

Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society

Annual Report

August 6, 2007



Prepared for the:

Tishomingo County Board of Supervisors
1008 Battleground Drive
Iuka, Mississippi 38852



Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum

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1008 Battleground Drive
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Re: Annual Report and Budget Request

The Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society (TCHGS) respectfully submits the following report for its 2006-2007 operation of the Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum (TCAHM) housed in the historic County courthouse.

This report includes the 2007 budget (exhibiting expenses through the month of July with budget comparisons), the income statement through July, and an outline of scheduled events for the entire year. Also included in this report is a summary of future plans and some quotes from our visitors. We hope you will look at our progress with the same pride we share.

As always, we appreciate your support and encouragement.

Respectively submitted,

Cindy Whirley Nelson
Executive Director (Volunteer)
Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum

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Report and Budget Appeal

Introduction

The Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society (TCHGS), a volunteer organization, strives to preserve, protect, and share the heritage of Tishomingo County through its historical museum, the Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum (TCAHM). This mammoth undertaking is attempted and somewhat successful with minimal funding and volunteers. The terminology of “somewhat successful” is used to stress that the museum’s hours of operation were shortened to lessen the costs of utilities and payroll. Even with a reduced paycheck, the courthouse museum’s project manager continues to work 40 hours per week on site; she also volunteers a large amount of time offsite. Residents of Tishomingo County have graciously volunteered countless hours of their time to the facility. The amount of time and energy donated to the historical courthouse demonstrates pride in Tishomingo County’s heritage.

The museum’s reputation is growing by leaps and bounds; this is evident in the volunteerism, increased traffic of visitors to the museum, and the ever-increasing amount of artifacts donated and loaned to the facility. Tishomingo Countians have grown to respect the Society and its historical museum, trusting the staff to handle their priceless artifacts with loving respect. This organization is an integral part of the County’s tourism.

Much progress has been made. All of the museum’s artifacts have been inventoried and a care plan has been established for each item. The PastPerfect museum software database contains over 4,000 artifacts and more than 2,000 priceless photographs of Tishomingo County and its citizenry. Perhaps the most exciting new artifact is the grand piano from Belmont; however, whether it is big or small, all artifacts are important.

The museum’s Native American room has been re-designed. Upon entering the room, each visitor is immediately transformed back in time. The genealogical library has been expanded and moved into the annex area to house its increasing collection. Due to the generosity of certain individuals, it has been possible to purchase all Tishomingo County courthouse records that have been made available on microfilm.

A plan was instigated for interested citizens to erect historical markers throughout the County. This is an on-going project. Other projects that continue from last year include compiling histories of the County’s military veterans, histories of the historic homes in the area, and preparing a book of marriages performed in the County.

The Society is pleased to submit the following report for its 2007-2008 operation of the archives and history museum housed in the historic County courthouse. We trust you will look at our progress with the same pride we share.

Artifacts and Exhibits

The historical courthouse museum's artifacts and exhibits invite visitors to embark on a walk through history, the history of Tishomingo County from its inception through decades of progress. These years—1832 to 1974—are not chosen at random. They are the years that comprise the “life” of Tishomingo County through the time that a more modern courthouse was built on Battleground Drive in Iuka. You will also find some more current artifacts as well.

Exhibits continually change as more artifacts are donated and loaned to the historical courthouse museum. The museum maintains both permanent exhibits and changing, temporary exhibits on special themes. Each month the museum proudly displays new artifacts. These exhibits allow frequent visitors to the museum a chance to see the newest additions prior to them being routed to their permanent location in the museum. Recent items on display have included:

- An original copy of S.B. No. 215, *An Act to Incorporate the Town of Iuka in the County of Tishomingo*, dated 1872, printed by *Tishomingo Herald*. The document describes the center being the point where the street crosses the main track of the Memphis and Charleston railroad, east of the railroad square, and near the former site of the Iuka Springs Hotel.
- Travis Eugene Nelson's diploma from the Pleasant Hill School dated April 8, 1938, signed by Clyde O. Bingham, Superintendent of Education.
- A schedule of movies playing "Playbill" at the Victory Theater in Burnsville during the week of November 2-8, 1947. This playbill was designed to be bulk mailed to all box holders and rural routes.
- A wedding display featuring a beautiful white wedding gown from the 1920-30 era, handmade by a lady from Belmont for her daughter. It was purchased at the daughter's estate sale and loaned to the museum for the display. Included were cake toppers and greenery. An assortment of marriage certificates and licenses were also featured. The most talked about item in this exhibit was the invitation to a wedding in 1912 and a wedding program (spelled Programme).
- Personal artifacts of W. B. Ellis, including a black bowler hat, black top hat, and brush dated 1872-1874.

