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Title: In House Workshop on giving tours of the Archives and
History Building, June 10, 1971

IN-HOUSE WORKSHOP
ON GIVING TOURS OF
ARCHIVES AND HISTORY BUILDING

June 10, 1971

Carl A. Ray
Charlotte Capers

Ray: As you know, we have been having groups come in for tours; we are going to have more as we get the library in. So, there is a need to have at least a half dozen people who will be trained - so we can call on them - for tours. This morning we are going to take a little time for sort of an in-service workshop. Miss Capers is going to talk to you about what the best procedure is to use in giving a guided tour. She did most of the planning of the building.

Capers: I thank you, sir. This is quite informal. I think this is an opportunity - this will be about the building - but I would like to extend this to two sessions and talk about the building and a little bit of the history of the archives to give the young people who are here with us for the first time - and the interns - some idea of what we do.

Now, a building is a good building if it functions, works. You can know what we do because of how the building functions. So, it would be logical to back up in time and give you a little background of our work, because we hope that one of the objectives of Dr. McLemore's intern program is that young people who are interested in history, but do not want to teach, might find a career opportunity with us.

I think the buiding is a very good way to explain the function of the Department of Archives and History. Now, the first exhibit I have here is a building survey for a new archives building which was prepared by William D. Morrison, Jr., architect, in 1966. That was when I was director. The board authorized me to get an architect to work with me on what we needed, because we could not go to the legislature and say, "Give us some money for an archives building." We could not know how much money we needed if we didn't have specific plans. This is a very hard thing to get done, because you are asking an architect to work with you, and he may not get the job. In this case Bill Morrison did a real fine job, and he did not get the job. But, anyway, I think his analysis is interesting because it explains what the Department of Archives and History is all about. This presentation explains that we were in bad shape in the old building. It gives a little historical background on the Department of Archives and History and states since 1941 it was located in one wing of the War Memorial Building. And its holdings include a historical reference library of approximately 26,000 volumes, I believe. People are interested in how many, how tall, how big, how wide, and what did it cost. They are crazy about what did it cost. So, we had to line out for the legislature and the architects and anybody else involved what we had here. We had approximately 20,000 volumes; we had archives of Mississippi as a province, territory and state; we had a great private manuscript collection; we had Mississippi newspapers from 1805 to the present; we had maps and other source

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material on Mississippi History.

The department's purpose and function - and if this building doesn't make the function easy, then it isn't a good building - its function is to provide information and reference service to scholars, genealogists, graduate students, business men, lawyers, other agencies of the state government, magazine writers and others who must do research in original source materials. I see the function of this building as two-fold: Primarily, the preservation of the material and, secondly, making the material available. We are very low on collection; we've got a good collection, but we don't do much collecting; and I think now that we have this building, when people come through here, you might try to enlist their support in helping add to the manuscript collection. We do well to get the material we have in some sort of shape to use, but for years and years we have added very little to our collections, and that is one of our functions. The building, then, is to preserve these records. And bear in mind that the manuscripts we have, as well as many of our books, are one of a kind. Therefore, these things are irreplaceable, they are priceless, there isn't but one. For this reason we do not lend books because we can't afford to. We are a special library. Now, is there anything at this point that you all would like to say?

This department administers the whole historical program for the state of Mississippi. I think it is interesting to note that many

states have, say, a state museum administered by one agency; an archival agency, records center, state library or something like that, each under a separate agency. We have the responsibility for everything historical in Mississippi, and it seems to me people who are interested in history as a profession could find something that particularly interested them here with us, where they might not in another state.

