



NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and* RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
8601 ADELPHI ROAD COLLEGE PARK, MD 20740-6001  
[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

***Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.***

June 1, 2018

Ms. Dora Blackwell  
Social Security Administration  
818 Altmeyer Building  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235-0001  
[dora.m.blackwell@ssa.gov](mailto:dora.m.blackwell@ssa.gov)

Dear Ms. Blackwell:

Thank you for notifying the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) about a loss of records at the Social Security Administration (SSA) Security Records Branch located in Boyers, Pennsylvania. In an email, dated May 21, 2018, we were informed that, “a relatively small grouping of Earnings Records (referred to hereafter as “1086 film”) stored on cellulose acetate-based microfilm has begun to deteriorate through a process called ‘Vinegar Syndrome’, whereby the film outgasses acetic acid and becomes warped, brittle, curled and over time, unusable.”

This email also indicated that:

In an effort to safeguard the agency’s permanent and long-term temporary records stored on microfilm, SSA, in consultation with NARA, launched the Microfilm Digitization Project in 2016. The mission of this initiative is to digitize 1.2 million reels of microfilm as an effective safeguard to prevent further loss of the microfilmed records. During the planning and assessment phase of the project, SSA contracted with Northrop Grumman to conduct a baseline assessment of the microfilm. Northrop Grumman found groupings within the “1086 film” to be in advanced stages of vinegar syndrome. When SRB technicians began the scanning/digitization of the 1086 Master Copy Earnings film they discovered that, due to vinegar syndrome, some of the records relating to 1959 have developed a crystalized layer, obscuring the data thereby making the film unreadable. It is important to note that there may be other earnings-related records housed on cellulose acetate-based microfilm that may also be unreadable.

Although the Microfilm Digitization Project effectively addresses SSA’s responsibility to prevent the unlawful or accidental removal, defacing, alteration or destruction of records as outlined in 36 CFR §1230.10, NARA is requesting that you provide us with quarterly status reports of the Microfilm Digitization Project until its completion. The status reports should include the identification of and quantity of records that have been successfully digitized, as well as the identification of and quantity of any unreadable records compromised by vinegar syndrome.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact Andréa Noel, Senior Records Analyst, at 301-837-3564 or by email at [andrea.noel@nara.gov](mailto:andrea.noel@nara.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence V. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and a distinct 'V'.

LAURENCE BREWER  
Chief Records Officer  
for the U.S. Government



Office of the Chief  
Records Officer for the  
U.S. Government

***Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.***

October 3, 2022

Dora Blackwell  
Agency Records Officer  
Social Security Administration  
818 Altmeyer Building  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235-0001  
dora.m.blackwell@ssa.gov

Dear Dora Blackwell,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) received the Social Security Administration's (SSA) final quarterly status report for the Microfilm Digitization Project. SSA's digitization project sought to digitize 1.2 million reels of microfilm to prevent further loss of the microfilmed records due to deteriorate through a process called "Vinegar Syndrome", whereby the microfilm outgasses acetic acid and becomes warped, brittle, curled and over time, unusable.

The cellulose acetate-based microfilm was in use from the mid-1930s until the 1980s. SSA's "1086 film" covers earnings reported to SSA for the years 1936 – 1975 and is scheduled under N1-47-09-03 Earnings Recording and Self-Employment Income System as long-term temporary records with a retention period of 300 years.

NARA acknowledges that approximately 0.58% of microfilm covering records from 1958-1960 were unreadable due to "Vinegar Syndrome". Based on the information provided, the reporting requirements of 36 CFR 1230.14(a) have been met and this matter is now resolved. If you have any questions, please contact me at [laurence.brewer@nara.gov](mailto:laurence.brewer@nara.gov). Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

LAURENCE BREWER  
Chief Records Officer  
for the U.S. Government