The following images are representative of the works currently on display or in the museum's collection.



The sports display shown here features school memorabilia throughout Tishomingo County; it is a fun display for folks of all ages. Also included are six items of Mississippi State University (MSU) baseball memorabilia from yesteryears of playing ball. The MSU items were donated by former Tishomingo Countian, William (Bill) Hamilton, son of W. C. Hamilton.

The medical room exhibit on the second floor of the County's museum showcases various memorabilia from practicing physicians in Tishomingo County. Among the items displayed is Dr. Whitehurst's chill tonic bottle circa 1920s and "Simmons Liver Medicine" that was marketed by Dr. M. A. Simmons throughout the County in a buggy and retailed in quantities to suit the purchaser.



These canned beans, peas, and peaches won first place for Mrs. W. A. Phillips at the Tishomingo County Fair around the late 1930s. The following year she entered them in the fair in Red Bay, Alabama, and once again the canned items won. Mrs. Phillips then retired the goods to the shelf, undefeated. They are still looking good after nearly 70 years. The cabinet belonged to long time residents and teachers, Clyde & Clara (Bell) Bingham.

This walnut fireplace heat screen is believed to have been owned by Gov. John M. Stone. The front view displays beautiful needle-point, and the back view has original period wall paper



Mr. Pruitt, a one-time owner of a broom factory in Tishomingo County, grew his own straw. He was blind and averaged making 20 brooms per week.

This beautiful piano is a recent acquisition from Belmont, Mississippi. It was previously displayed in an antebellum home and is now in our courthouse lobby for the public to enjoy.



Programs and Activities

Most courthouse museum events are staffed by volunteers that simply desire this County's heritage to prevail. In addition, events and programs are continuously reviewed in an effort to offer improved and more worthwhile programs. The Society and its historical museum provide value to all of the County's communities by preserving everyone's heritage, not to mention the educational aspects of the museum and activities for residents and visitors. The Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum benefits everyone, with increased commerce and goodwill. The facility is a source of pride for the community, and it is a local landmark structure in need of continual preservation.

The following photographs showcase various programs and events held at the Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum:



3rd Annual Wedding Reunion



Flag Day Celebration



Boy Scouts



Girl Scouts



**Watermelon Spitting Contest
at Camp Courthouse**



Old-Fashioned Music Day, July 28th



Belmont High School Volunteers



Demonstration Friday



Christmas at the Courthouse



Old-Fashioned Music Day



Flag Day Celebration



Flag Day Retirement



Playing Tops at Camp Courthouse

Staff and Volunteer Development

The historical museum's progress and appeal would be nonexistent without the spirit of volunteerism within Tishomingo County. Volunteers have made several trips to Jackson, Mississippi, to visit the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) at their own expense. These volunteers made this effort to study available Tishomingo County resources; as a result, this County's archives and history museum has been able to share its resources with MDAH to better represent our County's history.

The historical museum maintains two staff members on payroll. One is designated as the project manager who relieves daily stress on volunteers with other full-time jobs. The other staff member is a clerical support person. A third individual works in the museum's genealogical library as a library assistant. Her salary is paid by the Experience Works Program. These three individuals also volunteer many hours. They serve as docents to give informative tours of the historical museum, assist researchers in the genealogical library, assist visitors browse and purchase Tishomingo County memorabilia in the museum gift shop, and handle day-to-day operations. The amount of correspondence for the museum has increased almost two-fold since last year. In 2006, a total of 1,274 mail items were received, and 783 items were mailed out. This does not include at least 1,500 quarterly journals that were mailed to the Society's members.

The museum's hours of operation were decreased and have been maintained at 28 hours per week; however, the project manager continues to work approximately 40 hours per week on site and volunteers a large amount of time offsite. Additionally, the executive director and librarian donate approximately 350 hours each month in order to maintain the administrative needs of the facility. A recent seminar for volunteers stated that the value of a volunteer hour is \$18.47. **Calculating the time donated to the County's historical museum with the value stated above, an amount of \$62,630.17 has been donated in volunteer hours to the County from January to June of this year. In 2006, a total of 10,853.75 hours were volunteered, calculating to a donation of \$200,360.23 in volunteer hours.** The amount of time and energy donated to the historical courthouse demonstrates pride in the County's heritage. This organization is an integral part of the County's tourism.

