

OHRAB Grant Final Project Report

January 31, 2019

Organization: The University of Akron, University Libraries, Archival Services

Project Title: Processing the Opie Evans Papers

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Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

The purpose of this project was to process the Opie Evans Papers by appraising, sorting, arranging, preserving, and describing the collection so that it can be used by students, faculty, and other researchers. The Opie Evans Papers is a diverse collection of photographs, documents, printed items, and artifacts relating to the life and occupations of Opie Evans (1906-2000), a local African-American photographer, publisher, and businessman. There are also sound and video recordings that were not being processed in this phase. The papers document the history of the local African-American community in Akron, Ohio and Summit County, and is one of the few collections that documents this underrepresented segment of our community.

Processing began May 8, 2018 and was conducted by the Special Projects Processing Archivist, Theodore Mallison. Nicole Merzweiler, the former Special Projects Processing Archivist listed in the grant application, resigned her position in mid-April, so the Head of Archival Services and the Project Director, S. Victor Fleischer, had to conduct a search and hire a new Special Projects Archivist to work on this and other projects. Theodore Mallison was hired on May 1, 2018 to perform this work. Mr. Mallison has a Master of Arts in Arts Administration from The University of Akron and a Bachelor of Arts in Education (History and Social Studies Concentration) from Kent State University. He is the former Curator at the Summit County Historical Society in Akron, where he gained valuable experience in curating the organization's artifacts collection and processing and preserving their archival materials.

The project started with an initial survey of the collection, which revealed that most of the boxes were very disorganized. There was no discernible original order to the collection, and it became very clear early on that an artificial arrangement would need to be imposed. Boxes and contents were very dirty, and there was evidence of water damage and vermin infestation. Much of the contents appeared to have been dumped into the boxes by the donors with no regard for organization. Papers were bent, crumpled, and torn. Photographic prints were very curled, indicating long-term storage in fluctuating temperatures before their arrival in the archives facility. One box containing materials related to the *Akronite* newspaper was somewhat organized and seemed to represent something of an "original order" that might have been used while Evans was publishing the paper. Therefore, under the direction and in consultation with

the department head, the processing archivist developed a processing plan. Once created he shared it with the department head for review and input. The department head made several changes and numerous suggestions regarding the proposed organization scheme and returned it to the processing archivist to proceed with the processing.

The first week of processing was spent conducting a first sort of the collection. This involved sorting the materials into broad categories such as correspondence, writings, news clippings, photographs, etc. The *Akronite* newspapers and associated materials that had been kept together were set aside. At this point, potential series and sub-series began to be plotted out. Also, materials without archival or historical value were weeded that would not be archived and should be deaccessioned and discarded or shredded, such as medical bills, receipts, junk mail, catalogs, illegible notes, and unused greeting cards. The department head thoroughly reviewed these materials before they were destroyed and eventually approved their destruction.

During the second sort, the processing archivist spent time refining the series and organizing these into temporary folders and boxes. Deciding on series was somewhat difficult because it was clear that Opie Evans had kept records that related to his various occupations and pastimes, although he had not kept anything in clear order. Thus, it was tempting to try and arrange the collection by “functions of the creator” as it seemed the most likely way that Evans would have arranged his papers while he was alive. However, this arrangement would make it very difficult to determine a permanent location for his photographs, since Evans took photographs in almost every area of his life. After another consultation with the department head, it was determined that arrangement by type was the most logical method. Therefore, the series that finally emerged were Correspondence, Personal Papers, Writings, Printed Material, Artifacts, and Photographic Material. Still, this left the problem of what to do with the *Akronite* materials, which had obviously been kept together by Evans intentionally. There were also other materials relating to other areas of Evans’ life such as broadcasting, side businesses, and charitable work that seemed to have greater research value kept together. After further consultation with and a review of these materials by the department head, it was determined that a Subject Files series would be helpful to keep these special materials together.

