

Donating Private Papers, Manuscript Materials, Account Books to the State Archives

Many hundreds of North Carolina families, individuals, businesses have already donated their papers and archives to the private papers area of the State Archives of North Carolina. Increasingly, others are realizing the numerous advantages to placing private papers and manuscripts with the Archives, the state's permanent repository for historical materials. During processing, any manuscript papers that are badly damaged are identified and placed for repair in our in-house Conservation Lab. Every collection received in the Archives is carefully arranged and is then described in a finding aid. This document helps the researcher gain an overview of the contents of the collection. It is also used by the Archives' staff in the administration of the collection over time. Finding aids for the majority of private collections, including account books, are available for use in the Archives Search Room.

Private papers and manuscripts are sought from, but not limited to the following groups and categories:

- Public officials whose public records are in the Archives.
- North Carolinians who have played a leading role in some aspect of government.
- Individuals or families whose private lives have had significant impact on the public life of the state.
- Individuals or families from groups and historical eras that are inadequately represented in our holdings.
- Papers that significantly complement existing private or public records in the State Archives.
- Private papers that fill in gaps caused by the destruction or lack of information in public records.

Typical types of materials found in private manuscript collections at the State Archives:

- Letters
- Memoirs/reminiscences
- Diaries
- Speeches
- Poems, verses, songs
- Business records, including minutes of meetings
- Legal, financial, and estate documents
- Account books, including ledgers, cash books
- Photo Albums and Photographs (identified, preferably)
- Films/videos/audio tapes (labeled)



Private Papers and Manuscripts, Special Collections Section

Materials that meet our collections standards may consist of a single item or fill dozens of boxes. Rather than focus on quantity, we generally seek a coherent body of material that is historically significant and contributes to our state's documentary heritage.

In addition to our general collection criteria, Private Collections seeks materials that offer relative completeness, readability, credibility, uniqueness, and acceptable condition, to ensure that researchers have access to source material that is useful and usable.

The State Archives of North Carolina does not accept private manuscripts on loan. Donors should be prepared to execute a contract of gift conveying physical and intellectual rights in the materials to the state of North Carolina. The collections become the property of the state and are available for use by the public in the Search Room of the State Archives.

Possible Restrictions Placed by Donors:

The Archives is willing to accept reasonable, time-limited restrictions on access to donated papers. For instance, a donor may feel that a collection contains personal information that should not be available to researchers for a limited number of years. Archivists will be glad to give advice in the matter of appropriate restrictions.

Physical Storage of Collections:

When arrangement and description are complete, the collection is carefully placed in archival quality, acid-free folders and document storage cases. These are numbered and labeled for identification, and preserved in the secure, closed stack areas of the Archives under carefully controlled conditions of temperature and humidity. While materials do not circulate outside of the Archives, they are available to researchers in the Search Room under the careful supervision of professional staff. In working with the collections, staff members identify and treat any items that need special conservation.

Contact Information

Prospective donors are invited to write or call the following:

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