

**Alabama Department
of
Archives and History
Museum of Alabama History
Defined Scope
of
Collections**

Authority and Intent

The Alabama Department of Archives and History was established by an act of the legislature on February 27, 1901. According to the enabling legislation, one of the purposes of the department was "...the collection of materials bearing upon the history of the state and of the territory therein from the earliest times." Additionally, the department was empowered to "...diffuse knowledge in reference to the history and resources of the state." The collecting of artifacts related to Alabama history serves two functions, both of which were clearly set forth in the early guidelines and are represented by the current mission statement:

"To tell the story of the people of Alabama by preserving records and artifacts of historical value and promoting a better understanding of Alabama history."

The collection and preservation of artifacts ensures that these materials will be maintained for scholarly study and analysis and for general interpretation and education through museum exhibits.

History of Acquisitions

Although artifacts had been collected from the beginning, it was in 1904 that the director, Thomas M. Owen, first outlined a plan to focus the collecting of artifacts for the "installation of a new museum."

"So comprehensive is the Department plan that the collection to be built up is designed to embrace each and every object or article which properly comes within the scope of museum collection. These include among other things:

1. Relics of pioneers and pioneer life, as articles of dress, implements of labor, implements of the chase, and household furnishings.
2. Relics and personal belongings of eminent Alabamians, as library desks or tables, chairs, knives, dirks, dueling pistols or other fire arms, stock, knee or shoe-buckles, drinking cups, watches, chains, snuff-boxes and canes.
3. War relics, as uniforms, swords, arms and equipment. This includes all wars of the United States, for there are known to be a number of Revolutionary relics in Alabama.
4. Indian relics, as pottery, weapons of all kinds, personal ornaments, specimens of modern Indian handicraft.
5. Modern work, when specially notable from being unique in design, or the first of a class of article manufactured or introduced."

Owen's plan was broad in scope, and in the hundred years since this statement was issued a large collection of objects documenting Alabama's history and prehistory has been collected and preserved, although collecting emphasis has shifted from time to time. The strengths of this collection include:

- ▶ Prehistoric Native American objects (Central Alabama)
- ▶ Native American objects 1702 – 1763 (Central Alabama)
- ▶ Historic Creek materials (Central Alabama)
- ▶ Antebellum planter class materials
- ▶ Military and civilian small arms
- ▶ Civil War (Confederate uniforms, flags, weapons and accoutrements)
- ▶ Confederate Government
- ▶ Portraits
- ▶ State Militia 1870 – 1916
- ▶ World War I (uniforms, weapons and accoutrements)
- ▶ World War II (uniforms, weapons and accoutrements)
- ▶ War trophies, Spanish-American War to present
- ▶ Patriotic and Fraternal organizations (United Confederate Veterans, etc., uniforms, badges, medals, memorabilia)
- ▶ Textiles, 19th and Early 20th century (quilts, coverlets, etc.)
- ▶ Glassware (bottles, 19th century)
- ▶ Agricultural implements, tools (late 19th and early 20th century)
- ▶ Currency (state, private banks, Confederate)
- ▶ Toys, Games (19th – mid 20th century)
- ▶ Musical Instruments (mid to late 19th century)
- ▶ Politics and state government

Thematic Collecting Emphasis

While the department's collections are very strong in some areas, they are quite weak or even non-existent in others. In order to more fully document and interpret Alabama history, the department must review from time to time significant changes in Alabama and adjust collecting priorities to reflect those changes. For several decades now, the efforts at continuing to build the collections have languished for a number of reasons. As the Archives prepares to undertake a new state history exhibit, the artifact collections become an increasingly important priority.

All of the thematic areas listed below represent current gaps in the department's collections. Some areas are ranked higher in collecting emphasis due to the need to acquire these materials in order to complete the installation of the new Museum of Alabama History. Those listed as lower priorities are already somewhat represented in the department's collection of artifacts and/or records. The department is currently seeking to collect materials in the following areas:

Level I. – Highest Priority

- ▶ Late 20th Century Alabama Life
 - ▶ Cold War
 - ▶ Space Program in Alabama
 - ▶ Growth of Financial, Medical, Technology, Automotive Industries
 - ▶ Transition from Rural to Urban/Suburban Lifestyles
 - ▶ Late 20th Century Sports, Religion, Entertainment, Education
 - ▶ Famous late 20th Century personalities
 - ▶ New immigrants to Alabama (esp. Asian and Hispanic/Latino populations)
- ▶ The African-American Experience in Alabama
 - ▶ Slave life
 - ▶ African-American Civil War soldiers (Union & Confederate)
 - ▶ Life for Freedmen during Reconstruction
 - ▶ Migration of African-Americans to the North
 - ▶ The Civil Rights Movement
 - ▶ African-American soldiers in all wars
- ▶ Alabama Folk Traditions & Artisan Crafts

Level II - High priority

- ▶ French Colonial Period 1702 – 1763
- ▶ British Colonial Period 1763 – 1781
- ▶ British and Spanish Military (American Revolution, Mobile)
- ▶ Spanish Colonial Period 1781 – 1813
- ▶ Civil War Union Troops from Alabama
- ▶ Industrialization – Coal, Iron, Steel, Textile, Lumber, etc.
- ▶ Populist Movement
- ▶ World War II Home Front (Defense Industries, Military Industries, Rationing)
- ▶ Everyday life of common citizens (all time periods)
- ▶ Eminent Figures (Examples – Andrew Jackson, William Weatherford, Pushmataha, Admiral James Farragut, General James Wilson, Booker T. Washington, George

Washington Carver, Helen Keller, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Werner Von Braun, “Bear” Bryant, Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Joe Louis, Nat “King” Cole, W. C. Handy, Hank Williams, Hugo Black, Harper Lee, etc.)

Level III

- ▶ Yeoman Farmers
- ▶ River Travel
- ▶ Railroads
- ▶ Civil War Production (Arsenals, Foundries, Ironworks and Factories)
- ▶ Immigration to Alabama

Level IV

- ▶ Prehistoric Native American (Northern and Southern Alabama)
- ▶ Historic Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole
- ▶ Creek War/War of 1812 (Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, U. S. Military and Volunteers, British Military)
- ▶ Creek materials (1815 – 1836)
- ▶ Indian Removal – 1836
- ▶ Farm Implements (late 18th, early 19th century)
- ▶ Korean War

Acquisitions Statement

All objects donated to or collected by the Alabama Department of Archives and History must have a clear and well defined association with the history of the state or with individuals from or representing the state of Alabama, including individuals originally from Alabama who later moved away and objects manufactured within Alabama but distributed outside the state.