

## EDITORIAL PROCESS

Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery (LSP) Transcription Protocols draw on those adopted by the Civil War & Reconstruction Governors of Mississippi (CWRGM) and the Association of Documentary Editing (ADE).

### Locating & Identifying Ads

LSP identifies advertisements from newspapers that have been microfilmed or digitized and that are available to us through Interlibrary Loan or open access databases.

Locating these advertisements is a multi-step process:

- Identify in-scope (1865-1920) African-American newspapers in which to search. We have created a comprehensive list of in-scope papers to target for acquisition. (We also use this list to track progress.)
- Once a newspaper has been identified, we use WorldCat in conjunction with *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography* edited by James P. Danky and Maureen E. Hady, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) to determine which institution has the best, most complete run of the paper on microfilm. If that institution participates in Interlibrary Loan, then we request the microfilm through the Falvey Memorial Library at Villanova University.
- If the newspaper is available in an open-source, freely accessible online database such as the Library of Congress's Chronicling America, and the issues available are the best, most complete set available, then we search the available issues online.
- Searching the newspapers is a tedious process. We begin by conducting a targeted scan of each column on each page; reading headlines, subject lines, and titles looking for variations in wording: "Last Seen," "Information Wanted," "Personal," "Lost Friend/s," "Have you seen them?" "Missing," and "Dear Editor."
- When an LSP staff member finds an ad, they read the entire ad to verify that it was taken out by an African-American person searching for a family member or loved one, post emancipation (or if the newspaper is an antebellum newspaper, that the person being sought is identified as "black," "negro," "mulatto," "colored," or with reference to their status as "slave" or "free").

### Identifying Ads:

- When an in-scope ad is located, the LSP staff member creates a high-resolution TIFF and assigns the file a title **using our naming taxonomy**, which includes a standard abbreviation of the newspaper, the date of the advertisement (YEARMONTHDAY), full name of the searcher, and initials of the staff member who found the ad.  
For example: An [1890 advertisement](#) taken out by Elizabeth Pettiford in the *Washington Appeal* scanned by Judy Giesberg becomes:  
WA\_18900712\_ELIZABETHPETTIFORD\_JAG.
- This TIFF file is archived in Dropbox.
- From this TIFF file, the staff member creates a duplicate that is cropped, rotated, and modified to enhance readability. This file is saved as a JPEG and uploaded and published to the site, along with basic Dublin Core metadata.

### **Transcription Protocol:**

LSP transcriptions are crowd sourced. Textual access to the ads is provided by volunteers who transcribe the ads. Volunteers follow the following guidelines.

1. Transcribe the document as it appears in the window. What you type gets transferred to the main document record as transcription, so don't add *anything* like a transcriber's signature or notes.
2. Preserve the spelling of the document, even if words are misspelled.
3. Preserve the punctuation of the document, even if it seems wrong to you.
4. If you cannot make out a word, include [indecipherable] in the place of the illegible word.
5. Do not use the tab button; it causes formatting problems. To indicate a paragraph, use two hard returns to leave a line between the paragraphs in the editing window.
6. If you have additional information about the document or wish to explain any of your transcription decisions, leave a note for the editors.

Volunteers' transcriptions are visible to other users, but until they have been doubly verified and published to the site, they remain temporary, and the contents of these temporary transcriptions cannot be searched via the search mechanism.

### **LSP Transcription Verification Protocol**

LSP staff members apply a rigorous two-step verification process to each volunteer transcription. Staff follows the following protocol throughout this process:

- **Spelling and Grammar:** Record all words as they appear in the ad. Preserve all misspelled words, including if the same name or word is spelled multiple ways in the same ad; record all variations exactly as they appear in the ad. Preserve all grammatical errors.
- **Punctuation:** Maintain all punctuation as it appears in the original ad. Do not add or delete punctuation to correct errors in the original.
- **Capitalization:** Preserve all capital or lower-case typography as it appears in the ad. If the letter or text is not capitalized in the original ad, then do not capitalize it in the transcription, even if it should be.
- **Line Breaks:** Transcriptions should follow the original ad. Maintain line breaks as they appear using a hard return. Use hard returns to indicate line breaks before/after the heading, date, and any opening/closing salutation as they may appear in the ad.
- **Hyphenated Words:** Record hyphenated words as they appear in the ad and then immediately after the hyphenated word, enter the [whole word] in brackets. This makes the hyphenated word searchable.
- **Abbreviations:** Preserve any abbreviations as they appear.
- **Duplicate Words:** Record duplicate words as they appear in the original.
- **Spacing between Initials:** Regularize spacing between initials. If a name appears as G.W. Samuels, record it as G. W. Samuels.


- **Indentations:** Do not indent any line of the ad. Each line of every transcription for each ad should be left-justified.
- **For a New Paragraph:** Use two hard returns to start a new paragraph.
- **Dash Length:** Use an em dash to make all dash lengths consistent (do not use spaces around the em dash).
- **Preserve Mistakes:** If there is a mistake in the original, preserve it so that the transcription matches the ad exactly (except for indentations.)
- **For Unreadable Words:** If a word is illegible, insert [indecipherable] in place of the word that you cannot decipher. Include the brackets. If, as the transcription undergoes second round of verification this word is identified, the original staff member should be consulted before a decision is made to replace [indecipherable].
- **Nothing Extra:** Take every precaution that there is nothing extra added to the transcription. (Sometimes volunteer transcribers “sign” their work or include other bits of information.)

