

Museum Archivist

Summer 2010

Volume 20, Issue 2

2010 Annual Meeting Preview

As incoming co-chairs, we hope you enjoy the Summer 2010 newsletter and find it informative. For the upcoming year, we have several exciting thoughts and ideas for the section starting with the 2010 Annual Meeting.

For those planning to come to Washington DC, please join us for the next Museum Archives section meeting, scheduled for **Thursday, August 12 from 1:45 PM - 3:45 PM (room TBD)**.

Traditionally, the meeting has provided an opportunity for members to come together and discuss issues relating to museum archives. We will be happy to introduce our new officers and share results from our recent online survey.

We will also launch a new segment, repository updates, to highlight our members' special projects and initiatives. All in all, we look forward to presenting these new directions, as well as providing a "tried and true" forum for networking and future session ideas.

An agenda for the section meeting follows. Please direct any questions, ideas or suggestions to Susie Anderson at skanderson@philamuseum.org.

We hope to see you in DC!

- *Susie Anderson and Francine Snyder,*
Co-chairs, Museum Archives Section

Meeting Agenda

Greeting/introduction

Ballots results

Steering Committee introductions

Survey results

Working Group introduction

Newsletter update

requests for session papers
new "Postscript" feature

Five minute repository updates

2011 session suggestions

Social/networking time

Mountains to Molehills: Balancing Institutional, Donor, and Researcher Priorities for the Charles Sheldon Papers

By Anne L. Foster, CA, formerly Archivist, University of Alaska Fairbanks

(This paper was given at the 2009 SAA conference in Austin at a session sponsored by the Museum Archives Section.)

I had one of "those" calls about 18 months ago: after enthusiastically announcing that he had found a fabulous photo collection at a museum back East, the caller insisted that we—the Archives—had to have it. It soon became clear that he was not suggesting that we obtain copies of it, but that he and a group of others were going to

insist to the current repository that the collection belonged in Alaska. He was simply calling to confirm that when they wrested it away, the Archives would accept it. Somewhat panicked, I told him that yes, the collection did sound exciting and if the institution truly wanted to dispose of it, we would be happy to accept it. However, I suggested to him that it would be better for any sort of discussion to occur directly between the two institutions.

I started with some research. Charles

Sheldon, the collection's creator, was considered the father of Mt. McKinley (now Denali) National Park. Our own collection of Charles Sheldon papers had been used extensively by the Park for an administrative history; but it contained no images for illustration or exhibit. With the Park approaching its 100th anniversary, it was clear why the collection had caused such great excitement among the Park's supporters.

Armed with this background, I phoned the archivist of the Shelburne Museum. After some thought and negotiation, we

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From the Chair

Dear Section Members,

The first thing that comes to mind as I look back over my tenure as Chair is the support of my fellow steering committee members, whose proactive and adroit co-leadership have encouraged me at every turn. With that in mind, I'd like to welcome our incoming co-Chairs Francine Snyder and Susan Anderson, and thank Joe Ciccone for his exemplary service as newsletter editor over the past year; kudos!

These past few months have seen the steering committee working on a mix of old and new projects. Notably, we have recommended several past Museum Archives Section leaders as potential interviewees for SAA's 75th Anniversary Oral History Project. While the composition of

the final interviewee list is up to project staff to decide, I was pleased to be able to recommend Sarah Demb, Maureen Melton, Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Kathleen Williams, and Deborah Wythe as candidates.

As I write this we are tweaking the wording of a few final questions on the Section survey; it should be ready to go live soon. We have also re-published the proposed bylaws revisions in this newsletter; the proposed changes will be voted on at the Section's business meeting at the SAA Annual Conference. While I am disappointed that the Program Committee passed over the session proposals we recommended for this year's conference, I'm looking forward to attending other museum-related content in the program. In particular, several of our colleagues



from the museums and archives of the Smithsonian Institution are speaking on various panels; I encourage everyone who is able to make it to the conference to check them out!

It's been a great two years, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible this August!

- Leilani Dawson, Chair

Museum Archives Section Working Group meeting

Join us this August for the inaugural meeting of the reinstated Museum Archives Section Working Group. The Working Group has been reformed to develop a project plan for a resource or resources that expand on the success of the Museum Archives manual and (hopefully) allow for expanding resource-sharing across institutions. Possibilities include form and policy section, page for members to post new collections and links to finding aids, and museum archives blogroll. The final project will provide all section members with community updated resources as well as a participation platform - especially for members who cannot always attend the conferences.

