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# Genealogical Research Locality Guide for Lafayette County, Mississippi

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*by Kim Richardson*

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## Historical Background

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Located in northern Mississippi, Lafayette County was formed on 9 February 1836 from Monroe County from the Chickasaw lands and named for the Marquis de Lafayette, an American Revolution friend. Surrounding counties include: Calhoun, Marshall, Panola, Pontotoc, Tate, Union, and Yalobusha.

Lafayette County was largely an agricultural and livestock center at its foundation, and it was located on the Illinois Railroad making it a good locale of business. Early settlers were able to utilize its rolling hills and valleys to farm exceedingly well, making Lafayette County a prosperous location.

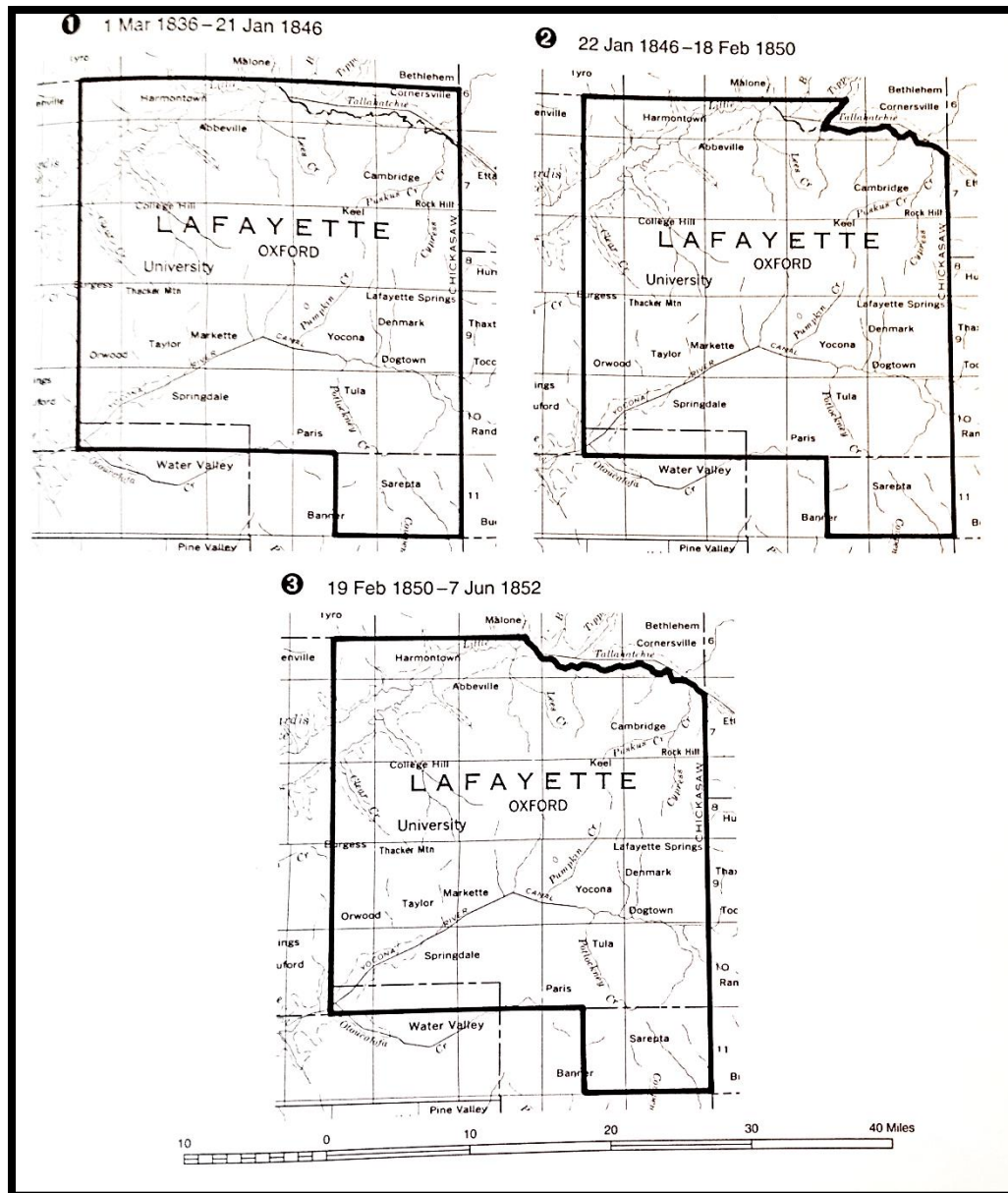
By a margin of only one vote over the coastal region, Lafayette County was chosen as the home of the University of Mississippi, which opened in 1848. The University survived the Civil War and is today a major university and learning center in the South.

