

Scrapbooks: A Genealogists Gold Mine

By
Melissa Barker

Houston County, TN. Archivist
Professional Genealogist
Lecturer, Teacher and Writer

Email Address: melissabarker20@hotmail.com

Blog: A Genealogist in the Archives:
<http://agenealogistinthearchives.blogspot.com/>

Scrapbooks are one of my favorite record sources that I love to access and do research in and also to process as an archivist. Scrapbooks are like time capsules, they contain just about anything and until you “open them up”, you don’t know what is in them. This presentation is going to talk about the different kinds of scrapbooks and how to access them.

No Two Are Alike

There are so many different kinds of scrapbooks. Each one is one-of-a-kind and unique because they are produced by individuals with different interests and events that happened to them personally during their lifetime. Or they are produced by different organizations that had a particular reason to compile a scrapbook. Don’t think that once you have seen a scrapbook that you’ve seen them all, that thought couldn’t be farther from the truth! Here is a listing of some of the different scrapbooks that you might be able to find.

-Newspaper Clipping Scrapbooks: These types of scrapbooks are some of the more popular scrapbooks that we see. These could include scrapbooks that have only newspaper obituaries in them or scrapbooks that have newspaper clippings of local events. Some people liked to clip what interested them out of the newspaper and paste them in scrapbooks.

-Diary Scrapbooks: I call these diary scrapbooks because they are produced by someone who is documenting their day to day life with ephemera,

artifacts and journaling. These are very personal scrapbooks and help to tell the story of someone's life or what happened around them.

-War Scrapbooks: These types of scrapbooks were normally put together by an individual at home during the war. It could include newspaper clippings of reports about the war. It could include items such as war bonds, ration stamps and other memorabilia. I have also seen original telegrams from their soldier or the war department and other correspondence.

-Family History Scrapbooks: These types of scrapbooks would include anything having to do with the family history of the person who put it together. It could include such things as vital records, photographs and handwritten stories. It could also include dates of special events and other types of genealogical information. Many of these types of scrapbooks include journaling to describe the document, photograph or item that has been pasted in the scrapbook.

-Baby Books: Yes, baby books are considered a type of scrapbook. They usually included information about the baby's birth and all the first's that the baby achieved. It could also include a lock of hair and photographs of the newborn.

-Organizational Scrapbooks: A lot of our ancestors were members of a civic organization or a professional organization and they had scrapbooks too. These scrapbooks are quite different from a personal scrapbook and will document the events of the organization and its members.

-Whimsical Scrapbooks: Some people compiled scrapbooks of whimsical topics such as paper doll scrapbooks, movie star scrapbooks or even sports scrapbooks. While these may not help you advance with your genealogy research, it could definitely give you a sense of the time in which your ancestors lived.

Scrapbooks Online

There are not a lot of digitized scrapbooks online. Scrapbooks can be fragile and hard to digitize. However, here are examples of sites that have scrapbooks

digitized and free to view. The researcher would need to check with local repositories for scrapbooks that might be digitized and online.

-North Carolina Digital Heritage Center: This is a fantastic site with many types of digitized records including scrapbooks. As of the writing of this presentation they had 495 individually digitized scrapbooks and adding to that number every day. <https://www.digitalnc.org/>

-University of North Carolina Greensboro: Another fantastic website with digitized scrapbook. At present they have 236 digitized scrapbooks available free to the public.

<http://uncgspecial.blogspot.com/2014/02/university-archives-scrapbooks.html>

-Library of Congress: The Library of Congress has digitized scrapbooks including one for Lewis Carroll, author of “Alice in Wonderland”,

<http://international.loc.gov/intldl/carrollhtml/carrollbibSubjects1.html>

Finding Scrapbooks

Not every repository has scrapbooks in their collections, so you are going to have to do some research and dig a little bit to see if you can find them.

-Locate a local repository where your ancestors lived like a library, archive, historical society, genealogical society or University archive.

-Contact that repository and ask if they have any scrapbooks in their collections of records. No reason to travel to the facility if they don't have what you are looking for, plan ahead!

-If a repository has scrapbooks in their collections, they will most likely not be able to send you copies of it, you will probably have to visit the facility to view the scrapbook yourself.

-Some scrapbooks are housed in Manuscript Collections as part of a larger collection or they could be a manuscript collection of their own especially if

they are for civic/professional organizations. It would be important to access the Finding Aid to see if scrapbooks are listed.

-Some scrapbooks can be located in Special Collections housed at libraries and University archives. Again, they could be in with a larger collection or in a collection to themselves.

Preserving Scrapbooks

If you have scrapbooks as part of your family genealogy records, here are some steps you can take to archive and preserve them for future generations.

-Scan or take digital photographs of each and every page of the scrapbook including the front and back covers. If the scrapbook is very brittle or falling apart, do not scan it just take photographs.

-Purchase archival tissue paper that has passed the P.A.T. (Photographic Activity Test). Interweave the pages of the scrapbook with the tissue paper so that none of the contents will “leach” onto other pages, especially newspaper print.

-Purchase an archival box that has passed the P.A. T. (Photographic Activity Test). This box should be a flat box that is large enough for the scrapbook but not large, you don’t want it moving around in it. If you have to, you can crumple up tissue paper and put it around the scrapbook to hold it in place.

-Keep stored in a cool, dark place away from sunlight. Do not store in an attic or basement.

Archival Supplies:

Gaylord Archival

www.gaylordarchival.org

University Products

www.universityproducts.org

Hollinger Metal Edge
www.hollingermetaledge.org

Remember: It's Not All Online, Contact or Visit an Archive Today!