

WASHINGTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



“Hidden Treasure”: The Vault at the Ashe Street Courthouse

Submitted by
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WASHINGTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES
ANNUAL REPORT, 2022-2023

By the Numbers

The following is the county archive year (July 1st, 2022~June 30th, 2023) by the numbers:

- 281,108 = dollars appropriated in the department budget (See page 2.)
- 272,811 = revenue dollars raised by the archive filing fee (See page 2.)
- 195,966 = individuals viewing Facebook posts. (See page 17.)
- 12,280 = linear feet of records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 9,138 = website visitors. (See page 16.)
- 5,691 = boxes of county records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 3,913 = volumes of county records housed in the archives. (See page 5.)
- 1,820.5 = number of hours contributed by others to the archives. (See page 19.)
- 1,387 = number of reference inquiries handled. (See page 13.)
- 1,101 = volumes in Book Collection. (See page 10.)
- 603 = maps housed in the archives. (See page 11.)
- 252 = number of marriage license reference inquiries. (See page 13.)
- 44 = reels of microfilm housed in the archives. (See page 12.)
- 40 = number in attendance at public presentations. (See page 14.)
- 29 = number of states and District of Columbia from which reference inquiries were received: Tennessee, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington. (See page 13.)
- 11 = number of media items about the archives.
- 10 = number of volunteers. (See page 19.)
- 1 = number of foreign countries from which research inquiries were received. (England)

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Some years end, and one does not realize until they begin compiling a report like this just exactly what an eventful year just passed. That's the way with it is with this year as I complete this annual report. Major multi-year processing projects were completed. An important replacement was installed for the archive building to improve climate control for both staff and records. Historic and unknown county records were uncovered and recovered. Reference service saw continued increases. And a major new initiative to aid researchers was began with the development of the "Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee" project. Plus, a whole lot more that is described in the pages that follow.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The departmental budget for 2022-2023 was \$281,108. This sum included an \$8,450 one-time addition to the budget to cover the cost of a new chiller unit for the archive building. Less this supplemental funding, the budget was an increase over the previous year's budget of \$25,879. A substantial part of this increase was inflationary salary increases for the first time since department staffing began in 2012.

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. Total revenue from the filing fee for the year was \$272,811. This compares with a revenue total of \$265,151.05 for 2021-2022.

Any surplus revenue goes into a dedicated archive reserve fund. We began the year on July 1, 2021 with a balance in the archive reserve fund of \$126,860.46. As of June 30, 2023, the reserve fund totaled \$127,867.60, an increase of almost exactly a thousand dollars.

BUILDING MANAGEMENT

The major building initiative for the year was improving the archive building's air system. This is important as climate-controlled space is vital to the long-term preservation of the historic county records housed in the building. All of this work was done by S. B. White of Johnson City. A new compressor on the archive building was installed in the summer of 2022 at a cost of \$8,450. This involved using a Burleson Construction crane to remove the old compressor from the roof and to place the new one there.

For several seasons, we were having to have Freon added to the chiller during air conditioning season. This meant we had a leak somewhere. A leak test was conducted on the system on July 20th, 2002, which determined that the end seals on the unit in 2nd floor

mechanical room were leaking and needed replacement. This was done on July 18th at a cost of \$635. On August 3rd, new gaskets were put on the chiller unit in the in 2nd floor mechanical room and the chiller bundle was recharged at a cost of \$1,906.20.

On October 18th, 2022, the Town of Jonesborough installed a new water meter to the archives building as part of their water meter replacement project.



On January 3rd, 2023, Ricky Poore, maintenance director, replaced five water-stained ceiling tiles in the Reading Room that had been damaged since 2017. (See tile stains in upper photo.) Also, in January, he installed a new shelving unit for office supplies in the back hallway of the first floor. This freed up storage space for records in the archive's main storage area.

On March 1st, 2023, the department's janitorial services were changed, along with that to several other county buildings separate from the courthouse. We were required to pay for this service, which the county contracted through Cooks Commercial Services. This involved the archives building; Agricultural Extension office building; and the satellite offices of the County Clerk and County Trustee in Marketplace Center in Johnson City. The courthouse offices continued to have their work done at no cost to the departments. No monies were provided by the county for this, so the money had to be found in existing departmental revenue. This was an increase in unanticipated costs of \$5,030 per year. The buildings first cleaning under this plan was on Tuesday, March 7th, 2023.