The first meeting will brainstorm needs and possibilities. Meeting time: Thursday, 3:45—5:00 (right after the annual meeting!) in Park Tower 8224. All are invited to attend. Those who cannot attend but are interested in participating can email questions, ideas, or suggestions to Francine Snyder at francine.snyder@guggenheim.org.

Museum Archives Section Officers

Leilani Dawson, Chair
leilanid@earthlink.net

Francine Snyder, Co-Chair Elect
francine.snyder@guggenheim.org

Joe Ciccone, Editor
jciccone@cicconearchives.com

Susan Anderson, Co-Chair Elect
skanderson@philamuseum.org

Francine Snyder, Web Liaison
francine.snyder@guggenheim.org

Museum Archivist is issued two times each year by the Museum Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists. Articles, news and comments from the archives community are welcome. Submission deadlines for the Winter and Summer issues are the second Fridays in December and June. All submissions can be sent to the incoming editor, Adrianna Del Collo, at Adrianna.DelCollo@metmuseum.org

Museum Archives Section Survey

The steering committee of the Museum Archives Section is interested in getting your feedback as we chart the course for future section activities.

To gauge members' priorities, we have developed an online survey at <http://bit.ly/dhYomy>.

The questionnaire should take @ 10-15 minutes to fill out. Please complete it by Monday, August 2. We plan to report our findings at the section meeting on August 12.

Your opinion is important to us, especially if you can't attend the upcoming SAA meeting and participate in various group discussions.

If you have any questions about the survey, feel free to contact Francine (francine.snyder@guggenheim.org) or Susie (skanderson@philamuseum.org).

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settled on a two-pronged approach. First, the Museum would loan the collection to us for three years. I had not originally considered a loan, but it offered the perfect solution for the researchers' desire to commune with the original materials. The process of completing the facility report was daunting; however, I have concluded that this is an idea that should be considered more often for archival materials. Museums loan materials often enough that their professional organization has developed a standardized form for inter-institutional loans. This provides both institutions with a degree of confidence in the other's ability to protect the loaned item. Why not loan archival materials, too?

Second, we would digitize the collection and add it, and the Shelburne Museum as the holding institution, to Alaska's Digital Archives. This would ensure that Alaskans could easily find and make use of the col-

lection for years to come while also preserving the Shelburne's ability to manage reproduction and use of the materials.

Not long after this was settled, I received a letter from the Sheldon descendent. She had located some additional Charles Sheldon images and wanted to donate them to us. After mulling over the ethical issues, I contacted the donor and told her I wanted to consult with the Shelburne first and make sure that the donation was acceptable to them as holders of the primary collection. Fortunately, the Shelburne was not interested and we were able to accept this portion of the collection.

As my example illustrates, collections rarely fit the collecting policy of only one institution. David Duniway points out the numerous potential repositories for which one hypothetical individual's paper may be appropriate. Frank Burke was blunt: "the personal papers that we so avidly solicit because they are 'just

right' for our acquisition policy also happen to be 'just right' for another institution's acquisition policy because we are dealing with the written remains of complex personalities who led complex lives." Cynthia K. Sauer writes that "collections are simply too multifaceted and repository collecting focuses too overlapping for clear collecting lines to be drawn. . . [and] the existence of split and 'alienated' collections are inevitable parts of the archival world." While acknowledging the problem, none offers solutions for dealing with the problem beyond calling for increased "cooperation".

Guidelines are clear when we are faced with potential new collections—we "do not compete for acquisitions when competition would endanger the integrity or safety of documentary materials of long-term value . . ." Unfortunately, the literature is largely quiet on the issue of what to do when it is too late; when,

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for whatever reason, a collection is split between two or more institutions.

One article is the exception. After taking manuscript curators to task for their “archival avarice” in accepting alienated federal records, Loretta L. Hefner suggests “complementary archives”:

Archivists and manuscript curators will need to work cooperatively to construct donor agreements with appropriate restrictions, and converse about the arrangement and description of the records. They will need to share finding aids, communicate to researchers that additional related records are located at another repository, and cite the other repository as holding related records in the national bibliographical databases.

