Digitizing Historic Architecture

The Texas Historical Commission's Architectural Photography Archive
Tools

Camera Station

Computer

1TB external drives

Capture 1 Cultural Heritage

Shutter Control

Software
**Flatbed Scanner**
- 10 minutes per negative
- 40–50 per day

**Camera Scanner**
- 1.5 minutes per negative
- 200–300 per day
Scanning → Workflow
Capture ➔ Ingest ➔ Output
Capture
Ingest

- Crop
- Set B&W points

- Local Adjustments
  - Spot healing
  - Gradient mask
  - Contrast
File Handling

Master Catalog

THC_01_0001-1300
- Capture
- Output
- Selects
- Trash

Drawer 1
Drawer 2
Drawer 3

Physical Storage

THC_02_0001-1425
Challenge
Tools

[Image of a computer monitor and keyboard]

[Google Drive logo]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Suburb Size</th>
<th>Hwy</th>
<th>County Hwy</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Kendall</td>
<td>Grove</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2101 Spring</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>KD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2101 Spring</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>KD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical Storage:

- Drawer 1
- Drawer 2
- Drawer 3
2 Photographers Should be Recorded: “JO | DH”
SMITHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Address: 113, 115 MAIN ST

EAST ELEVATION

Photographer: CKennedy

Date: 7/80

County
City

National Registry Numbers

Property Numbers

Detail
SOUTH ELEVATION: PHOTOGRAPH
TAKEN IN 1911 BY:
CLIFFORD C. H. HERBERGER
BROOKLAND TX.
COPY PHOTO BY: JAS.

Site Name: BLAKE-BEATTY ORTON HOUSE
Detail: JAS
Photographer: CLIFFORD C. H. HERBERGER
Address: BROOKLAND TX.
Other: JAS

County: No Quad
City: No Block
No Lot
Challenges
Closing Thoughts
Contact

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Outline

Twenty-five minutes total. Allow five minutes for questions.

Overview
- What the Project is (joint venture j&b).
- Acquisition: Why we took the project.
- How this project is different from the standard operating procedure.
  - For this project we had to adopt a parallel scanning and metadata process in order to speed up the process.

Imaging

- Time:
  - Normally projects of this volume tend to be text documents.
  - Negatives, however, are more time intensive to scan than documents. This is due to the quality demands and scanning methods. Flatbed scanners have to warm up and reload, where photography is immediate and continuous.
  - We ran the following tests to determine differences b/w the two methods. These tests were based on the time it took to output a completely finished and edited negative for 1 worker.
    - Flatbed scanner:
      - 10 min per negative.
      - 50 to 60 per day
    - Camera scanner:
      - 2 min per negative.
      - 200 to 300 per day
  - Time constraints: This project is also particularly difficult because there is a deadline of late September.

- Tools:
  - Digital Transitions is a company that specializes in high end scanning solutions for museums and cultural heritage institutions. More info about what they provide.
    - Camera stand
    - Table
    - Lightbox
    - Camera body
    - Digital Back
    - Lens
  - Other tools
iMac
External 1TB drive for iMac
1 external 1TB drive for each worker.

Software
- Capture One, cultural heritage edition.
- Shutter Release

**Workflow: Chart:**
- Processing takes place at the item level, each negative must be removed from its sleeve and placed underneath a magnetic rubber mask, one at a time.
- Capture:
  - F/8 for all images because this is the DOF which will provide maximum sharpness.
  - Exposure:
- Ingest:
  - Two steps once image is registered in C1
    - Crop
    - Set B&W points
    - Describe settings
  - Proprietary raw format, IIQ.
    - 83mb per file
  - One master catalogue **Image:**
    - One session per drawer, 1500 images.
- Output: **Image:**
  - Describe settings
- Editing:

**Challenges:**
- **Image:** Wear and tear is an issue when performing any repetitive action in high volume. Masks tend to wear out often. We have been working with DT to come up with different solutions, though nothing has been able to hold up yet. Surprising none of the other institutions they deal with have had this issue.
- **Image:** Focusing. The biggest setback so far in the project has been the loss of 3 drawers of work because we did not realize that the camera had to be focused before each session.
- Storage of large raw files while working.
- Tech support from DT has been fantastic.
- Coordinating with Metadata

- **Justin:**
Time:
- Not enough time to put input detailed records because 22000 records had to be done within eight months.
- Instead, information is transferred from the sleeve and into our spreadsheet.