The processing archivist then began putting things into alphabetical and chronological order within each series and sub-series and began the process of humidifying and flattening the curled photos. Since the flattening of the photos was a protracted process, the processing archivist also used this time to complete the final permanent foldering and re-housing of the other series into acid-free boxes and folders, including labeling folders. He also surface cleaned important documents and items that had been soiled using document cleaning sponges and pads, and flattened important documents that had been creased, rolled, or folded. Documents and printed material were then foldered into buffered archival folders and re-housed in archival boxes. Work also began on writing the finding aid.

Since the processing archivist was recently hired, the department head had to train the processing archivist in surface cleaning using document cleaning pads and document cleaning powder. He also trained the processing archivist in the process of flattening photographs using a humidification chamber to relax them. Once the processing archivist surface cleaned and humidified the curled photos, he pressed them under heavy weight, sandwiched between blotter paper and polyester

web, as recommended by conservators, in order to flatten them out. As this was being done, the photographs were also being sorted into stacks by subject, as narrowly as possible. Most of the photos were not identified by Evans, but many local buildings and public figures in the photographs were identifiable by the department head, who has extensive knowledge of the collection and local history. Those that could not be identified by simply looking at them were researched by the department head, which included looking up the images to see if they were published in the *Akronite* newspaper, or researching street addresses that appeared in the photos using the Akron City Directories.

By the time all the photographs had been flattened and sorted by subject, the cleaning, flattening, and re-housing and labeling of the other series was complete and a draft finding aid was completed minus the photographs. Then the photographic prints, slides, and negatives were foldered in unbuffered archival folders, interleaved with acid-free interleaving paper where necessary, and re-housed in archival boxes and these locations were added to the finding aid. All archival supplies, including archival boxes, folders, labels, interleaving, document cleaning sponges and pads, blotter paper and polyester web, and dust masks and gloves were paid for and provided by Archival Services. These supplies were taken from our stock of supplies we have on hand, but an accounting of the actual supplies used and their costs was calculated and generated by the department head based on current pricing from Gaylord Archival, our regular archival supplier. This cost, which came to \$862.97, and takes into account our 25% discount, including shipping and handling, are listed in the attached budget in Appendix A with a detailed list of supplies and current costs in Appendix B. With the salary and fringes for the department head/project director at 5.18%, or \$4,036.78, this brings the total match to \$4,899.75.

The cost match wasn't as much as projected in the grant application, which estimated \$5,411.00, because the processing archivist decided not to use our student assistants to help with this project. This was due to the fragile nature of the records, disorganized condition of the collection, and dirt and insects discovered in the materials, as this would have been beyond their skill level. These issues were not discovered until after the processing archivist started working on the collection and looking more closely at the materials. Unfortunately, this cut \$872.00 from the cost share. However, the university cost match for supplies ended up being \$367.97 more than projected in the grant application due to the fact that the materials in the collection were dirtier than originally thought and exhibited signs of insect infestation, and therefore, additional supplies were needed for document cleaning and interleaving as well as rubber gloves and dust masks to protect the health and safety of the processing archivist. Additionally, since numerous curled photographs were discovered in the collection once processing began, we used additional supplies such as blotter paper and polyester web for sandwiching humidified photographs for flattening. With the wages and fringes for the part-time processing archivist provided by the grant, at a cost of \$4,680.00, plus the university matching funds of \$4,899.75, this brings the total cost of the project to \$9,579.75, as detailed on the attached budget.

Finally, the department head reviewed the draft finding aid, noting the necessary changes and adjustments, and returned it to the processing archivist. The department head also edited the finding aid catching typographical and punctuation errors. He also researched, wrote, and provided the biographical sketch of Opie Evans. The processing archivist then addressed the comments of the department head by adjusting and finalizing the finding aid, adding the

photographic material. The processing archivist then posted a PDF version of the finding aid in The University of Akron Archival Services' Digital Repository at <http://cdm15960.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15960coll3/id/90348/rec/1> and entered the finding aid into the OhioLINK EAD Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OhAkUAS0127.xml&query=&brand=default>. He also provided a link from the short description on the archives' website at https://www.uakron.edu/libraries/archives/collections/collections.dot?search_query=evans, which was written by the department head. Finally, the department head sent the final finding aid to the University Libraries' Cataloging Department and worked with the catalogers to get the collection cataloged. A member of the Cataloging staff then cataloged the collection at the collection level in the University Libraries' catalog, which includes a link to the electronic finding aid (please see catalog record at <http://library.uakron.edu:80/record=b6097108~S24>). Salary and fringes for the cataloger were not included on the attached budget because the university could exceed the required cost match without these additional costs added.

