DISCOVER THE ARCHIVES

An Orientation for Researchers
AGENDA

• Introduction to the Archives
• Introduction to the Collections
  • Using the Collections
  • Digital Collections
INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHIVES

The City of Savannah Municipal Archives division:

• Collects, manages, preserves, and makes accessible records documenting the City of Savannah's history

• Administers the records management program and the City Records Center to increase the efficiency of City agencies

• Shares the City's history with City employees, citizens, and visitors through outreach activities
INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTIONS

Overall collections reflect:

- City of Savannah incorporation date of 1789
  - Collections are particularly strong 19th century-forward (though there are some gaps)
  - Do not hold records prior to incorporation, including Colonial-era records (refer to Georgia Archives and Georgia Historical Society)

- City of Savannah corporate limits
  - Records reflect City of Savannah corporate limits and properties; we do not hold records for unincorporated Chatham County or other local municipalities
  - Records refer to the corporate limits for the time period being researched, not modern limits

- City of Savannah government functions
  - For example, Building Permits and Inspections, City Council Minutes and Mayor’s Papers, City Manager’s Records, Business Licenses, etc.; think of how the City interacts with citizens and businesses
  - Very few personal papers are held here, with the largest exception being the W.W. Law Collection
Use this as a jumping off point for research.

It is EXTREMELY important to make a research appointment to ensure you have a successful research visit!
USING THE COLLECTIONS: USING THE ARCHIVES

This page contains almost all the information you need to get started with research.

Explore the Collections
Research Guides
Digital Collections

Contact Us
Research by appointment. Please contact the Archivist to schedule an appointment or with questions regarding collections.

Using the Archives
The Library & Archives prepares finding aids and inventories for all archival collections that are open to the public. All of these research tools are available to you through Explore the Collections.

The Library & Archives maintains a collection of reference publications related to municipal government work and issues. The Reference Library Collections are catalogued in the international bibliographic database WorldCat.

Search for an item in libraries near you:
Enter title, subject or author

WorldCat.org >>

Research Guides
Additionally, we have prepared several Research Guides to assist you with specific types of research, including building and genealogical research, and direct you to specific collections that may be of use to you.

Reference Requests
The Library & Archives services reference requests from researchers and the general public which relate to archival and historical City records under its administration in the City Records Center. If you need reference assistance with our collections, please Ask a Question.

Onsite Research Appointments
Research appointments are required for on-site research visits. Please contact the Archivist to schedule an appointment.

Preparing for a Research Visit
These are important administrative forms. Please review these links before starting your research process. You will be asked to fill out the Research Application when you come in for your Research Appointment.
USING THE COLLECTIONS: RULES & PROCEDURES

- Appointments must be made at least 1 working/business day in advance
  - Call or email the Archivist (912-651-6412, Archives@savannahga.gov)
  - Researchers must complete a research application once per year, photo ID is required

- No food or drink is permitted in the Archives

- You must handle all materials carefully (no leaning, pressing, rough handling); cotton gloves are provided for handling photographs, film, and artifacts

- Pencils only, no pens may be used in the Archives
USING THE COLLECTIONS: RULES & PROCEDURES

• Photography (including cellphones) is permitted, no flash
• Photocopy Services: 10 cents per page; payable by check, money order, or cash (exact change only)
• Digitization Services: currently there is no charge for this service (up to 11”x17”); staff time may be charged for large requests; scans are provided via email or ftp transfer
• Permission to reproduce for publication (books, articles, exhibits, websites, etc.) must be obtained before publication. The form is available on website.

CITATION:

Item and Collection Identification. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.
Under the Research Guides tab, there are many subject guides that link you to the most useful collections for each topic.

- Building Research Checklist (PDF)
- Genealogy Research Checklist (PDF)
- Resources for Researching Businesses (PDF)
- Resources for Researching City Employees (PDF)
- Resources for Researching Neighborhoods & Community History (PDF)
- Resources for Researching African American History (PDF)
- Engineering and Public Works Resource List (PDF)
- Port of Savannah Resource List (PDF)
- The W. W. Law Collection - Collections Guide (PDF)
- Municipal Slavery Research Project Brochure (PDF)
- Resources for Researching World War I Soldiers (PDF)
- Municipal Archives Brochure (PDF)
This is a Research Guide example. The hyperlinks take you to the related finding aids.

