

## MLPC Archive Project Summary

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Our goal is to arrange, describe, and re-house in archival enclosures the present photographic collections in the Cleaves Library. As a result, the images, which are unique and historic documentation, will be in a stabilized storage and, with finding-aids inventorying the collection, will be easily accessible to researchers. Bibliographic control of the photo collection also minimizes handling of the originals, thus also contributing to their conservation. In addition, using the software program PastPerfect, a variety of electronic "virtual exhibits" may be created, for viewing and research via the Cleaves web site. Samplings of the collection, either through electronic, published, or exhibition means, raise the historic profile of the Library, accentuating the uniqueness of Cleaves as a resource.

At present, the existing collection has been surveyed and examined for its physical storage needs, tabulating dimensions and types of photo print processes. This having been carried out, the next phase is to plan the housing of the collection, and as the photographs are filed in acid-free folders, envelopes, and boxes, they will be catalogued.

The first phase in processing (cataloguing) an archival collection is to arrange the collection into discernable units, making decisions based upon provenance (the originating body- or corporate body- of the record[s]). Images may be grouped by subject, such as "portraits," "group portraits," or by chronology- in the example of the large montages of small photos of attorneys. Basic arrangements (classifications) will then be specified by sub-grouping categories into specific "catalog able units." The most efficient way to do this is to gather all the photographs and spread them out on large, flat surfaces, beginning to discern how the records will be accessed by researchers.

The following steps comprise housing the images in archival enclosures that are appropriate to their physical dimensions, along with the process of describing (cataloguing) individual images. Descriptions may best include dates (or approximate dates), names, places where the images were made, physical dimensions, and types of prints (albumen, gelatin-silver, Daguerreotype, etc.). The large montages of small prints will be dismantled from the acidic glues and boards, to be sleeved sequentially in archival enclosures. Names will be transferred to the prints (light pencil on upper-right-verso, for example), and the names will be recorded on the finding-aid. Call number information will also be developed, so that a unique identifying code number will accompany each photograph. Thus an expandable system will have been initiated.

It is anticipated that subsequent contributions of photographic records will be made to the collection. The system of processing materials will accommodate expansion, and storage systems will have to, as well. For the larger, oversized, records such as panoramic photos and large group portraits, oversized containers may be employed- or the Library may choose to purchase a map case of flat-storage drawers, which would have a greater capacity and would also provide a permanent receptacle for any other large paper-based item in the Cleaves collections, such as maps, charts, and documents.

Finding aids begin as basic, informative inventories, documenting collections, though they can easily provide for resulting publicities such as brochures, published volumes, Web sites, and catalogue records to be shared with related archival union catalogues- reporting the Library's holdings, both for research and security purposes.