggy, a long-time archive supporter, does her volunteering at long-distance. She lives in Southern California and works from home on an on-going project to transcribe the county's early tax lists that have been scanned and are found on our website. As they are completed, these transcripts are also posted on the website.

We thank them for all their hard work and dedication: Mike Briggs, Maria Corwin, Peggy Dougherty, Gordon Edwards, Janette Guinn, Shirley Hinds, Betty Jane Hylton, Gary Irwin, Jeff Jernigan, Nina Langley, Kristina McInturff, and Terry Millhorn. Most of these individuals have been working with us for a number of years. Most of the volunteers have been featured in articles under the "Volunteer Spotlight", which can be found on the website.



Volunteer Shirley Hinds with her niece Selah Rose Johns, October 23rd, 2023. Selah says she hopes to work in the archives one day. Her sister Karis took the photograph.

PUBLIC RECORDS COMMISSION

The Public Records Commission (PRC) is mandated by state law and serves as an advisory board to the county archivist and archives department. The following are members of the commission: County Commissioner Lewis Wexler, Chairman; County Historian Judge John Kiener, Vice-Chairman; County Archivist Ned Irwin, Secretary; Register of Deeds Teresa Bowman, Gene Hurdt, Dr. William Kennedy, Chancellor John Rambo, and County Clerk Cheryl Storey.

A meeting was held on August 15th, 2023, at which Ned Irwin reviewed the 2022-2023 department year through the annual report and approval was given to adopt revisions to three documents related to research use and fees by the archives department.

FRIENDS OF THE ARCHIVES

The Friends of the Washington County Archives (FOA) continue to be an important source of support for the department. The group funded the department's server cost for its' website and its' annual subscription to Newspapers.com, an invaluable reference source used frequently by staff. In addition, the FOA purchased several books that were added to the department's Book Collection totaling \$314.81.

THE YEAR AHEAD

- In seeking to address the long-term storage needs of the records of the county, an inventory of the records held in the various county offices was conducted this year. Now, we need to plan for where these records and others created in the future will be housed. The possibility of a records storage center for the county as an adjunct to the current county archives storage facilities will need to be examined.
- In January 2025, I will retire as the County Archivist and Records Manager. I have been preparing for this change in department leadership through on-going training and development of Donna Briggs as my deputy and Britney Helton as Archive Associate. They are, I believe, now fully capable of managing the department after me.



County Archivist Ned Irwin in the early days of establishing the Washington County Archives. This shelving in the courthouse parking lot was being installed in the Archive Annex.