

# University of Wyoming American Heritage Center COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2024

**INTRODUCTION:** Original, firsthand, accounts and contemporaneous records (primary sources) provide windows on past historic events through the viewpoint of the people who experienced them. As such they are indispensable and irreplaceable tools to enable further historic inquiry. The American Heritage Center is the University of Wyoming department responsible for maintaining the University's Archives, and for the collection, preservation, and dissemination of primary source materials documenting select aspects of American history at the local, state, and national level. Its mission is to support the administrative and educational curriculum of the University by enabling historic research and interpretation across a broad spectrum of interests and disciplines. We meet these mandates through acquisition, stewardship, service, instruction, digitization, exhibitions, and programmatic activities.

## University Archives

As Wyoming's only four-year academic institution the University of Wyoming holds a uniquely important position in the state. As the archive of the University, it's the responsibility of the AHC to document the university's history and heritage, the contributions of its faculty and students, and to preserve those permanent records which the university is legally obligated to maintain in perpetuity.

### Additional Collecting Scope

American History is an immensely large and diverse topic that no one institution can hope to document in its entirety. Therefore, the American Heritage Center has focused its collecting into a small number of broad topics determined to best support its particular mission and its multifaceted, interdisciplinary, researcher base. These topics provide necessary specificity for focusing finite resources, while also enabling adaptability for collecting related to developing trends and societal changes. A descriptive synopsis of these broad topics is listed in the following pages.

(Please Note: *Wyoming and the American West* is listed first because it is the Center's highest priority collecting topic after the University of Wyoming. All other topics are listed alphabetically with no prioritization.)

## **Wyoming and the American West**

The West inhabits a special place in the American imagination embodying many values such as independence, equality, and adventure. To many, the West is the romantic image of Cowboys and Native Americans, majestic mountains, and vast open spaces, with no boundaries and infinite possibilities. However, the West is also home to mining industries, the development of the transcontinental railroad, agriculture, and livestock, hunting and fishing, and unique art. Historically, it is a place to which people have relocated to start new lives. The West is an incredibly complex concept that means many different things to many different people. Wyoming has contributed both culturally and materially to this complexity with its own rich history and that interplay is a source of constant fascination for scholars.

The American Heritage Center's Wyoming and the West collections encompass both the myth and reality of the West. They provide a resource to understand how the West has influenced America's history and culture, and also how that influence and relationship continues to evolve over time.

This is one of the Center's core collecting areas and a major strength of our holdings. While many of the AHC's premiere collections document prominent Western individuals and organizations, equal consideration is given to the "Western image," as represented by writers, artists, historians, popular entertainment, and others.

## **Book History (Toppan Rare Books Library)**

The study of the history of the book and, more broadly, the history of printed communication is an exploration of the art and evolution of both storytelling and documentation: in different countries through multiple centuries. It provides a window into the thinking and priorities of past cultures and what they considered important. Thus, book history provides invaluable insights for anyone interested in societal and cultural development.

## **Conservation and Environment**

For hundreds of years our environment has had a profound influence on us and we, in turn, on it. Individuals, businesses, and institutions have interacted with nature and governments have watched, participated, or enacted regulations according to changing state and national values and priorities.

The conservation and preservation of our environment and natural resources is a topic of concern and controversy, especially in western states like Wyoming. As future policymakers search for solutions to environmental problems, the history of conservation provides a vital record that will help avoid the mistakes of the past.

The American Heritage Center's environment and conservation collections offer a unique opportunity for research on this topic. Our collections include many scientists in fields such as ecology, botany and environmental science as well as legal papers describing lawsuits, information about the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), correspondence pertaining to the U.S. Forest Service, and much more.

## **Entertainment Industry**

During the 20th century, the Entertainment Industry underwent radical changes as the advances in communications technology increased ease of accessibility and the size of audiences. As a result of these changes mass entertainment is now not only firmly embedded in American culture but influences our perceptions of every aspect of the world around us including our own self-image. The American Heritage Center's collections document these changes, like the transitions from Vaudeville to radio, and motion pictures to television, and provide insights for scholars researching the incredibly pervasive influence possible through mass media.

The American Heritage Center actively collects the papers and records of the creative minds of the entertainment industry. For instance, the William Boyd papers document how an actor re-created himself as the hero he played (Hopalong Cassidy) to market everything from toy guns to tuna. The William Tunberg, Jacqueline Tunberg, and Karl Alexander papers illustrate what went into producing U.S. Armed Forces Radio Service shows in the 1950s.

## **Journalism**

Journalism not only has an important role in how democracy functions it, much like the Entertainment Industry, shapes how we perceive the world. Journalists not only inform us of the events happening locally, regionally, and globally, they often provide the parameters and context for how we discuss and understand those events.

Studying the records of past journalists allows researchers insight into how important events were prioritized, researched, analyzed, and finally presented to the public. It reveals the prevailing attitudes of the times and what the readers and journalists were focused on.

## **Mining, Petroleum & Energy**

The mining, petroleum, and energy industries have done more than just fuel the economy of the United States of America. They have helped shape the country, and in particular the state of Wyoming.

Throughout American history, the pursuit and exploitation of mining and petroleum commodities has been a catalyst for migration and western expansion. Many of the AHC's collections focus on petroleum and mining and industry development. In particular, the Anaconda Geological Documents Collection, a subscription-based service, has been described as one of the largest and most significant historical collections related to mining.

Our collections also reflect the changing attitudes about the generation of energy over time as in recent years the AHC has expanded its collections to include alternative energy with a particular interest in wind energy in Wyoming. Our collections can also be

useful in understanding the environmental impact of the world's methods of sourcing energy.

## **Transportation**

Transportation is more than just the movement of people and material from one place to another. It connects people otherwise separated. It opens new opportunities. And for the United States as a nation, the development and use of transportation routes and methods is one of the most distinct and defining factors in the growth and development of the nation.

The American Heritage Center actively collects, preserves, and makes available select material relating to transportation in the United States. The study of the history of transportation is a continually fascinating topic to both professional and amateur scholars and AHC collections are a window into the changes that resulted with the advances in transportation and the communities that sprung up around them.

## **U.S. (post 1950) Conservatism**

Conservatism is a broad system of political beliefs in the United States that is characterized by respect for American traditions, support for Judeo-Christian values, moral absolutism, economic liberalism, anti-communism, advocacy of American exceptionalism, and a defense of Western culture. The history of American conservatism has been marked by tensions and competing ideologies, and historians argue that the conservative tradition has played a major role in American politics and culture since 1776. However, they have also stressed that an organized conservative movement has played a key role in politics only since the 1950s. The AHC has standout collections in this topical area, which also relate well to many of the Center's Wyoming political collections, and the study of this element of American politics is an increasingly popular area of study.

## **Related Collections**

The American Heritage Center will continue to carefully acquire collections that have a clear and direct connection to existing collections if that connection enhances the existing collections with contextual substance. Additionally, the AHC will be open to suggestions and proposals from the UW community regarding collecting topics which enhance a particular teaching curriculum or UW program.