During March and April 2023, archive staff cleaned and straightened up the Archive Annex, the first major clean up since that of 2018, which followed the end of the renovation project. Donna Briggs and Britney Helton are to be commended for this hard work.

To maintain the archive building, several companies are used to routinely perform specific tasks. This includes Barnes Exterminating for pest control, which is done on a quarterly basis; Fleenor Security for 24-hour a day security and fire alarm monitoring; and Premier Fire Protection for inspecting and maintaining the building's Inergen fire suppression system.

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:

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. Archives 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.

In processed court case files alone, we have an amazing number (nearly 75,000). This does not include case files not yet processed. The following is the total number of court cases listed by the court with the time span of the cases:

- Circuit Court (24,185 cases), 1808-1969
- Johnson City Law Court (18,306 cases), 1891-1984
- Chancery Court (4,744 cases), 1836-1942
- County Court Judicial (26,632 cases), 1778-1963

- Court of Oyer and Terminer (18 cases), 1782-1784
- Superior Court of Law and Equity (501 cases), 1784-1819
- Tennessee State Courts (182 cases), 1808-1950

Other major record holdings include:

- Marriage licenses (18,137), 1778-1950
- Wills (7,552), 1773-1992
- Estate files (9,697), 1778-2000

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:

- Total shelves = 4,598 (13,794 linear feet)
- Shelves used = 3,633 (10,899 linear feet)
- Shelves unused = 965 (2,895 linear feet)
- Boxes = 5,691
- Volumes = 3,913
- Filing Cabinets = 54
- Linear feet of records stored = 12,280 (equivalent to the length of 41 football fields!)]

Additions To County Records

The most significant and surprising addition of county records were those recovered in August 2022 from the old Ashe Street Courthouse building in Johnson City. During demolition and renovation work of the building, Burwell Construction Company employees found a vault hidden behind a wall they had torn out. (See the photograph on the report front cover.) In that vault were 113 Johnson City Law Court volumes from 1891-1963. These records were retrieved by department staff from the office of project architectural firm Clarknexsen in Johnson City. A huge gap in the documentation of that court for that time period was filled with this discovery. Though we knew the records were missing, we had until then assumed they were lost.

In addition to the Ashe Street records, various records were transferred from county offices to the archives during the year, as follows:

- August 3rd, 2022: Three boxes of Chancery Court case files were found in what was thought to be an empty filing cabinet in Annex Vault D and were added to the existing collection.

- August 9th, 2022: “Notice to Trustee” volume was transferred from County Clerk’s office and added to Record Group 5.
- August 15th, 2022: Sarah Lawson, Clerk and Master, transferred additional boxes of financial records to their space in Archive Annex Vault B.
- September 2nd, 2022: Richard Griffith, Washington County-Jonesborough Library director, transferred one box library administrative files (2018-2019).
- January 12th, 2023: Volumes 19-22 of Marriage License Record books (October 1990-October 2001) were transferred from County Clerk’s office. This now takes us up to the point when they can look records up on their computer database.
- March 21st and March 23rd, 2023: Transferred 12 record center boxes of loose marriage licenses (1951-1975) from County Clerk’s basement storage room. We now have in the Archives loose marriage licenses and marriage bonds from 1778-1975.

