

TSLA Photograph and Image Search

The TSLA Photograph and Image Search currently hosts records for approximately 34,000 digitized images. The heart of the database consists of five large collections which had already been indexed in database form. These were merged together to create one large database. While we have negatives for the most frequently used images, negatives may not yet exist for particular photographs. The five major parts of the current database are:

1) **The Library Photograph/Image Collection** - This large group of images, physically arranged by subject, was collected by the TSLA library staff, primarily during the time when Archives and Library divisions were separate and pursued independent collecting policies. Items tend to be copy prints, but many original photographs are also included, and there are a considerable number of oversize prints. Additionally, this collection includes prints and engravings, illustrations, pages from books and magazines, original art, court exhibits, stereographs, slides, and Brownie snapshots, with the bulk of the images falling between 1885 and 1940. The Library Collection has long provided a quick reference function for images concerning both Tennessee and many other subjects. It is closed to further additions. Very eclectic and far-ranging, this collection of images covers subject areas related to Tennessee history, houses and buildings, and prominent individuals.

2) **The Tennessee Historical Society Picture Collection** - These images, including many early engravings and lithographs, are part of the THS holdings housed at TSLA. Although Tennessee subjects are of primary interest, images from all over the world are included in this collection. Relatively few actual photographs of Tennessee or Tennesseans are in this collection; more prevalent are engravings and other image formats. Though not an absolute rule, the subjects of THS images tend to be concentrated in the earlier periods of American history. Size of the originals varies, and not all have negatives.

3) **Tennessee Department of Conservation Photograph Collection (Record Group 82)** - This treasure trove of over 11,000 images produced by the department from 1938 to 1977 is divided into 33 topical groupings, including Agriculture, Animals, Arts, Crafts & Folklife, Buildings, Cities & Towns, Fishing, Forestry, Grand Ole Opry, Great Smoky Mountains, Historic Sites, Industry, State Parks, Tennessee Valley Authority, and many others. The collection consists almost exclusively of 8" x 10" black & white prints. Many of the images were used in the department's magazine, *Tennessee Wildlife* (later *The Tennessee Conservationist*), as well as throughout state government, in tourism brochures, annual reports, and presentations. The Department of Conservation photographers clearly were encouraged to shoot scenes promoting Tennessee's natural beauties and resources, agricultural assets, the wealth of her rivers and streams, craft and musical traditions, and sundry festivals and tourist attractions. There are a great many of what might be called 'photo opportunities,' in which politicians, beauty contestants, and

other publicity seekers are pictured. Some photographs from other sources, such as TVA, the Soil Conservation Service, and newspapers, are also included in the collection. Negatives are available for approximately 75% of the collection.

4) Looking Back At Tennessee Photograph Collection - This project was undertaken by TSLA in 1986, in conjunction with the Homecoming '86 celebration. Our photographic staff traveled to many of Tennessee's counties and made negatives from original photographs owned by local residents. From these negatives, small (2"x2") contact prints were produced which were attached to information cards. Many of the photograph owners provided unique and fascinating background information on the people and places depicted in the images, and this information has been included in the database. This large collection, as the name implies, aimed at gathering images of the past in order to create a visual record of community and social history. Since many of these photographs came from family collections, they depict a wide range of bygone work practices, family life, amusements and sports, religious gatherings, and dress styles. In most cases, negatives are still available from which full-size prints can be made, but some negatives are no longer extant. Please note: the digitized contact prints, because of their size, are sometimes of lesser quality when viewed in the database and some distortion may occur.

5) TSLA Portrait Collection (Record Group 197) - Compiled by TSLA staff, this collection consists of an inventory and prints of oil portraits of famous Tennesseans which were once the property of TSLA. In 1975, most of these portraits were transferred to the State Museum. A small number still reside at TSLA, most in storage. The inventory is contained in four loose-leaf notebooks, and many photographic prints of the paintings are attached.