

The Tennessee Genealogical Society (TNGS) is a nonprofit, and tax exempt educational organization completely staffed and managed by volunteers. *(Donations, grants, collections bequeathed, etc. are tax deductible subject to IRS rules.)*

TNGS was established to acquire, preserve, and make available genealogical history and records *(early microfilmed records included those of Confederates buried in Elmwood Cemetery which were donated to the Cossitt Library)*; to publish materials relevant to Tennessee genealogy and history (see Book Store at this site) and to educate family history researchers *(Biannual seminars with internationally recognized speakers and organizations, monthly computer club "Let's Discuss it," "Go To Meeting," Genealogy 101 lectures)*.

TNGS traces its roots to a group of fourteen friends who, in 1943, met at Barry Boswell and Virginia Walton Brooks' home to pursue their common interest in family-history research. This group evolved into the Memphis Historical Society and met at various libraries and members homes to exchange ideas and new books.

By 1952, members agreed that their interest was by and large the study of family history and their request to create a corporation, the Memphis Genealogical Society Inc, for this purpose was granted by the State of Tennessee on November 3, 1952.

The 38 founding members were:

Miss Jennie Allensworth

Miss Josephine Allensworth

Miss Nellie Ayres

Mrs. Willis E. Ayres

Mrs. L. D. Bates

Mrs. Lois D. Bejach

Miss Margaret Rose Bell

Mrs. Berry Boswell Brooks (Honorary Life Member)

Mrs. E. Hope Brooks

Mrs. R. S. Caradine

Mrs. Robert S. Carney

Mrs. James B. Cartwright (Life)

Walter Chandler (Honorary Life Member was mayor of Memphis, 1940 to 1946, and 1955.)

Mrs. Rogers M. Clark
Mrs. Wm. W. Deupree
Mrs. L. G. (Ruth) Duncan, (Life)
Mrs. James S. Fleming (Life)
Mr. Laurence B. Gardiner (Life)
Mrs. Laurence B. (Lillian) Gardiner (Life)
Mrs. J. B. George
Mrs. Thomas Booker
Mr. S. V. G. Lane
Mrs. J. J. Love (Life)
Mrs. Hugh McCain
Mrs. R. C. McKitrick
Mrs. D. W. Maxwell
Mrs. R. W. Nicolson
Mrs. Walter K. Page
Mrs. C. Raymond Powell
Mrs. W. O. Pruette
Mrs. Dale Pumphrey
Mrs. R. J. Reynolds
Miss Jeanne Scott
Mrs. George Ryland Scott
Mrs. T. D. Warner
Mrs. J. H. Widman
Mrs. Charles G. Young

In 1954, the Memphis Genealogical Society began publishing a quarterly news bulletin, *Ansearchin' News*. The name was coined by Mrs. I. G. (Ruth) Duncan's cook. "One day I (Mrs. Laurence B.

Gardiner) called to talk with Ruth, and Fanny said, "No Miss Lillian, she ain't here, she's gone 'ansearchin'. Fanny had been hearing a lot about searching for ones' ancestors and when we decided, I remembered how we all enjoyed *Ansearchin*."

On December 6, 1965, a new State Charter was granted to reflect the name change. "Memphis Genealogical Society" to "Tennessee Genealogical Society," it being the first genealogical society chartered by the State of Tennessee.

The October-December 1965 issue of *Ansearchin' News* was published by the "Memphis Genealogical Society." The January-March 1966 issue was published by the "Tennessee Genealogical Society."

By the early 1970s *Ansearchin' News* had become a premier resource for the researcher of Tennessee family roots. By the 1980s librarians were asking, "where do you shelf such a title?" To ease this problem the title was changed to the Tennessee Genealogical Magazine, *Ansearchin' News*. It is now available in hundreds of libraries nationwide.

(All issues of the Tennessee Genealogical Magazine, *Ansearchin' News* are available in a searchable PDF format at www.tngs.org. The most current issues are available only to TNGS members in good standing.)

After forty years as nomads--meeting in various libraries and homes of members--an announcement is made in the Winter 1984 issue of *Ansearchin' News*, "All operations of the Tennessee Genealogical Society are finally under one roof," at 3340 Poplar Avenue. "Additional space for our growing membership is indeed a luxury, and a larger office with extra tables for laying out the magazine should facilitate the editorial staff work. The library office is large enough for all staff members to work at the same time, and the Sales Room, an office for storing and mailing all of our reprints and books, has joined us here."

But things change. TNGS outgrew the space and rental cost in that location became unaffordable.

A note in the Winter 1996 issue of *Ansearchin' News* explained: "TNGS begins another year in a new location. With the historic Davies Plantation as our setting, we guarantee the quiet, peaceful setting...and the plethora of information at your fingertips ...will make your genealogical research pleasant as well as profitable. It's so quiet out here you can almost hear the conversation that took place in 1863 when Union soldiers came through the plantation and rounded up all the livestock. Frances Anna (Vaughan) Davies, the plantation mistress, noticed that the officer in charge had taken her horse. Hiding a kitchen knife in the folds of her skirt, she went out and politely requested the officer to leave her horse. Making the request twice to no avail, Mrs. Davies took the horse by the bridle and cut the reins with her knife. "Sir," she said, "I have my horse. You go!" He went. And in the late afternoon hours at TNGS' new home, if you listen hard enough you might just might hear her words... Visit us ...preferably in a horseless carriage so there won't be any reins to cut!"

The new home was the Davies Plantation library built in 1937 by Mrs. Hillman Philip Rodgers, aka Ellen Davies. The structure was built using bricks from the 1912 and 1924 construction of the President's home and Training School on the campus of the West Tennessee State Teachers' College. (now University of Memphis)

TNGS' ten years on the Plantation were most pleasant for our members and very educational for its management team.

During this time the TNGS Board redirected the organization from closed-membership to one open to all genealogical researchers. Even so, analyzes of cash flow indicated operational costs were hampering the acquisition of research and training material.

It became obvious that operating a members-only library was not the best utilization of assets, monetary and volunteers, and that alternatives should be investigated.

After discussions with three library systems in Shelby county it was determined that the Society could best attain its goals by donating its real property, including research material, to the Germantown system in exchange for a ten year lease for "the most eastward building in the C. O. Franklin Park." Terms being agreeable, a contract was signed on October 5, 2005. Redesign and remodeling of the building took almost a year. TNGS took possession of the building in November, 2006.

Requirements of this 2006-lease having been fulfilled, the City of Germantown and TNGS entered into an agreement to extend the lease for a second ten years. This new agreement runs through June 30, 2026.