



State & Local Records News

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ADAH west wing nears completion

Construction on the new west wing is now in its final phases, both inside and out. While the front lawn will be resodded and landscaped, the north plaza (facing the Capitol) is being reconstructed to accommodate a large bronze map that will depict rivers, cities, and images from around the state. Exterior construction on the wing itself is all but finished, and its edifice now blends in beautifully with older sections of the Archives.



North plaza reconstruction, with ADAH west wing behind the bulldozer

Inside, staff work space is taking shape; work is progressing on the new auditorium; and an artist is painting murals in the west wing's lobby. Our handsome new reference room has received its carpet, shelves, and research tables, while in the basement, compact, moveable shelving in climate-controlled vaults awaits the transfer of historical records and artifacts from older storage areas.



Shelving ready for installation in the reference room; new reference desk in foreground

The entire third floor of the “old” Archives building is now closed. Before Christmas, staff emptied its galleries and storerooms so that workers could install electrical and data communications wiring needed in the new wing. Staff moved more than 3,000 artifacts to permanent or temporary storage, and several large items are residing in the third floor hallway until space in the new wing is ready for them.

Contractors hope to complete most of their construction work by early March. Once the west wing's environment is clear of contaminants and safe, staff will begin the task of moving 40,000 boxes of collections to their new locations. Although ADAH will be closed at some point for “The Move,” our new reference room should be open by mid-summer. We invite all Alabamians to tour the new west wing at our forthcoming Open House, scheduled for October 8, 2005.

State Records Commission approves records dispositions

Meeting on January 26, the **State Records Commission** approved revised records disposition authorities (RDAs) for ADAH and the state Department of Revenue. Commission members also approved records disposition requirements for the Capitol Complex Security Office of the Department of Finance. Finally, the commission reviewed RDA implementation reports from 25 state agencies.

Because a major item was withdrawn from its agenda, the **Local Government Records Commission** did not hold its scheduled meeting on January 26.

The commissions' next quarterly meetings are set for **Friday, April 29, 2005**. The State Records Commission will begin at 10:00 a.m., and the Local Government Records Commission at 1:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held in the Milo B. Howard Auditorium at ADAH.

Revenue department appoints new commission representative

G. Thomas Surtees, Commissioner of Revenue and a statutory member of the State Records Commission, has recently appointed Ms. Yolanda Caldwell of the department's Financial Operations Division as his representative on the records commission. Ms. Caldwell takes the place of Bill Morrison, who had represented the Department of Revenue since October 2003.

Several vacancies currently exist among the Local Government Records Commission's county and municipal members (county commission chairman, county tax assessor, and city clerk). *State and Local Records News* will carry the names of new members as soon as the Governor appoints them.

Department of Transportation hires archivist

As reported in an earlier issue of *State and Local Records News* (June 2004), last year ADAH contracted with the state Department of Transportation (DOT) to employ, train, and assign a senior archivist to coordinate DOT's records management activities. DOT will reimburse ADAH for the archivist's salary, benefits, and travel expenses.

In February, Government Records Division archivist Chris Davidson, who currently supervises the State Records Center, accepted the DOT position. He will begin his new job as soon as his replacement at the records center has been hired and trained.

Chris has been an ADAH staff member since 1996. We wish him well in his new responsibilities.

Volunteers complete one records project, start another

Hoping to serve their church while pursuing their interest in genealogy, two retired Montgomery couples "signed on" 18 months ago to prepare county records in the ADAH collection for microfilming by the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU).

Since then, Jack and Vivian Colquett and Winston and Mittie Stockman have flattened, foldered, and described several hundred thousand pages of "loose" papers that produced over 200 rolls of microfilm. Among the records they completed are Perry County estate cases, Montgomery County marriage licenses, and Calhoun County circuit court files. These records, which soon will be available for research, will be an invaluable resource of Alabama history and genealogy.

Now our volunteers have taken on a new assignment. Although Vivian has been sidelined by elbow surgery, Jack, Mittie, and Winston are



The Colquetts (l) and Stockmans (r) at their "retirement" party after finishing their work at ADAH

preparing circuit court files at the Montgomery County Archives to be digitally photographed, as part of a new ADAH/GSU initiative (see below).

