

DeKalb History Center

Historic DeKalb Courthouse
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Times of DeKalb

Archives Edition

Fall
2025

Stories from the Stacks

Archives are at the heart of our mission. They provide endless histories, stories, and glimpses into our past. Archives encompass a wide range of items, but generally they are documents. This can include things like scrapbooks, images, audio recordings, paper documents and newspapers. For our final Quarterly Journal of 2025, we wanted to open the vaults and highlight a few archival collections and items that we find fascinating. Some of these collections are new, some have never been shared publicly before.

Would you like to donate something? You can always reach out to us. Unfortunately, we can't always take everything, but donating your items to an institution like ours is a way to preserve it for future generations and give others the opportunity to see your story!

We can't highlight every collection in this edition but please read on to learn about a few of the rich resources you can find digging through the stacks here at the DeKalb History Center. ✦

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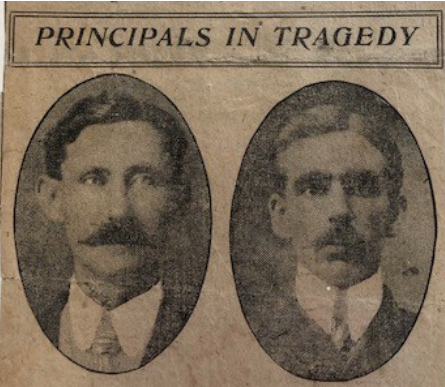
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Deed from the original Georgia land lottery of 1821. This is the oldest item in our archives.



Article depicting Oakhurst Mayor W. H. Johnston and P. W. Zuber, from the Broadhurst-Phillips collection, circa 1920.

Family Time and True Crime

By Jennifer Blomqvist, Archivist & Volunteer Coordinator

We have collections in the Archives that I call family collections. These are groups of items relating to a particular family or a blended family in DeKalb. Materials generally include scrapbooks, journals, letters, newspaper articles, photos, and more. I reviewed one such blended family collection recently; someone had made a note that medical records were part of the collection. I was intrigued. It turned out to be a

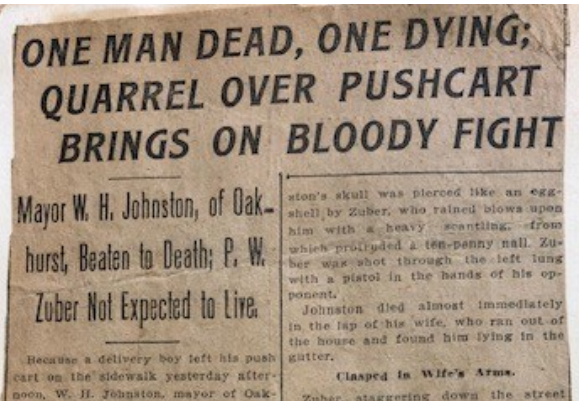
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Family Time and True Crime continued

misprint, but the collection is interesting in any event. The Broadhurst-Phillips collection is a group of items related to a blended family – the Broadhursts from Fitzgerald, Georgia, and the Phillips from Oakhurst/Decatur, Georgia. Dr. John Halsey Phillips was a doctor in the Atlanta area for many years. He was also a councilman and tax assessor for Decatur and the first mayor of Oakhurst, according to his obituary. He died in 1932 from complications following a medical procedure. William Gibson Broadhurst was a prominent businessman in Fitzgerald. An article in one of the scrapbooks reads “Public Wants Syrup in Smaller Packages.” As Broadhurst was a syrup manufacturer, he gave the public what they wanted and added smaller bottles priced at 10-15 cents as a supplement to the standard gallon size. He passed away in 1930. Children from these two families – Emma Mary Phillips and William Gibson Broadhurst, Jr. – were married. Emma was a student of the Leffingwell Violin School and a member of the Atlanta Ladies’ Concert Orchestra. She was a socialite who also served in the Girls’ Service Organization, which was part of the Atlanta YMCA. She even procured an invitation to see the White House in 1935. There are several scrapbooks, compiled by Emma, that are part of the collection, as well as family photos, letters, and journals.

