

Tuscaloosa is blessed with a prized set of records for historians and genealogists. The records on the seventh floor of the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse date back to the time when Alabama first became a state. That they still exist today speaks well for the dedication and commitment of our elected officials.

Everyone agrees the bound volumes stored on the seventh floor need better care. They must be organized, cleaned, and catalogued. The seventh floor is a poor environment for these rare books. In the long term these volumes must be housed in a better environment.

However bad these present conditions might be, there seems to be a misconception in the community that these records are about to be destroyed. I have been assured by the Clerk of the Circuit Court that these records *will not be destroyed*. Routinely, certain public documents are discarded, but only if legally scheduled for destruction. Each agency has a retention schedule governing the public records they produce. However, the bound volumes on the seventh floor are excluded from this process.

Volunteers from the Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society, both morning and night groups, have been transcribing, indexing and publishing records in the County Courthouse for more than twenty years. The website for the Night Group (NGTGS) has a list of these publications.

The Tuscaloosa County Loose Records Project has consumed the efforts of the night group during the past three years. This project included all divorce records housed at the courthouse up to the year 1950 and 130 estate records. It was a cooperative endeavor by the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU), Tuscaloosa County governmental officials and local volunteers. Mark Scogin, a local attorney and member of the NGTGS, provided legal advice throughout the project. Professor Richard Carroll assisted with the database and report design. Jan Hutchison served as project coordinator. The success of the project resulted from her dedication and perseverance. The 45 volunteers who participated in the project donated over 2,350 hours. Tuscaloosa volunteers created an index that will be of great value to anyone looking for family members in Tuscaloosa County. The index to these records has been submitted to the Alabama Genealogical Society's LRP web index project team. This Loose Records Project index is scheduled to go online some time this fall and the Tuscaloosa County's index may appear at this time. A copy of all the films will be delivered to the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse sometime in the near future. The films already appear in the Family History Catalog at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

With the Loose Records Project completed, the NGTGS has turned its attention to the Nineteenth Century bound volumes on the seventh floor. A standing committee, made up of a dedicated, committed, and enthusiastic group of volunteers is in place. Its members possess the skills to make this project successful. Jim Crowder chairs this committee. It includes Jan Hutchison and Charlotte Tucker, two seasoned genealogists, who were so instrumental in the Loose Records Project. It has two librarians, Joyce Lamont and Janet McElroy, who together have extensive knowledge of rare books and library information

systems. Ann Fulmer, an expert genealogist, also serves and will act as liaison with the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Work space for the project has been identified and final negotiations for it are being wrapped up. The standards and procedures for the project are just about completed. Development of the training process for volunteers also is underway. A call for volunteers has gone out with a very positive response.

A permanent archive still must be found. Your ideas are solicited. It is our hope to have a new home for the volumes before we finish cleaning, indexing and cataloguing them.

We are on our way to solving this issue for which a solution is long overdue. This will not happen overnight. This project will take countless hours. During this time, we ask for your patience and support.

Warren Spruill, PhD

President

The Night Group of the Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society

(<http://www.rootsweb.com/~alnngtgs>)

P.O. Box 02802

Tuscaloosa, AL 35402-0802