

Archives Alive!

*Five Years that Changed Savannah Forever:
Reflecting on the Civil Rights Movement
through the W.W. Law Collection*

An Introduction to Archives and Reading Photographs

In today's program we will...

- Learn what Archives are
- Learn about the Civil Rights Movement in Savannah
- Use photographs from the Archives to learn about reading and interpreting photographs
- 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



Why do we need Archives?

- Archives are important because they provide evidence of events and tell us more about individuals and institutions.
 - They tell stories.
 - They increase our sense of identity and understanding of cultures.
 - They can even ensure justice.
- People use Archives to research their families, their cities, their culture, their property, their hobbies, for school and work, and more!
- Archival materials are used in museum exhibits, books, articles, school curriculums, and art projects.

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 City Archives

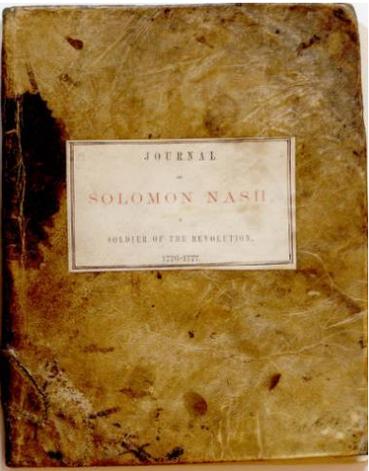
The City of Savannah Municipal Archives:

- 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 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**
 - Consider how citizens and businesses intersect with City government (building permits, business licenses, City Council records).
 - 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



May!
Dear Daggert -
I want to go to Washington but it's a busy time here, business-wise, for Congress won't bother with anything but President-making. My publisher got me to send a letter of his to Blaine a month or two ago, in which my piece was fully set forth. I didn't believe Blaine would intercede himself in the matter & I was right. You



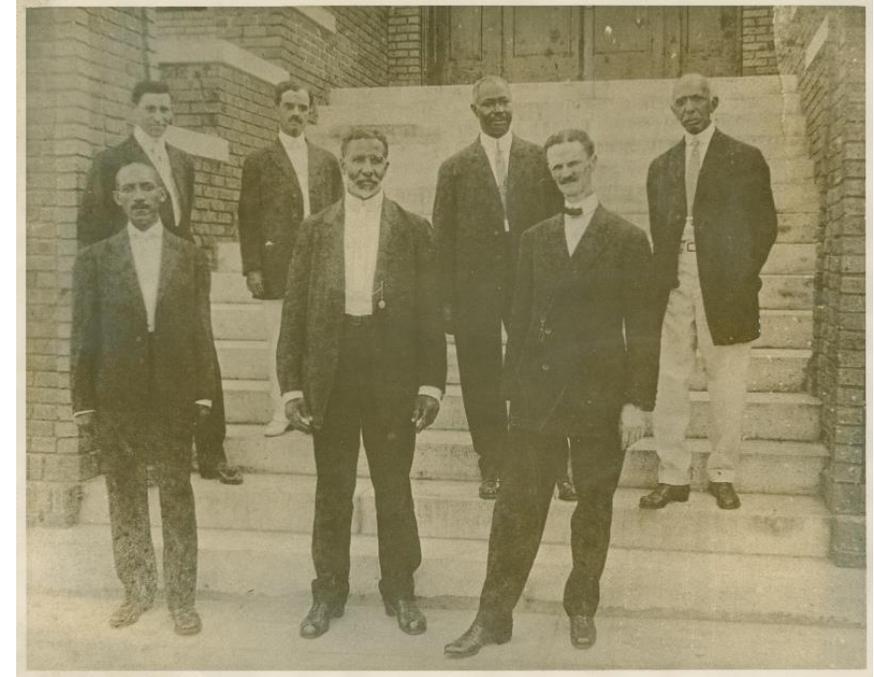
Primary Sources

- 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

From *Engaging Students with Primary Sources* produced by the Smithsonian Museum of American History

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.