What I hadn’t expected to find while looking through all of the family memorabilia and social news was a group of articles about a horrific incident in Oakhurst. No

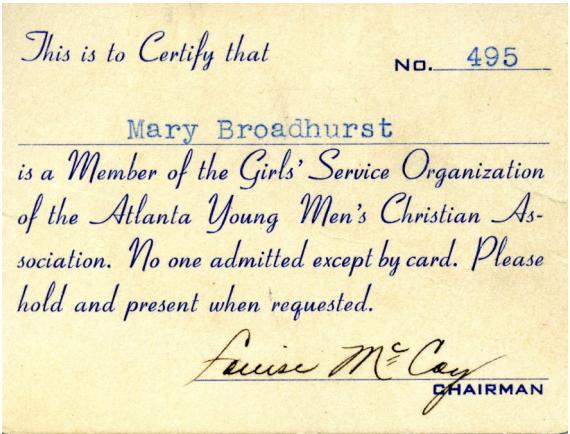
dates were found on any of them, but it would have been in the late 1920s or 1930s. The headline reads “One Man Dead, One Dying: Quarrel Over Pushcart Brings On Bloody



Article headline from Emma Mary Phillips' scrapbook, from the Broadhurst-Phillips collection, circa 1920.

Fight.” There was an incident between the Mayor of Oakhurst at the time, W. H. Johnston, and a grocer, P. W. Zuber, who had left a grocery cart in the street outside of Johnston’s home in Oakhurst. When the cart wasn’t moved in a timely fashion, Johnston kicked it and spilled all of the contents onto the ground. A fight ensued and Johnston was killed. Zuber was shot and managed to make it to a nearby hospital. I suppose the story hit close to home for Emma and she decided to preserve it in one of her scrapbooks.

You never know what you might find in our Archives. Thank you for considering helping us to continue to collect, preserve, and share these interesting finds. ✦



Membership certificate for Mary Broadhurst from the Broadhurst-Phillips collection, circa 1925.

Did you know?

There are approximately 21,000 items in our archives and collections.

End of Year Fundraiser for the Archives



We hope you enjoyed this special Archives Edition of the Times of DeKalb, highlighting a few of our collections. We find endless histories and stories in the stacks, and we know you do too! This year has been record-breaking for research requests. To date, 350 researchers have used our Archives. And in 2025 alone, we have added 65 new collections to our Archives.

More than ever, people are turning to us as a resource to uncover family stories, learn about their home, or reveal untold histories. To keep up with this demand, we must expand our storage, cataloging system, and supplies.

Our goal of \$15,000 will go toward the mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing DeKalb County history for generations.

This year, we are focusing on the essential building blocks that outfit our Archives. This humdrum equipment makes all the difference behind the scenes. We cannot properly carry out our mission without these items:

- ◆ Shelving Units
- ◆ Archival Software Cataloging System
- ◆ Remodeling of storage spaces
- ◆ Dehumidifiers
- ◆ Archival Boxes and Protective Sleeves

You can make a difference - please help us to continue to preserve DeKalb County History.

Name _____ Email _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ Phone _____

I want to make a donation to the archives

___ \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$75
___ \$100 ___ \$250 ___ \$350
Custom Amount \$ _____



Please mail this form with your contribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Court Square, Decatur GA 30030 or call 404-373-1088 ext. 1003. Visit our website www.dekalbhistory.org to pay online.

In Memoriam

Judge Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr.

Preserving the Story of the DeKalb History Center

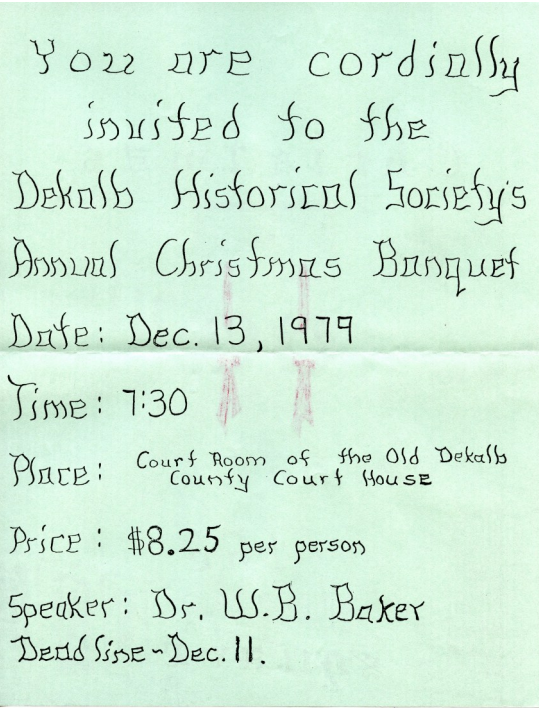
By Dave Stanhope, Board Member & Volunteer

Every institution has a story, and sometimes the best stories are found not in exhibits or photographs on the wall, but in the boxes of papers stored behind the scenes. For me that’s exactly where the real adventure begins. Since joining the Archives team, I have enjoyed the countless hours processing many of the Center’s various historical collections. However, the collection that gave me the most fun and consternation was the DeKalb History Center’s (formerly the DeKalb Historical Society) institutional files, consisting of materials that document the organization’s history, growth, and community impact.