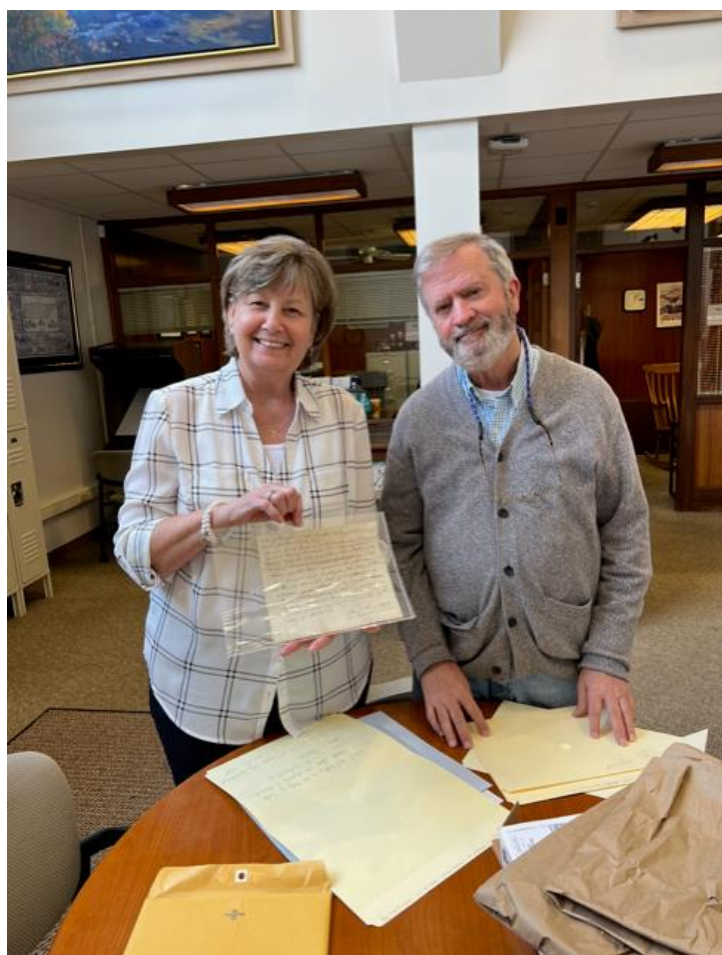
Recovery of County Records

Following the return of Deed Book A in June 2021 by Governor Bill Lee, we thought we had reached the point where no more county records could be identified outside the custody of the county. Then by a sudden fluke, in the winter of 2020-2023, we discovered that, in fact, several records were still to be recovered. We identified county documents in repositories at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina; at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville’s Special Collections Department; and at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville. Working with County Attorney Allyson Wilkinson, we began the process to replevin these county records.

In April 2023, Deputy County Archivist Donna Cox Briggs traveled to Nashville to search for any additional Washington County records that might be housed at the Tennessee State Library and Archives. She found several. We are in the process now of having these records returned to Jonesborough. This should happen later in the summer of 2023. There will be more about this in next year’s annual report. Note: As I was preparing this annual report (but after the end of the fiscal year), I was notified by State Librarian and Archivist James Ritter that the TSLA will be returning the requested Washington County documents later this summer.

Also, in April 2023, five documents were returned to us from Wofford College. We thank them for their cooperation in this effort. We continue to work on recovering the records from Knoxville and Nashville and expect their return later in 2023.

On May 24th, 2023, we recovered eight Washington County documents from the Archives of Appalachia at ETSU found in the Mary Hardin McCown Collection. We again thank that department and its’ director Dr. Jeremy Smith for the cooperation shown in this replevin effort.



Records returned from Wofford College, April 5th, 2023

Processing Projects

Much of our time, and certainly all the time of the volunteers, is spent on processing county records—organizing, conserving, and properly storing them, so that these historic records can be used by researchers both locally and from all over the world. Several projects were on-going during the year. And several long-term projects were completed.

On April 26th, 2023, volunteer Nina Langley completed a long-term project of typing the guide for County Court Judicial case files, 1778-1963 and undated. This project was begun on January 31st, 2022 by the late Georgia Greer. These cases, handled by Justices of the Peace when they had a judicial function, totaled **26,634** court case files (333 boxes and 168 linear feet of shelf space). The updated guide was posted to the website on May 30th, 2023.

Volunteer Kim Livaditis began typing a box and folder list for the guide to Estate Records. This project was completed with the assistance of Britney Helton in March 2023. This series consists of 519 boxes (261 linear feet of shelving space).

An eight-month project involving five volunteers to process Guardianship Records was completed on October 10th, 2022. The volunteers were Janette Guinn, Shirley Hinds, Betty Jane Hylton, Kim Livaditis, and Terry Millhorn. This series consists of 272 boxes (137 linear feet of shelving space.)

On November 16th, 2022, Britney completed the processing and re-boxing of Johnson City Law Court case file records covering the period 1891-1979 (806 boxes; 408 linear feet of shelving). The project took four years, beginning in 2018, and involved most every volunteer at one time or another.