I believe Hefner was on the right track. Archivists need to work together to find creative solutions for the problem. While there is probably not one solution that fits every

variation of the split collection, there are some overarching principles that can be drawn from my experience. First, we need to be clear about our institutional mission; not so much what we do, but why we are doing it. If we focus on this, we may become more open to new ideas for reaching our goals. Second, we must be willing to discuss the problem openly and honestly. This is something we all have to deal with at some point, why not make our experiences--both successful and unsuccessful--available to our colleagues? Third, we should consider alternative ways to reunite these collections. Whether it's a temporary loan, publication, digital reunification, or something else as yet unthought-of, some form of reunification is what the modern researcher expects and we need to be able to provide it.

i. David C. Duniway. “Conflicts in Collecting,” *American Archivist* 24 (January 1961): 55.

ii. Frank G. Burke, “Archival Cooperation,” *American Archivist* 46 (Summer 1983): 294.

iii. Cynthia K. Sauer. “The Use of Collection Development Policies and Cooperative Collecting Activities at Manuscript Repositories.” *American Archivist* 64.2 (Fall/Winter 2001): 331.

iv. Council of the Society of American Archivists. *Code of Ethics*. 1991 [1992]. Retrieved from Code of Ethics Online, June 30, 2009. <http://ethics.iit.edu/codes/coe/council.soc.amer.archivists.html>.

v. Loretta L. Hefner. “Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory Records: Who Should Collect and Maintain Them?.” *American Archivist* 59.1 (Winter 1996): 87.

New Museum Archivist Editor

After this issue of the *Museum Archivist*, Joe Ciccone will be turning over the editorial reigns to Adrianna Del Collo.

Adrianna is the Associate Archivist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she administers the museum's business and legal records and manuscript collections. Her work has focused on using databases and Web technology to improve access to the museum's rich archival holdings.

Prior to joining the Metropolitan, Adrianna worked at the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of a four-year processing project funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Adrianna holds a B.A. from Oberlin College, an M.S. in Library and Information Science from Drexel University, and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Art History from Hunter College.

Adrianna has attended Museum Section meetings since 2001 and is delighted to serve as the next editor of its newsletter.

She can be reached at: Adrianna.DelCollo@metmuseum.org

Proposed Bylaw Revisions

Justification:

In light of Council's updates to the section and roundtable governance procedures, the Museum Archives Section Steering Committee has drafted revisions to Articles 4 and 5 of the Section's bylaws (dealing with Section officers and business, respectively). The changes will bring the Section's election procedures into compliance with SAA Council's revised rules for Sections by electing a vice chair/ chair-elect every year instead of every other year. Also, elections for Section officers will use SAA's electronic voting system instead of being conducted at the business meeting each year. As indicated by the current bylaws, the proposed revisions will be published for review by the Section's membership in the January and June newsletters and then voted upon at the Section business meeting at the 2010 SAA conference. (Also see: <http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section9.asp>, especially part VIII – Governance, for more detail on current SAA guidelines for section governance.)

Part of the reason to move away from holding elections at the annual meeting and instead elect officers via electronic ballots (with results announced at the annual meeting) is to let the entire Section membership participate in elections, regardless of whether or not they are able to attend the annual conference. It seems that this logic should apply to bylaws amendments as well, and so by the time the newsletter has been published the Steering Committee will have asked Council to place the issue (of whether or not the holding these sorts of votes electronically in conjunction with annual officer elections is feasible) on the agenda for its February meeting. If it is possible then we will also be proposing a second set of revisions, to Article 8 of the MAS bylaws (on amendments).

Proposed Revisions (proposed additions in [brackets], proposed deletions underlined):

Bylaws of the Museum Archives Section

Society of American Archivists
As revised, September 8, 1995

Article 1. Name.

The name of this section shall be the Museum Archives Section of the Society of the American Archivists (SAA), hereinafter referred to as the Section.

Article 2. Objectives.

The Section will provide a forum for dialogue on any issue or event relating to museum archives; promote the interests of museum archivists with SAA through annual meetings, publications, and a newsletter; and informally disseminate knowledge to those concerned with museum institutional records, personal papers, and special collections.

Article 3. Membership.

Membership is open to any SAA member who elects to join the Section.

Article 4. Officers.

A. The Section shall be guided by[a Steering Committee consisting of] a Chair, Chair-elect, Recording Secretary, and an Editor.

B. Terms of Office.

I. Only members of the Section may serve as officers. [Positions may be held by either an individual or two members who will have joint responsibility, i.e. co-chairs or co-editors.]