The Civil War left Lafayette County in ruins. High taxes were levied to rebuild the roads, bridges, and courthouse, all of which were burned and destroyed during the war, and many people forfeited their land due to high taxation. Once begun, though, recovery was steady and swift, and by 1872 the county was well on its way to recovery.

Religious influences have traditionally been Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Churches suffered immeasurably as a result of the war, most falling to ruin by the end. Along with the economic recovery, churches were re-established throughout the county.

Of some interest to genealogists, the State Library Commission granted Lafayette, DeSoto, Tate, and Panola counties funds to create the first regional library system in 1950. The libraries cooperatively supply their holdings to the public, and by this, all holdings in the system are available to all patrons of any one of the member libraries.

Two boundary changes to Lafayette County have been made since its formation, see the maps on page 2 for illustration. To view an animation of boundary changes, go to Map of US's website: <http://www.mapofus.org/mississippi/>



Source: Peggy Tuck Sinko, compiler, *Mississippi Atlas of Historical County Boundaries*, John H. Long, ed., (New York : Simon & Schuster, 1993), 110.

Sources:

Bettersworth, John K. *Mississippi: A History*. Austin, Texas: The Steck Company, 1959.

Kendal, Julia. "Reconstruction in Lafayette County." Franklin L. Riley, ed. *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Volume 13*. University: Mississippi, 1913. Pages 223-271.

Map of US. *State and County Maps of Mississippi*.

<http://www.mapofus.org/mississippi/> : 2015.

Sinko, Peggy Tuck, compiler. *Mississippi Atlas of Historical County Boundaries*. John H. Long, ed. New York : Simon & Schuster, 1993.

## Records

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### **Listing of All Pre-1920 Mississippi County records:**

Each county's pre-1920 records are catalogued on the Mississippi Department of Archives and History's website. The listing is at this link:

<http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/queries/coinventory.php?referer=http://zed.mdah.state.ms.us>

Users simply select the county of interest and click "submit." Once on the county's page, the record type, years available, and the office of custody is viewable.

### **County Microfilm Records available at MS Department of Archives and History:**

County records available on microfilm at the Archives are listed at this link and are found by selecting the county of interest and pressing the "submit" button:

[http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/county.php?referer=\\$referer](http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/county.php?referer=$referer)

The record type and years available are viewable as well as the microfilm number.

Research requests for these records may be made by following the instructions here:

<https://www.mdah.ms.gov/research#research-request>

It is highly recommended that the request be as specific as possible in order to provide the best success.

### **Online availability of Lafayette County local records:**

All available Mississippi Data Collections on *Ancestry* are here:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/places/usa/mississippi/>

*FamilySearch* is browsable by county. Go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) > catalog > search by place > enter "United States, Mississippi, Lafayette." Choose the drop-down suggestion when it appears. Underneath the search bar, set the availability to "Online." Press the "search" button. The results will be of every item that is accessible online at *FamilySearch*. At the time of this guide's writing, the following link will take the user to the same place. If this link does not work, the user should be able to follow the above instructions to find the records.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&placeId=192795&query=%2Bplace%3A%22United%20States%2C%20Mississippi%2C%20Lafayette%22%20%2Bavailability%3AOnline>

### **Online availability of State-level Records Sorted by County:**

The following state level records are sorted by county at the listed links. (These are not found in the local records collections described in the foregoing paragraph as they are state level records and not county records.) These are browsable images, usually not indexed.

Should the listed links fail, go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) and perform a keyword search through the catalog using the underlined titles below.