In March-April 2023, Britney processed loose marriage licenses for the period 1951-1975. We now have marriage licenses from 1781 to 1975. (38.5 linear feet). A major effort on her part also involved entering the data from 10 large marriage license index books compiled by the Mormons in 1998, so that these indices are now available to researchers on our webpage.

Volunteer Betty Jane Hylton finished processing Inheritance Tax Records on June 22nd, 2023.



Volunteer Terry Millhorn processing records.

A major effort during the year was processing of various sub-series of loose records in the County Clerk's records (Record Group 5). Staff and volunteers completed several of these sub-series, including Deputy Clerk Reports, 1910-1970 (RG5.A.1); Appropriations, 1870-1958 and undated (RG5.A.4.b); Attachments, 1794-1854 (RG5.A.4.c); Contracts, 1924-1959 (RG5.A.4.d); County Officials, 1807-1959 (RG5.A.4.e); Reports, 1820-1985 (RG5.A.4.f); Beverage Bonds, 1899-1953 (RG5.B.1); Constable Bonds and Oaths, 1900-1978 (RG5.B.2); Emancipation Bonds, 1802-1841 (RG5.B.3); Magistrate's Bonds and Oaths, 1838-1948 (RG5.B.4); Merchant's Bonds and Oaths, 1797-1893 (RG5.B.5); Notary Bonds and Appointments (RG5.B.6); Officials' Bonds, Oaths, and Commissions, 1779-

1961 and undated (RG5.B.7); Real Estate Bonds, 1979-1983 (RG5.B.8); Tippler's Bonds and Oaths (RG5.B.9); Miscellaneous Bonds (RG5.B.10); County Court Minutes (loose records), 1875-1979 and undated (RG5.C.2); Releases and Transfers, 1880-1959 and undated (RG5.C.3); County Court Judicial Bonds, 1780-1891 and undated (RG5.F.2); Inquests, 1792-1955 and undated (RG5.F.5); Miscellaneous Court Records, 1784-1962 and undated (RG5.F.6); Licenses (RG5.G); Motor Vehicle Records, 1947-1959 (RG5.I); Vital Records (loose records) (RG5.M.2); Acts of Tennessee related to Washington County, 1872-1939 and undated (RG5.O.1); Airport Records, 1934-1960 and undated (RG5.O.2); Agriculture Extension and Other Agricultural-related Records (RG5.O.3); Articles of Agreements, 1778-1964 (RG5.O.4); Attorney General and other legal opinions, 1923-1933 (RG5.O.5); Bills of Sale (RG5.O.6); Bounty scalps, 1860-1889 and undated (RG5.O.7); Census, 1800-1890 (RG5.O.8); Charter (incorporation) Records, 1881-1953 (RG5.O.9); Civil War Claims (civilian), 1865-1868 (RG5.O.10); Civil Works Administration, 1933-1934 (RG5.O.11); Correspondence, 1805-1958 and undated (RG5.O.12); County Boundaries, 1836-1927 and undated (RG5.O.13); County Physician, Health, and Medical Records 1860-1960 and undated (RG5.O.14); County Property, 1878-1994 and undated (RG5.O.15); Courthouse Management Records, 1795-1956 and undated (RG5.O.16); Estrays (stray animals), 1791-1881 and undated (RG5.O.19); Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Washington County Records, 1898-1936 and undated (RG5.O.20); Indentures and apprenticeships, 1787-1887 and undated (RG5.O.21); Jail and Workhouse Records, 1804-1960 and undated (RG5.O.24); Land Records, 1784-1942 and undated (RG5.O.25); Library Records, 1942-1960 (RG5.O.26); Maps, 1954 and undated (RG5.O.27); Military Records, 1798-1934 and undated (RG5.O.28); Petitions, 1806-1957 and undated (RG5.O.30); Power of Attorney Records, 1783-1931 and undated (RG5.O.31); Promissory Notes and Receipts, 1780-1949 and undated (RG5.O.32); Stock and Bond Certificates, 1828-1911 (RG5.O.34); Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission Records, 1956-1977 (RG5.O.35); Town of Jonesborough Records, 1887-1911 (RG5.O.36); Welfare Records, 1832-1953 and undated (RG5.O.37); Works Progress Administration (W. P. A.) Records, 1935 (RG5.O.38); Miscellaneous Records, 1803-c. 1918 (RG5.O.39). Still to be finished are Accounts (RG5.A.4), Processing on Tax Records (loose) (RG5.L), and Road and Bridge Records (RG5.O.33) should be completed later in the summer of 2023.