Pay close attention to the date range listed on each entry. It can help you easily decide if a collection is useful to you or not.
### USING THE COLLECTIONS: EXPLORE THE COLLECTIONS

- The Explore the Collections page lists all the collections (in alphabetical order) that are available to the public, with links to the collection finding aid.
- Related digital collections are linked below the main collection entry.

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#### Explore the Collections

- Archival Collections Listed Alphabetically
  - Collection / Record Series Title [Record Series Number], Dates [Extent/Size]
  - Record Group Title [Record Group Number]
  - Alternate Records Location (if applicable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection / Record Series Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Extent/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts, Committee on</td>
<td>1866-1932</td>
<td>[15 document cases (7.5 cubic feet)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Council Meeting Papers</td>
<td>Record Series 0115-001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Bicentennial (1776-1976) Collection</td>
<td>1868-1976, no date</td>
<td>[28 folders, 1 tube (0.75 cubic feet)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Library and Municipal Archives Records</td>
<td>Record Group 1121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Artifacts: Cloverdale Waste Water Sewer System Project</td>
<td>1850-circa 1916, no date</td>
<td>[1 archival box (0.5 cubic feet)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Library and Municipal Archives Records</td>
<td>Record Group 1121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Artifacts: Cluskey Embankment Stores Archaeology Project</td>
<td>1850-circa 1920, 2012-2014, no date</td>
<td>[22 records cartons, 1 oversized folder (11.25 cubic feet)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Library and Municipal Archives Records</td>
<td>Record Group 1121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact Collections: U.S.S. Savannah and N.S. Savannah</td>
<td>Record Series 1121-028</td>
<td>1938, 1962, 2012, no date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Library and Municipal Archives Records</td>
<td>Record Group 1121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING THE COLLECTIONS: FINDING AIDS

What is a finding aid?:

A description of records that gives a repository intellectual control over materials and that assists users to gain access and understand the materials in context with information about acquisition, processing, historical note, scope of the collection, arrangement information, and an inventory of the contents.
## USING THE COLLECTIONS: FINDING AIDS

### Record Series: 5600IN

**Name:** City of Savannah, Georgia Records – Inspections Department  
**Dates:** 1866-1977  
**Extent/Size:** 52 volumes and 84 document cases (45.73 cubic feet)

### Organizational History:

Prior to 1884, the City Surveyor had the responsibility of approving building requests (Code of Savannah 1898, p. 97). According to an ordinance passed in 1884, a permit from the Clerk of Council was necessary before a person could start building a structure or repair a structure, for work costing over $100 (Code of Savannah 1898, p. 152). In 1904, a Building Inspector was appointed to inspect all construction sites, and building permits were issued by the Tax Assessor’s office (Code of Savannah 1907, p. 176). By 1917, the permits were issued by the Building Inspector, who would then report to the Committee on Streets and Lanes (Code of Savannah 1918, p. 201).

In 1956, the title of the office of Building Inspector was changed to Director of Public Improvements (Code of Savannah 1958, p. 310). Today the Development Services department, in the Public Development Bureau, carries on the functions of engineering, surveying, building inspection and permitting services (2008 Service Program and Budget, p. 120). Development Services is responsible for interpreting and enforcing the codes that affect the safety and welfare of the public and its property. The codes regulate building and site construction, life safety and structural items, as well as electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems. The Property Maintenance department is responsible for enforcement of property maintenance codes, to promote a safe, clean and healthy environment (2008 Service Program and Budget, p. 126).

### Scope and Content:

Record Series 5600IN City of Savannah, Georgia Records – Inspections Department (1866-1977), is arranged into the following sub-series. See Scope and Content notes for each sub-series for further information about the content and arrangement of the materials.

