

# Museum Archivist

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## A Message From the MAS Chair, Katrina O'Brien



Museum Archives Section Members,

In the last year, we have seen the reemergence, deepening, and proliferation of museum programs from collection care and access to exhibition. As museums have begun to recoup and reopen in the last year, I am honored and humbled by the strength, creativity, and resourcefulness you all have engaged. Thank you to all of you who have shared your thoughts and experiences whether in articles, posts, workshops, surveys, or conversations over the last few years. It has been an honor to help move MAS through the transitional years of the pandemic. I came in as MAS Vice Chair for the first time in 2018. When the pandemic hit in 2019, many museum colleagues were unsure or overwhelmed, or a combination thereof. MAS leadership found itself without new candidates for the 2020/2021 season and so each leader stepped up and offered their service for an additional year. It has been a gift to work alongside the MAS leadership as well as the MAS working group in its multi-year project of updating SAA's Museum archives standards. After four years as acting Chair or Vice Chair, I am excited to see our newest leadership members take hold and direct MAS into its next phase.

Many of us have pivoted within our projects, positions, or careers. In the last year, I have moved from closing a museum I had worked with since its inception to my new position preparing to open a new museum. Museum archives professionals have experienced a changing landscape, grew concern for colleagues and the future of museums and the archives profession, and provided support and creativity to our community of professionals. MAS will continue to be a space of support and engagement for all our members.

As we look forward, I am excited and proud of all the work MAS members and extended museum and archives colleagues have and will contribute.

Katrina O'Brien, Director of Programs & Services, Oregon Military Museum

## Report From the MAS Standards and Best Practices Working Group

Submitted By Rachel Chatalbash and Megan Schwenke, MAS-S&BP Working Group Co-Chairs

We are happy to report that the SAA Standards Committee undertook review of the updated Museum Archives Guidelines as well as the Working Group's justification for the proposed changes and has accepted our revised Guidelines. The Standards Committee will now submit the revised Guidelines to SAA Council for their acceptance.

For anyone new to our project, the [Museum Archives Guidelines](#) were originally developed in 1998, and approved and endorsed by SAA Council in 2003. The Working Group began evaluation and revision of the Guidelines in 2018 to reflect the many changes and advances in our profession over the past two decades. Once the revised Guidelines have been approved by SAA Council, they will be updated on the Section's website and reviewed by the Museum Archives Section on a periodic basis. The Working Group thanks everyone for their participation in this multi-year project.

We would also like to share that we (Megan and Rachel, current Working Group co-chairs) plan to step down from the Working Group at the end of this year. Museum Archives Section leadership will help assist with this transition. We are incredibly proud of the work the Working Group has produced and the community it has created over the past decade, and we look forward to seeing how the Working Group continues to grow and prosper. We thank the current and former Working Group members for so fully investing themselves in our endeavors, Section Chairs for their commitment to the Group's mission and development, and Section members for their camaraderie and support.

### **2020-2021 MAS Standards and Best Practices Working Group Members**

Arabeth Balasko, Kelli Bogan, Sam Bogner, Emily Fendya, Tara Hart, Michelle Interrante, Tara Laver, Hannah Mandel, Sana Masood, Karen Melis, Shannon Morelli, Katrina O'Brien, Cate Peebles, Katherine Meyers Satriano, Joe Schill, Sharad Shah, Peggy Tran-Le, Brian Wilson

### **Co-Chairs**

Rachel Chatalbash  
Megan Schwenke

## Meet Your Fellow SAA Museum Archivist Members...

**Anastasia Karel** is the new Archivist for the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields. After ten years as an archivist at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. I knew my ideal next job would be in a museum and I'm excited to be part of a place like Newfields, which has two historic homes and a 100-acre art park in addition to the museum. I will be overseeing both the institutional records and special collections, migrating legacy finding aids to our new AMS (Access to Memory), and supporting the work of our Processing Archivist, Rachel Hancock. With both of us working from home most days, we haven't met in person yet, but she'll introduce herself below. My typical days are spent learning about the museum's history, answering reference questions, and testing CSV files to see what will work best for the finding aid migration.

**Rachel Hancock** accepted a position as a Processing Archivist at the Archives, Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields and began work in November 2021 on the NHPRC-funded project Downtown to Oldfields to Newfields. Hancock brings considerable experience from processing both the Senator Barbara A. Mikulski Papers at Johns Hopkins University, and the Richard G. Lugar Senatorial Papers at Indiana University. She was most recently the Associate Archivist for the Clyfford Still Museum in Denver, Colorado. A graduate of IU Bloomington, specializing in archives & records management, Hancock also brings her art background to the IMA, having earned a BA in art history and studio painting from Franklin College. She is returning to Indiana with her husband Wesley Edwards and their two young sons, Anthony and Aengus.

You can connect via [LinkedIn](#) and follow the project on Twitter [@NewfieldsHist](#).