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2. All ~~other~~ officers shall serve a term of [one year] two years. The Chair-elect shall serve a term of one year, and then shall succeed the Chair[, for a total of a two year term].
3. Except for the Chair and the Chair-elect, all other officers may succeed themselves[indefinitely]. [The Chair and Chair-elect may not serve for more than two consecutive years.]
4. The Chair, Chair-elect, and Recording Secretary[All officers] shall assume office at the close of the annual Section meeting in which they are elected, and, except for the Chair-elect, shall serve until their successors have taken office.
5. The Editor shall be appointed by the Chair.

C. Nomination [and Elections].

[1. The Section shall conduct annual elections via an online ballot system provided by SAA staff.]

[2] Nominations for [all officers] Chair-elect shall [be issued ten weeks prior to the Annual SAA Conference] occur one year after the Chair has been in office.

2. Nominations for the Recording Secretary will be held at the annual meeting of the Section after the Recording Secretary has been in office for two years.

3. Nominations may be made by any Section member, including officers.

4. The nominee must give her/his consent to be eligible for election to office, either in writing, which is to be read at the meeting, or orally.

[5. Online ballots containing basic ballot information shall be prepared by SAA staff and made accessible during the first week of July and shall remain open for at least two weeks.]

[6. Section members who are in good standing on June 30 shall be eligible to vote. Members who join after this date shall be eligible to vote during the following year.]

D. Vacancies in Office.

1. Chair.

In the case of vacancy in the office of the Chair, the Chair-elect, when in office, shall assume the duties of the Chair. The Chair-elect completes the vacancy and then takes on the regular [one] two year term. When[if] no Chair-elect is in office, the Recording Secretary shall assume the office and duties of the Chair, and shall appoint someone to carry out the duties of the Recording Secretary until a Chair is elected. Election of a new Chair shall, in that case, occur at the next annual meeting of the Section.

2. Chair-elect.

In the case of vacancy in the office of the Chair-elect, the office will remain vacant [until the next annual election of Section officers]. Election of a Chair shall occur at the next annual meeting of the Section. The election of a new Chair-elect will not occur until the annual meeting following one year in office by the Chair.

3. Recording Secretary.

In the case of vacancy in the office of the Recording Secretary, the Chair shall appoint a member of the Section to take over the duties until the next [yearly Section election] Section meeting, at which time election of a Recording Secretary will occur.

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4. Editor.

In the case of vacancy of the office of the Editor, the Assistant Editor [if there is one,] will assume duties of the office until the Chair appoints a new Editor. In the absence of an Assistant Editor, the Chair will appoint an Acting Editor, who will carry out the duties of the office until a new Editor is [elected]appointed.

E. Duties of the Officers.

1. Chair.

The Chair shall preside over Section meetings and shall direct the Section's activities. The Chair will[may] appoint a Membership Coordinator, Committee Chairs and Liaisons; is responsible for all communications and submissions to SAA Council and the SAA Executive Office, either directly, or through delegation, after conferring with Section officers and Section members, as needed, for appropriate action.

2. Chair-elect.

The Chair-elect shall have no specific duties, but rather will be assigned tasks by the Chair.

3. Recording Secretary.

The Recording Secretary shall record the proceedings of the annual meeting, and perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair. Minutes of the meeting will be provided to the [Steering Committee]Chair, and a copy [or summary]shall be published in the Section newsletter in the first issue following the meeting.

4. Editor.

The Editor is responsible for preparing, reviewing, and publishing the Section newsletter twice a year. At the Chair's discretion, the newsletter will be reviewed by others before publication. In consultation with the [Steering Committee]Chair, additional issues may be published. The Editor [may choose to]shall appoint an Assistant Editor, and regional editors as needed. The Editor [shall coordinate with the Section's Website Coordinator to publish the newsletter on the Section's website]selects the mode for production of the newsletter, with SAA being one option.

Article 5. Business.

A. Meeting Times.

The Section shall meet at least once a year at the time of the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists. The time of and agenda for this meeting shall be announced in the newsletter immediately preceding the meeting.

B. Other Meetings.

Additional Section meetings may be scheduled during the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists. Such meetings shall be announced in the newsletter preceding the annual meeting or before the end of the annual Section meeting.

