

BRINGING LIFE TO OUR ANCESTORS: MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS



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If our genealogical research is limited to the **Who**, **When**, and **Where** questions we compile a collection of skeletons. To answer the interesting questions—the **What**, the **Why**, and the **How**—we can use manuscript collections. These underutilized collections bring our ancestors to life and put flesh on their bones.

Challenges

- ▶ Understanding the types of records
- ▶ Understanding how to access records
- ▶ Understanding that collections might not be indexed
- ▶ Understanding that collections are sometimes poorly cataloged or arranged
- ▶ Understanding that not all archives or repositories have a website
- ▶ Understanding that manuscripts might be held in location far removed from where they were created
- ▶ Understanding that there might be limitations to access or to use

Terminology

Archives

Responsible for long-term care of the historical records of an organization or institution

Public archives: responsible for government records

Private archives: responsible for the records of an organization or institution

Repositories

Purchase or seek donations of material to which they have no necessary right

Document the transfer of material by deed of gift or by other legal conveyance

Types of Archives and Repositories

Arts & Sciences

Business

Educational Institutions

Ethnic Groups

Fraternal Organizations

Genealogical Societies

Government

Health Care

Historical Associations

Libraries (Special Collections)

Military

Museums

Professional and Service Organizations

Religious

Organizational Records: documents created a group or body of people

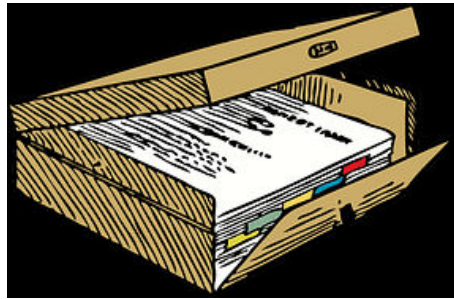
Personal Papers: created or maintained in the process of living by an individual or by a family.

Jargon

- Linear/cubic feet
- Inclusive dates/predominant dates
- Guides/finding aids: in-house only, online, or both
- Deposited
- Accession
- Acquisition
- Provenance
- Collections
- Record groups
- Original order
- Series
- Vertical files

Organization of Finding Aids

- Collection Overview
- Biographical/Historical Note
- Related Information
- Scope and Content (provenance)
- Information on Use
- Search Terms
- Content List



Strategies for Locating Records

- Internet Searches
 - By surname
 - By location
 - By association, religion, occupation, school
- National Union Manuscript Catalog (NUCMC)
 - 1959–1986; printed volumes
 - 1986–present; online

Research

- Website
- Telephone first and speak with an archivist
 - Be very specific about goal or the document need
 - Open to the public
 - Days and hours and/or by appointment only
 - Fees
 - Finding Aids
 - Policies
 - Copying, scanning, digital photograph
 - Permission to use

SOURCES

Archival Practice.

Daniels, Maygene F. "Introduction to Archival Terminology." National Archives and Records Administration, Archives Library Information Center.

<http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/archives-resources/terminology.html>

Note: This web version was prepared in 1999, based on: Maygene F. Daniels, "Introduction to Archival Terminology" published in *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice* (National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1984): 336–342.

National Gateways.

National Union Manuscript Catalog (NUCMC). <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>

-----, "OCLC World Cat." <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/oclcsearch.html>

The Library of Congress provides a gateway for searching OCLC WorldCat (Manuscript materials) -- nearly 1.5 million catalog records describing archival and manuscript collections and individual manuscripts in public, college and university, and special libraries located throughout North America and around the world. Access to this gateway is made available courtesy of OCLC, Inc.

Finding Aid: National.

The Library of Congress. "Search Finding Aids." <http://findingaids.loc.gov/index.html>

State Porthole.

Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library.

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/manuscri.htm>

Manuscripts and archives dating from the early 17th century to the present are available. These include the papers and records of individuals and organizations for most subjects, including social, art, political, military, environmental, family, religious, literary, and scientific history.

Finding Aids: Business / Industry / Economic History.

Indiana University Northwest, Calumet Regional Archives. "Gary Screw and Bolt Company Records."

CRA261. http://www.iun.edu/~cra/cra_records/cra261.shtml

The collection comprises three major series: financial records, personnel records, and labor records. There are no restrictions on access to the collection; researchers must agree to avoid publishing names of individuals in the Personnel Series of the collection.