As we completed the year, we have nearly processed the county records presently stored in the archive building, a rather remarkable feat considering the amount of these records and that the work has been done in a period of five or six years.

Scanning Projects

There were no major scanning projects during the year. State of Franklin era documents were scanned and added to the Digital Collections page of the website as these were found.

Artifact Collection

Artifacts are distinct from paper-based documents, having three-dimensions. The collection currently consists of eight items and include such pieces as a Boone Tree gavel, souvenir courthouse plate, embossing stamps, and a jury selection box. No new artifacts were added during the year. A guide to this collection is found on the archive's website.

Book Collection

We went over the 1,000-volume total this year in the Book Collection. The final book count was **1,101**. 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 following individuals donating books or journals to the department this year: Kathy Storey, County Clerk; Betty Jane Hylton, Bekki Cox, and the FOA.



In October 2022, the children of late Lucy Gump (Mary Gump Fly, Louis Gump, and Warren Gump) donated books from her personal collection. The Gump family also donated a digital copy of Lucy's "Watauga settlement" research data files and donated money to the FOA for the archives to purchase the DeedMapper software needed to run the data files. We thank them very much for their generosity. Lucy Gump was an early proponent and strong support of the Washington County Archives.

County Archivist Ned Irwin and Louis Gump, Lucy Gump's son outside her home at the time of the donation of her collection on October 6th, 2022.

Archives Associate Britney Helton generated the idea of using Libib (a cloud bibliography/cataloging site) to catalog the book collection. Libib is an application that we will use to allow patrons to view our Book Collection. The app will be added to our website where patrons can access it. It will provide completed information on the books as

well as a photograph of the book cover. Britney finished inputting the books on Wednesday, September 28th, 2022.

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. Four new collections were added during the year:

The Lucy Kennerly Gump Collection (Accession 3), donated by her children on October 6th, 2022, consists of a copy of her DeedMapper data files in researching early land settlements of upper East Tennessee, along with newspaper clippings and correspondence related to her historical and genealogical interests. Lucy's DeedMapper files were the basis for establishing the department's on-going "Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project."

The Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Papers (Accession 26). These records were found among county records transferred from the County Clerk's office. It consists of correspondence, reports, by-laws, and other documents related to this organization.

The Comet Newspaper Collection (Accession 28) was donated by Stephanie McClellan, editor of the *Johnson City Press*, on behalf of the newspaper, on March 8th, 2023. The collection consists of issues of The Comet newspaper, a weekly paper published in Johnson City in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The George L. Carter Collection (Accession 12), donated by Ned Irwin, May 25th, 2023, contains the research files used in writing the biography, *The Last Empire Builder: A Life of George L. Carter, 1857-1936*.

Map Collection

The Map Collection now contains **603** maps either in paper or digital format. On July 18th, 2022, Ned Irwin, County Archivist and Records Manager, donated 105 maps. This included 99 Tennessee Department of Transportation General Highway Maps for each of Tennessee's 95 counties, spanning from 1983-1990, with the majority of maps being dated 1985. Also donated were the following miscellaneous maps: "Index to Topographical Mapping in Tennessee map (January 1989); Jonesborough: "Service Proposal Map Short Range, Long Range (October 1992, 2 copies); Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps for Jonesboro (July 1913, 3 sheets); and Washington County, Tennessee Schools (1986).

On June 1st, 2023, Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park, Elizabethton, Tenn., donated a copy of "The Wataugah Land Purchases" map by Troy R. Keesee.

All these maps were added to the Miscellaneous Maps Collection.

