



Alabama DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Donation Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I donate records and artifacts to the Alabama Department of Archives and History?

The ADAH is committed to sharing the story of Alabama and its people by preserving records and artifacts of historical value. Donations from individuals, families, and organizations are an essential part of the department's collection.

When you donate to the ADAH, we preserve your records and artifacts for long-term use and share them with students, researchers, and the public. Collections are accessible for research and used in public programming and the development of educational resources. They may also be used in exhibitions or digitized for online access.

What does the ADAH collect?

The ADAH collects records and artifacts that tell the story of Alabama and its people. Since 1901, we have collected not only the official records created by state agencies, but also records and artifacts donated by individuals, families, and organizations.

We seek items that represent Alabamians of all walks of life and reflect the state's diverse history. Records and artifacts collected by the ADAH typically fall into one of three categories:

Artifacts: Three-dimensional items that tell the stories of the personal and professional lives of Alabamians.

Archival Materials: Original records created by families, individuals, or organizations that describe events in Alabama or document the lives of Alabamians. This includes letters, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, maps, and video and audio recordings.

Reference Materials: Books and other reference materials that primarily focus on Alabama.

If you are interested in donating artifacts or records which are not reflected on this list, please contact us at (334) 353-4748 or registrar.archives@archives.alabama.gov. We appreciate the opportunity to review items that have a strong connection to Alabama. The ADAH typically is unable to collect items such as large furniture, large musical instruments, large collections of research notes, and textbooks, magazines, and other publications which are unrelated to Alabama.

How do I donate records or artifacts to the ADAH?

Please complete the [online donation form](#) and upload images of the records and/or artifacts you would like to offer for donation. (If you are unable to complete the online form or have questions about the donation process, please call (334) 343-4748 or email registrar.archives@archives.alabama.gov.)

After we receive your donation form, it will be reviewed by our Collections Review Committee and director.

If your offered donation is accepted for the department's permanent collection, we will send you a Deed of Gift to sign. Your signature and return of the Deed of Gift legally transfers ownership of the collection to the ADAH and completes the donation process. If your offered donation is accepted for the department's nonaccessioned collection, we will mail an acknowledgement letter thanking you for your gift.

If your offered donation is declined, we will try to recommend another institution to contact.

May I mail or drop off a donation?

Please complete the [online donation form](#) or call (334) 353-4748 or email registrar.archives@archives.alabama.gov before mailing or delivering material offered for donation. **We are unable to accept drop-off donations or unsolicited mailed donations without additional paperwork.**

How are records and artifacts used by the ADAH?

Items received by donation are administered as either **accessioned** or non-**accessioned** materials.

Accessioned materials are records and artifacts managed as part of the department's permanent collection. These items are preserved according to the highest standards, stored in secure, climate-controlled storage areas, and used for exhibition, loan, and research in controlled environments. Direct handling by staff and the public is minimized and carefully monitored to prevent damage. **It is the department's intent to retain these items in perpetuity, so long as they continue to support the department's mission, maintain their physical integrity and authenticity, and can be safely and properly stored and preserved.**

Nonaccessioned materials are used for reference, demonstrations, and interactive exhibits. These items may be used for interactive learning activities in the Hands-On Gallery, by staff to teach proper storage and conservation techniques, or in our Research Room as part of our reference collection. Nonaccessioned materials include books, photocopied reference materials, and records and artifacts used for hands-on learning activities. **These materials may be discarded or replaced if they become broken or worn beyond repair.**

Is my donation tax deductible?

The fair market value of your donation is tax deductible to the extent provided by law. It is recommended that you consult an accountant, attorney, or the IRS to ensure that you receive the maximum tax benefit. For more information, you may also consult IRS [Publication No. 526, Charitable Contributions](#) and [Publication No. 561, Determining the Value of Donated Property](#).

Can the ADAH tell me how much my materials are worth?

IRS guidelines do not allow the ADAH to provide financial valuations or recommend an appraiser.

A professional appraiser can provide a financial valuation for a fee. All fees associated with appraisal are the responsibility of the donor. To locate a licensed appraiser in your area, visit the [American Society of Appraisers](#) or review a [list of appraisers in Alabama](#).

How do researchers access records and artifacts at the ADAH?

Archival records are available for research through the department's [Research Room](#), and selected items are available through the [ADAH Digital Collections](#). Unprocessed materials may not be available for viewing until they have been fully cataloged.

Artifacts are available for research upon request and with an advance appointment. If you would like to view an artifact, please contact the museum collections coordinator by email at ryan.blocker@archives.alabama.gov.

Will my donation be on display?

Only a small portion of the department's collection is on display at any time, and materials are periodically rotated off display to minimize the damage caused by exposure to light. To prevent damage and preserve artifacts and records for future generations, the ADAH cannot accommodate requests for permanent display.

Whether on display or in storage, records and artifacts expand the public's understanding of Alabama history. Collections are accessible to donors and their families, students, genealogists, historians, and the public, and are often used in educational resources and public programming by the ADAH.

If I donate artifacts or records, can they be returned to me or my descendants?

Donation of items through a signed Deed of Gift constitutes a permanent transfer of ownership to the Alabama Department of Archives and History. The ADAH does not return donations to the donor or his/her descendants once a Deed of Gift has been signed and the items have been accessioned into the department's permanent collection.

Can materials be removed from the ADAH's collection?

Under the guidelines established in [Alabama Act 92-719](#), the ADAH may remove objects and documents from the department's permanent collection through a process called deaccession. Deaccession is undertaken rarely and requires approval from the department's director and board of trustees. Artifacts or records are most often removed from the collection because they are damaged or pose a threat to the health and/or safety of staff, the facility, or other collections.

Does the ADAH accept long-term loans?

The ADAH is unable to accept long-term or permanent loans and prefers to commit its resources to the storage and preservation of artifacts or records held in the department's permanent collection. While the ADAH does sometimes borrow items that are not represented in our collection to enhance our exhibits, all loan agreements are signed for a specified, limited period.