## National Gallery of Art's *Kress Collection Digital Archive*

By Shannon Morelli, Digital Archivist, National Gallery of Art

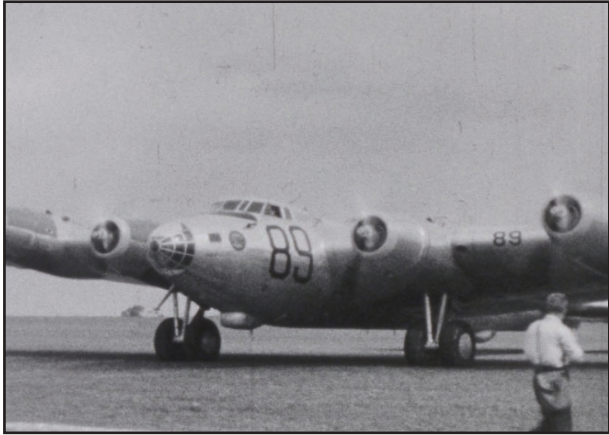
The National Gallery of Art [Gallery Archives](#) launched last year the [Kress Collection Digital Archive](#), an online resource documenting the history and development of an important collection of nearly 3,500 works of European art. Funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the project digitally reunites the Kress Collection amassed by Samuel H. Kress and his foundation, and then donated to nearly 100 art and educational institutions throughout the United States, including the National Gallery of Art.

Data and digitized archival materials illustrate the history, acquisition, condition and care, and distribution of the works of art over many decades. Containing more than 10,000 historical and conservation documents and images from the holdings of the Gallery Archives, the National Gallery of Art painting conservation department, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation Archive, the resource emphasizes the relationships that exist between the objects, the people and institutions, and their histories.



## New Collection Highlight from the Museum of Flight

By Arabella Matthews, Archives Intern, and Nicole Davis, Supervisory Archivist, Museum of Flight



1. Courtesy of The Robert L. Simons Collection/The Museum of Flight

The Museum of Flight's Collections Department is pleased to announce the completion of a project to digitize 86 films from our archival holdings. The project was made possible thanks to a grant from Council on Information and Library Resources' (CLIR) Recordings at Risk program which we were awarded in early 2020. The grant program is made possible by funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The 16mm, 8mm and Super8 films selected for the project came from 18 different archival collections, including the G. Harry Stine Space History and Model Rocketry Collection, the Julius A. Barr Photographs and Films, and the James Stewart Fighter Ace Collection. The films spanned most of the 20th century and contained a huge variety of subject matter.



2. Courtesy of The Floyd R. Daniel Boeing Collection/The Museum of Flight

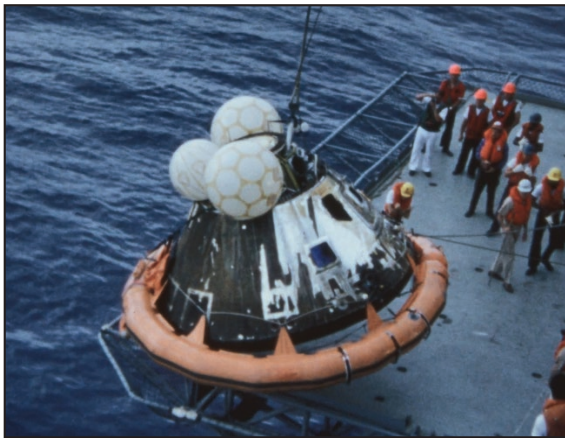
Among the diverse subjects of the films are World War One German propaganda films, Boeing family home movies, clips of the flight of the Aerocar, the recovery of the Apollo 13 command module, and National Championship Air Races in the 1930s. Because most of the films are privately shot home movies, they contained unique content, such as some 1940s-era footage of the Associated Women Pilots of Boeing Field. Though most of the films were naturally aviation related, there were some outliers: travel footage from as near as Utah and as far as Indonesia, and film footage of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.





3. Courtesy of The Roy A. Parsons Aerocar Film/The Museum of Flight

The end goal of the project was to make all these materials fully accessible with detailed descriptive metadata for each film on our [digital collections site](#) and finding aids for the related collections on our [research portal](#). Supervisory Archivist Nicole Davis and Digital Asset Coordinator Ali Lane oversaw the project. They sent the films to a film preservation specialist for digitization last winter. Then, this past spring and summer our project intern Arabella Matthews cataloged them with aircraft identification help from some of our volunteers. A few of the collections contained other archival materials beyond the films, including the John Wegg Commercial Airlines Collection and Franklin W. Minert collections, and Arabella also processed those materials and created finding aids for the complete collections.



4. Courtesy of The Michael Poirier Apollo 13 Recovery Collection/The Museum of Flight

The digital films and associated finding aids were posted online in July and August. In September we held a virtual event for our members, and we wrote an article for the fall issue of our member magazine, Aloft, to promote the project. We've received a lot of great feedback so far. With these films now fully digitized and accessible, hopefully more people can view these unique moments in aviation history.