When I began working on the Center’s archives, the project seemed simple enough: about nine boxes of administrative and financial files. But as we dug deeper, the collection started to take on a life of its own. To my surprise more boxes emerged from storage closets, filing cabinets, and tucked-away corners of the archives—each filled with correspondence,

photographs, exhibit plans, and artifacts that traced the Center’s journey from its early days in the historic courthouse. The expanding project became not only an exercise in archival management but also a deep dive into DeKalb County’s collective memory. What started as a small task became a growing, decades-spanning record of community partnerships, education programs, preservation projects, and local celebrations.

Now that the institutional records are fully processed, researchers and staff can easily access decades of organizational history. The collection offers valuable insight into how the Center has evolved and grown over time. It’s rewarding to know that these materials – many of which might have been forgotten – are now preserved for future generations. Like the DeKalb History Center, I am dedicated to keeping history alive and that the story of history itself begins with those who take the time to preserve it. ✦



Annual Christmas Banquet Invitation, 1979. From the DHS/DHC Collection.

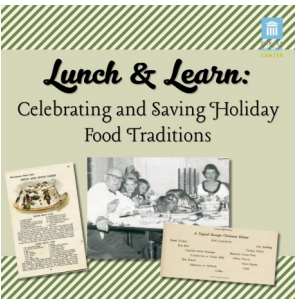


DHS 40th Anniversary, 1987. From the DHS/DHC Collection.

Did you know?

We need your help to maintain the unique treasures that make up the DeKalb History Center archives.

Upcoming Programs



December 9
Lunch & Learn: Celebrating and Saving Holiday Food Traditions

12:00—1:00 pm
Join Atlanta historian Amy Durrell and Pixorium founder Jiffy Page for a lively discussion about holiday food history in the South and how to preserve and share your own family traditions.

Free to attend—bring your lunch!



December 16
Hops at the History Center: *35 Natural Wonders of Georgia to See Before You Die*

6:00—7:00 pm
Join authors Ann Litrel and Charles Seabrook for a talk about their book, *35 Natural Wonders of Georgia to See Before You Die*.

Tickets: \$5 for Members / \$10 for Non-members



January 29, 2026
Drunk Journaling: An Evening of Crafting, Cocktails, and Creativity

6:00—8:00 pm
This workshop is about gathering tools to fill a journal with stories and secret dreams, practicing listening to your inner wisdom, and opening your heart to what’s next in your world.

Tickets: \$25 per person



February 26, 2026
2026 Black History Month Celebration
Stepping into Tradition: The Divine Nine
Sponsorships now available.

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Miscellaneous Treasures

By Rebecca Selem, Exhibits & Communications Coordinator

We at the DeKalb History Center have been collecting archives and artifacts from our community since 1947. Naturally, collecting procedures back then were not as advanced as they are presently, leaving a number of collections a mystery in terms of where they came from or who had owned them. These collections are housed in manila folders in “miscellaneous” boxes.

Personally, I find these mysterious archival collections to be the most fascinating. Thumbing through correspondences from unknown people who lived decades ago or sorting through photographs of people who may be forgotten to history is enjoyable, as they lay unclaimed in shell boxes nestled within our walls.

Recently I dove into a miscellaneous box, eager to come across something unseen and full of mysteries. Two booklets, *Secrets of Good Conversation* and *Good Letter-Writing Made Easy* were first to pique my

interest. Inside, the booklets feature helpful tips on each topic, for example the importance of speaking in a pleasant voice, avoiding

Did you know?
The newest item in our archives is a Zoom interview with a brother and sister from Decatur.



Secrets of Good Conversation and Good Letter-Writing Made Easy booklets, 1937.

pretentiousness, and how to differentiate ‘thank you’ letters versus congratulatory letters. In the back of the booklet there is a list of all the booklets offered through the Home Service Department back in 1937 including *Self-Introduction to Ballroom Dancing*, *How to Win and Hold Love*, and *Overcoming “Nerves” and Every-Day Health Problems*.

Next was the **Servicemen’s Kard Kit** from 1943-1945 featuring comical postcards that servicemen could easily mail to their loved ones. The kit in our collection has only unused postcards, but I imagine the person who owned it sent a few home before the war’s end on September 2, 1945. ✦



Packaging and postcards from the Servicemen's Kard Kit, 1943.

Fire Ledger Record Books—Decatur Fire Department

By Marissa Howard, Programs & Membership Coordinator

Some of the most captivating items in our Archives are two Fire Ledger Books for the Decatur Fire Department, spanning 1949-1981. The logs include the type and location of the call, details, and the amount of damage, if any.