In order for the collections of the Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum to be properly maintained, staff and volunteers must continue to stay abreast of evolving technologies. Through continued education, staff and volunteers tap into their creative potential, and through a variety of experiences, obtain the knowledge to enhance their perceptive, imaginative, and expressive potential to market Tishomingo County to visitors and residents alike through the museum.

The table below lists the seminars and workshops that staff and volunteers have attended in 2007, including currently scheduled workshops for the near future. The list will continue to grow whenever time and monies allow future attendance at a workshop. Please be aware that most of the workshops are attended at the personal expense of staff and volunteers.

2007—Seminars and Workshops Attended

Date	Workshop	Location	Sponsor	Attendees
1-11-2007	Genealogical Seminar	Jackson, MS	MGS	Jan Anglin, Cindy Nelson, RaNae Vaughn
2-1-2007	MDAH Grant Workshop	Jackson, MS	MDAH	Jan Anglin, Cindy Nelson
2-4-2007	Mississippi Museum Association Annual Meeting	Oxford, MS	MMA	Jan Anglin, Christina Goss
2-4-2007	Behind the scenes at Rowan Oak	Oxford, MS	MMA	Jan Anglin
2-7-2007	Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance	Corinth, MS	MHA	Jan Anglin
5-6-2007	Family Fair with Beth Freshour	Midway School	TCHGS	Jan Anglin, Christina Goss, Cindy Nelson, Brenda Whitfield, Betty Marlar
7-21-2007	Native American Workshop	Little Rock, AR	Butler Center	Cindy Nelson, Martha Burcham
8-27-2007	Artifacts Preservation	Jackson, MS	MMA	Jan Anglin, Christina Goss

MHA = Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance

MGS = Mississippi Genealogical Society

MDAH = Mississippi Department of Archives and History

MMA = Mississippi Museum Association

Butler Center = Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System

Visitor Statistics

Visitors to the museum and genealogical library include tourists, genealogical researchers, and County residents. In the past seven months, the historical courthouse museum has hosted visitors from Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia; and the country of Netherlands. The Society boasts a membership from at least 22 states and throughout the State of Mississippi. Many of these people desire to visit Tishomingo County to view the geographical area where their ancestors settled and to perform genealogical research; however, it is not always feasible or cost effective to visit. Therefore, the Society is in place to represent visitors, including county residents, by supplying research assistance. More than 200 visitors who live within Tishomingo County have visited the historic County courthouse since January 2007. When current and former Tishomingo County residents return for a visit, they are enthusiastic about the historical courthouse museum. They reminisce and share positive memories about their Tishomingo County experiences. Usually some special memory stands out—a great teacher, a close friendship, deceased family members, old family customs, or former places of residence. These visitors display the same pride that is shared by staff and volunteers.

Statistics	2004	2005	2006	2007 Jan-Jun
Library Researchers In Mississippi Outside Mississippi	Combined with museum	186 61 56	154 76 78	87 49 38
Museum Visitors	4,461	2,297	2,048	751
Returning		474	578	333
New		854	1029	405
Unknown		969	441	13
Programs	27	12	21	13
Museum Donations	150	361+	176	125
Museum Entrance Fees	\$1,486	\$1,333	\$571	420.49
Volunteer Hours (on/off site)	6,944	9,084	7,011	3,393
Website Users	4,461	4,442	3,218	16,342
Programs	27	12	21	13

Visitor Feedback

In an effort to continually grow and improve, visitors are asked to fill out a survey about their experience at the courthouse museum. Thus far, response has been overwhelmingly positive. A few of these comments are shared below:

