



TSLAFriends

Friends of the Tennessee State Library and Archives

Issue 3

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31 million and counting!

Tennesseans have searched TEL more than 31 million times in 2011! Use will only increase as new databases are added.

Recent additions include collections of historical images in Volunteer Voices, and death certificates from the State Archives



Dear Ellen,

First of all, thank you for becoming a charter member through joining the TSLAFriends, the nonprofit group that supports our Tennessee State Library & Archives. I am grateful for your membership--without Friends like you, we would not be here.

We are just concluding our first year as an organization and I'd like to give a big thanks to Secretary of State Tre Hargett and Chuck Sherrill, as well as the archivists and librarians at Tennessee State Library and Archives without whose support and assistance, the TSLAFriends group project would have never gotten off the ground.

2012 will be an exciting year! We will continue work on the Supreme Court and Union Burials project. We will be showcasing some of the very special items at TSLA in our library system throughout the state and continually looking for items, pictures and collections to acquire that should be in our Tennessee State Library and Archives. And, of course, we are looking for ways to grow our organization. **Please forward this newsletter to your friends and colleagues you think may be interested.**

If you have not yet done so, be sure to renew your membership at our website or respond to the recent mailing. You will see updates below on various projects. Know that we are continuing and expanding our goal of preserving the past and informing the future of our great state!

Steve Richards

TSLAFriends President

Supreme Court Report

No, this isn't the latest on decisions handed down from the state's highest court. This is an ongoing project to protect and preserve records from the court's rich history.

dating from 1908 to 1945. Thanks to Secretary of State Tre Hargett, **all this is free to every Tennessean** at [the Tennessee Electronic Library portal](#).

Tennessee Remembers Vietnam and Korea Veterans

On Veteran's Day, TSLA launched a new project which asks veterans to fill out an online questionnaire about their military experiences. We are also seeking original materials such as photographs, letters and maps, to preserve the history of those who served. For more information, see [this website](#).



TSLAFriends

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Ex Officio

Chuck Sherrill,
State Librarian

Work to flatten, clean and index the historical files of the Tennessee Supreme Court continues. Each month interns hired by the Friends work alongside TSLA staff to add entries to the database. To date, 22,819 cases have been processed and indexed. This represents only about 10% of the total cases on file at the Archives. Recent work has focused on cases from the East Tennessee counties from the 1920s through the 1940s. Many of the topics in this era are the same as in cases from a century earlier: debt, murder, distilling liquor, etc. But new topics like medical malpractice, auto accidents and workplace injuries are also emerging.

Uncovering Burial Records

The records of Union soldiers buried in private cemeteries and later moved to the Federal Cemetery in Madison TN have long been a buried Civil War resource. With the help of an intern provided by TSLAFriends, work is progressing on a database created from "burial sheet" records recently located at the National Archives. Under the guidance of Friends member Fletch Coke, new discoveries are being made - including the fact that a group of Union soldiers lie buried in the "Confederate Circle" at Mt. Olivet!

For more information, please see the Fall issue of TSLAFriends News and check out the article by Fletch Coke!



Silent Cities of the Dead Exhibit

It's been said that "The dead tell no tales," but TSLA staff know that's not true. The study of cemeteries - and the people who are buried in them - can often provide helpful historical clues, particularly the field of genealogy.

With that in mind, TSLA is hosting a free exhibit called "Silent Cities of the Dead," which focuses on various cemeteries around the state and the role those cemeteries play in the study of history.

Cemeteries featured in the exhibit include First Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, on the National Register of Historic Places and the oldest cemetery in Knoxville; Upper Cumberland Cemeteries, which has the largest concentration of "tent-style" graves in the United States; and Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis, where many of the city's historical figures were laid to rest, and the Nashville City Cemetery.

and Archivist
Jami Awalt,
TSLA Liaison

The TSLA Newsletter is
written and edited by Ellen
Myrick with special thanks to
Chuck Sherrill

The Tennessee Advisory Council on Libraries welcomes these new board members:

Tricia Bengel, Nashville
Public Library, metro
libraries representative

Kathy Bennett, Metro-
Nashville Public Schools,
school libraries
representative

Cindy Boshears of Clinton,
library user representative

Wendy Cornelisen, TSLA,
representative from TLA

Dottie Ford of Newport,
library user representative

Meredith P. Goins of
Maryville, special libraries
representative

Kristina Hibdon of Lebanon,
library user representative

These new members were
appointed to the Council and
attended their first meeting
on December 1st. The
Tennessee State Library and
Archives appreciates their
willingness to serve

"All of our exhibits highlight the collections at TSLA, and we choose topics of interest to our patrons," said State Librarian and Archivist Chuck Sherrill. "Ninety percent of the people who come into the building are here for genealogy purposes. Cemetery records, published or on microfilm, are among the sources genealogists turn to most often when they do research here."

The exhibit, now open, will run through the first week in March.

TSLAFriends Volunteer Spotlight

Gordon Belt, Treasurer



Why do you value libraries?

As Library Manager for the First Amendment Center, I have a keen appreciation for libraries as a source of knowledge and a temple of democracy. In a free society, libraries inspire free thought and imagination - values that I carry with me daily. It is truly a privilege to work in a place that honors those values.

Do you have a special "library moment" from your childhood?

I've cherished books, libraries and archives throughout my life. I began reading at a very early age, and became inspired to follow a career path in libraries and archives during a 6th grade field trip to Nashville. During a summer vacation to Washington D.C. my parents took me to the National Archives where I saw the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. It was so inspiring to actually see the documents that our Founding Fathers touched and signed in a brave expression of our freedoms. The feeling of awe that I experienced that day has never left me.

How did you come to be on the executive board of TSLA?

Former State Librarian and Archivist Jeanne Sugg called me in the fall of 2009 and asked me to consider becoming Treasurer of TSLAFriends. I was humbled and honored to be considered, and I have really enjoyed volunteering my time to this worthwhile endeavor. It is very rewarding to actually see firsthand the dollars being donated and spent on projects like the digitizing the State Supreme Court Records, and cataloging the Nashville City Cemetery Union Burial Sheets. I'm very blessed to have a small part in this effort.

Of course, we now also know you as the co-author of *Onward Southern Soldiers*. Did you use TSLA for your research?

The letters, diaries, and photographs held at TSLA were a tremendous resource. In *Onward Southern Soldiers*, we rely heavily on primary source material to tell the story, and there was a wealth of material to mine in the archives at TSLA. For my wife, Traci, who is the primary author of our book, it was incredibly moving to read the letters written by the common soldiers who fought on the front lines, and to learn from their own handwritings how religion sustained them in their darkest hour. For me, as I worked with TSLA staff to gather images for our book, seeing the photographs and looking into the eyes and determined faces of these common soldiers knowing that they would perish in battle was very sobering, yet awe inspiring at the same time.

What aspect of TSLA do you personally treasure the most and why?

While the archival records are important, access to the important documents,

photographs and artifacts entrusted to TSLA's care is provided by a capable and competent staff. Tennessee is very fortunate to have a dedicated group of archival professionals working at TSLA who are ready and willing to help the public find the information that they need to find that missing branch in their family tree, to help fill in the blanks in a story, or to guide researchers like me on specific projects. These fine folks are TSLA's greatest treasure.

Thank you for your support of TSLA!

Steve Richards

President, TSLA*Friends*