State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University, The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, The Ringling. "Stuart Thayer Manuscript Collection."

https://www.ringling.org/sites/default/files/basic_page_download/Finding%20Aid%20Stuart%20Thayer%20Collection%2006.24.15.pdf

The materials held in this collection were assembled by circus historian Stuart Thayer to inform his research and publication. Thayer's special interest in circus wagons, routes and personnel is reflected in the materials, arranged within the subject fields of: writings from other authors, biographies, circus history by date, circus history by location, circus lot and route history, circus companies, wagons, and research and publications. The collection consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, scholarly articles, maps, books, microfilm and photographs which all pertain to the American circus, and the impact of American circus abroad. The bulk of the material concerns the years 1793–1918.

Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries. "Keith/Albee Vaudeville Theater Collection." MsC 356, Collection Dates: 1890–1952.

<http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/scua/msc/tomsc400/msc356/msc356.html>

The Keith/Albee collection primarily reports vaudeville programming in Rhode Island between 1894 and 1936, but it includes resources for studying vaudeville throughout the east coast and Ohio with a series of Managers' Reports spanning 1902–1923.

Finding Aids for Ethnic.

Ruth Lilly Special Collections & Archives, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. "Preussen Unterstutzungs Verein Records, 1884–1956." Accession A91-51, Collection Mss 074.

<http://www-lib.iupui.edu/collections/german-american/mss074>

Mutual benefit societies have served as social support organizations for many immigrant groups, including the German community in Indianapolis. This group, organized in 1884, served German immigrants from Prussia by providing assistance in time of illness. The first volume also contains membership records and members' accounts for the period 1884–1906.

Special Collections, Florida International University. "Cuban Archives, 1800–1988."

<http://fiuarchon.fcla.edu/?p=collections/controlcard&id=39>

The Cuban Exile Archives and History Project, collected documents relating to the exile experience. This collection includes publications from the Cuban American National Foundation, and photographs of exiles.

Guide for Personal Letters.

Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Library. "Guide to the Isabel Hawkey Collection."
RH MS P786

<http://etext.ku.edu/view?docId=ksrlead/ksrl.kc.hawkeyisabel.xml;route=ksrlead;brand=ksrlead;query=hawkey>

Isabel Hawkey letters, 1900–1910. Isabel Hawkey and her husband, Cyrus T. Hawkey, were born in Ottawa County, Kansas. After marrying, they lived in Colorado and in Kansas City, Kansas. These letters are chiefly incoming letters to Isabel Hawkey from her father, William Larzalere of Minneapolis (Ottawa County), Kansas, and from her aunt Elizabeth Ford of Burlington, New Jersey.

Library Catalog Listing for Personal Letters.

Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library. "Fort Benton, Mont. Terr., to Mrs. Wm. Larzalere, Minneapolis, Kansas, 1884 Aug. 4." Call number: Vault box Ayer MS 3242.

<https://i-share.carli.illinois.edu/nby/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi>

Letter, dated Aug. 4, 1885, from Gus, in Fort Benton, Montana Territory, to his sister, Mrs. William Larzalere in Minneapolis, Kansas. Gus, probably a stage coach driver for the Benton and Billings Stage Company, had intended to answer his sister's June 19th letter, but has been "on the road (Benton & Billings Stage Road)" most of the time. He has recently had his photograph taken, and asks that she do the same. He goes on to recount how he was shot May 13, 1878 as he sat on the coach in front of one of the hotels on the stage line, by a man with whom he had had trouble in the past. Although it was a dangerous wound, he recovered, with the help of good treatment and nursing by kind friends. Gus asks his sister, and her children, to write more often, addressing letters to him at Fort Benton M.T., c/o J.H. Caldwell.

Vertical Files.

Anderson [Indiana] Public Library. "Vertical File Index."

<http://www.and.lib.in.us/clientuploads/collection/Vertical%20File%20Index.pdf>

The vertical files in the Indiana Room at Anderson Public contain collected newspaper clippings, pamphlets, catalogs, and other miscellaneous materials.

Spencer Research Center, L. Caroline Underwood Museum, Yates County History Center. "Yates County Surnames." <http://www.yatespast.org/genealogy/genealogy.html>

Files containing newspaper clippings, genealogies, family history publications, and other contributed information on Yates families.

Example of Using Manuscript Collections to Bring Life to Our Ancestors

Bloom, Jeanne Larzalere. "The Child Left Behind: Henry Larzelere of the Town of Jerusalem, Yates County, New York." *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 147 (January 2016): 21–35, and 147 (April 2016); 144–155.