This is the clearing house for most historical activities in the state, more of a challenge than, say, an archives building. When an archives building is nothing but archives, you've got nothing but a vault. We had to have some administrative offices in here, and archival vaults have very few, and they are underground. When we set out to make an analysis, Bill Morrison said what he was trying to think of that this building was to accomplish was housing the non-current, permanently valuable records of the state government. We define archives and manuscripts as two entirely different things. Private manuscripts are what they say. They can be papers of public individuals. It is up to our archivists to decide which they are; some can go either way. The definition of archives is official records, so you have governors' papers, legislative papers, the papers of state agencies, all of these things. Then you've got the letters of somebody who wrote to a friend about plantation life or something like that. We also have a very good collection of manuscripts of Mississippi writers. For instance, Eudora Welty's papers,

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which she has given us, are priceless, but these are not official; they are manuscripts. Also, housing semi-permanent records of the state government. We don't keep everything; we're not supposed to. Permanently valuable records of subdivisions of the state - in case we ever get any county records - which Dr. McLemore is very interested in; house manuscript collections; rendering reference services - especially genealogical - by correspondence, telephone, conference; providing research facilities for state officials, scholars, genealogists; publishing guides to holdings and volumes of source materials; providing a photoduplication service; and exhibiting archival materials.

Ray: We see as we take people through the building that it is very difficult to explain what manuscripts are or what archives are. We are going to try to get an exhibit in the foyer. We would like very much to show on exhibit some manuscripts which better explain the work.

Capers: I think that this would be very helpful, and it would be appropriate. I think, for instance, these plans would be a nice exhibit - like we have in the Old Capitol, with some supplementary material. But this is just to let you know that this building was planned for a long time over a period of years. We have put in and taken out and so forth. The first plan was designed to go on the corner of North and Amite Streets, right across from the War Memorial Building.

That was a seat of government piece of property, which we could have gotten without cost. And it would have provided a lot of parking. This is a much better location because it is historically appropriate, and it fills out Capitol Green. But the Amite Street site would have solved a lot of practical problems.

Ray: Would you go over a little background of the Capitol Green?

Capers: When Natchez was capital of the state, it was very difficult for people to get to the legislature, meeting in Natchez, through the Indian country. And then, as the state grew, it was an odd location for the state capital to be down in the southwest corner of the state. So, at a session of the legislature which met in Columbia, Mississippi, in 1821 during the yellow fever epidemic in Natchez, there was a commission created to locate a new capital near the "true center" of the state. The commission wandered around and found Jackson. In 1820, there was a treaty between the United States and the Choctaw Indians at Doak's Stand, which opened up enough land so that the true center of the state fell in this region. So, the commission looked around this new Indian land, and they found Lefleur's Bluff located on the Pearl River, which - strangely enough to us - had steam boats; and this was important. Then, this site was selected as the capital, and a city plan was made. The original plan is on exhibit in the Old Capitol. The focal point of the original city plan was Capitol Green. Now, Capitol Green extended

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north and south from Pearl Street to Amite Street and fronted on State Street. This is an interesting and very appropriate location for the Archives and History Department, for we now have a historical complex on some of the most historical land in the state.

In 1961, we finished the restoration of the Old Capitol, and then we started right away to get a new building. We worked on this project through two or three legislatures without any success, and this plan is the plan that we worked on. I think I should tell Bill Morrison sometime - as he didn't get the job - that they did use his preliminary program; they have exactly the square footage in it. He had, however, windows, and the core was a center core, and they somehow have moved it over. That's the difference in the plan. But Bill's plan and our building have the same space and the same function. Now, I think the basement floor plan that he drew is interesting because it shows what we try to do. It shows fumigation, the two elevators, distribution, air control, technical services. Also, that long ago, Bill's cost estimate was pretty good, because we were working on the other site; and on the other site, we weren't going to have such a fine exterior - we weren't going to have limestone, we were going to have masonry. The Morrison cost estimate was \$1,300,000 and something, which is pretty close to what the building cost. Now, that is kind of the historical background of the building itself. The current issue of the Journal has an article on the building - May, 1971 -

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which is terribly immodest, because Dr. McLemore and I say about the other that we did it. It was very embarrassing. Dr. McLemore told me to write it, and I said, "I don't see how I can." So, he said, "Then we both will." But it's true. Dr. McLemore was president of the board the whole time, and then when I resigned as director, he had a real terrific time of getting this thing together. He did a great job, and he has gotten us some things that I could never have gotten.

