Archives Alive!
A Yellow Fever Investigation

An Introduction to Archives and the Deadly History of Yellow Fever

In today's program we will...

Learn about Yellow Fever and its deadly impact on Savannah

Use primary source archival materials to research Yellow Fever

Handle original archival materials safely

Test your cursive handwriting skills!

What does the word Archive mean?

Archive ar·chive | \ ˈär-ˌkīv \ *noun*

Definition

1: The records created by people and organizations as they lived and worked. An archival collection is a unique body of information, created at a particular time by a particular organization or individual as the result of a particular activity

2: a place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are preserved

3: The organization responsible for preserving or making available archival materials

Types of Archives

Historical Societies

Government Archives

Community Archives

Corporate Archives

Religious Archives

Digital Collections

COLLECTION
10th-16th Century Liturgical Chants
The acquisition of medieval liturgical chant manuscripts that trace the history of music notation as it evolved over

COLLECTION
Aaron Copland Collection
The first release of the online collection contains approximately 1,000 items that yield a total of about 5,000 images

Digital Archives

...and so many more!

Introduction to the Archives

The City of Savannah Municipal Archives:

- 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

  – Colonial-era records are not held here.

- City of Savannah corporate limits

  - Think corporate limits for the time period being researched, not modern limits.

- City of Savannah government functions

  – Very few personal papers are held here, with the largest exception being the W. W. Law Collection.
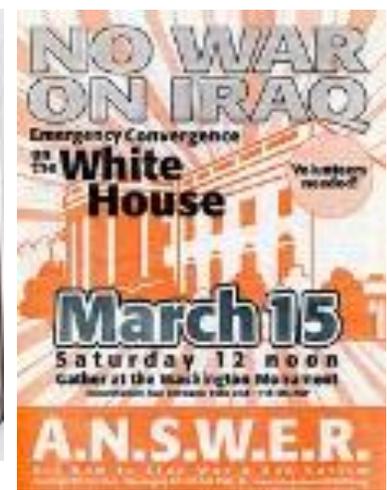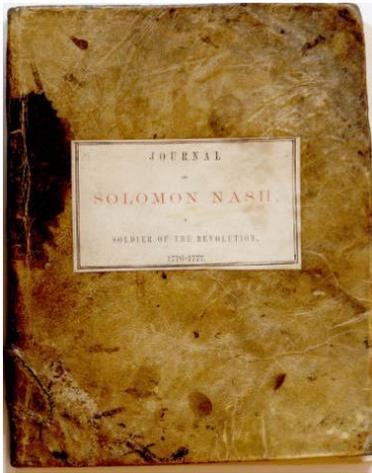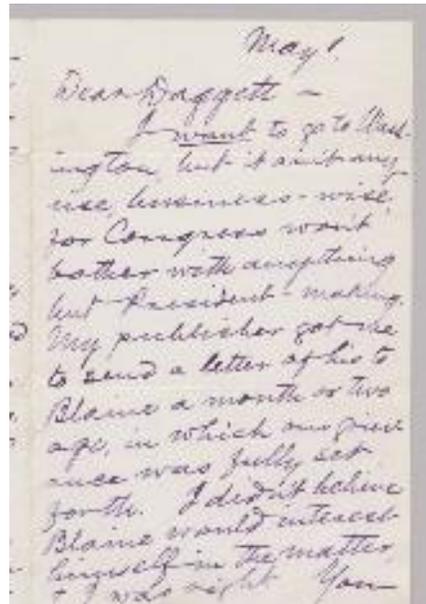
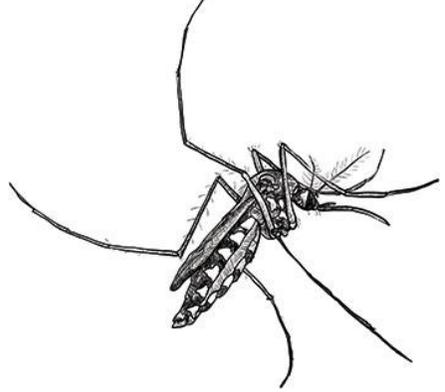Archival collections can contain just about anything that was created or saved by a person or organization

Primary Sources

Materials that provide direct evidence,
first-hand testimony, or an eyewitness account
of a topic or event.

They can be published or unpublished items
in any format, including handwritten letters,
images, sound, or objects.

What is Yellow Fever

- Infectious disease transmitted by mosquitoes
- Symptoms include: fever, chills, headache, backache, nausea, vomiting, skin and eyes appear yellow (jaundice)
- No specific treatment: good nursing, supportive care
- Preventable: vaccination, control mosquito populations
- Savannah Yellow Fever Outbreaks of 1820, 1854, and 1876
- Low country environment (marshy, wet, low land) perfect for cultivating rice and breeding mosquitos
- Deadly epidemic factors: poor street drainage, poor hygiene, rainy summers, and close living quarters

Today's Program ....

- Break into 5 equal groups
- 5 Activity Stations (15 minutes each)
  - Identifying Resources
  - Savannah Yellow Fever History
  - Handwriting Challenge
  - Death Register Review
  - Map Exploration
- Wrap-Up Exercise

What you will be using…

- Finding Aid – a description of records that helps researchers identify useful information

- *"A History of the City Government of Savannah, Ga. From 1790 to 1901"* by Thomas Gamble, Jr.
  - Gamble went on to be Mayor of Savannah from 1933-1937, 1939-1945
  - History compiled using City Council minutes and other City records

- Mayor's Letter Books – transcribed outgoing letters from the Mayor to correspondents

- Death Registers – record of people who died in Savannah monthly, gives important information about the person and why they died

- Maps – can give important information about geography, but also the cultural landscape such as parks, squares, buildings and historical events

Remember!

Records are created by people, and people make mistakes (just like we still do!)

Keep an eye open for any human errors in the archival materials.

Handling Records

Handling Records:

- Pencils only
- Be very careful when turning pages
- Do not pick up original archival materials
- Do not lean or write on archival materials
- Keep papers and pencils far away
        from original documents

Mistreatment of original documents will result in being removed from the exercise

Do I need to wear gloves in the archives?