Tools:
- We’re using Google Documents because we have to share the information with multiple people in the Lab as well as with the folks at the Texas Historical Commission. Google docs easily facilitates this and holds larger spreadsheets well enough.
- **Image:** Have at least one slide of sleeve. I’d probably go for a few, showing off the different qualities of information provided and the different quality of handwriting. Separated by drawer, trying to represent everything on the sleeve that we can interpret. Talk about numbering…need unique IDs, especially to match up records, spreadsheet stuff…drawers by the order in which we scan them.
- Then we put info in spreadsheet, talk about contacting THC to clarify info, like the initials of the photographers. At end of project, the spreads will be available to thc and we’ll end up using the spreads to import info to records to go online…it’ll be a conglomerate of info we got from them and how we like records to look. But they’ll be basic. Intent is that we’ll go back and add real descriptions and place points, but that’s an ongoing project.

Workflow:
- Basic overview of the workflow
  - A spreadsheet would be created for each individual box of items. This kept things from getting too unwieldy.
  - Each spreadsheet would then be given an identical row of column titles for the set of information
  - **Image:** Records for each item were then added sequentially.
    - This information comes directly from the negative’s sleeve.
      - **Unique ID:** Added by metadata creator to the bottom right corner of the sleeve, typically as the item’s information is added into the spreadsheet. The format follows as THC-##-####, ## being the box number and #### being the number of the slide in the drawer. The number restarts at 1 at the beginning of each drawer.
Site Name.
Address. This could be an actual street address or a directional description.
County
City/town. This could be written in as rural, and were left blank.
Quad
Block
Lot
Details. This is used to note a sleeve’s description of the photograph. Normally something simple like “northwest oblique” or “east view.” Sometimes, however, this section would be for pointing out an architectural detail.

Image:Photographer. Usually initials.
Date
THC Atlas Reference Number (“Property Number”)
Image:National Registry Number
Other. This is used for anything else valuable found on sleeve. Examples include
  a. How we normally do things for individual records.
     ■ We normally fill in much more descriptive metadata using our own in-house system.
     ■ Why we couldn’t do that here...

- **Challenges:**
  - Partner constraints: Also, partner explicitly wanted a spreadsheet of stuff on sleeves. We don’t normally use spreadsheets. We put information directly into our forms, as this is faster and more cost effective. Higher quality, too.
  - Image:Handwriting!
  - Lacking information.
  - Number goofups.
     ■ As it is the metadata creator’s job to write the identifiers on thousands of sleeves, human error is inevitable. Sometimes, one (or dozens) of sleeves could be missed, resulting in sleeves that would have to be renumbered and records being moved around in the spreadsheet. In some instances, it was deemed more efficient to add letters to the ends of previously used identifiers and adding these to the skipped records. This way, there would be no need to change the following records.
  - More than one negative in the sleeve.
These would be separated and placed into individual sleeves. Each new sleeve is then filled in with the original sleeve’s information and then added to the spreadsheet as usual.

These would sometimes be missed by the metadata creator. Additional discovered records were treated as skipped records, with letters being added to the parent’s identifier for each new sleeve.

- Spreadsheets, man. Fairly easy to update if something weird happens…weird things happen! Esp with a project this large.

Goals:
- Our PRIORITY is getting them all scanned and online by the end of September.
  - Are we on track for that?

Scope:
- May wanna talk about how this only part of their project. THC is having 10s of thousands of slides and things being scanned and added into spreadsheets that we’ll take and add to our system. In theory. So, this is being used as a template for several thc projects (that we aren’t scanning)

Eccentricities:
- Survey never really ends…building conditions change, get razed and demolished, brought back from ruin, additions!
- Styles of dress capture the time period.
- Subject matter that is environmental or spontaneous.
- Patterns in architecture and similar houses.
- Homes are like beetles caught in amber.
- The things we are doing are several steps removed from the thing itself. Several steps removed from true historical fidelity. We’re trying to provide (on the portal) this historical database for people…imperfect!