

"ACID-FREE"

The Newsletter of the University of South Alabama Archives

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New and Increased Collections

USA Archives is pleased to report that we have received three new collections and three additions to existing collections. Below is an image from the Hill Lantern Slide Collection, which contains 231

glass lantern slides of the various 17th, 18th, and early 19th



This ca. 1910 image of Senator John H. Bankhead is from the Hill Lantern Slide Collection.

century people and places connected with the state, including John H. Bankhead and Abram Ryan. The slides were a gift from the Louisiana State Museum, to whom they had been donated some years ago. Not fitting in with their collecting mission, the museum offered us the slides late this past June.

Lantern slides are transparent positive images suitable for projection. They were introduced in 1849

See New Collections on page 2

Grant Update

As we reported in the last issue of "Acid-Free," the Archives received a \$2,500 grant from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which was administered by the Alabama state Historical Records Advisory Board (HRAB). We spent \$2,497 of those funds to purchase archival sleeves and boxes to re-house the Wilson C. Burton photographic collection. Beginning June 15, three of our graduate students—**CHRIS BURROUGHS, REGINA KANNE, and SHAWN KEATING**

—began the project under supervision of Archives' staff. By October 21, the students had spent a little over 600 hours on the project and our supplies had run out. But they had alphabetized the entire collection and re-sleeved and re-boxed

through the middle of the R's (or, we estimate, about 72,000 negatives). Considering the length of time and condition under which the collection was housed, few major problems were discovered. Among the collection are numerous images of African Americans, as well as a never-before-seen photo of Cudjo Lewis, as well as portraits of Kay Ivey, Dan Alexander, and Regina Benjamin. In fact, the Archives plans to print several of the Benjamin portraits and send them to her Washington, DC office. ☐

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Inside This Issue

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 3 | Executive Committee Report |
| 2 | FOA Corner |
| 1 | Grant Update |
| 2 | High Heel Ordinance |
| 4 | Lee Harvey Oswald |
| 1 | New Collections |
| 4 | Website |

The staff of USA Archives wishes all of our readers a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season! If you plan to get photographs as gifts this year, please do your shopping early. The Archives closes December 24 through January 3. ☐

New Collections

continued from page 1

and remained popular into the 1950s, when 35mm slides supplanted them. The Archives removed the slides from their original housing, cleaned them, placed them in four-flap enclosures, and re-housed them in appropriate, archival lantern slide boxes. We also created an Excel spreadsheet for them.

In addition to the slides, we also received six banker boxes of photographs, slides, and negatives in September from the USA Athletic Department.

As expected, all of them appear to be sports-related and most seem to be at least minimally identified. As time permits, they will be



A November 1988 photograph of members of the Mobile Junior Music Club.

organized. The last new collection we received also arrived in June. The Mobile Junior Music Club Collection is made up of scrapbooks dating from 1979 to 1991. The books were compiled yearly and consist of photographs, newsclippings, programs, awards, and other material.

Along with these new collections, we also received additions to three other collections: those of the League of Women Voters, the Azalea City Quilters Guild, and the Woman's Clubhouse Association. All three additions should increase by about one cubic foot the volume of material held in each of the respective collections. ☞

Did you know . . .

That in 1959 the city commission banned the women of Mobile from wearing heels higher than one and one-half inches? It seems that the heels were getting caught in the city's drainage vents, leading to twisted ankles and lawsuits. The ordinance drew attention around the country, prompting one New Yorker to send two dozen bottles of a perfume called "High Heel" and a soldier serving in Korea to write a letter telling city commissioners, "Don't ban sweaters!" ☞

FOA Corner

Thirteen Friends of the Archives met at Ruby Tuesdays on Dauphin Street on Friday, August 21. The food was good but the company even better. We'd like to make this an annual tradition. In fact, one Friend suggested that we do this more than once a year. So, don't be surprised if we send out a similar invitation early next year. Then you, too, can be in the picture!

The Friends held their second official meeting of the year at the Archives on October 29. Members discussed a number of issues and approved for a two-year period the new constitution restructured by the constitution and by-law committee made up of **ELISA BALDWIN, CHRISTOPHER BURROUGHS, SCOTTY KIRKLAND, SUSAN THOMAS, and MICHAEL THOMASON**. Members will revisit the constitution in 2011.

Along with a new constitution, five Friends volunteered to serve on a new executive committee. The members of this new committee are: **BARBARA ASMUS, BAILEY DU MONT, BOB GLENNON, SUSAN THOMAS, and**

MICHAEL THOMASON, with the Archivist, **CAROL ELLIS**, as ex-officio. We hope that you will attend the next meeting to find out what changes are in store.