Mississippi enumeration of educable children, 1850-1892; 1908-1957

These records are a listing of students within each county, often offering the names of parents in the later records.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1856425>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=https://www.familysearch.org/service/cds/recapi/collections/1856425/waypoints>

Mississippi Freedmen's Bureau Field Office records, 1865-1872 are sorted by town or locality.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2333768>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=https://www.familysearch.org/service/cds/recapi/collections/2333768/waypoints>

Mississippi, voter registration, 1871-1967 is available for Lafayette County.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/3308840>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3308840>

Mississippi, State Archives, various records, 1820-1951 can be found on FamilySearch, browsable by county. These links contain state tax records, state censuses, military grave registrations, etc. Most of these records are not indexed, so a manual search is recommended.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1919687>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=https://www.familysearch.org/service/cds/recapi/collections/1919687/waypoints>

**Birth records:**

Records prior to 1912 are not found in Lafayette County. In 1912, Mississippi began keeping birth records. The Mississippi Department of Health, Vital Statistics Office <https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/static/31,0,109,808.html> has birth records from November 1912 forward available for order.

“A certified copy of a birth certificate [less than 100 years since the birth] can be issued only to a person with legitimate and tangible interest as defined by the Rules Governing the Registration and Certification of Vital Events. Primarily this is:

- 1) Registrant (the child named on the record), if of legal age.
- 2) Parent(s) listed on the birth record, if VR office has not been notified of termination of parental rights.
- 3) Spouse, sibling(s), or grandparent(s)/child(ren) of registrant

- 4) Legal Guardian, guardianship papers must be provided.
- 5) Legal representative of one of the above persons, proof of representation must be provided.
- 6) Licensed adoption agencies working within the statutory authority of §93-17-205.
- 7) Other person(s) by court order, certified copy of court order must be provided.

[for certificates more than 100 years since the birth] For Genealogy purposes - Genealogy must be stated as purpose for certificate. Relationship to applicant must be provided. Plain paper copies are provided for genealogy purposes.”

### **Marriage records:**

Marriage records are kept by the State 1 January 1926 to 31 July 1938 and from 1 January 1942 to the present. The marriage records held in Lafayette County are stored in two different physical locations. All marriage records after 1944 are at the Lafayette County Circuit Clerk's Office and are available to the public. The Clerk's Office has marriage books prior to 1944 at the office, also available to the public. All known marriage documents (not marriage books) from 1861 to 1944 are housed by the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society in their private collection in the Genealogical Room located in the Lafayette County Library. The Clerk's office discovered ten files of marriage records in a closet on the third floor of the courthouse in 2002. After speaking with the State Archives, the Circuit Clerk transferred the loose records to the then Skipwith Historical and Genealogical Society (now the Lafayette County Genealogical and Historical Society). In return for receiving the collection, the Society agreed to preserve, secure, and make the more than 19,000 loose records available to the public. Since receiving the records, the Society has indexed into two volumes the records by grooms' names and cross referenced them by brides' names. The indices use letter codes to indicate the type of document housed in the collection. They also placed each record/document into protective sleeves in binders. The binders are kept in a glass case that is locked at all times. Records for white marriages begin in 1861, and African American marriage records are found beginning in 1865.

Lafayette County marriage records available online:

1. *FamilySearch*: Lafayette County, Mississippi marriage records, 1850-1951:  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/249858?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
2. *Ancestry*: All available Mississippi Data Collections:  
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/places/usa/mississippi/>

### **Divorce Records:**

The legislature decided divorce cases prior to 1840, and the State Department of Archives and History has an index to acts from 1817 to 1865 in which divorces are listed. The Lafayette County Chancery Court has divorces occurring after 1865.

## **Death records:**

The Mortality Schedules of 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880 are available on *FamilySearch* at <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/422723>.

Death records prior to 1912 are not found in Lafayette County and were not required by the State. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has death certificates from November 1912 to 1943 on microfiche. Indexes for these certificates are available at these three links:

1. *Ancestry*: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62090/>
2. *FamilySearch*: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3583821>
3. *Reclaim the Records* <https://archive.org/details/msdeathindex?sort=titleSorter>

A death index on microfilm for 1912 – 1925 is kept by the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society in their private collection in the Lafayette County Library.

To order a certificate image found in the above indexes from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, see this link:

<https://www.mdah.ms.gov/research#research-request>

Death records from 1912 to present may be obtained from the MS Department of Health Vital Statistics [https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/31,0,109,809.html](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/31,0,109,809.html).