We are grateful to the Colquetts and Stockmans—and to hundreds of other volunteers across the state—for their vital role in preserving Alabama's heritage.

GSU to digitize Montgomery County circuit court records

While loose records microfilming proceeds in other counties (see below), Montgomery County is undertaking a different type of records reformatting project.

In January, Montgomery County Archivist Lyn Frazer began supervising the preparation of 130 cubic feet of circuit court files (1870-1933) and probate estate files (to 1949) that will be digitally photographed, rather than microfilmed. This pilot project arose from the GSU's recent decision to phase out microfilm and convert to digital imaging for its records reformatting work. The transition is scheduled to occur over the next five years, but it will not affect existing commitments to microfilm records in other Alabama counties.

Circuit Clerk Melissa Rittenour and Probate Judge Reese McKinney have authorized Montgomery County's project. Besides the Colquetts and Stockmans, volunteer Nancy Medina is assisting with records preparation. Once prepared, the files will be digitally photographed by GSU volunteers Rod and RaNae Richards, who are now microfilming records at ADAH.

More loose records microfilming project news

Since our last issue, loose records microfilming has been completed in three counties. Projects have been started in two other counties and are making good progress elsewhere in the state.

GSU camera operators Mike and Sue Rau recently finished a huge project in Mobile County (over 400 rolls of film), along with a project in Crenshaw County (38 rolls). Grant and Val Clement filmed 168 rolls of Marshall County records before moving on to Jackson County. DeLoy and Lois Larsen have been filming loose records in Lee and Chambers Counties, while Eric Olsen continues work in Jefferson County. The Raus have just begun to film in Choctaw County. Meanwhile, local volunteers and probate staff recently completed preparation of Houston County's records.

In January, ADAH staff trained volunteers at the Franklin County Archives, where preparation of estate and guardianship records is now under way. Franklin County's archivist, Chris Ozbirn, coordinates the project. Another project will start next month in Sumter County, when county historical society members and students from the University of West Alabama start work on loose circuit court files.

Two of our ongoing projects are making especially noteworthy progress:

- Talladega County's volunteers, led by Mary Frances McGehee, have uncovered such interesting items as slave manumis-

sions; Native Americans' estates; and incorporation papers for businesses, churches, and towns in Talladega County. They are compiling a computerized index to the probate records and have made extensive notes on historical material. Some time ago, the project was prominently featured in Talladega's newspaper, *The Daily Home*. Although their cut-off date has been extended to 1952, the volunteers hope to finish records preparation within another year.

- Members of the Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society are at work on divorces and other circuit court cases filed prior to 1950. These will include a number of estates filed originally in circuit instead of probate court. Here, too, volunteers are creating a computerized index and "specializing" in different aspects of records preparation. So far, 25 volunteers have participated, and coordinator Jan Hutchinson is adding to their numbers by publicizing the project in the local press. As of February, she esti-



mated that records preparation was 1/3 complete.

Tuscaloosa County volunteers show their work to ADAH archivist Tom Turley

Many times these pages have recorded the services of Alabama's loose records program vol-

unteers. It is not too much to say that this massive microfilming project (which has so far been completed in 32 counties and produced over four million images of microfilmed historical records) would never have been possible without them.

More records from ADAH collection available for research

During the past quarter, the ADAH Collections Management Section (Mike Breedlove, Dianne Jackson, and Alden Monroe) arranged and described 25 new series, comprising 96 cubic feet of records, that are now available for reference use. Sixty-six series, including many state publications, were substantially updated.

A sampling of the newly available records includes:

- Governor's administrative files for 1819-1896; and the administrative files of Governor William J. Samford, 1900-1901
- Administrative files from the offices of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General for 1861-1866. Also Secretary of State's records for the Constitutional Convention of 1861
- Military Assessment Records, 1860-1861, from the tax assessor's offices of Blount, Covington, Fayette, Sumter, Tallapoosa, and Washington Counties
- Administrative files of Supreme Court Justice J. Gorman Houston, 1985-2004
- State publications of the High School Athletic Association, Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Oil and Gas Board, Pardon and Paroles Board, Real Estate Commission, St. Stephens Historical

Commission, Supercomputer Authority,
and Troy State University