C. Voting.

All decisions of the Section [other than election of officers]shall be determined by a majority of members voting at any meeting. All officers except the Chair may vote. The Chair votes only to break a tie. Where there is no majority vote, [the issue shall be re-discussed and a second ballot shall be held] particularly in the case where more than two members are up for election for a given office, selection shall be made through a second ballot between the two members who received the most votes on the first ballot.

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Article 6. Committees.

The Chair may appoint or dissolve committees as needed. Each committee shall have a written charge and a specified period of service. Committees shall report on their activities at annual Section meetings.

Article 7. Parliamentary Authority.

Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern the proceedings of the Section, except as otherwise provided for in these bylaws, or in the constitution, bylaws, or special rules of the Society of American Archivists.

Article 8. Amendments to the Bylaws.

A. Notice and form.

1. An amendment to these bylaws may be proposed by any Section member.
2. Amendments must be submitted in writing to the Section [Steering Committee]Chair, with a copy to the Editor.
3. The proposed amendments shall be published in the next two newsletters. If the annual meeting is held before publication in the second newsletter, discussion at the annual Section meeting shall take the place of publication in the second newsletter.

B. Adoption of Amendments.

1. After the appropriate notice has been given, amendments shall be voted on at the annual Section meeting.

Article 9. Dissolution.

This Section, noting failing interest or lack of accomplishment of its objectives, may vote to dissolve.

News & Notes

Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives Publishing Content for Museum Blog

Staff at The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives are partnering with the Museum's new Digital Media department to produce "Today in Met History" articles for the Metropolitan's new "Now at the Met" blog.

The first two installments focused on the 140th anniversary of the Museum's founding, and the acquisition of medieval artworks that formed the nucleus of The Cloisters.

Future articles will highlight the first gift of an artwork to the Museum, milestones in the history of the Metropolitan's Watson Library, and anniversaries of several landmark exhibitions.

Visit "Today in Met History" here: <http://www.metmuseum.org/now-at-the-met/category.aspx?filterby=Archives>.



Interior view of George Grey Barnard's Cloisters Museum in upper Manhattan, about the time of its 1925 acquisition by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Photograph from Views of The Cloisters. The Cloisters Library and Archives, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)

Litchfield Historical Society Creates Online Database

The Litchfield Historical Society invites you to participate in an exciting new project. In September 2009, the Society began a two year venture to create an online searchable database of all documented students of Litchfield Female Academy and the Litchfield Law School. Funding for the project is provided by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Council on Library and Information Resources, and the Connecticut Humanities Council.

The Ledger will present the stories of these institutions, their founders and students. In 1784 Tapping Reeve opened the Litchfield Law School, the first in America. It attracted over 1,200 students from 13 states and territories to study in Litchfield. Graduates formed a network of leadership and influence that encompassed public service, business, and other areas of American life. In 1792 Sarah Pierce founded a pioneer insti-

tution of female education in America. Her innovative curriculum of academic, practical, and ornamental courses expanded the world of the estimated 3,000 girls who attended the Litchfield Female Academy over its 41 year history.

The words, artwork, and personal belongings of the students and instructors will be brought together with biographical and genealogical information from a variety of repositories and private collections. The Society seeks information about any related collections of archives or artifacts. For further details about the project, a complete list of students, or to submit information to be included please contact the cura-



Portrait miniature of Sarah Pierce attributed to George Catlin

tor, Julie Frey, at curator@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org or archivist, Linda Hocking, at archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org.

Demb Appointed as Museum of London Archivist & Records Manager

Sarah R Demb was appointed the first Records Manager and Institutional Archivist for the Museum of London (MOL) in September 2009. MOL opened in 1976 and is comprised of the collections of two older museums, the London Museum and the Guildhall Museum, along with subsequent acquisitions from the social history and archaeology of London (UK).

Sarah was previously London Museums Hub Records Management Advisor from 2007-2009 (based at MOL) and continues to oversee the Hub's Information and Records Management Project,

which serves the 200+ museums in the greater London region. She originally moved to London to work



Pleasure Gardens in the Galleries of Modern London. © Museum of London/Philip Treacy/Yasemen Hussein.

for the International Records Management Trust from 2003 to 2006.

Prior to that, Sarah was Reference and Technical Services Archivist at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (2001-2003) and Museum Archivist at the Peabody Museum of Ethnology and Archaeology, Harvard University (1996-2001). She served as Chair of the SAA Museum Archives Section in 2001-2002.

