

DISTRICT CLERK – POLK COUNTY, TEXAS
2021/2022 PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION RECORDS PLAN

District Clerk’s Records Technology Fund Overview

The District Court Records Technology Fund is authorized in Texas Government Code 51.305. Section 51.305(d) requires the authorized fee to be used for “the preservation and restoration of the district court records archive.” Section (f) states, “the district clerk shall prepare an annual written plan for the preservation and restoration of the district clerk’s records archive.” The Commissioners Court is required to hold a public hearing on this plan and to publish notice of such hearing in a newspaper no later than 15 days prior to the hearing. This fee was due to sunset on September 1, 2019 but the 86th Legislature approved HB 686 making this \$10.00 fee a permanent fee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to define the restoration and preservation, digital capture, storage, retention and management of archived records belonging to the District Clerk’s Office. Records maintained in the District Clerk’s Office have been identified to fall under the category of “Preservation and Restoration Plan” that will provide reproduction and archiving of such records for space availability purposes. It is the intent of the District Clerk to follow guidelines set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commissioner.

GOAL

The goal is to reproduce and archive all documents, regardless of type, as efficiently as possible. The District Clerk’s office also intends to restore records, suspending or reducing deterioration of public records, improving the public access to these documents in a manner that reduces the risk of deterioration, and possible reducing or eliminating paper documents.

SCOPE

The scope of this document includes the following:

- *All District Clerk records filed at the Polk County Courthouse
- *Plans to restore and preserve records with significant historical value
- *Future plans are to improve public and governmental access and provide an archive for records that have or will be imaged.

This document addresses the restoration and preservation needs of the District Clerk Records Archive. No other departments are addressed.

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SECTION ONE: RECORDS CURRENTLY IN REPOSITORY

INVENTORY

The office of the District Clerk maintains the records of the 258th and 411th Judicial District Courts as well as records filed in the County Court at Law. Currently the District Clerk's office holds over 100 books and several thousand paper files that are related to civil and criminal actions which have occurred since the founding of Polk County in 1846.

SECTION TWO: RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

PERMANENT RECORDS

We are required by statute and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to permanently retain all court documents prior to January 1, 1951. All records from 2005 to present were imaged through a third party vendor who maintained a copy of our images offsite. In 2016 we moved all of our images from the third party vendor to our case management system and their imaging system. Beginning with fiscal year 2019 my part time person was dedicated as my records manager and she worked with some of our local high school students to organize our records in storage to get them ready for imaging and preservation. Kofile Technologies, Inc. completed preserving our earliest cases numbered 1-37. With a partial grant provided by the Texas Bar Historical Foundation and funds from this Technology Fund, Court Minute Books A and B were preserved by Kofile Technologies. These books date back to the earliest days of Polk County (1846). Shadow Boxes of the original covers of these books were presented to the County and hung in the main lobby of the Judicial Center. This year Kofile created a database for all of the prior images that have been created by them (books A-E that are both civil and criminal minute books and books F-T that are civil minutes), as well as converting the the NetData database for all of the older images that had previously been converted from ACS. This database will soon be available online to the public.

SECTION THREE: FUTURE PLANS

We intend to continue with the current preservation project to identify all permanent and historical records so they can be restored, preserved and digitized for public use. We are moving through our earlier minute books to preserve them first. Books A and B have already been preserved. This year the plan is to preserve and rebind the combined Civil/Criminal minute books C-E. These books date from 1856 to 1882.

The need for this project will continue for many years as we slowly preserve and image our old books and case files as funds permit.

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