

Conducting Local History Research in the Columbus State University Archives

If you are a researcher searching for historical information on Columbus or the surrounding area, the Columbus State University Archives is an excellent place to begin. Since the mission of the archives is to preserve, collect and make available cultural and historical research materials which focus on Columbus and the surrounding Chattahoochee Valley, the facility offers a variety of materials which can yield information about the region and her people. Although no two local history searches will ever be exactly the same, below you will find some recommendations and a brief list of tools to help you utilize our resources. If you have further questions, the [archival staff](#) is always on hand to assist you in finding the information you seek.

First Steps

The first step in conducting an effective search is to identify the subject of your search. Compose a list of key terms, which will help you to utilize our access tools. For example, if you are looking for information on historic homes in Columbus, you might start with keywords architecture, preservation, or the name of a specific home, such as St. Elmo. Likewise, try to identify as many proper names of persons or entities as possible. As you conduct your research, you may add key terms to your list as you discover new information.

Research Tools

The next step is to begin your search for items housed in our collection. To do this, you will need to know where to look, and below is a list of access tools which should be consulted for most local history research. There is no specific order to follow, and each source will not necessarily produce information on your topic. To conduct a comprehensive search, however, we recommend you consult each of the following items.

- *Chattahoochee Valley Sources and Resources: An Annotated Bibliography. Two volumes.* By John S. Lupold. This source is located on the ready reference shelf in the front of the archives. One volume covers the Alabama counties, and another provides citations for Georgia resources. Please note that not all of the resources in this volume will be located in our library, but this resource is excellent for locating hard to find materials about the valley region.
- [GIL Online Catalog](#). With over 1000 entries which relate to local history, the GIL catalog is an excellent way to search for local history resources. GIL can be accessed at home via the World Wide Web or at the patron computer terminal located in the archives. Be sure to write down the item type and call number of any items you are interested in. If the item is located in the Local History and Culture Reference Collection, this area is self service and is arranged in Library of Congress call number order.
- [Vertical Files](#). The archives maintains clippings files on a variety of cultural and historical topics. A list of these topics can be found in the black binder labeled vertical files near the center column in the archives. Since the vertical files are located in a limited access area of the facility, ask the archival staff to retrieve any items you many wish to peruse.
- *CSU Student Papers*. As part of the requirements for local history and historical methodology coursework, CSU students have conducted research on a wide variety of regional historical topics. The inventory to the CSU Collection, housed near the column in the center of the archives, will provide a listing of these papers. These papers are located in the closed stacks, so please ask the archival staff to retrieve any items you may wish to consult.
- *General histories of the Columbus and the surrounding area*. Several excellent histories exist which can provide a wealth of information on the region. Many of these are located on the ready reference shelf at the front of the archives, and several have internal or external indexes. See the pathfinders [Columbus: A Brief Bibliography](#) and [A Brief Bibliography of County and Regional Histories](#) for an individual list of sources to consult.
- *A Guide to the Manuscript Holding of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Collections; Archival Finding Aids; Box and Folder Lists*. These sources detail the manuscript holding of the archives. Each manuscript collection which has been processed has a box and folder list which outlines its contents, but to make the best use of this resource, each individual entry should be browsed to identify relevant collections. The expertise of the archival staff can help

to narrow this process to specific collections. Copies of each of these materials can be found near the column in the center of the archives.

- *City Directories and Phone Books*. These materials can be used to find information about the people living at a specific address, or to find out information about local businesses.

The key ingredient to successful local history research is thoroughness. If after consulting the above resources you still cannot find information on your topic, ask the archivist for further assistance.