- Leah R. Smith, Southaven, Miss. – “The courthouse museum is an interesting facility. Staff is very friendly and cooperative, and the displays were innovative and informative.”
- Jerry Walker, Hamilton, Ala. – “The ladies were very helpful.”
- Lisa Gann, Hamilton, Ala. – “Awesome!! I’ve searched for 4 years and found nothing substantial. Here I found my great-great grandparents marriage record!! Superb help!!”
- William and Mary Tittsworth, Dothan, Ala. – “This is a wonderful museum.”
- Fannie Coman Godwin, Baton Rouge, La. – “Thank you for preserving part of my father’s history.”
- Sherry Whitten, Germantown, Tenn. – “Excellent museum.”
- Edgar David Smith, Selmer, Tenn. – “Very friendly and helpful, very nice displays.”
- Robin T. Willis, Manvel, Texas – “All excellent.”
- Randy Bishop, Middleton, Tenn. – “I have to again brag on the complete staff at the Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum. I don’t believe I’ve ever been treated more professionally or in a more personal manner than my son and I was treated today. Please pass my compliments on to the “powers that be.” They need to commend a group as outstanding as these three ladies were on my visit today.” July 11, 2007.

Condition of Facility

Currently, the historic courthouse's most pressing needs are for a roof replacement and wire replacement in the attic to prevent bats from coming into the facility. Also high on the list of items needing repair are two walls that need restoration work and interior paint. Staff has successfully located all existing leaks in the facility and religiously place containers under the leaks during the on-set of rain. In 2006, TCHGS acquired a \$35,000 grant allocation from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for a roof replacement. In July 2007, with the assistance of Senator J.P. Wilemon, we were able to obtain an additional \$20,000 in emergency funds from MDAH to successfully replace and repair all roof associated problems. We will be advertising for bids on this project in two to three weeks.

Interior Problems

The following photographs showcase various interior problems within the historic courthouse.



Administrative Office



East Side of Attic



Bat in Entry of Office



Deterioration Upstairs



Courtroom Wall



Upstairs Wall

Exterior Problems

The following photographs showcase various exterior problems at the historic courthouse.



Vent on West Side



Front Soffit Deterioration



Gutter Deterioration



East-side Foundation on Back



Back Gutter on Northeast Side

Future Plans

- Skill Enhancement – To continue to learn and develop conservation and preservation skills for the records, histories, and artifacts of the entire County.
- Battle of Iuka – To continue to learn and educate tourists and citizenry about the Battle of Iuka, including histories of the skirmishes that occurred in this County that are not always recognized.
- Home School Program – To assist home-schooled students in obtaining extra credit with educational programs.
- Increase African-American Artifacts – To locate and obtain artifacts from the County that reflect African American culture; thereby, increasing interest from African Americans.
- Historical Home Tour – To increase pride in the area's heritage and increase tourism by offering a tour of the homes and businesses to demonstrate the County's architecture.
- Increase Pride in Native American Heritage – To develop program(s) on Chief Tishomingo and Chief Iuka and conduct educational program(s) for schools, Scouts, and clubs.

- Governor John M. Stone Program – To share aspects of the life and career of one of Mississippi’s most esteemed Governors.
- Veterans Program – To continue working on a veterans’ book with concentration on World War II veterans from this County.
- Grants – To continue to seek additional funding through grants, etc., for the restoration of the historic courthouse museum facility.
- Marriage Book Program – To compile the stories of people that received their license or was married in the courthouse.
- Museum Display Improvements – To acquire several new display cases; these are needed to properly exhibit artifacts that currently have no permanent home.

Budget Request for 2007-2008

The Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society (TCHGS) and its historical museum respectively request a total of \$62,500 for its operating budget.

The historical museum’s expenses include costs for the building upkeep, payroll, supplies, utilities, insurance, alarm system, and the conservation and preservation of over 4,000 artifacts and 2,000 priceless photographs of Tishomingo County and its people. These numbers increase and change frequently.

Heritage is expensive; in order to properly maintain these priceless artifacts, a budget of over \$10,000.00 earmarked for conservation and preservation alone is needed. In an effort to assist with archival preservation, staff began to maintain a log of the historic courthouse’s temperature and humidity. One log is kept for the temperature and humidity of the courthouse’s second floor, and another one is kept for the ground floor of the facility. Artifacts stored and maintained at the facility are extremely valuable, and most items are irreplaceable. Taking pride in Tishomingo County ensures future generations of pride, optimism, and faith in its future. The past is important; it demonstrates both the failures and accomplishments of Tishomingo County to its citizens. It also demonstrates the lessons learned, values, perseverance, and “stickability” of the area’s citizenry. By learning from the past, Tishomingo County can create a better tomorrow. The activities at the archives and history museum include preservation of the building and its artifacts, record gathering, presentations, programs, and more.

ADDENDA