



PRESS RELEASE

December 14, 2016

Alabama Archives Contact: Georgia Ann Hudson
(334) 353-3312, georgiaann.hudson@archives.alabama.gov
Alabama Media Group Contact: Bart Thau
(205) 325-3303, bthau@al.com

ALABAMA MEDIA GROUP DONATES MASSIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVE COLLECTION TO THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Montgomery, AL (12/14/16) - The Alabama Department of Archives and History and Alabama Media Group announced today that Alabama Media Group is donating its massive collection of photographic negatives to the Archives, where the images will be preserved, digitized, and made available to the public. Containing an estimated three million images, the collection is the largest gift of historical content received by the Archives since its founding in 1901.

The negatives were produced by scores of photographers who worked at the *Birmingham News*, Mobile's *Press-Register*, and the *Huntsville Times*. They document occasions ranging from presidential elections to city council meetings and from civil rights demonstrations to high school football games. The earliest images are from the 1920s, but the bulk of the collection dates from the 1940s through the end of the twentieth century. Most were likely never published and have been seen only by the photographer and perhaps an editor.

"The breadth and depth of the collection are astonishing," said Archives director Steve Murray. "We have only begun surveying the materials, but we can already tell that this will be an unparalleled resource for students, educators, and researchers studying twentieth-century Alabama. And thanks to the generosity of Alabama Media Group, it now belongs to the people of our state."

Tom Bates, president of Alabama Media Group, said the company's decision to donate the collection was an easy one. "Having worked in recent years to digitize and publish these images in small batches on AL.com, we came to realize that a treasure of this magnitude deserves proper preservation and broad distribution. After touring and visiting with the staff of the State Archives, we concluded this is the right place."

The donation comes at a time when the Archives is committing additional resources to the digitization of its collections to prepare for Alabama's bicentennial in 2019. "Alabama Media Group has presented Alabama an extraordinary and early gift for its 200th birthday," Murray said.

Work to scan and place the images online will commence in the coming months and likely last for years, according to Murray. An initial phase will involve capturing the handwritten or typed information on the envelopes containing the negatives.

"Each envelope represents a photojournalism assignment. Building a database of the information recorded about the assignment by the photographers is the first step toward creating a useful research tool," Murray said. "After we have good momentum on that effort, we will also begin scanning the images themselves, gradually building a fully searchable library of the Alabama Media Group materials."

Once ready, the scanned images will appear in a special Alabama Media Group Collection on the Archives' site at www.digital.archives.alabama.gov, which currently contains more than 195,000 digital items. **For additional information about the announcement, visit alabamamediagroup.com/archives.**

The Alabama Department of Archives and History is the state's government records repository, a special collections library and research facility, and home to the Museum of Alabama, the state history museum. The Archives is located in downtown Montgomery, directly across the street from the State Capitol. Alabama Media Group produces AL.com, the state's largest news and entertainment network, popular video programming such as *SEC Shorts* and *Head to Head*, *Birmingham magazine*, *This is Alabama*, and Alabama's most prominent newspapers: *The Birmingham News*, *The Huntsville Times* and *Press-Register*.