We do want to have a tour, and I want us to get the idea today that this is a functional building and that there is some reason to build it. We need to bear down hard in the processing area, the library. That is what we are for. I think when we get to this floor we say the department is responsible for all state historical activities, and this floor is the administrative floor. Then you can explain the divisions: The library and archives, historic sites and archaeology, special projects, etc. I think they should look in the stacks. One thing we've worked hard to achieve is security, and we have elevators planned so the public never gets into the stack area or processing area unless we take them, and the freight elevator has direct access to the stacks. Now, if we leave all the doors open to the stacks, that's foolish. Actually, those doors should be locked. They are not for our convenience. I feel strongly about them being locked, because the staff members can get out, but the public can't get in. Archival agencies have a

terrible problem with people stealing manuscripts, and we have had such a wide open office arrangement, there wasn't any way we could protect the material. I think it's a bad mistake to have people wandering around.

Mr. Ray and I have agreed that what we are trying to do is initiate orientation for new staff and old staff that come to the department. We feel we need to know something about the history and purposes of the department. The specific objective is to create a brief tour to handle the visitors to the department in order that they will all get correct information, the same information, and see the things that we think are most interesting. Now, I know that the things that are most interesting to the general public are the things that are a little bit different, that you do not find in just any office building. Any special things that any of you would like to mention?

I went into the stacks on this floor, and I thought, "What would be of special interest?" And, immediately, there was the intercom system, which doesn't work for me because I don't know how to work it. Then I looked up into the ceiling, and I saw those mysterious bloop, kind of. I think we can point to the ceiling and say we have fire detector systems and humidity and temperature control systems throughout the stacks. Now, those things are really different and special.

Henderson: I did some investigation this morning, and the fire-smoke detectors are the beige things with the silver screen with a little light bulb.

Dawkins: The humidity controls are tiny little boxes. There is one on the third floor, I know.

Capers: It would be real good to locate these. What I want to do is tell people something that is different. These specifications will give you an idea of what went into the building: In section 16, page 16-2-11, A, "Furnishing and installing complete operative fire detection and reporting system," which indicates it is supposed to detect and, perhaps, buzz - I don't know what. "Systems are to be complete. On detecting units will be both the ionization protection type and fixed temperature and rate of rise types." So, we do have a fire alarm system of the detection and reporting type.

Watkins: The system is in mine and Bob's office. When the bulbs light up, we are supposed to know where the fire is. Then you push the little button that says "alarm," then the fire department comes. Some man told me they were going to come classify each zone of the panel in my office, and they never came and did it, so we don't know what any of them are.

Ray: What are the alarms that were going off here for a week or two ago?

Dawkins: It was in the power plant. There is an alarm any time the power fluctuates, and it will ring until someone turns it off. Like if the lights go off, the alarm goes off.

Capers: In case you think we are wandering, we are not. We are talking about special systems in the building. Another special architectural feature that we requested was a fire-insulated vault. Now, the vault is on the basement floor, and the construction people have done a very dumb thing. Now, I particularly specified a vault, because I talked to Mr. A. K. Johnson, who is director of the National Archives and Records Service, and he said that in every good archival agency there was a vault, because in an emergency it is quite possible that papers essential to state government be somewhere safer than the office. And in other instances, someone might lend us something to copy that was very valuable; we wouldn't want it to be loose in the processing area or loose in the stacks. So we put a vault in, which, of course, cost a little more: "A vault door unit which shall be an insulated, flat-seal record-type door; record vault which shall be a product of a type of manufacturer specializing in this type work." Then it specifies special doors, special hinges, but the main feature is that it is a fire-insulated door. It has a rating on it, which means it would last so long before the fire would burn it. If the vault functions as it should, there should be very valuable things in there or nothing - it's not just a storage area. What's wrong with it is they put

