



## News Release

### **THOUSANDS OF HISTORIC SUMNER COUNTY PHOTOS DONATED FROM HISTORIAN'S WORKSHOP**

*Residents Asked to Share Missing Photos from Ernest Stark's Collection*

**Gallatin** – During the last Pubic Records Commission meeting that Sumner County Historian John Garrott attended before his passing, Garrott announced his intention to donate a collection of glass plate negatives that were stored on his property. The photos were the work of Gallatin Studio Photographer Ernest Stark, and the collection of more than 7,000 photographs shot between 1905 and 1935 continues to thrill historians as they are cleaned and restored.

"I think the thing about the particular photography of Ernest Stark, he seems to capture the quality of light in people's eyes and to me he captures their spirit," said Sumner County Archive Director Bonnie Martin. "Even nowadays you don't see that sort of thing. I really think he captured the real person inside."

Martin recalls the shock of seeing the scale of the collection that had been stored for decades in Garrott's workshop on Main Street where he built reproduction Tennessee furniture. "There were negatives all over that workshop," said Martin. "We've had people from the community come in and go through it and actually have been able to name some of the people. If they find family in there, they'll make a copy of it and add it to their family history. Even if you don't know who they are, they are such charming photographs."

With some training from the Tennessee State Library's preservation lab, Martin learned how to properly clean and store the glass negatives. Volunteers with the General Jethro Sumner Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), together with photographer Allen Haynes, then began the task of restoring each of the delicate glass negatives by hand.

DAR's Historic Preservation Chairperson, Jane Wright, is the lead on the project that began more than a year ago. "It's like a step back in time. These are relatives of a lot of the people who are still living here in Gallatin." DAR has restored 4,000 photos during seven work sessions utilizing six volunteers working two shifts a day. Wright estimates they will complete the remaining 3,000 negatives before the end of the year.

Curators at the Sumner County Archives say there are additional glass negatives in the community that were separated from Stark's collection. They are hoping residents will come forward and allow the archive to digitize the images, even if they do not wish to donate the original.

Images from the Stark Collection are available for viewing on a public computer at the Sumner County Archives building, located behind the Sumner County Administration Building at 365 North Belvedere Drive in Gallatin. Volunteers interested in cleaning glass negatives may contact Jane Wright with the DAR at 615-452-7704.

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