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## Spotlight on Mississippi Archives

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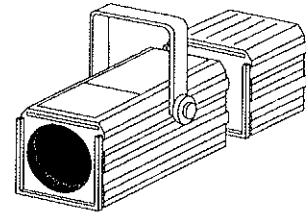
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# Spotlight on Mississippi Archives



## JACKSON COUNTY ARCHIVES, PASCAGOULA

The first objective of the formation of the Jackson County Archives in July 1993 was to organize and initiate measures to preserve the records of the chancery clerk at Pascagoula. Due to the high volume of use and growth of the county, many books were in disrepair and in need of attention. Betty Rodgers and Lois Castigliola were hired by the clerk and began to identify and sort record groups that were stacked in disarray due to lack of space. Boxes of old historic files and transcripts were put into groups and labeled. The Jackson County Archives was organized but was not yet a separate department of the county.

After three moves over about six years, the archives are presently in an adequate facility on Krebs Avenue, near the courthouse and downtown Pascagoula. Plans are being made for permanent quarters for the permanent official and historical records of Jackson County.

The Jackson County Archives has fulfilled its first objective, and the records are properly stored in their original order with temperature and humidity controlled conditions. Now operating as a budgeted department under the county administrator and the board of supervisors, the archives has also continued to grow as a repository of historical records and photographs.

Several preservation projects are in progress, one of which is the preparation of chancery court cases for microfilming. In 1998, our friends from the Genealogical Society of Utah completed processing and microfilming cases from 1875 to 1915. They humidified, unfolded, returned the documents to their original order and placed them in acid-free folders and boxes, and skillfully created a full name index of the entire group of records. This work has proven to be very valuable for genealogical researchers and may be the first effort of its kind in local government records.

Since county records are kept in groups in the order that they were created, they are easy to store and access. Because of the nature of land records, most of them are considered permanent and must be kept forever. Any county records not fitting into the permanent retention description are carefully evaluated and a decision is made as to further storage. While this is not meant to be a complete listing, the following records can be found at the archives:

Because of destruction by three separate fires, the county records begin the day after the last fire in 1875. About 150 original documents were found in cardboard boxes, which appear to have been stored away when residents took their original deeds and other papers back in to the courthouse to be re-recorded after the destruction of the records. One deed is of particular interest as it is on sheepskin and is dated 1848. A few other papers dating back to the 1850's and one volume of township plats holding surveys said to have been drawn in the late 1820's have survived. The loose chancery papers are our only original documents that pre-date the fires.

**Tax Receipts 1875-1998.**

**Land Rolls 1875-1995.**

**Deeds** - 32 volumes of land deeds are preserved in boxes until they are re-bound.

Photocopies are available for use by the public. Remaining original land deeds are bound copies held in the land records department.

**Mortgages and Deeds of Trust, 1906-1963.** Archives holds the first 200 volumes of Deeds of Trust.

**Board of Supervisor's Minute Books, 1875-1993.** Bound volumes of minutes chronicle the only official record of the business and proceedings of the county. Boxes of transcripts of board minutes were

found that held many important original documents such as the Ingalls Shipbuilding Company's original signed contracts and rights to oysters beds. Finding and preserving these early original papers was a goldmine of early history for Jackson County.

**Newspapers, 1875 to the present.** Bound original copies are kept until 1995 after which microfilming began. This collection is nearly complete except for 1876 and some years during the 30's and 40's when the originals were water damaged during Camille.

**Chancery Court cases.** Beginning with case #1 in 1875, these folders include wills, estates, divorces, and all suits involving land and people, which are non-criminal. We currently have about 31,500 cases held in 436 acid-free boxes. We have continued the project of humidifying, unfolding and repairing the old court cases, putting them back into their original order and are placing them in acid-free folders. When we finish this task, microfilming will be done to complete the project. Since we have been working with these old papers, we have found many original surveys and unique documents. Because of their importance, we have replaced the original documents with official copies. The originals have been encapsulated, indexed and placed in special boxes with the case number inscribed for source identification. Some of these documents date back to the early 1850's and are a valuable resource for historical and genealogical research.

