

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_



## BACKGROUND: Understanding Archives

### What Are Archives?

- Archives are collections of documents and other records from the past.
- They preserve evidence of what happened in the past and help researchers piece together stories of people and change over time.
- The State Archives houses original documents and audio-visual materials created by North Carolinians over three and a half centuries.
- The State Archives preserves over 100 million records. Many come from government agencies. Others are donations from citizens and organizations.
- The State Archives welcomes researchers at locations in Raleigh, Manteo, and Asheville.

### What is a DocsBox?

- A DocsBox is an archival box containing primary source documents from the State Archives of North Carolina.
- To preserve them as long as possible, documents are in acid-free folders.
- Archives staff and researchers use only pencil on folders and when handling documents. They avoid ink which can cause permanent damage by bleeding and smudging.
- The gray archival box opens from the top to make it easy to find documents and minimize handling, which can cause damage over time.

**Acidic or Not?** When it comes to storing old and important documents, it's important to use acid-free containers. All wood products produce acid as they age, causing them to yellow, stain, and become brittle. Archival papers contain substances that help slow acid production and deterioration. The pH scale refers to the amount of acid present. Lower pH levels indicate higher levels of acid. Higher pH levels indicate lower acidity, which is better for preservation. An acid-indicating pH pen can show if the paper or cardboard is acidic or neutral.

### Acid-Indicating Pen Activity

**Directions:** Using a pH Pen, draw a line or other mark on the each of the 4 paper samples. Check the color as soon as the fluid dries. **CIRCLE** the type of paper in the chart below.

**PURPLE** indicates a pH of 7.0 or above and means the paper is considered acid-free.

**YELLOW** indicates a pH of below 6.5 and means the paper contains too much acid for long-term storage.

Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
Acidic or Acid-free	Acidic or Acid-free	Acidic or Acid-free	Acidic or Acid-free

# Activity: Record Identification

## Preserving the Past: Understanding Archival Procedures

- Old documents require special care to preserve.
- Over time the environment and acidic surfaces can degrade paper and photos.
- The dark color of the record at right is a result of acidity.
- Archivists are specially trained in methods to help fragile documents last and provide access to researchers.

## Protecting Documents

- Store in a cool, dry environment with minimal exposure to light.
- Use acid-free containers to block pests and pollution.
- Avoid tape, staples, and paper clips, which can damage and stain paper items.

## Examples of Archival Records

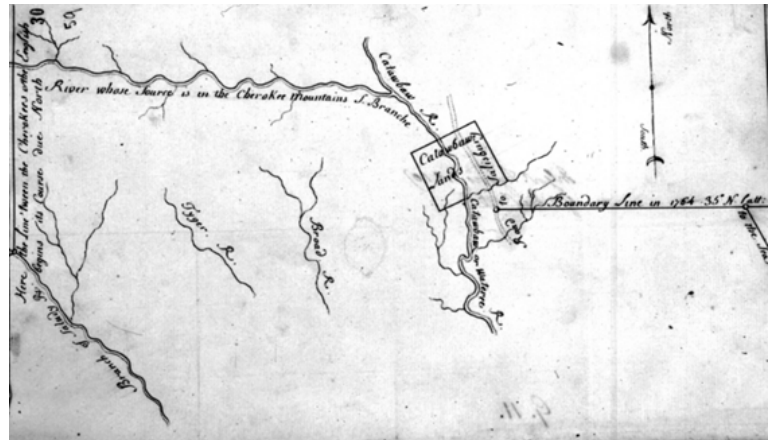
- State records
- County records
- Land deeds
- Maps
- Military records
- Oral histories
- Photographs
- Newspapers
- Letters and diaries
- Wills and estate records

Label each item from the State Archives with **one or more** types of records from the list above. Try to find a date or use context clues to make an educated guess.

West Point N.C.  
April 12<sup>th</sup> 1861

Dear Father

Since I last wrote you there have been daily occurrences which lead to the conviction that there will be no compromise, and that the border states will be compelled to decide however unwilling they may be to do so. You yourself will love the Union; and as every right-minded man ought, were its privileges conceded to each and every part of it; and would look with sorrow upon its disruption. I think in one of your letters to me that unless such a compromise was effected on the basis of that of Antislavery, that you



2.



3.

State of North Carolina.

No. 775 Raleigh Dec. 10. 1874.

AGREEABLY to the Report of the Auditors appointed to settle and adjust the Military and other Claims for services performed and supplies furnished in July and August, 181<sup>st</sup> approved and filed with me,

Jacob Cole a private in the company  
of Bramford Militia commanded by  
Capt. John Cox is entitled to receive  
out of the Public Treasury the sum of One Dollar & Eighty Cents  
for the payment of which this  
shall be a Warrant.

M. Muller

4.

1.