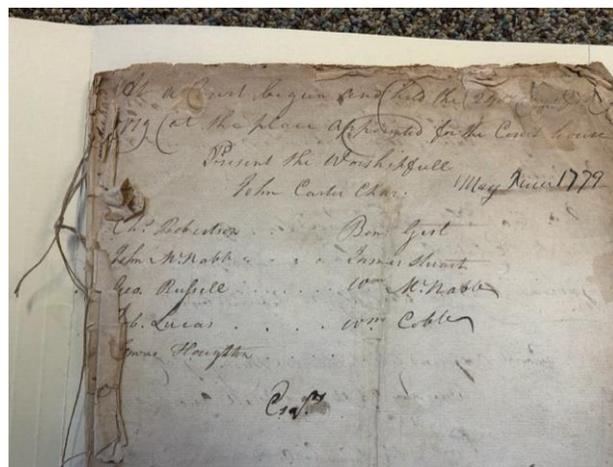




THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Had someone told me that I would become a collector of paperclips, I would have said that there was no way. But here I am today, writing an article about my paperclip collection!

This strangest of collections began in 2017 when we here at the archives began to earnestly process the earliest court records of Washington County. With this being the oldest county in the state, we had records dating back into the 1770's. There were court cases in which several small pieces of paper were folded up together into small rectangles. These were simple—just unfold, flatten, and file. Other records were tied with bits of string or even sewn together as seen on the 1779 County Court minute book shown below.



We began to find straight pins pushed through two or more documents to hold them together. Using a magnifying glass, we looked at these straight pins and realized that the pins were likely from the same time period as the documents. It seemed a shame to lose this tiny bit of history, so I began tossing them into my desk drawer, many with a date scribbled on scrap paper and attached.



When the collection grew too large for the tray in the drawer, it was moved into a gallon-size plastic bag and it stayed in the bottom desk drawer for several years. I once mentioned on Facebook that I had a paperclip collection and was really surprised at the number of people who wanted to see it. With a little encouragement from the County Archivist, our Archives Assistant and I undertook the task of sorting the dated items and mounting the items on cardstock. Only dated items were used, and only a few of each type pin or clip.

It was surprising to note that we only had straight pins until the 1860's when manufactured clips began to appear on county documents. We still occasionally saw a straight pin or two, but not the hand-made variety. Straight pins were used more predominately during the 1880's and 1890's. Beyond straight pins, there were not many other types of fasteners. These new straight pins were manufactured, not hand-made.

My favorite items were the tiny straight pins that were found from the 1920's up through the 1950's.



At the beginning of the 1900's, there were many different types of manufactured clips, brads and fasteners. Safety pins were used and we found copper and brass paperclips.



Along the way, we have found a lot of odd items in the files, including gum, empty gum packets, a bullet, coins, a peanut shell and flower seeds. Volunteers and staff still bring me odd paperclips occasionally, and I still enjoy seeing the different types. One just never knows what they will find next!



Donna Cox Briggs,
Deputy County Archivist, Washington County, Tennessee
Jan 20, 2023

McAllister School 3rd District, Washington County, Tennessee

On January 25, 2023, the Herald and Tribune posted an article about how Washington County had discovered that the county owned a “mystery piece of property.” They asked the readers of the H & T to let them know if they had any history of the property or knew anything about it.

It was a small tract of land, only 1.2 acres in Limestone, described as being on State Route 34. A drawing of the tax map showing the parcel was also included in the article. Apparently, that was all it took to catch the attention of our archives' volunteers. Early Friday morning, our local deed expert came into the office and said he knew where that property was located and he had run the deeds on it some time ago. Before he had breakfast or even coffee, he had gone to the school board office to let them know he could help solve their mystery!

So, what was this small parcel of land used for? The McAllister School. The school has long since disappeared and only one photograph has been found, a framed, undated photo at the Washington County School Board.