“A certified copy of a death certificate [less than 50 years since the death] can be issued only to a person with legitimate and tangible interest as defined by the Rules Governing the Registration and Certification of Vital Events. Primarily this is:

- 1)Parent(s) listed on the death record.
- 2)Spouse, sibling(s), or grandparent(s)/child(ren) of registrant, proof of relationship required.
- 3)Informant must be listed on death record.
- 4)Legal Guardian, guardianship papers must be provided.
- 5)Legal representative of one of the above persons, proof of representation must be provided.
- 6)Other person(s) by court order, certified copy of court order must be provided.
- 7)Funeral Home, must be the funeral home on record that took possession of the body.

[for certificates more than 50 years since the death] For Genealogy purposes - Genealogy must be stated as purpose for certificate. Relationship to applicant must be provided. Plain paper copies are provided for genealogy purposes.”

## **Land Records/Wills/Estates/Guardianships/Adoptions/Tax Records/ Military Discharges/etc.:**

The Chancery Court holds these records for Lafayette County. Record keeping in the late 1800s to early 1900s for various types of records is intermittent. Some Chancery records are on microfilm with the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society.

Each county’s pre-1920 records are catalogued on the Mississippi Department of Archives and History’s website. The listing is at this link:

<http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/queries/coinventory.php?referer=http://zed.mdah.state.ms.us>

Users simply select the county of interest and click “submit.” Once on the county’s page, the record type, years available, and the office of custody is viewable.

All available Mississippi Data Collections of land, wills, probate, etc. on *Ancestry* are here: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/places/usa/mississippi/>

*FamilySearch* is browsable by county and then by record type. Go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) > catalog > search by place > enter “United States, Mississippi, Lafayette.” Choose the drop-down suggestion when it appears. Underneath the search bar, set the availability to “Online.” Press the “search” button. The results will be of every local Lafayette County record type accessible online at *FamilySearch*. At the time of this guide’s writing, the following link will take the user to the same place. If this link does not work, the user should be able to follow the above instructions to find the records.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&placeId=192795&query=%2Bplace%3A%22United%20States%2C%20Mississippi%2C%20Lafayette%22%20%2Bavailability%3AOnline>

Mississippi, State Archives, various records, 1820-1951 can be found on FamilySearch, browsable by county. These links contain state tax records, state censuses, military grave registrations, etc. Most of these records are not indexed, so a manual search is recommended.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1919687>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687>

or

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=https://www.familysearch.org/service/cds/recapi/collections/1919687/waypoints>

### **Newspapers:**

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has a searchable database of newspapers throughout the history of the State. *The Oxford Eagle* is the longest running paper for the area, and intermittent microfilm/digitized issues may be found at the University Library, the Oxford/Lafayette County Library, and some are held by the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society in their private collection in the Genealogical Room in the Lafayette County Library. Short running papers include the *Globe*, *Ricochet*, *Shot*, *Intelligencer*, and *Falcon*. Intermittent copies of these may be found at the local libraries as well. The Chancery Clerk’s Office has a store of hard copies of various newspapers for viewing.

The Library of Congress’s website *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>) lists the following as Lafayette County newspapers. To find copies, click on the provided link to go to that paper’s listing. At the



top of the listing click “Libraries that Have It” or to view online issue, click “Browse Issues.” If “Browse Issues” does not appear as an option, it means that there are no online issues at this website.

1. [The Constitution. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1851-18??](#)
2. [The Dollar Democrat. \(Oxford, Lafayette, Miss.\) 1842-18??](#)
3. [The Democratic flag. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1852-18??](#)
4. [The Independent. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1914-19??](#)
5. [Lafayette county news. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1899-1900](#)
6. [Lafayette county news. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1959-1961](#)
7. [Lafayette County press. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1906-1915](#)
8. [The Lafayette post. \[volume\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1937-1937](#)
9. [Random shot. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1876-1???](#)
10. [The organizer. \[online resource\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1845-18??](#)
11. [The organizer. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1845-18??](#)
12. [The Oxford falcon. \[online resource\] \(Oxford, Mississippi\) 1865-18??](#)
13. [The Oxford falcon. \[volume\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1865-18??](#)
14. [The Oxford globe. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1889-19??](#)
15. [The Oxford intelligencer. \[online resource\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1860-18??](#)
16. [The Oxford intelligencer. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1860-18??](#)
17. [The Oxford mercury. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1857-18??](#)
18. [The Oxford observer. \(Oxford, Lafayette Co., Miss.\) 1843-184?](#)
19. [The Oxford signal. \[online resource\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1856-18??](#)
20. [The Oxford signal. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1856-18??](#)
21. [Oxford sun. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1881-18??](#)
22. [The Oxford times. \(Oxford, MS\) 1985-1986](#)
23. [Oxford weekly ricochet. \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1874-18??](#)
24. [The Star of the union. \[volume\] \(Oxford, Miss.\) 1850-1???](#)
25. [Oxford eagle. \(Oxford, Lafayette Co., Miss.\) 1876-current](#)