SUSAN THOMAS recently participated in an oral history project with the Alabama Folklife Association in which she interviewed individuals in south Alabama who are known for their gumbo traditions. In the interviews the participants discuss how they learned to make gumbo, the family customs surrounding its preparation, and the ingredients that they use. Tapes of the interviews will be kept in the state Folklife Archives and may be used in an upcoming Smithsonian folk festival featuring Alabama.

On October 21, 2009, **SCOTTY KIRKLAND** met with his master's thesis committee at USA. During the meeting he took questions from committee members and successfully defended his thesis, which concerns politics

"Sometimes I do get to places just when God's ready to have somebody click the shutter." Ansel Adams

and race in Mobile from post-World War II into the 1980s. Scotty has also been invited to participate in the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History's Summer Seminar for Teachers at Cambridge University next summer. The institute presents an intensive, week-long seminar on the history of the American Civil Rights Movement to American high school teachers. The invitation was extended based on Scotty's extensive knowledge of and interest in the civil rights history of Mobile.

John B. Thompson, brother of **DOT THOMPSON**, passed away on Wednesday, November 4, 2009, at the age of 73. John proudly served in both the United States Marine Corps and in the 711 Signal Battalion of the Alabama Army National Guard. He retired from the United States Postal Service with 35 years of service. He will be missed by all of those who were fortunate enough to have known him. All of the members of the Friends of the University Archives send our deepest condolences to Dot and her family.

ANDREW and **GRETA SHARP** are pleased to announce that their book, *Antebellum Myths and Folklore: A Search for the Truth*, is now available at the Book Nook at Spring Hill College and the Oakleigh Gift Shop. The book was published by Artcraft Press this year. It includes a foreword by Gordon A. Cotton, former director and curator of the Old Court House Museum in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

BOB GLENNON'S 2009 book *Alabama History on the Air! Mobile Radio Broadcasts of the 1930s* about his grandfather's WODX radio broadcasts is available for sale at the Archives at a special price: \$23.95 for the paperback and \$34.95 for the hardcover. Please drop in and pick up a copy or email us at archives@jaguar1.usouthal.edu.



Friends enjoying dinner on August 21. Seated left to right: Wes Baldwin, Susan Thomas, Meriem Barlow, Dot Thompson, Michael Thomason, Carol Ellis, Christopher Burroughs, Elisa Baldwin, Barbara Asmus, Ann Summersell, Elizabeth Smyth, Jacqlyn Kirkland, and Scotty Kirkland.

News From the Executive Committee

The newly constituted Executive Committee met briefly immediately following the last Friends meeting, and selected Bob Glennon and Mike Thomason as co-chairs. The committee immediately drew up plans to increase awareness of the Archives and what it does by placing the Archives' brochures in as many area attractions as possible. To date, they have been put at the Museum of Mobile, Fort Conde, and the Fairhope Visitor's Center. We also decided to offer ourselves as a speaker's bureau and have created a list of organizations in the area that might like to have one of us speak at their future meetings. In fact, one of us has already addressed a class of thirty at the Mason School at Dauphin Street Methodist Church, and we will be sending out a letter soon to other groups. We feel confident that doing this will make the Archives more visible to the public and increase patronage. The Executive Committee will meet again for a brown bag lunch on December 8, at which time we will assess our progress and take additional steps in our campaign to promote the Archives. *Respectfully submitted, Mike Thomason* ☐

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From Mobile's Past

On July 27, 1963, four months before he assassinated President John F. Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald spoke to an audience at Spring Hill College. The invitation to come to Mobile came from Oswald's cousin Gene Murret, who was studying for the Jesuit priesthood at Spring Hill. Oswald traveled by car to the city with his wife, Marina, his daughter, June, and Gene's father, mother, and sister. They stayed at the Palm Motel on Highway 90. Oswald spoke for 20 minutes about life in Russia, about communism, socialism, and capitalism. Oddly, considering that just ten days later he would make headlines in New Orleans for handing out pro-Castro literature, he did not talk about Cuba.

Hours after Oswald killed Kennedy, CIA agents paid a visit to the college, having found letters in the Oswald residence addressed to Marina from the Spring Hill seminary student tasked with entertaining her during Oswald's speech. ☞

Archives' Updated Website

The Archives is in the process of updating most of its website. The update will include a new main page featuring two new "photos of the month," one from our general collections and one from our university collections. There will also be revised photographic and manuscript guides that aim to include more of our collections, increased information about our policies, an online exhibit featuring material from one of our manuscript collections, and additional photo galleries. The latter is particularly important in this day and age when everyone expects everything to be instantly available via the web. The revised site should be up and running by the first of December. We hope you'll take an opportunity to check it out. Our website address is <http://www.southalabama.edu/archives>. ☞

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