## Editing and Publishing the Transcription of G. W. Samuels's Advertisement

### Illustration of Double Verification Process:

The multi-step verification process that ensures the accuracy of a transcription is illustrated below:

#3721



1. Where is His Brother?  
Paris, Ky. - I had a brother name Harvey. We called him "Tandy Bangs." I was small when he was sold by a man named Jim Hall, at Lexington, Ky., in 1863. His mother's name is Mahale; a sister, Sallie Williams and a brother, G. W. Samuels. We would like to find out where he is, if alive. We were all born about one mile from Paris, Ky., on the Lexington pike, and were owned by William Lyle. Any information will be gladly received by G.W. Samuels, box 431, Paris, Ky.

2. HP April 8, 2021

Where is His Brother?  
PARIS, Ky. - I had a brother named Harvey. We called him "Tandy Bangs." I was small when he was sold by a man named Jim Hall, at Lexington, Ky., in 1863. His mother's name is Mahale; a sister, Sallie Williams and a brother, G. W. Samuels. We would like to find out where he is, if alive. We were all born about one mile from Paris, Ky., on the Lexington pike, and were owned by William [William] Lyle. Any information will be gladly received by G. W. Samuels, box 431, Paris, Ky.

3. spf approved 4.24.2021

Hannah Pfeifer Deleted: i  
Hannah Pfeifer Deleted: aris  
Hannah Pfeifer Deleted: . - I  
Hannah Pfeifer Deleted:  
Hannah Pfeifer Deleted: R  
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### Instructions for the process:

LSP staff members follow the instructions below. (During step 2 of the verification process, tags are applied to the ad to enhance discoverability. More on that below, see Tagging Protocol.)

PART 1: To begin the verification process, Reviewer #1:

1. Log-in to the *Last Seen* website as an Omeka administrator.

2. Click on the link for “Tags” and search ads identified as “untranscribed” to find items awaiting verification.
3. Open the “Transcriptions” Word document in the LSP shared Dropbox “Transcriptions” folder.
4. Record the ad’s Item Number
5. Copy an image of the ad from the website and import the transcription into the Word document so that the transcription appears beneath the original document.
6. Make a second copy of the transcription and paste it beneath the original. This second version is used for markup.
7. Edit the transcription with “track changes” enabled and following LSP Protocol.
8. Note any problems or concerns in a “comment box.”
9. Read through the Glossary of Tags and in a “comment box” identify potential tags. Document these in a comment appended to the ad.
10. Save the document to the LSP Dropbox Transcriptions folder.

#### PART 2: Double verification, Reviewer #2:

1. Open the Word document and locate the ad to be double-proofed. Make sure that “track changes” is still enabled.
2. Read through the original ad alongside the edited transcription. Edit transcription if needed.
3. Read through and, if possible, resolve any comments left by Reviewer #1. If comments cannot be resolved, notate them for team discussion.
4. Read through the Glossary of Tags and those tags suggested by Reviewer #1. Modify tags as needed in the comment box.
5. Log-in to the *Last Seen* website as an Omeka administrator.
6. Locate the ad, using the Item Number. Copy and paste the edited transcription into the Scripto text box.
7. Click on “Tags” and apply relevant tags to the ad’s metadata.
8. Remove the “untranscribed” tag.
9. Add a “verify tags” tag. (This alerts the Director and/or Director of Research and Analysis that a new ad has been transcribed and tags have been added that need final approval)
10. Save the document.

## **Tagging Protocol**

While textual access to the ads is provided through the transcription process, intellectual access is provided via the use of an established Tagging Protocol. Like annotation, tagging is intended to provide context for the documents, to “supply what’s missing.” Context (1) guides editors in providing accurate transcription, (2) allows readers to fully understand the document and how it fits into the scholarship on the period, and (3) helps readers to see connections between individual documents.<sup>1</sup> Tags are labels with specific meanings assigned to each ad as a means of identifying content that is not explicitly stated in the ad itself. For example, an ad tagged with “found” indicates that the ad was taken out by someone who successfully located their loved one(s). A tag such as “changed name” alerts readers that someone in the ad changed their name after emancipation, either through marriage or of their own accord. Tags allow LSP staff to provide context while keeping this information separate and distinct from the original text of the ad.

Trained historians and graduate students assign tags via a rigorous protocol that enables users to see the unspoken inferences contained in many ads. The final part of the transcription process is assigning tags to the ad in accordance with the LSP Tagging Protocol.

### **Verifying tags:**

To ensure consistency in the application of tags, newly assigned tags undergo periodic review. LSP staff assign tags in the process of double-verifying the volunteer transcriptions using the established Glossary of Tags. Both reviewers agree on the appropriate tags for the ad from the list of 120 tags currently in use. When the transcription is published, LSP staff flag these newly transcribed ads with a temporary tag reading “verify tag.” The Director or Director of Research and Analysis reviews these periodically, edits as necessary, and removes the “verify tag” tag.

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<sup>1</sup> David Nordloh, “Supplying What’s Missing in Editions of Selected Letters,” *Scholarly Publishing*, 1985-86, 43-4.