As of the creation of this guide, *Newspapers.com* ([www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)) hosts a few of the above, but they are linked courtesy of *Chronicling America* and not unique issues.

*GenealogyBank* ([www.genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com)) has the following within its online collection, some of which are also on *Chronicling America*:

1. [Oxford Eagle](#) 02/09/2012 – Current
2. [Organizer](#) 03/31/1849 – 12/14/1850
3. [Oxford falcon](#) 11/23/1865 – 08/27/1885
4. [Oxford intelligencer](#) 06/06/1860 – 11/15/1861
5. [Oxford signal](#) 09/11/1856 – 10/09/1856
6. [Oxford eagle](#) 02/11/1876 – 12/28/1922
7. [Oxford Magazine](#) 07/15/2017 – Current

## Repositories

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### **Oxford/Lafayette County Library**

Address: 401 Bramlett Blvd, Oxford, MS 38655  
Phone: 662- 234-5751  
Web: <http://www.firstregional.org/oxford.html>  
Hours: Mon – Th 10 AM-8 PM; Fri-Sat 10 AM-5:30 PM; Sun 2 PM-5 PM  
Fees: Fees for copying and printing apply  
Parking: Parking is limited, but free; many patrons park across the street in a shopping center lot.  
Notes: Heritage Quest Online, Ancestry Library Edition, FirstSearch, Oxford African American Studies, MS Digital Library are available for use. Inter Library Loan is available. Most materials may be checked out for three weeks. Catalog online. Many ebooks are available for download.

### **University of Mississippi JD Williams Library**

Physical Address: 1 Library Loop, University, MS 38677  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1848, University, MS 38677  
Phone: 662-915-7091  
Email: [umladmin@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:umladmin@go.olemiss.edu)  
Web: <http://www.libraries.olemiss.edu/uml/>  
Hours: Hours vary between and among sessions/semesters. Check for current hours here:  
<http://www.libraries.olemiss.edu/uml/jdwilliams-calendar/month>.  
The Department of Archives and Special Collections is open Mon-Fri 8 AM-5 PM except for University holidays.  
Fees: To print, you may purchase a Library Printing Card at the West Circulation desk for \$5.00, which does not include the funds for printing: \$.15 per page for black and white and \$.50 per page for color. Microfilm printing and photocopying are \$.15 per page, and the machines accept cash. Scans are free of charge.  
Parking: Parking costs \$3 each day; passes may be obtained at the Welcome Center or online. Visitor parking is available at the Lyceum or University Avenue. Metered and garage parking are also available for a fee.  
Notes: A “subject specialist” can help you with your research, and librarians are available without an appointment at the Reference Desk. Assistance may also be reached by phone, email, or chat. Any Mississippi resident may borrow materials from the library with a valid MS driver’s license. Available for use are: Maps, Microfilm, Newspapers, Reference Materials, Videos, Digital Collections, etc. Special Collections houses films, photos, documents, microfilm, etc about the South.

## **Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society**

Physical Address: 401 Bramlett Blvd, Oxford, MS 38655

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1382, Oxford, MS 38655

Phone: 662-234-5751

Web: [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mslchgs/Lafayette\\_County\\_Historical\\_and\\_Genealogical\\_Society/Home.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mslchgs/Lafayette_County_Historical_and_Genealogical_Society/Home.html)

Hours: Mon – Th 10 AM-8 PM; Fri-Sat 10 AM-5:30 PM; Sun 2 PM-5 PM

Fees: Fees for copying apply if you use library copiers. Small numbers of copies are allowed in the genealogy room.

Parking: Parking is very limited, but is free; many patrons have to park across the street in the shopping center lot.