Archival Services did publicity to announce the grant. The department head created an announcement and submitted it to the Society of Ohio Archivists, which appeared in their Fall 2018 newsletter (please see Appendix C or p. 30, column 1 of the *Ohio Archivist* at <http://www.ohioarchivists.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-Fall-SOA-Newsletter.pdf>). In addition, the department head wrote an announcement and submitted it to The University of Akron's e-mail blast called E-Mail Digest, which goes out to thousands of employees, alumni, and friends of the university (please see E-Mail Digest announcement in Appendix C). Additional publicity was done by the department head after the processing of the collection was finished, including an announcement that was submitted to the Society of Ohio Archivists for publication in their Spring 2019 newsletter, and an additional announcement in the university's E-Mail Digest (see Appendix D). The University of Akron Archives thanks the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board for their generous support of this project. Without it, these important records that document our local African-American community would not be properly processed and preserved and available to the public.

**Appendix A:
Final Budget Report**

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board National Historical Records & Publications (NHPRC) State and National Archival Partnership (SNAP) Grants Regrant Program			
Salaries and Wages	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
T. Mallison, Library Res. Asst. (\$13.31/hr. x 35% fringes x 260 hrs.)	\$4,680.00		\$4,680.00
S.V. Fleischer (5.18% AY April - Dec 2018 x 37.7% fringes)		\$4,036.78	\$4,036.78
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
Subtotals: Salaries and Wages	\$4,680.00	\$4,036.78	\$8,716.78
Supplies	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Archival Supplies (details included in narrative; includes 25% discount)		\$802.56	\$802.56
Shipping and Processing (includes shipping discount)		\$60.41	\$60.41
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
Subtotals: Supplies	\$0.00	\$862.97	\$862.97
Equipment	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
Subtotals: Equipments	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contracted Services	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
Subtotals: Contracted Services	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Eligible Expenses	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
			\$0.00
Subtotals: Other Eligible Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Summary Budget	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
<i>Salaries and Wages</i>	<i>\$4,680.00</i>	<i>\$4,036.78</i>	<i>\$8,716.78</i>
<i>Supplies</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$862.97</i>	<i>\$862.97</i>
<i>Equipment</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Contracted Services</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Other Eligible Expenses</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
Total Project Budget	\$4,680.00	\$4,899.75	\$9,579.75



Grant Announcement on University of Akron E-Mail Digest (August 2018):

From: [The Digest](#)
To: ua-mail@lists.uakron.edu
Subject: I-Corps Teams | Blue and Gold Days | New outdoor seating
Date: Thursday, August 30, 2018 3:27:21 PM



August 30, 2018 | [Submit News](#) | [Submission Guidelines](#) | [Archives](#)

TODAY'S HEADLINES

- ▶ [Faculty and student teams complete intense I-Corps Teams program](#)
 - ▶ [Blue and Gold Days meet Five-Star Fridays](#)
 - ▶ [New outdoor furniture brightens landscape across campus](#)
 - ▶ [Archival Services receives grants](#)
 - ▶ [Business Analytics Innovation Summit – register by Sept. 3](#)
 - ▶ [Entrepreneurship is a topic on 'Zips Unlimited' this Saturday](#)
 - ▶ [Black Alumni Tailgate and Reunion to be held Sept. 8](#)
 - ▶ [Auditions scheduled for 'Big Love'](#)
 - ▶ [Repeated Items](#)
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TODAY'S NEWS

