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OLD PHOTOGRAPH PROGRAM OF THE CALLOWAY COUNTY LIBRARY

Gerry Reed

The Calloway County Public Library is offering its patrons a unique service. Old family photographs are being copied and prominently exhibited there. Along with the photographs are identifying notes listing genealogical information and interesting historical details. Many of the viewers are discovering pictures of family members they didn't know existed. Some are being newly made aware of family relationships. The display is a delight to all of our patrons, especially to descendants of early settlers, but even our newest residents enjoy seeing examples of the old horse and buggy, farm machinery, methods of farming, road building, period costumes and hair styles, school class groups, special events and the like.

Many collections of old photographs exist but they become exceptional when we can identify the owner of the picture, the date it was taken, names of subjects, description of activity or articles in the photograph and in many instances, extensive relative details. In some cases oral history tapes are being taken to accompany each item. In the near future we hope to catalog and cross reference the large collection of oral history tapes which already belongs to this library and to supplement them with related photographs when possible.

This recently initiated service to patrons comes at a time when most libraries are considering cutting back services. It is possible for us to do this because of a rare combination of circumstances. Most important is a librarian who observes what other libraries are doing, who adopts their good ideas, and encourages the incorporation and expansion of those ideas into the existing structure of services offered. The other absolutely essential element in making this project possible is the volunteer program which provides a channel through which talented people can invest themselves.

In this endeavor as in all our others, we have excellent workers. Serving as curator is Jean Murdock, a 4th generation Calloway Countian who recently retired and now has time to pursue a long smouldering twin interest in both genealogy and photography. Lynn Crysler, our cataloger, has many skills which she has plied in the library's behalf in the past. Exhibits of her lovely art work have graced our walls more than once. Her past experience includes working as a consultant for a newly instituted library in Texas. She organized a work plan, a catalog system, and generally established a sound, efficient structure for the entire operation. She brings that same orderly and prudent mind to bear on cataloging the photo collection.

The professional quality of our photographs is no accident. Volunteers Mary and Dick Paterson are both art majors having had many courses in

photography which led to the acquisition of various pieces of photographic equipment. They have their own dark-room. Dick is the chief photographer and director of the multi-media center at TVA's facility at Golden Pond. Because these two have brought their various skills to this program and their knowledge about resin coated paper, mat boards, brown toner, etc., we were able to avoid costly trial and error procedures and move directly into the inexpensive, matted 11x14 inch finished product. The wholesale, free labor, resulting cost to the library is an incredible \$1.40 plus two hours volunteer labor per photograph.

Other volunteers who have worked diligently to meet our deadline for the initial display were Joe Graves, who prepared our exhibition board, Susie Adams, and Elsie Parker who worked with matting and identification cards, and Lynn Hewitt, a library staff member who volunteered time to publicize the project and assist with the dark-room work.

We are pleased with the short term results of our efforts and the gratifying response received. One such response came from a new resident of Murray who said, "I am amazed at the feeling of the history captured in this exhibit. I just stood for the longest time drinking it all in. It has a warmth and nurturing quality similar to that evoked by Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*."

Another indication of the worth of this project came from a commercial establishment which wants to use blown up copies of some of the photos to lend a nostalgia flavor to their decor.

I feel that perhaps the natives of Calloway County take this rich heritage somewhat for granted because they have always had it. Not so with newcomers who sense the endurance of the goodness lived out in the lives of those who invested themselves in Calloway County's earlier days. We at the library cherish it and delight in preserving a bit of the essence of it through these old photographs, notes and oral history tapes.