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the intake, outtake, something of the air conditioner in the bottom of the vault, so anyone who wanted to get in could simply walk through. Well, I complained about that to the architect and said, "This is a dumb thing." And he said, of course, it wasn't his fault, that it was pretty dumb, but it's really just a fire vault, and this doesn't hurt the efficiency as a fire vault. I think it may, but, anyway, that is what happened. We have a fumigating unit, which is very interesting. We have temperature and humidity control, fire detection and alarm system and inter-com. Now those are things which I think we should all know to mention when we show off the building. It is not our intention to give you a canned speech. I think that we have found that in the museum we did much better telling it in our own words.

But we are going to give you facts that we think should be included in your speech. When you get to the second floor, it seems to me that it would be an appropriate time to tell about the organization of the department. You should derive a short sentence about the four divisions. I would like to tell you briefly about the history of the department. It was founded in 1902 as the Department of Archives and History, and it is the second oldest in the United States. Alabama was first, so this is a southern development. Dr. Rowland, the first director, was quite a pioneer in archival work. He did some great work in classification of the material. The department was first located in the Old Capitol; it was there very

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briefly. In 1903, the New Capitol was built, and the department was moved to the basement of the New Capitol where it stayed until 1940. Dr. Rowland died in 1937. He had done a lot of publications; we are very indebted to him for publications to which we refer constantly, those of us in the research business. Dr. Rowland had come upon evil days because of the Depression; his appropriation had been cut back and back and back; and at the time he died, I think he only had three people working - and they were splitting salaries. Anyway, the time began to get better. Dr. McCain succeeded him as director and began to rebuild public relations. Dr. Rowland had gotten real tired. He had been director as long as I've been working here, and he was just tired of fooling with the legislature. He was old, sick and unappreciated, and he began to be very short with the legislature. Dr. McCain came in, and during his administration, the War Memorial Building was built - not for us, but Dr. McCain was able to get space in it for the archives department. The department moved over there in 1940. At the time, the functions of the department were pretty much what they are today, except for the museum and the historic sites programs; it was principally library and archives - Dr. Rowland's same collection with very little change - but it was classified and used by scholars and researchers. The museum was what we call dormant: Any time we wrote or they wrote Dr. McCain, he said, "The museum is dormant." And you might think about it sleeping through the centuries. And it did. It was asleep; only the mummy was there,

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the big shoes that the North Carolina Negro wore in World War I and the Polynesian snake; and it was a pretty mixed, bad museum and not too good about Mississippi history. It was dormant. So, we were not organized into separate divisions until the creation of the museum. We didn't have a separation of functions by definitions. And then in 1961, the museum restoration was completed and the museum was installed in it, which we had been working on for about four years; and then, of course, we did have a separation - a physical separation - of our staff. At that time, we still did not have a director of the museum; I was director of everything, but we had a curator of the museum. When Dr. McLemore became director is the first time we were organized into separate divisions with separate directors. The historic sites function, I think, is interesting - its development. In 1966, the federal government passed a National Historic Preservation Act with a lot of specifications and requirements for participation by states. Up to that time, we had functioned in that area only with historical markers, which we had had a person for historical markers for fifteen years. And I was the director of the department - the director of that, too - so anything in the historical area we did through our one staff and director when this act of 1955 was passed. Elbert Hilliard was working with the department as curator of history in the museum; and I recognized that the potential for a real move in this direction was great because we had an opportunity in this area for federal funding that we would not have in any other area.