Archival Services receives grants

Archival Services of University Libraries recently received three grants. They are:

- National Film Preservation Foundation (\$37,310) — to reformat and digitize 14 nitrate motion picture films from The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company Collection that document the construction and operation of the dirigibles U.S.S. Akron and U.S.S. Macon, two of the most significant airships in lighter-than-air history.
- Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (\$4,680) — to process and preserve the papers of the late **Opie Evans**, a local African-American photographer who documented the history of Akron's black community.
- Ohio Humanities Council (\$14,957) — in partnership with Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens, to produce a documentary titled "Lost Voices of the Great War: Summit County in World War I," which documents Akron and Summit County's contributions to the First World War. The partners hope to air the documentary on PBS around Veterans Day.

A free film screening will take place on Oct. 30 at 7 p.m. in the Akron-Summit County Public Library Auditorium, 60 South High St., in downtown Akron. For more information about the film and other events and exhibits in Summit County commemorating the 100th anniversary of World War I, please visit [Summit County and the Great War](#) online.

**Appendix D:
Publicity for Completion of Grant Project**

Grant Completion Announcement in SOA Newsletter, *Ohio Archivist* (forthcoming in Spring 2018 edition):

The University of Akron Archival Services

Archival Services of University Libraries at The University of Akron recently received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant in the amount of \$4,999. The grant will fund necessary conservation work on the department's three-quarter-length portrait of Charles Goodyear by noted American portrait artist G.P.A. Healy. The painting is significant because it is one of the most prominent portrait of the discoverer of vulcanization and one of the few executed on a rubber canvas. Conservation treatment will include repairing damage to the portrait, providing support for the rubber panel, and surface cleaning the painting so it can be exhibited and shared with the public once again. All work will be performed by the Intermuseum Conservation Association (ICA) in Cleveland, Ohio.

The University of Akron Archives also recently completed two grant projects. The first, an Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) Grant, included processing and preserving the papers of Opie Evans (1906-2000), a local African-American photographer, reporter, publisher, and businessman. The Opie Evans Papers consist of correspondence, newspapers, publications, and audio-visual materials that document the history of the African-American community in Akron from the 1940s through the 1990s, including hundreds of photographic prints, negatives, and slides that visually document the local African-American community. The finding aid or inventory to the collection can be accessed at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OhAkUAS0127.xml&query=&brand=default>.

Archival Services, in partnership with UA's Design & Development Services, Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens, and other community partners, also recently finished an Ohio Humanities Council Media Grant by completing the documentary film "Lost Voices of the Great War: Summit County in World War I." The documentary premiered on Western Reserve Public Media (PBS 45/49 and Fusion) and Hudson Community Television (HCTV) last November. Catalogued copies of the DVD are available for circulation through Bierce Library. The film is also available for viewing on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bM5BoFr-ov4&feature=youtu.be>.

Grant Completion Announcement in University of Akron E-Mail Digest:

Archival Services Completes Grant Projects

Archival Services of University Libraries recently completed two grant projects. The first, an Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) Grant, included processing and preserving the papers of Opie Evans (1906-2000), a local African-American photographer, reporter, publisher, and businessman. The Opie Evans Papers consist of correspondence, newspapers, publications, and audio-visual materials that document the history of the African-American community in Akron from the 1940s through the 1990s, including hundreds of photographic prints, negatives, and slides. The finding aid or inventory to the collection can be accessed at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OhAkUAS0127.xml&query=&brand=default>.



Archival Services, in partnership with UA's Design & Development Services, Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens, and other community partners, also recently finished a \$15,000 Ohio Humanities Council Media Grant by completing the documentary film "Lost Voices of the Great War: Summit County in the First World War." The documentary premiered on Western Reserve Public Media (PBS 45/49 and Fusion) and Hudson Community Television (HCTV) last November. Catalogued copies of the DVD are available for circulation through Bierce Library. The film is also available for viewing on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bM5BoFr-ov4&feature=youtu.be>.