

Archives Alive!

Photographs in the Archives

An Introduction to Archives and Reading Photographs

In today's program we will...

Learn about what Archives are

Use photographs from the Archives
to learn about reading and interpreting them

Handle original archival materials safely

What does the word Archive mean?



Archive ar·chive | \ 'är-,kīv \ *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:

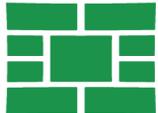
- Collects, manages, preserves, and makes accessible records documenting the City of Savannah's history
- Administers the records management program and the City Records Center to increase the efficiency of City agencies
- Shares the City's history with City employees, citizens and visitors through outreach activities

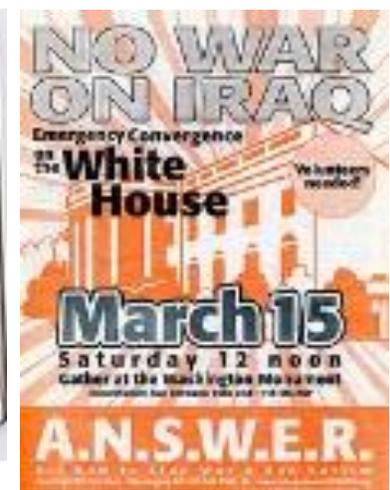
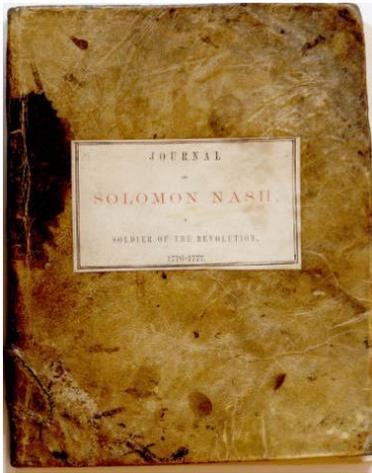


Introduction to the City of Savannah Collections

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.

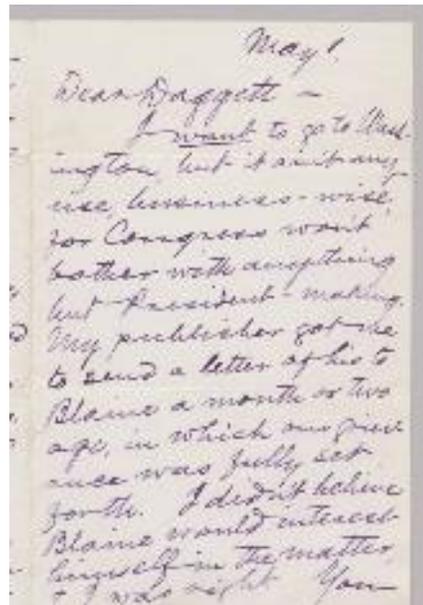




Archival collections can contain just about anything that was created or saved by a person or organization



WayBack Machine





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.

A Picture is worth a thousand words...



- *Photographs give visual information about a time, place, person or event*
- *They help us learn about clothes, hairstyles, and the way buildings looked in the past*
- *They are records of events that you don't have to be able to read to understand*
- *They may appear true, but the photographer can make choices about what to include in the picture that changes how we understand the subject.*

Learning about Photographs...

Strengths

- + Visual records of a moment in time
- + Convey many details about people, places, objects, and events
- + Convey information about everyday life and behavior that is best communicated in visual terms (hair and clothing styles, interior design)
- + Sometimes provide evidence of attitude
- + Important to the study of people who did not leave many written records
- + Can stimulate the personal involvement of the viewer
- + Do not require fluency in a particular language to understand
- + Can be used to stimulate the memory of people

Learning about Photographs...

Limitations

- Not a complete or objective source: the image that serves as the lasting record does not equate directly with the reality of the event itself
- Relationship of the photographer to those being photographed often difficult to determine
- Reflect the bias or perspective of the photographer including choices about:
 - what is included in the frame of the camera
 - the moment in time recorded in the photograph
 - the subject matter that the person present at the event thought was important to record
 - whether or not to manipulate the people or objects in the picture
- People, place, date, and the name of the photographer are often not identified.
- The emotions and thoughts of those involved often are not evident.
- Information from this kind of source is often suggestive rather than definitive. Photographs must be studied in conjunction with other evidence. One must look at many photographs and/or other source materials such as documents and oral histories to determine if the information is unusual or part of a larger pattern.

How to Read a Photograph

- ***What is the subject of the picture?***
 - The subject is the person, place, event, or thing that the photograph is showing
- ***Look at how the subject is presented. Is it shown with any special objects or in a special way that tells us something about it?***
 - Portraits are pictures of people. Sometimes people are photographed with things that are special to them to tell us about their life.
- ***Is the picture black and white or in color?***
 - This can tell you how old the picture is, if it is a snapshot or an artistic photo, or something about what the artist is trying to tell us.
- ***Perspective is the angle at which the photograph is taken.***
 - Images can be taken from the front, side, back, aerial (from the air), close up or far away.

Think about WHY the photographer made these choices and what they say about the subject they are presenting

What are some things that you
or your family take pictures of?

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?