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I had investigated about library buildings, and we couldn't qualify for anything, but for this. So, Mississippi had some things to comply with, and we complied; and this department was one of the first state agencies in the United States to be set up for funding, if there was funding available. On April 6, 1967, Governor Paul B. Johnson appointed, at my request, the Archives and History Department to direct the preservation plan, and this is what, of course, we had to do before we could get any money. So, Elbert, who was in the museum, had worked with us at that time about three or four years. I called him in my office, and I said, 'Now, Elbert, this is something that we are going into full speed ahead, and this is something that is going to really grow and appeal to the popular imagination more than the other things we do in the department. And I want to know if you want to work toward being director of the museum or the head of historic sites.' And he said, 'I don't care.' I said, 'The money is going to be in historic sites.' And he said, 'Well, I'll take historic sites.' So, then he worked very hard, and we are the ones who presented the plan that was approved by the National Park Service; we also got the first \$60,000 appropriation from the legislature to begin the historic sites program. It has developed, as everything else, from the growth of the department. Dr. McLemore reorganized the department into a museum division, which we had always had, but he made the head of the museum a director, more independent of him. Dr. McLemore remains head of the whole thing, and he is the chief

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executive officer of all the divisions, but he had put a lot of responsibility on the head of each division. The oldest part of the department is archives and library. Of course, we always were; but now that is a division headed by Mr. Ray, whose experience in the department was when it was smaller and not so organized. And I am director of publications and special projects. We have Dr. McLemore who is director of the department, Mr. Ray, Mr. Hilliard, Dr. Kynerd and me, and we are all called directors with administrative functions to perform. So, what you could say from that is when you get up here on the second floor is something like, "This is the administrative floor. Dr. McLemore's office is located here, as well as the conference room, staff offices, the business offices and the heads of the department's divisions. The Old Capitol is a division of the department." (I think you should always explain that.) "But its director, Dr. Kynerd, has his office in the Old Capitol. Other divisions are...." Now, I have suggested that you use your judgement in showing the offices if it seems desirable. That is, if you have a little group of school children, there's no point in the world of showing them the offices with people working in them; if you have a member of the legislature who is very interested in the building, or a personal friend of any of us, Dr. McLemore or I would like to take them around. You have to do things like this, and people often like to go to the head, even if somebody else can help them more.

If you get into the offices on the second floor, some of them have some right interesting things from the archives collection in them used as decorations. I would not do this except for some special person. But there are some right interesting pictures, and if you know something about them it makes them more interesting than if you just say, "these are pictures." I certainly think we should include this conference room on any tour. The conference room is used for meetings of the board of trustees of this department and smaller staff meetings. It is decorated with photographs by Brady, a Washington photographer, which were purchased for the department by Dr. Rowland in 1904. These pictures in here, which are Brady photographs, are of Jefferson Davis, L. Q. C. Lamar, Albert Gallatin Brown, John Anthony Quitman and Sharkey. Now, this is something of interest. These are part of a collection, and the other part is in the search room. This is a building plan for the archives; I think we should go up to the stacks near our offices, open the door and say the materials of the department are protected, or stored away, in the stack areas which take up most of the space in the building; there are stack areas on the first, second and third floor, and the materials are divided; in these areas the books and printed material are on the main floor, the manuscripts are on the second floor, and the archives are on the third floor; you fling open the door and say, "These are the manuscript stacks." (It would be advisable if we could have a few little things to work up there at the table without taking them into the stacks.)

Then you can say, "Fire protection, humidity control." You should mention that sometime. And you could say in the manuscripts collection are the private papers, diaries, of famous men and women - and some not so famous, average Mississippians - that show the life of the times, and then I think you should tell some things included.

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Miss Capers,

Here is a revised transcript of an in-service workshop on the topic of giving tours of the new MDAH building, June 10, 1971. As far as I know, the tape recording is no longer extant. The original transcription was hurried and, I fear, non too accurate; but I think the information in the transcript is really a good introduction to the building and the department. Perhaps, it would make good reading for the interns at the beginning of the summer.

At any rate, please, at your leisure, check through the transcript for the usual errors, misspellings and mis-transcriptions.

Thanks.

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