

# DISTRICT CLERK – CHAMBERS COUNTY, TEXAS PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION RECORDS PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main duty of the district clerk as outlined in Article 5, Section 9 of the Texas Constitution is the custodian of records for the district courts. The purpose of this document is to define the restoration and preservation, digital capture, storage, retention and management of archived district court records in the district clerk's custody. It is the intent of the district clerk to follow guidelines filed with The Texas State Library and Archives Commission in digitizing and disposing of the paper records not considered permanent retention.

## GOAL

To reproduce and archive all documents, regardless of type, as efficiently as possible. The district clerk's office will be restoring records, suspending or reducing deterioration of historic records and improving public access to the records in a manner that reduces the risk of deterioration to historic paper records, and reducing or eliminating non-historic paper documents.

## SCOPE

- All district court records filed in the district clerk's office;
- Restore and preserve records with significant historical value;
- Digitally image records of non-historical value;
- Improve public and governmental access to those records.

## PROGRESS OF THE PLAN TO DATE

- a. 6900 disposed civil and criminal cases have been digitally imaged and saved in the Odyssey case management system.
- b. All 220 civil ledgers have been digitally imaged and saved in Odyssey.
- c. All 200 criminal ledgers have been digitally imaged and saved in Odyssey.
- d. 30 historic ledgers have been restored, preserved and imaged.
- e. The district clerk's office has made district court records, allowable by law, accessible on the internet through "Chambers County Portal" located on the county website for free and court documents available for purchase.
- f. 1141 pages of historic case files have been restored and preserved by Kofile.

## SECTION ONE: RECORDS CURRENTLY IN REPOSITORY

INVENTORY – Currently the district clerk's office holds the following:

- a. 431 books containing civil and criminal actions that date from 1876 to 1998; 220 civil ledgers, 126 criminal ledgers, and 85 civil/criminal ledgers of historic value;
- b. Approximately 6,500 historic case files;
- c. 265,000 microfiche containing disposed cases.

## SECTION TWO: RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

### **PERMANENT RECORDS**

The district clerk plans to preserve and restore fifty ledgers and reproduce them in an electronic format for ease of access to the public while preserving the historic value that the paper ledgers are and the documentation within them contains.

The district clerk plans to reproduce the historic case files in an electronic format for easier access to the information and to restore and preserve the historical value that the paper case files are and that the documentation within them contains.

### **PROGRESS**

Kofile is currently in possession of approximately 4400 historic case files, starting with case file number 1 through case file 4477. They have processed 1,141 pages, at an approximate cost of \$10,079. The district clerk intends to budget \$10,000 for the 2020 budget to continue this project.

Local people have been employed to copy the paper case files that do not need restoration and scan the copies into the Odyssey case management system as funds are made available. We will also have them load the images of the case files restored into the case management system from the USB drive supplied by Kofile.

### **NON-PERMANENT RECORDS**

The district clerk plans to verify all documents in active case files have been scanned into the case management system. This is due to space constraints in the office and the desire of the Supreme Court of Texas to have all records digitized.

### **PROGRESS**

The district clerk's office has successfully scanned all active cases into the case management system. Certain paper records are still available on demand due to their possible historical significance to Chambers County. The district clerk employs one part time person who is now working on converting case files restored by Kofile into our case management system. At this time the district clerk's office is approximately 80% paperless.

## SECTION THREE: FUTURE PLANS

The County invested in a new case management system, Tyler Technologies "Odyssey", to insure a seamless flow of information from arrest to disposition of a case and to allow for the possibility of a paperless court system. Tyler Technologies has two redundant backup systems securing our electronic records, however the district clerk realizes the benefit of retaining the paper records of the court that hold potentially historic records and will take the appropriate steps to preserve that paper record, while still offering an electronic record for public viewing. The district clerk's plan is to finish the restoration of historic records as funds are collected or made available and to continue to digitize all other records.

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Patti L. Henry, Chambers County District Clerk  
August 8, 2019