Sarah can be reached at: sdemb@museumoflondon.org.uk

UT Library Special Collections Hosts Labor Movement Exhibition

The University of Texas at Arlington Library Special Collections is proud to announce the opening of the exhibit For All Workers: The Legacy of the Texas Labor Movement, 1838-2010, featuring the personal papers of labor and political activist John "J.W." Jackson, as well as numerous items from the Texas Labor Archives at UT Arlington. The exhibit, open May 17 through August 7, is located in Special Collections on the sixth floor of the UT Arlington Central Library.

The legacy of the labor movement in Texas is one characterized by struggles, victories and losses, all in an effort to provide a decent standard of living for all workers. In the 1960s, John "J.W." Jackson, a labor and political activist, began compiling and cataloging multiple boxes of labor records stored in the basement of the Wichita Falls Labor Temple; in the 1980s, when he retired, his purchase of the Carpenters, Local 977 union hall prevented the destruction of all of these historic records. This collection, which the Texas Labor Archives at UT Arlington has been attempting to persuade J.W. Jackson to donate since 1969, was finally donated to the university in 2009, culminating a 40-year effort to acquire these materials. The records of the numerous Wichita Falls labor unions, as well as J.W. Jackson's personal papers, provide a window into the impact of labor in a small Texas town. This exhibit, which highlights numerous records and papers from J.W. Jackson's donation, also includes treasures from the Texas Labor Archives. In doing so, the exhibit accomplishes one of J.W. Jackson's greatest passions – educating people about the labor movement.

Join the Union?

A labor union is defined as an organization of workers who unite to negotiate with management for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. Unions increasingly became a

part of American life during the 19th century Industrial Revolution, with goals such as creating an eight-hour workday and abolishing child labor. In today's world, labor unions are still a necessary part of the working person's life. Workers form a union in a non-union workplace by creating an organizing committee, followed by undergoing a certification process overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. The benefits associated with union membership are substantial – collective bargaining rights, employee benefits, safer working conditions, a higher paycheck, flexible working hours, and access to the grievance process. Union activity is defined by specific procedures – the union negotiates with management to secure a binding contract outlining employees' rights in the company, as well as the company's responsibilities toward its employees. Violations of the contract are brought forth in the form of grievances, which can lead to negotiations, arbitration, or even a strike. All of these aspects of the labor union work together for the benefit of the American worker.

In the Union Now: J.W. Jackson

John "J.W." Jackson became involved in the labor movement early in his life. He received his carpentry training in the late 1940s, subsequently joining the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in 1950. He settled in Wichita Falls, which became his base for activity in labor and in politics. In 1960, the members of the Carpenters Local 977 in Wichita Falls elected J.W. Jackson as Business Representative, a position that he held continuously for the next 25 years after he successfully negotiated conditions in a strike. In 1963, J.W. Jackson was elected District 9 Vice President of the Texas AFL-CIO, which he likewise held for the next 25 years. J.W. Jackson served as an officer in other labor groups, such as the Midwest Texas Building Trades

(Executive Secretary), the State Council of Carpenters (President), and the State Building Trades (Vice President). A staunch Democrat, J.W. Jackson also campaigned tirelessly for election of Democratic candidates who supported the labor movement.

Unions are Bigger in Texas

In 1838, the evidence of the first labor activity in Texas occurred when the Texas Typographical Association organized and struck. During the 1870s and 1880s the number of strikes, unions, and members within unions greatly increased as worker discontent with management intensified. During the 1930s, the impact of the Great Depression and the creation of the Wagner Act resulted in increased union membership, along with the increased influence of progressivism within the labor movement. The rapid industrialization of Texas after World War II further contributed to the influence of unions and, during the 1950s, Texas' union membership grew faster than it did in any other state in the country. Beginning in the 1960s union membership peaked. Membership then began a decline, which accelerated further during the 1980s due to internal divisions within unions, increased automation in industries and the resulting loss of jobs, and demographic and political changes. Nevertheless, the labor movement, a little-known aspect of Texas history, is nevertheless inextricably intertwined with the legacy of what it means to be a Texan, shaping the makeup of who we as a state are today.

For additional information on the exhibit, please contact:

Claire C. Galloway, C.A.
Labor Archivist
Special Collections
The University of Texas at Arlington
Library
Box 19497, Arlington, Texas 76019-0497
(817) 272-7511
Email: Galloway@uta.edu
<http://library.uta.edu/spco/>