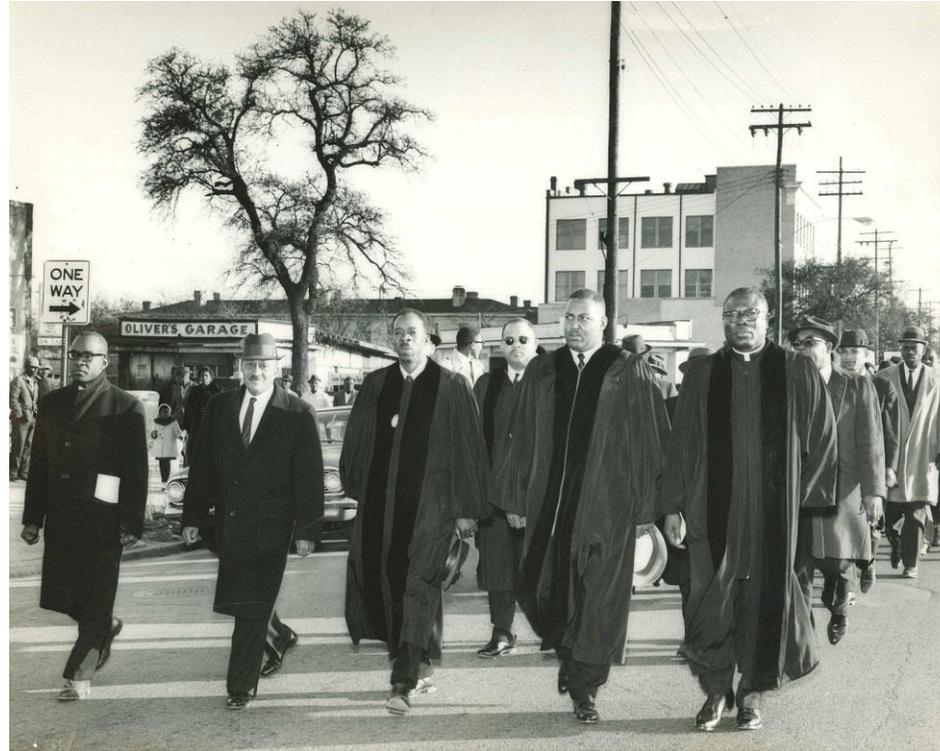
From *Engaging Students with Primary Sources* produced by the Smithsonian Museum of American History

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
photographs of?**



Five Years That Changed Savannah Forever

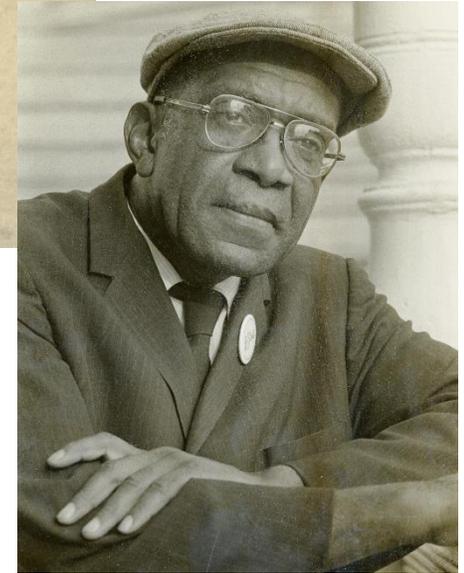
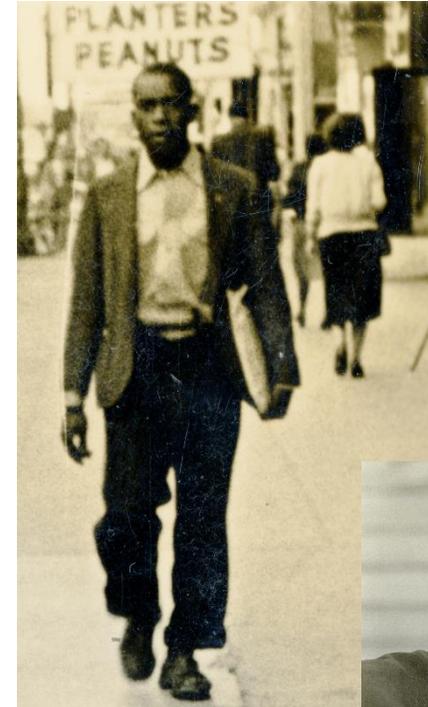
Reflecting on the Civil Rights Movement through the W. W. Law Photograph Collection

