

A to G – Archivist to Go

Last year was an active period for sharing DeKalb's history and raising awareness about the archives at the DeKalb History Center. Donated materials are collected, preserved, and stored in our archival "stacks" in order to make the sharing of our local history possible. The stacks house a variety of photographs, letters, scrapbooks, maps, and other ephemera. We protect the collections from damage that can occur from wide temperature swings, constant light exposure, and fluctuating humidity – just a few of the environmental conditions that can accelerate the deterioration of archival collections. The stacks are a key component to preserving these documents.

The mission of the DeKalb History Center is to collect, preserve and share the history of DeKalb County. Our archivist actively accomplishes this through presentations, meetings, and on-site work sessions – all of which highlight our goal of sharing history and obtaining donations of historical DeKalb materials. Participants often remark that they had not given much thought to how some of their commonplace documents and items could have historic value and should not be recycled or thrown away!

Yearbooks, directories, church bulletins, organizational minutes, photographs, and even digital records can provide documentation of the people and places connected with everyday life in DeKalb County. We expect yearbooks to contain documentation of school activities, students and staff. But annuals also provide great context for their time period. In addition to school portraits, they can contain photographs with "background" information about the community. School events can occur off campus providing detailed information about the school's town. Yearbooks also contain advertisements of the businesses which helped support the school.



1966 homecoming parade from "In Decatur," the Decatur High School Yearbook.

Yearbooks are cultural "time capsules" that offer unique glimpses into local history – they create a true sense of place and time

Our archivist shared local history with the **Decatur High School** alumni who had gathered to celebrate their 50th Anniversary. Fred Mobley created a PowerPoint presentation for the DHS Class of 1966: Decatur High School and Environs – Circa 1966. The presentation included numerous views of the City of Decatur and DeKalb County, which of course highlighted major changes with a half a century of development.

The 1966 Homecoming Parade of Decatur High School was routed up McDonough Street, around the courthouse, and returned to the football field for more celebrations. The parade photo is quite large – spanning two pages – indicating the

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Upcoming Events

The History and Preservation of DeKalb's Historic African American Communities: Flat Rock and Shermantown **Ninth Annual Black History Month Celebration**

Thursday, February 23, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm - Historic DeKalb Courthouse
Tickets: \$30/\$40 (discount for members of DHC)

Call 404-373-1088, ext. 22 or email forgey@dekalbhistory.org for more information.

Please join the DeKalb History Center for a program with a dynamic, multi-layered mix of scholars, long-time residents of Flat Rock and Shermantown, and theatrical entertainment to bring the history alive! Topics include life for African Americans in these historic communities during the Progressive Era to the present, Jim Crow Laws, church life, education, The Civil Rights Movement, and the challenges of preserving these communities.

Speakers: Ms. LaDoris Davis (symposium moderator), Mr. Michael Thurmond, Mr. Johnny Waits, Dr. Paul Hudson, Ms. Lora Mirza, and Ms. Jeanne Cyriaque. Dr. Karcheik Sims-Alvarado (panel moderator), and additional panel participants: Ms. Alice Bailey, Ms. Gloria Brown, Reverend T.A. Bryant, Jr., Ms. Bertha Clark, Ms. Evelyn Herans, Ms. Mamie Lane, Chief James Rivers, Ms. Elaine Vaughn, and Ms. Martha Williams.

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Annual Meeting & Silent Auction

Join us for our Annual Meeting and Silent Auction on **Friday, March 24, from 6:00—8:30 pm** at the Historic DeKalb Courthouse. Enjoy an evening of wine, beer, hors d'oeuvres and music while bidding on fantastic items donated by generous local businesses. We are currently seeking Silent Auction donations; email Fred at mobley@dekalbhistory.org or call 404-373-1088, extension 23 to donate. ✦

Archivist to Go (cont.)

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importance of the event to the authors (in this case, Decatur High School seniors). It shows the streetscape and high school, popular cars, and the full glory of 1960s hair and clothing styles as expressed in this one high school.

The Junior League of DeKalb County was founded in 1934 as the Junior Service League of Decatur. Members met with the archivist because to discuss donation of materials regarding the restoration and maintenance of the Mary Gay House. After learning more about our archives, it was decided that the records of the Junior League of DeKalb County, as well as the house committee, should be donated to the DHC archives. We will provide a secure, protected environment that allows regular access to the documents by League members and researchers. The history of the Junior League of DeKalb county shows the long dedication of women interested in providing much needed services to the community. But it also reflects local social history as it changed from exclusive membership to inclusive membership that more broadly represents all of DeKalb County.

The DeKalb Board of Health contacted DHC's archivist on how to organize and store a large number of early to mid-twentieth century photographs of various DeKalb Health Department activities. Review of the materials in an informational work session enabled the health department to establish a plan to identify and scan the photographs and then donate the originals to the DHC. The collection shows several decades of the county's growth and the advances made in health care. It also documents the cultural history of DeKalb County and how county government impacts the lives of its residents.

Interestingly the DeKalb Board of Health and the Junior League of DeKalb County's histories intersected through some of the League's service projects such as hearing tests for school children and a dental clinic for county residents. As the League developed and ran these service projects, the need for specific healthcare was recognized by the county government which incorporated them into the DeKalb Board of Health. This shows how sharing history can demonstrate how people and entities interacted and affected a larger part of DeKalb's history through partnerships that developed but were buried in the ephemeral material of the time.

DHC is eager to receive even copies of material of historic significance. Fred participated in the celebrations of the **Mount Zion community** and **Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church's** 146th anniversary, and created a PowerPoint presentation utilizing existing material from the stacks and copies of photos from church and community members that were loaned for the presentation at the church's anniversary earlier this year. It was a pleasant surprise to some participants to realize how even their copies of photos have helped this specific collection to grow.

In the spring the archivist was asked to share the history of the land where the **Swanton Hill Townhomes** are now located at the annual homeowner's association meeting. Many members of the association were unaware that their complex now sits on a portion of Atlanta Avenue that was an active, vibrant African-American community during the days of segregation.

If you want to learn more about our "stacks" or add materials about your DeKalb relatives, organizations, or businesses, or to request a presentation by the archivist, email Fred at mobley@dekalbhistory.org. Help participate in the archival cycle of collecting, preserving and sharing our history of all things DeKalb County Georgia! ✦



From the DeKalb History Center's photograph collection, a view of downtown Decatur in 1981. The blue circle shows the location of the Swanton Hill Townhomes.

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