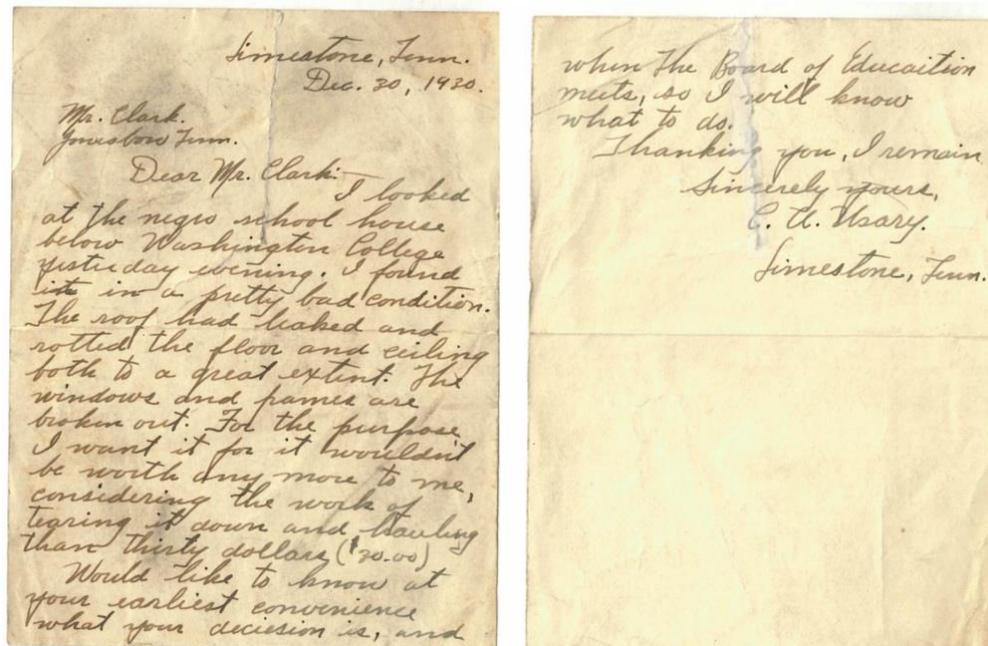


In 1886, the property was owned by S. K. and Jane McAllister. On November 8, 1886, they sold 130 acres to Emma Miller for five thousand dollars. Two sentences in the December 1886 Herald & Tribune reads, “Samuel McAllister left last week for his farm near Dalton Ga. Sam takes with him the best wishes of all who knew him.” Samuel and his family left east Tennessee and moved to Georgia. He died there less than three years later.

Emma Miller deeded a piece of the property (4 7/8 acres) in October 1892 to Samuel Easley, John Bolton and R. D. Beard, School Commissioners of the 3rd Civil District of Washington County. The deed reads, “...for the purpose of building a school building upon in which to [?] a school for the benefit of the colored people of said Civil District No. 3 and further said school house shall be open at all times for the purposes: holding elections for the various purpose of District County & State & National and

further said Commissioners may at their discretion sell so much of said lot of land as they do not deem necessary to be used for school & election purposes.” The school board did just that—in 1893, over three acres of the property was sold to Thomas Bright. This deed mentions several now disappeared locations, including “Ball Mountain Road,” “Alf Gillispie’s house” and the “Jack Gillispie Cabin.”

Newspaper articles through the years indicated that the school was used for many purposes, including a reunion, and was the meeting place of the organization of a strong “Republican Club.” In February 1920, the Herald and Tribune ran a notice that indicated that the property would be sold on March 20, 1920, “in front of the courthouse in Jonesboro.” After this, there were no more newspaper articles found. Apparently, the property was not sold, as the letter below was also found in our educational files concerning the McAllister School.



Limestone, Tennessee
Dec. 30, 1930.
Mr. Clark.
Jonesboro Tenn.

Dear Mr. Clark:
I looked at the negro school house below Washington College yesterday evening. I found it in a pretty bad condition. The roof had leaked and rotted the floor and ceiling both to a great extent. The windows and frames are broken out. For the purpose I want it for it wouldn't be worth any more to me, considering the work of tearing it down and hauling than thirty dollars (\$30.00)
Would like to know at your earliest convenience what your decision is, and when the Board of Education meets, so I will know what to do.

Thanking you, I remain
Sincerely yours,

C. A. Usary,
Limestone, Tenn.

Another of our volunteers had recently had the pleasure of processing a box of educational records and remembered mention of the McAllister School. She wrote to the Herald & Tribune letting them know that she believed the property had been the location of this building.

At this point, there is no other mention of the property or school in the deeds, newspapers, or any other files in the archives. Obviously, the county still owned the property in 1930 and over the years it was simply forgotten—until 2023!

Donna Cox Briggs,
Deputy County Archivist, Washington County, Tennessee
January 31, 2023