Notes: The genealogy room (named the Kerin Coffey Magdovitz Genealogy and History Research Room) is a privately owned, non-circulating collection tucked away in a corner on the second floor of the Oxford library. It is owned by the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society, established in 1967. The library allows the collection to be housed in the building, but no members of the library staff are responsible for its operation. Among its holdings are obituaries, cemetery records, Civil War records, Mississippi maps, how-to books, family histories, migration records, military records, marriage records, periodicals, census records, state and county histories for multiple states, and numerous other materials. Volunteers of the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society are available to assist, but no regular hours or days are established for the volunteers to be present. The volunteers receive queries from the public for look ups and will make copies and/or source notes of findings for the requester. Referrals are made to other societies, libraries, agencies, and sources. No electronic catalogues exist for the genealogy holdings, and the card catalogue has not been maintained to include all holdings. Books are shelved in sections: family, county, periodicals, censuses, etc., but within the sections, the organization is hit and miss. The genealogy room has a microfilm reader and several microfiche readers. Also, county histories and information for states other than Mississippi are available, including many publications focused on North Carolina. Many genealogical periodicals are available. One of the three shelved walls is devoted to the periodical collection. The periodicals are in the process of being indexed and organized by two volunteers. Unfortunately, the genealogy room has very limited newspapers on microfilm and none in the original. Microfilm for the Oxford Eagle is held for the dates 11Jan, 1883 - 12 Dec, 1883; 26 Nov 1936 - 5 May, 1939; and 25 Aug, 2004 - 22 Dec, 2004. Due to

the limited collection, referrals are frequently made to the nearby University of Mississippi's J. D. Williams Library, which has a vast collection of newspapers. The microfiche collection includes seemingly random censuses, indexes, and documentation.

### **Lafayette County Circuit Court**

Address: 1 Courthouse Square, Suite 101, Oxford, MS 38655  
Phone: 662-234-4951  
Email: [jeffbusby@lafayettecoms.com](mailto:jeffbusby@lafayettecoms.com)  
Web: <https://lafayettems.com/>  
Hours: Mon – Fri 8 AM -5 PM, excluding holidays. Call ahead to verify.  
Fees: Fees for printing or copying apply  
Parking: Metered parking is available all around the Square in Oxford. Parking spaces are scarce and traffic is congested Thursdays through Sundays during the college football season home game weekends.  
Notes: Lafayette County's courthouse was burned along with most of the city and county during the Civil War. It is worthy to note that the Circuit Court stores miscellaneous, old (uncatalogued) records in an old building in Taylor; therefore, no one can know for certain what records are/are not extant for the county.

On 15 March 2021, the Lafayette County Board of Supervisors approved efforts to preserve the county's oldest **civil and criminal records** (1840s-1930s) by donating the files to the University of Mississippi. The University's Law School will organize and index the files over the next two years, and the files will not be available to the public during this time. Once the project is completed (in about 2023), the index will be available to researchers via online or in-person access. [Source: Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society, "Preservation of Lafayette County Old Civil and Criminal Files," *Lafayette County Heritage News*, vol. XLII, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 8.]

### **Lafayette County Chancery Court**

Physical Address: 300 N. Lamar Blvd., Oxford, MS 38655  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1240, Oxford, MS 38655  
Phone: 662-234-2131  
Email: [swall@lafayettecoms.com](mailto:swall@lafayettecoms.com)  
Web: <https://lafayettems.com/>  
Hours: Mon – Fri 8 AM-5 PM, excluding holidays. Call ahead to verify.  
Fees: Fees for printing or copying apply  
Parking: Ample free parking is available adjacent to the Chancery building.  
Notes: Lafayette County's courthouse was burned along with most of the city and county during the Civil War. The Chancery Clerk serves as Clerk of the Chancery Court, Board of Supervisors, County Auditor,

and County Treasurer and as such is the overseer of all Chancery Court Records and Public Land Records.

**Mississippi Department of Archives and History**

Physical Address: 200 North Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571

Phone: 601-576-6850

Email: [Info@mdah.ms.gov](mailto:Info@mdah.ms.gov)

Web: <http://www.lafayettecoms.com>

Hours: Mon – Fri 8 AM-5 PM, excluding holidays. Call ahead to verify.

Fees: Fees for printing or copying apply

Parking: Ample free parking is available.