Fall 2019 – Savannah Cultural Arts Center

Westley Wallace "W. W." Law



Top row: W. W. Law, John S. Delaware, Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert, Boy Scout Troop 48, circa 1939-1940



A Discussion with Dr. Otis S. Johnson on the Civil Rights Movement in Savannah

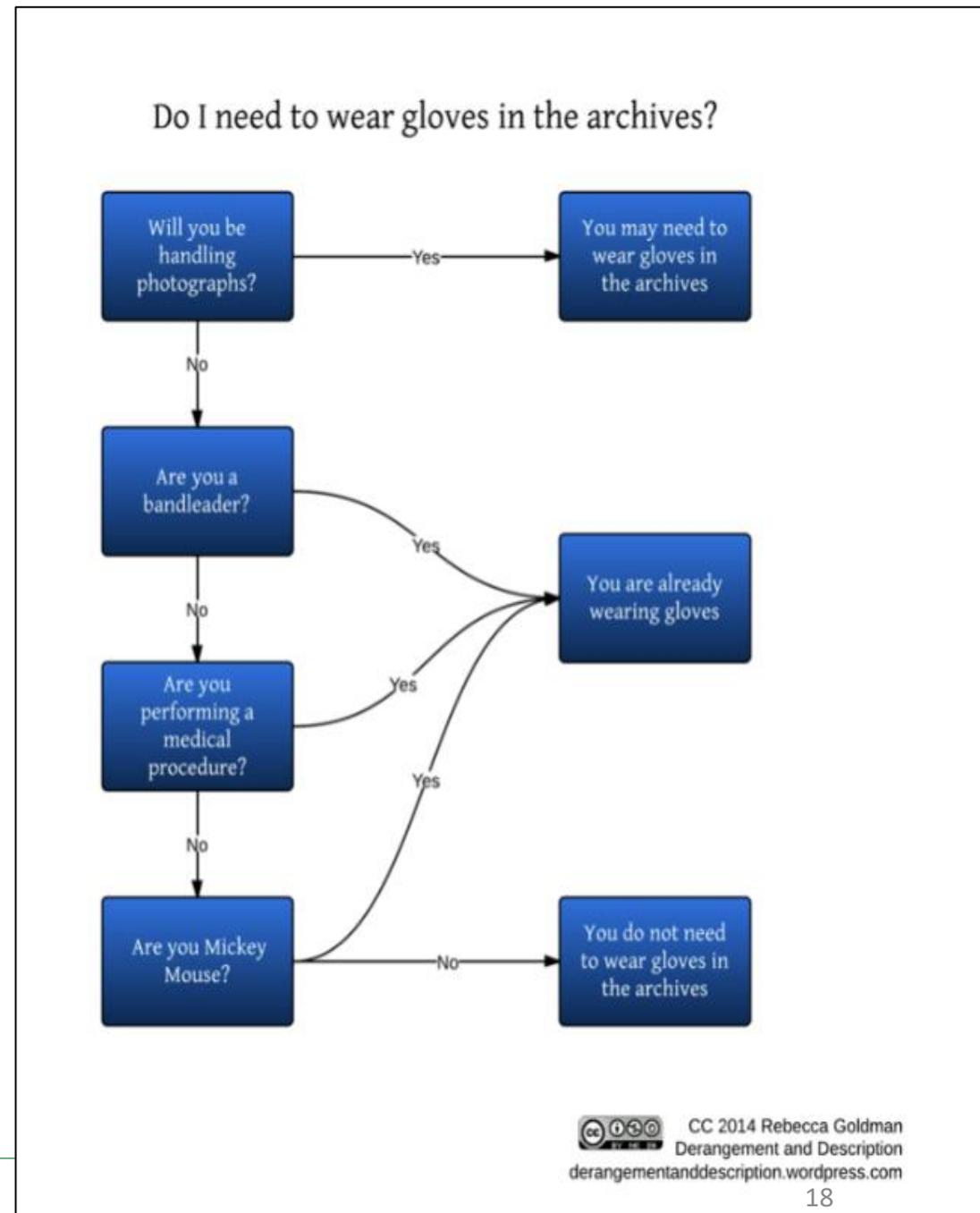


Play

Handling Records:

