

**Clay County Archives  
Fort Gaines, GA  
Collection Development Policy**

**Mission Statement**

Clay County Library is an organization that meets the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the residents and visitors of Clay County. The archives, located within the library, seeks to preserve the historical heritage of and serve as a resource for historical information on Fort Gaines, Clay County, and the lower Chattahoochee Valley Region.

**History**

Clay County, in southwest Georgia, was once on the western frontier of the United States. Named for Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, the county was created in 1854 from parts of Randolph and Early counties. The point where nearby Cemochechobee Creek meets the Chattahoochee River was, at one time, a defining boundary between the United States and Creek Territory. The county seat, Fort Gaines, was established in 1816 around a fort overlooking the Chattahoochee River. The fort was built by General Edmund Pendleton Gaines at the direction of General Andrew Jackson to protect settlers during the Creek Indian Wars. Until the development of the railroad in the 1850s, Fort Gaines was a hub of commerce and river traffic for merchants in Georgia and Alabama. It was known as the "Queen of the Chattahoochee." During the Civil War in 1863, the Confederates used the old fort. The schools in Fort Gaines were used as hospitals. After the war, the rebuilding process was slow. No substantial growth occurred until 1955. The Walter F. George Lock and Dam, under construction from 1955 until 1963, brought an influx of new businesses and people. The dam is located within the city limits of Fort Gaines, and its locks are the second highest east of the Mississippi River. The lake formed by the dam covers 48,000 acres and reaches as far north as Columbus. Agriculture has been and remains the main support for the county. Although demographics have changed slightly with the introduction of retirees to the scenic Lake George, the county contains a significant African-American population, and the archives' collections would like to reflect the county's populace.

**Scope of the Collection**

Clay County's Archives seeks to collect a representative sample of Clay County's history from its creation to present time. Identified strengths of the current collections include locally produced books, newspapers, reference newspaper clippings grouped by category, garden club records, and some local government documents. Of priority, the archives would like to target African-American collections; any original family documents, such as diaries; and photographs from the lower Chattahoochee Valley Region. In general, the Archives will not accept genealogical magazines and certain newspaper clipping scrapbooks that do not have specific reference to the region. Most artifacts will be deferred to the historical society repository.

*Examples of the types of materials accepted by Clay County's Archives:*

- Clay County's Archives serves as the official depository for municipal and county documents deemed permanent by the Georgia Retention Schedule for Local Governments established by the Georgia Department of Archives and History under the Secretary of State's Office.
- Family and Individual Papers (letters, diaries, farm journals, legal documents, speeches, memoirs, account books, etc.)
- Histories and genealogies of families local to the lower Chattahoochee region.
- Organizational Records (non-current records of volunteer professional and charitable organizations, churches, and businesses to include such series as minutes, membership lists, correspondence, accounting records, programs, photographs, etc.)
- Photographs
- Audio-visual materials other than photographs including oral histories and other media specifically related to Clay County.
- Pamphlets, Brochures, Broadsides and Posters
- Books (local and regional histories, genealogies, and biographies)

## **Clientele**

The archives seeks to preserve a unique source of materials and make them available to researchers on equal terms, subject to the appropriate care and handling of the materials by the researcher. Among the user groups of the collection are scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, high school students, business persons, municipal and county staff, historic preservationists, genealogists, journalists, and other interested citizens.

## **Acquisition Guidelines**

The director of the library or another individual so designated by the library board has the authority to accept a collection into the archives. For assistance in making a decision about a collection that may be the subject of argument, the Library Director may go the Board of Directors for guidance on whether to accept a potential donation. Before accepting, the director should be sure it meets certain criteria.

### *Criteria for Acquisition*

1. Collections must aid the mission of the archives
2. Owner must have clear title
3. Archives must be able to properly care for the collection
4. Donor must be willing to sign a deed of gift

### *Steps involved in Acquisition and Accession*

1. The director of the library or some other individual designated by the library board will decide which collections will be accepted by the archives. The archives is under no obligation to accept everything offered.

2. Before signing a deed of gift, the library director or another individual so designated by the library board will attempt to find out as much as possible about the potential donation and record this information in justifying its acceptance.
3. A Deed of Gift will be executed between the donor and the Archives. Any special exceptions to the procedures must first be reviewed by the library board.
4. The director of the library or another individual so designated by the library board will promptly complete an accession form and assign a tracking number.

### *Appraisals*

Financial appraisals of donated materials should be handled by the donor before such material will be accepted by the Archives. The Archivist may provide the names of competent appraisers.

### **Cooperation with other Archival Repositories in the Region**

Columbus State University Archives' primary focus is the Columbus State University Collection; however, a secondary emphasis is the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Collection including papers of individual residents or citizens and records of businesses, ephemera of local clubs and organizations, and non-profit organizations. These collections are currently limited and focused on the city of Columbus and the immediate surrounding area that does not really extend into the lower Chattahoochee Valley. Troup County Archives in LaGrange, Georgia, collects, protects, and makes available for research the local government records of Troup County and LaGrange, Georgia, and manuscripts, audio-visual, and printed materials relating to the history of Troup County. Across the state line in Alabama, in Chambers County, in Valley, the Cobb Memorial Archives part of the Chambers County Library but funded through the Cobb Foundation has an existing Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society Collection. This mostly focused genealogically-oriented archives has historical manuscript materials housed in a secured area, as with Columbus State and the Troup County Archives, with a separate research area. Cobb Memorial concentrates its collections mostly on Alabama, specifically, Chambers County's local history with much genealogical reference material, newspapers, and collections from such entities as the Daughters of the American Revolution, local mills, schools, and from its citizens. Other local libraries, such as the one in Abbeville, Alabama, do have a special collections room with extremely limited resources and materials. The manuscript and archival collections housed in Special Collections and Archives at Auburn reflect a strong focus on the history of Auburn University, which includes an institutional responsibility for the proper management of public records created by university officials. The department's manuscript and archival collections also reflect an emphasis on Alabama history as it has intersected the university's development and the accomplishments of Auburn alumni and faculty. Consequently, the department's holdings strengths include material related to Alabama agriculture and rural life, Alabama architecture, twentieth century Alabama politics, and Alabama writers. Finally, subject strengths in manuscripts and archives include holdings related to the Civil War and the history of flight. Troy University—Dothan Campus created an archival repository in 2002 to serve the Wiregrass Region of Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. The clientele of this archives includes mainly scholars, researchers, and university staff with a focus on historic manuscripts, its first major collection being the congressional papers of Terry

Everett. As part of its mission, not intending to serve genealogical researchers, the Archives of Wiregrass History and Culture intends to coordinate a network of special collections and archives within the Wiregrass Region, to provide training, and possibly even to inaugurate a regional consortium of archives providers and users. Clay County's archives recognizes other such institutions and special collections within the Chattahoochee Valley and will work through the network initiated by the Troy University—Dothan Campus archivist to ensure that the materials are placed in the appropriate repository and that the coordination of information is promoted. Clay County is expanding from a special collections room to an archives having identified a need to preserve specifically Clay County's records and those of the other lower Chattahoochee Valley Georgia counties.

**Deaccession Policy**

The Library Director or another individual designated by the Library Board of Trustees will make periodic reviews and recommend any items for deaccessioning in accordance with the accepted best-practices among archivists. Any deaccessioned collections may be offered to a more appropriate repository or the donor or donor's family.

**Approval of Policy**

This policy and any subsequent amendments shall go into effect upon approval by the library board.