- 5600IN-010.1 Improvement Books – Improvement Books (Ward)
- 5600IN-010.2 Improvement Books – Improvement Book (Date)
- 5600IN-010.3 Improvement Books – New Improvement Books (Name)
- 5600IN-020.1 Building Permit Registers – Building Permit Register Books
- 5600IN-020.2 Building Permit Registers – Building Permit Record Books
- 5600IN-020.3 Building Permit Registers – Building Permit Log Book
- 5600IN-020A Building Permit Receipt Book
- 5600IN-030 Permit Register Indexes
- 5600IN-040 Applications for Building Permits (Ward)
- 5600IN-050 Applications for Building Permits
- 5600IN-060 Letter Book - Committee for Opening Streets
Using the Collections: Finding Aids

Record Series #: 56001N
Name: City of Savannah, Georgia Records – Inspections Department
Dates: 1866-1977
Extent/Size: 52 volumes and 84 document cases (46.78 cubic feet)

This top matter gives you a brief summary of the collection, including collection #, name/title, date range, and size.
There is usually a historical note that tells you about the entity that produced the records.
The Scope and Content note describes what you will find in the collection or point you to sub-series’ finding aids.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5600IN-010.1</th>
<th>Improvement Books – Improvement Books (Ward)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5600IN-010.2</td>
<td>Improvement Books – Improvement Book (Date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5600IN-010.3</td>
<td>Improvement Books – New Improvement Books (Name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5600IN-020.1</td>
<td>Building Permit Registers – Building Permit Register Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>5600IN-020.2</td>
<td>Building Permit Registers – Building Permit Record Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>5600IN-060</td>
<td>Letter Book – Committee for Opening Streets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING THE COLLECTIONS: FINDING AIDS

Sub-series #: 5600IN-010.1
Name: Improvement Books (Ward)
Dates: 1875-1877, 1880, 1886-1889, 1892, 1894-1895
Extent/Size: 6 volumes (0.5 cubic feet)

Sub-series description:
Sub-series 5600IN-010.1 Improvement Books (Ward) (1875-1877, 1880, 1886-1889, 1892, 1894-1895) includes six volumes documenting improvements according to the ward they were located in. The records include: ward; lot number; owner’s name; value of the improvement; and a summary, by ward, for each six month period with the taxable value of each ward’s improvements listed.

Arrangement:
Alphabetical by ward every six months.

Inventory:
5600IN-010.1 Volume 1  Improvements, 1875-1877
5600IN-010.1 Volume 1A Improvements, 1880 (labeled 1884-1885)
5600IN-010.1 Volume 2  Improvements (Indexed), 1886-1889
5600IN-010.1 Volume 3  Improvements, 1892 (labeled 1893)
5600IN-010.1 Volume 4  Improvements, 1894 (labeled 1895)
5600IN-010.1 Volume 5  Improvements, 1895 (labeled 1896)

**Pay close attention to the arrangement note so that you know what you will need to request, or if you have the proper information for the records to be usable for you.**

The sub-series finding aid will be set up similarly with date ranges, a description of the information available, an arrangement note, and an inventory of the specific items.
The Digital Collections page lists and links to all of our digitized collections available online.
A selection of the Municipal Archives’ photo collections can be searched in the Digital Image Catalog.
The Digital Library of Georgia hosts several collections, including Mayor’s papers, annual reports, oral histories, and map collections.
Historic Savannah City Codes are available and keyword searchable here.
Records useful for genealogical research are available through Ancestry.com, including Birth, Marriage, Death, Burial, Voting, and Naturalization Records.
MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES RESEARCH TIPS

• Make a research appointment with the Archivist

• Start your research online with the Research Guides and Finding Aids and be prepared with a list of the items you would like to see before making an appointment
  • Collection/Record Series Number and Title/Name
  • Specific Volume or Item Numbers

• Please do not be afraid to ask for help!
  • Have dates, names, or legal descriptions regarding your research topic (property, family, individual, business, etc.) ready if you are not sure where to start

• To schedule a research appointment or for assistance with the online resources, please contact the Archivist at (912) 651-6412 or Archives@savannahga.gov