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Spotlight on Mississippi Archives

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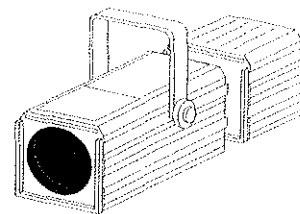
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Spotlight on Mississippi Archives



DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES CAPPS ARCHIVES AND MUSEUM BUILDING

The Delta State University Archives began in 1968 with the donation of the Walter Sillers, Jr. Papers by his widow, Lena Sillers. These papers are a treasure-trove for those interested in Mississippi political and legislative history and the development and activities in the Delta, ca. 1916-1966. Additional Sillers family papers followed, including those of Walter Sillers, Sr., newspaper columnist Florence Sillers Ogden, and Florence Warfield Sillers.

These papers were the seeds of a growing manuscript collection at the university. The late Sammy Cranford, DSU history professor and archivist, also began collecting university records and oral histories. This expansion led Cranford to seek support and funding for a separate building for the university's collections. With the support of Representative Charlie Capps, the money was appropriated for the construction project, and the Charles W. Capps, Jr. Archives and Museum Building was dedicated in 1997.

With the building came a commitment from the university to mount an ongoing effort to document the history and culture of the Delta through the collection of additional historical records. The historical manuscript collection and university records holdings have grown to over 900 cubic feet in 116 manuscript collections and 46 record groups. Subject areas in which the collections are particularly strong include the history and settlement of Delta towns, plantation operation, social life and customs, Mississippi politics and government, 19th- and 20th-century women, especially their participation in politics, levees and floods, Delta Council, World War I, ethnic groups in the Delta, and Delta State University.

The Archives also supports an active oral history program. Building on the efforts of Cranford and former history department chair Bill Cash, the oral history collection now contains over 280 oral history interviews. Forty of those record university history and came from the department's participation as a pilot project site in the Mississippi Humanities Council Mississippi Oral History Project. The Archives have also worked with the Humanities Council on the oral history projects "Patchwork of Mississippi" and "The Mississippi-Delta-Chinese."

Additionally, the Archives coordinates an active exhibition schedule, mounting displays from its own holdings, hosting traveling exhibitions, and sponsoring brown-bag lunches and lecturers in connection with the exhibitions. These efforts are part of the department's outreach efforts to the university and the community.

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