

WORKING WITH ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Archival items like photos and documents, let you discover history firsthand.

A general research format can help uncover amazing histories. These guidelines can be applied to individual items or entire collections.

FORMAT

- What does the item look like?
- What do the physical characteristics tell you about history?
- Are there notes or markings on your item?

AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

- Who created this item?
- Who is the audience for this item?
- Who or what is the author talking about in this item?

TIME PERIOD

- Consider when your item was created?
- What was going on politically, socially, etc.?
- Does this item reveal something new to you about that time?

PURPOSE

- What does the item say, or if it's a photo, what does it show?
- What perspectives does this item support or argue against?
- Why do you think this item was created?

FIND SIMILAR ITEMS

- What are the items that are in the same folder, box, or collection?
- How are they related to your item?
- How are they different?

SURPRISES & QUESTIONS

- What about your item surprised you?
- Why should others know about this item?
- What questions do you still have?

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ARCHIVES MELLON GRANT
SOUTHERN HISTORICAL COLLECTION