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

An important function of the department is to provide advice and assistance regarding the preservation, storage, and access of county records to the various offices and departments of Washington County government. The following were some of the offices receiving assistance during the year:

- July 21st, 2022: Assisted the Zoning Department with questions regarding records retention for the Code Enforcement Office.
- October 17th-25th, 2022: Assisted Circuit Court Clerk staff with a weeding and shredding project disposing of General Sessions Court records that had passed the retention period. Some 325 record center boxes of documents were shredded. This freed valuable records storage for that office in Archive Annex Vault E.
- June 7th, 2023: Records stored in the Archive Annex for the Election Commission were transferred back to the commission for storage at their newly-renovated building at Princeton School. Fifty-three boxes were returned, freeing 72 linear feet of storage space for other county records.

In addition, the department provides records storage space in the Archive Annex for the following county offices and departments: Assessor of Property, Benefits/Human Resources, Bookkeeping, Circuit Court Clerk, Clerk and Master, County Attorney, County Clerk, County Mayor, Juvenile Services, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, Trustee, Washington County Library, and Zoning. Department staff assisted various offices with the retrieval of records and retrieval of information from stored records throughout the year.

REFERENCE AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Reference Service

A major component of the department's work involves reference and other public service to both county employees and the general public. Statistics were very similar this year when compared to last year. A total of **1,387** reference inquiries were handled. This was just one less than the 2021-2022 figure. Research inquiries came from **29** states and the District of Columbia. The following were represented Tennessee, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. This was one state less than last year. Included in these statistics were **252** inquiries related to individuals needing copies of their marriage licenses, exactly the same number as in 2021-2022. At \$5 per duplicate certificate (which is what the County Clerk charges) this equals \$1,260 in revenue had we been able to collect it instead.

In-person visitors to the department's Reading Room totaled **583**. This was a slight decrease over last year's 613 researchers. As expected, the majority of visitors (540) were Tennessee residents. There were 43 researchers from a total of 16 other states. States represented were Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. We also had one researcher who traveled all the way from London, England!

Finding Guides

To better assist researchers, we began development of what we call "Finding Guides" to various subjects that researchers commonly study in the archives. Archives Associate Britney Helton created the first of these written guides: "Finding African-American History in the Washington County Archives" and "Finding the Civil War in the Washington County Archives." These guides are available on the department's website: www.wctnarchives.com.

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 (**40** attendees) about the department and county records. This included the following:

- August 1st, 2022: Provided archival advice to Boones Creek Historical Trust.
- August 22nd, 2002: Amslee Daniel of WJHL-TV television station interviewed Ned Irwin and Donna Briggs about the recovery of Ashe Street Courthouse records.
- During the year, we consulted on several occasions with Lisa Germaine, Carter County Historian, about issues related to proposed Carter County Archives.
- January 19th, 2023: Hosted Leadership County Services/Tourism Day tour of archives (23 attendees).

On January 25th, 2023, Melodie Daniels and her son Cohen toured the archives as he researched about a career in the archive field. He later wrote a fine article about the visit in the national publication for the Children of the American Revolution magazine.



Examining Deed Book A: Cohen Daniels and County Archivist Ned Irwin



Deputy County Archivist Donna Cox Briggs spoke to the Jonesborough Kiwanis Club about the “Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee” on March 29th, 2023.

- Wednesday, March 29th, 2023:- Dr. Pam C. Miller, president of the Storytelling Resource Place in Jonesborough visited and consulted about how to manage her archives.
- Donna Briggs and Britney Helton created and installed a display titled “Cabinet of Curiosities.” It contained many of the unusual items found while processing county records.

Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project

This project was begun in the fall of 2022 as a public service to researchers and the general community with the intention of documenting the present-day locations of the land holdings of many of the early pioneer settlers of Washington County and surrounding East Tennessee counties. Using resources available in the department, including Deed Book A, the DeedMapper data files of the late Lucy Gump, as well as other deed and county records and other sources, Deputy Archivist Donna Briggs and Gordon Edwards, archive volunteer, had been able to document and depict the early land holdings of such pioneers as William Bean, Jacob Brown, Charles Robertson, Isaac Lincoln, John Crockett, and a host of others. As this is a continuing project of the department, many other early settlers will also be documented in the future. The project was assisted in its’ early stages also by Frank Collins of Jonesborough. And the department thanks him as well

as Donna and Gordon in this very important effort. For more about the project, see the department website: www.wctnarchives.org.



Gordon Edwards, Donna Briggs, and Frank Collins work on the “Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project,” November 15th, 2022.