**Plans, Specifications and Maps.** Early maps and plans did not survive, and most of the collection is dated after 1900. Plans and specifications are kept for county-owned facilities such as the courthouse, fairgrounds, libraries and other sites.

**Marks and Brands, 1875 to the present.** Unique marks and brands for cattle or other animals, registered in the owner's name and sometimes sketched.

**Rafting Record, beginning in 1875.** Another unique mark was branded or excised into the end of cut timber, usually for identification to be claimed later by the registered owners.

**Record of Protests, 1886-1900, Book 4.** This book was used to register complaints or suits regarding the quarantine station on Ship Island and activities regarding the ships on Horn Island. Yellow fever quarantine and fumigation of all ships called for unloading and re-loading of lumber and often resulted in damages by wind or foul weather. Sea captains, destinations, names of ships and ports of origin are listed.

**School Records, 1871-1970.** Most of the registers in this important yet incomplete set of records are from the 1880-1930 time period. They include school enumerations, attendance registers, administrative papers and other school related subjects. Of special importance are the Negro and Creole Indian School registers and papers that span the years down to integration. School records are useful in replacing the burned 1890 Federal census date and to help re-construct family groups and identify relationships for genealogical research. There are approximately 150 boxes in this collection.

**Military Records** include original pension applications for veterans and their wives for service in the War Between the States, also pension board records and enumerations. This group of records is incomplete due to theft in prior years. 2 boxes.

## MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

**The Bratt Collection:** Original documents and family memorabilia spanning from 1809 to the 1920's in the family collection of Mrs. Florence McIntosh Bratt show the migration of the McIntosh, McInnis, McKay and related families from Virginia, North Carolina to Greene and Jackson Counties, Mississippi. Photos, deeds, genealogies, an album, Bible, military records and other memorabilia are included. 3 boxes.

**The Ford Papers:** Preserved by the Ford family for over 150 years, Liz Ford brought this priceless collection of estates, bills, deeds, personal letters and correspondence of Thomas Bilbo, Deputy Surveyor, and other documents to the archives on the eve of Hurricane Georges. The families included here are Krebs, Delmas, Ely, Frederic and other early Jackson County businessmen and families. 1 box.

**The Grant-Oliver Cole Collection:** This collection includes photographs, letters, local history, magazines, genealogy charts and other family memorabilia from the Oliver Cole family that includes the death certificate of John Grant, the builder of Grant's Pass at Mobile Bay. There is also a log of boats

passing through Grant's Pass with ships and fees listed. An old 1850's store account ledger lists customers and their purchases from all over Jackson County.

**Thomas C. S. Wixon Collection:** The photographs and negatives collected for the publication of *Jackson County, Mississippi: Photographs From the Past* have initiated a new quest to gather photographs of Jackson County and its people. Also included in this collection are pamphlets, books, clippings, an original 1783 map, and other local historical memorabilia .

**Ray Bellande Collection:** A specialist in research of Ocean Springs and east Jackson County, Ray Bellande has contributed historical books, pamphlets, photos, maps and plats, including a portfolio of original photographs of the construction of the Gulf Hills Dude Ranch and Golf Club in 1929. His historical column *Sous les chenes* that has appeared in the Ocean Springs Record since 1992 is included in this collection.

**Cassibry's Ladner Odyssey Manuscript Papers:** Nap L. Cassibry II has donated the manuscript research papers of the *Ladner Odyssey*, published through the Mississippi Coast Historical and Genealogical Society. Included with the photocopies and notes of his personal research are journals, books and documents from his many years of research on these early French families of the Gulf Coast. 15 boxes.

Several smaller but not less important collections add to our treasures at the Jackson County Archives.

Researchers are welcome at the Jackson County Archives. Located at 619 Krebs Avenue, we are within three blocks of the courthouse, land records and the Pascagoula Library and Genealogy Department. Inquiries are welcome. Hours are 8-5 weekdays. We close for lunch except by appointment for out-of-town users.

E-mail Betty Rodgers at the following address: [bjclark@datasync.com](mailto:bjclark@datasync.com)

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