- Pencils only
- Do not touch the surface of photographs
- 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



“Introduction to Archives and Reading Photographs”

Five Years that Changed Savannah Forever: Reflecting on the Civil Rights Movement through the W.W. Law Collection

Presenter Notes – Exhibit background

Slide 15:

With the opening of this exhibit, we wanted to take some time to talk about Westley Wallace Law, better known as “W. W. Law,” this important period in Savannah’s history, and discuss some of the images that are featured in the exhibit.

Before we dive in, I’d like to formally introduce Mayor Johnson, who served as Guest Curator on the exhibit, a man who probably doesn’t need an introduction in Savannah anymore, but definitely deserves one. Dr. Otis Johnson is a native of Savannah, born in the historic Georgia Infirmity Hospital. He graduated Alfred E. Beach High School in 1960 and served on active duty in the U.S. Navy Reserve for two years before returning to attend Savannah State College. In 1963, he transferred from Savannah State to Armstrong State College to become the first African American to attend and then graduate from Armstrong in 1964. He went on to the University of Georgia, where he was the first African American from Savannah to earn a Bachelor’s degree from UGA in 1967. He completed his education with a Master of Social Work from Atlanta University and a Ph.D. degree in Social Welfare from Brandeis University. In a career spanning over 50 years, he has devoted himself to being a servant leader, including working for the Economic Opportunity Authority, the City of Savannah’s Model Cities Program, teaching at Savannah State University where he organized the undergraduate program in Social Work and later served as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and as Executive Director of the Youth Futures Authority. He served as an alderman on the Savannah City Council in the 1980s, founded the Neighborhood Improvement Association, and served on the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Public Education. In 2003, he was elected the 64th Mayor of Savannah, and was reelected to a second term in 2007. After finishing his run as Mayor in 2011, he was appointed Scholar in Residence and Professor Emeritus at Savannah State University. His autobiography, *From “N Word” to Mayor: Experiencing the American Dream* was published in 2016.

Let’s start off with how we got together on this project. The City of Savannah received the W. W. Law Collection in 2014 through a donation from the WW Law Foundation. The Collection is over 2,000 cubic feet and includes Mr. Law’s personal materials, including papers, books, music, photographs, artwork, and more. I’ve long wanted to showcase his photograph collection which includes almost 4,000 images documenting many aspects of Savannah’s history, and also wanted to do an exhibit focusing on Mr. Law’s Civil Rights work. As President of the Savannah Branch of the NAACP from 1950 until 1976, he was on the front line of the Civil Rights Movement in Savannah. Just this year we finished processing the vast photograph collection, and I’d like to give a shout out to Lacy Brooks who served as Project Archivist on the Photograph Collection. With that project closing, it seemed the right time to do this exhibit, but I didn’t feel that I was the right person to fully curate the exhibit, as I’m not originally from Savannah, I’m not African American, and I wasn’t even alive in the 1960s. I felt it was important to have a native Savannahian who was involved with these events as they were unfolding have a voice in the creation of this exhibit, so I asked Mayor Johnson if he would guest curate and select the images and write the introduction.

Slide 16:

I selected this assortment of images from his photograph collection because they represent the young man who became this elder. In the upper left he is featured as a Boy Scout leader with his own mentors John S. Delaware and the Reverend Ralph Mark Gilbert. W. W. Law was a powerful orator; he was always seen walking about Savannah with reading material under his arm, more often than not with reading material for you to read as well; his NAACP desk and home were cluttered with work and there was little separation between his personal life and work life because he never stopped working; but he did have a full-time job also, as a mail carrier for the US Postal Service for over 40 years.