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 **9,138** website visitors, who made **82,027** views of various pages and documents found on the webpage. Compared to 2021-2022 figures of 7,135 visitors, we saw an increase of almost exactly 2,000 more visitors using our webpage.

Visitors to the website were located in 38 countries, including the following: Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong SAR China, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom,

United States, and Uruguay. This was a drop from the 47 countries recorded in 2021-2022.

There were 60 Facebook social media postings about archives' news items and "finds" made during the year on the Friends of the Archives Facebook page. A total of **195,966** individuals saw these posts, a remarkable increase from the 35,509 viewers in 2021-2022! The most popular post was the one of August 19th, 2022 about the finding of hidden county records at the old Ashe Street Courthouse in Johnson City.

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS



Archive Staff, taken Friday, January 6th, 2023

Staff

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.

Staff development is a continuing process in the department. This year saw Archive Associate Britney Helton begin a three-year effort toward receiving her certified archives status from the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA), as she attended her first Tennessee Archives Institute operated by the TSLA in Nashville. This year's classes were held April 24th and 25th, 2023. Britney is to be commended for trying to always improve her professional competency.



Nashville bound! Donna and Britney make a pit stop on their way for classes and county records, April 2023.





Earlier in the year, we created an office work area for Britney in the Book Collection area outside the vault. Until then, she had been a sort of itinerant employee working in various places in the building.

Publications

Ned Irwin wrote an article for the website titled “The Treasure of the Ashe Street Courthouse” that was reprinted in the *Johnson City Press* newspaper (August 20, 2022) and the *Watauga Association of Genealogists Bulletin* (Fall issue 2022). The article was about the discovery of a large cache of missing court volumes that were found and returned to the archives during demolition and renovation work at the former courthouse building in Johnson City.

Donna Cox Briggs contributed “The Petition of Margaret Lee” to the *Watauga Association of Genealogists Bulletin* (Spring issue 2023).

Volunteers

We depend on an invaluable group of volunteers to help us process and maintain the county’s historic records. Evidence of all they contributed was noted especially under the “Processing” section of this report. The archives could not really function at its’ best without out wonderful volunteers.

The following individuals volunteered during 2022-2023: Frank Collins, Gordon Edwards, Janette Guinn, Shirley Hinds, Betty Jane Hylton, Gary Irwin, Jeff Jernigan, Nina Langley, Kim Livaditis, and Terry Millhorn. These individuals contributed a total of 1,820.5 hours to the department. This is the equivalent of having a full-time employee for nearly an entire year (48 ½ weeks to be exact). **A remarkable figure!**

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. It was a reorganizing year for the records commission following the election of a new Board of County Commissioners in August 2022. The PRC held its organizational meeting on November 3rd, 2022. Lewis Wexler, newly-appointed as the County Commission representative, was elected Chairman. Judge John Kiener was elected Vice-Chairman, and County Archivist Ned Irwin was elected Secretary. Other members of the PRC are Register of Deeds Teresa Bowman, Gene Hurdt, Dr. William Kennedy, Chancellor John Rambo, and County Clerk Cheryl Storey.

At the November meeting, the county archivist presented his annual department report for 2021-2022. County Attorney Allyson Wilkinson discussed Tennessee's Open Records Law, explaining the law and county policy related to this law.

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 the 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. Total funds expended were \$257.26.

The FOA received two important donations during the year. On October 31st, 2022, Warren Gump, the late Lucy Gump's son, donated \$500 to the FOA in her memory to enable the archives to purchase the DeedMapper software needed to run the data files Lucy compiled in researching the early Watauga settlements. This became an important tool for the "Early Landowners of Northeast Tennessee Project." On March 13th, 2023, the FOA received a \$500 donation from the Watauga Association of Genealogists for the support of the archives.

THE YEAR AHEAD

- With most processing completed on the records housed in the archive building, our focus will shift in coming years to organizing and processing records housed in the Archive Annex. This effort will probably begin with Clerk and Master records and Trustee Records (old tax books).
- The need for future storage space in the long-term needs to be studied as existing archive space both in the archive building and the Archive Annex will be completely filled within the next few years.



Early morning Main Street looking west, Jonesborough, August 2021
Courtesy Donna Cox Briggs