These entries provide an interesting snapshot of the types of calls that were made to the fire department. Early entries are filled with calls for faulty cars, mattresses on fire, trash, and brush fires. By the mid- to late-1970s, in the second book, the majority of calls were medical emergencies, including chest pain, diabetes, and other medical conditions.

Some entries are difficult to read because the subject matter documented tragedies, including calls about people found deceased or others who were injured.

There are also some humorous calls, like:

- “Husband Drunk, set mattress on fire” Hunters Alley, January 13, 1952
- “Received call to get drunk man out of tree” Decatur Depot, September 6, 1953
- “Put police on the roof of the jail to check for escaped prisoners.” April 22, 1972

These calls offer firsthand accounts of historical events:

- Decatur City Fire Department aided in a call for a B-47 that crash landed at Naval Air Station Atlanta on October 14, 1955.
- A Winnona Park Elementary School fire in 1975.
- The fire that destroyed Thankful Baptist Church in Decatur’s Beacon Hill Neighborhood in 1970. The ledger states the cause was “unknown,” although investigators suspected it was arson.

In 1972, Thankful Baptist moved to a new sanctuary on College Avenue and there was another incident at the church that year. The ledger states that someone threw cherry bomb fireworks into one of the windows of the Thankful Baptist Day Care Center. The call was reported months later, and nothing was mentioned or recorded in the newspapers at the time.

These ledger books are an amazing resource for research in our Archives, because they provide us with a first hand account of events, as they happened. ✦

Did you know?
The oldest item in our archives is a deed from the original Georgia land lottery of 1821.

32									
NO.	DATE	TIME OF ALARM	KIND OF ALARM	LOCATION	OWNER	OCCUPANT	DESCRIPTION OF BLDG.	HOW USED	CAUSE OF FIRE
47	Feb 21, 55	1:47 a.	Service	100 BK Hearing St.	DeKalb County	SAME	Concrete	Office Bldg	Police smelled smoke could not find cause
48	Feb 21, 55	11:20 a.	Grass	211 Pensdale Rd					
49	Feb 21, 55	6:05 p.	Grass	Oakview Rd & Ausley St					
50	Feb 21, 55	11:26 a.	Grass	150 Midway Rd					
51	Feb 24, 55	11:38 a.	Trash	224 Lament Dr					
52	Feb 27, 55	2:05 p.	House	204 Coventry Rd.	W.W. Cole	SAME	Brick	Dwelling	Short in Furnace Motor N.D
53	Mar 1, 55	9:35 a.	Grass	W. College Ave & Adams St.					
54	Mar 1, 55	4:25 p.	House	256 Mount Vernon Dr.	Paul Green Realty Co.	H. Truth	Frame	Dwelling	Insulation on Furnace pipe on fire No Damage
55	Mar 1, 55	9:24 p.	House	312 Superior St.	Mrs. A.K. Seibert	SAME			Children set old sofa cushion on fire in basement N.D.
56	Mar 3, 55	4:31 p.	False	320 N. McDonough St.	City of Decatur	Decatur High School	Brick	School	
57	Mar 5, 55	11:43 a.	Grass	New St.					
58	Mar 7, 55	10:30 a.	Service	520 Scott Blvd.					Child locked in closet
59	Mar 9, 55	7:25 a.	House	559 Church St.	Molly W. Carr	Robert Dowdy	2nd Frame	Rooming House	Mattress on fire
60	Mar 9, 55	4:29 p.	Woods	Chelsea Dr.					Children playing in woods
61	Mar 10, 55	2:42 p.	House	147 Garden Lane	Mrs. Paul V. Jollett	SAME			Furnace motor burned out
62	Mar 11, 55	1:55 p.	Auto	200 BK W. Ponce de Leon Ave.	Oshields Buick	SAME	1953 Buick Super Tag M-5931 G-99		O.O.A.
63	Mar 11, 55	4:15 p.	House	316 Montgomery St.	T.G. Adams	SAME	Brick	Dwelling	Garbage sack against hot water heater caught fire O.O.A.
64	Mar 12, 55	10:25 a.	House	217 E. Davis St.	D.G. McMichael	SAME	Frame	Dwelling	Short in Radio wire burned curtains O.O.A.
65	Mar 12, 55	2:36 p.	Woods	Champlain & Huron					Beet out
66	Mar 12, 55	8:37 p.	Grass	812 Sycamore Dr.	P.C. P... ..				

Page 32 of the City of Decatur Fire Records Ledger, 1949 to 1976.