**Photo Captions:**

1. Screenshot of a Boeing XB-15 from film footage of the 1939 National Championship Air Races, Cleveland, Ohio, 1939. The footage includes scenes of aerobatics, formation flying, parachute jumps, air races, officials, and spectators. 2. Screenshot from film footage of the Associated Women Pilots of Boeing Field (AWPBF) at Boeing Field, Washington, circa July 1940. The footage opens with several AWPBF members arriving at Boeing Field via a United Air Lines Douglas DC-3 "Mainliner" aircraft. The following scenes depict the women chatting together and with others, posing for the camera, and looking over aircraft, including an Aeronca Model K (tail number NC19718) and an aircraft belonging to the Privateers Club. Mildred Filz Merrill appears in some scenes. 3. Screenshot of the Aerocar landing from film footage of the Aerocar III (N100D). The footage shows wing attachment, takeoff, flight, and landing, Washington State, circa 1968. The footage begins with the Aerocar in its car configuration, towing its folded wing attachment. Molt Taylor and an unidentified man then convert the Aerocar to its plane configuration and take off from an unidentified airfield. The Aerocar is shown in flight, landing, and taking off. 4. Screenshot from film footage of the recovery of the Apollo 13 Command Module (CM), April 17, 1970. The footage begins with panning shots of a coastline and beach and scenes of people surfing and swimming in the ocean. At 00:01:14, the footage transitions to a SIMEX (simulation exercise) of the Apollo 13 recovery, showing divers practicing with a boilerplate Command Module (CM). The actual recovery begins at 00:03:32. Scenes include the CM's parachute-assisted descent, the CM in the Pacific Ocean after splashdown, the CM's recovery, and the Apollo 13 crew (James A. Lovell, John L. Swigert, and Fred W. Haise) on the USS Iwo Jima (LPH-2). Several shots feature U.S. Navy Sikorsky SH-3D Sea King helicopters of HS-4 (Anti-submarine Squadron 4).

## News from The Frick Collection and Frick Reference Library

By Sally Brazil, Frick Collection and Frick Reference Library

Lots have happened both to and around the Archives Department of The Frick Collection in the last year and a half. As covid 19 came on the scene in March 2020, the Archives Department was in the midst of packing and barcoding all materials in the archives for transfer to offsite storage as part of the museum's expansion plan. Archives moves stop for no one, or at least they are not slowed for long, and the department continued working under difficult conditions to remove everything from The Frick Collection's 1 East 70th Street location to a commercial storage facility in upstate New York. Moves continued through January 2021, when records and archivists were all out of the building.

After catching our collective breaths for a bit, we began to return on-site to the museum's temporary home, Frick Madison, located in the former Marcel Breuer-designed Whitney Museum/Met Breuer building located at 945 Madison Avenue. Researchers, including archival researchers, were welcomed back to the reopened reading room of the Frick Art Reference Library, in March, 2021. Archives staff now come into the museum as needed to work with researchers, manage the flow of records to and from off-site, and to accession and process collections. We are also still working from home on the many projects we have that can be worked on remotely.

We have been fortunate to add an additional archivist to our team, as well. We welcomed the return of Elizabeth Kobert, a former project archives assistant, with us, as a fourth professional archivist in the department. Elizabeth's primary focus is and will be for a while, the processing of a recent gift from Gerald Stiebel of the records of his family's gallery, Rosenberg & Stiebel Gallery, comprised of c. 400 linear feet of gallery business records, photographs, and sales catalogs.

Sally Brazil

Barbara G. Fleischman Associate Chief Librarian for Archives and Records Management  
The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library

## **A Frame of Mind Explores *Museum History through Voices, Memories of Kansas Citians***

By Tara Laver, Senior Archivist, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art



A five-part podcast produced by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and hosted by local poet Glenn North, features stories that explore issues such as race, representation, identity, and belonging, through personal histories and encounters with the museum. Each episode interlaces the perspectives and voices of 23 Kansas City creatives, community leaders, museum workers, and everyday citizens. Focusing on the museum’s location and grounds, architecture, and art, [A Frame of Mind](#) invites listeners to dive into the complex history of the Nelson-Atkins, a familiar cultural icon, and its relationship to the citizens of Kansas City through unexpected stories and inclusive narratives.

“The Nelson-Atkins has shaped, and been shaped by, the cultural, economic, and racial landscape of Kansas City,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “It has been very exciting to witness the evolution of this podcast, which explores the past, acknowledges the present, and looks forward to the future. It tells complex stories about what an art museum can mean to a community.”

[A Frame of Mind](#) was produced by Christine Murray, an award-winning documentary audio and film producer, Jocelyn Edens, Interpretation and Digital Engagement Specialist at the Nelson-Atkins, and Kimberly Masteller, South & Southeast Asian Curator at the Nelson-Atkins. The project honors multiple and divergent



experiences, making room for Kansas Citians to speak for themselves. Podcast host North, in conversation with various members of the community, helps the listener see the museum with fresh eyes, look at complicated and sometimes difficult histories, and find wisdom and insight in works of art. Research in the museum's archives helped provide a framework for many of the conversations and contextual content

“Hosting the Nelson-Atkins’ [Frame of Mind](#) podcast created the space for me to have some of the most profound conversations around race, culture, and art that I’ve ever experienced,” said North. “If it can inspire others to do the same, I will be pleased. If those conversations can then lead to systemic changes, I will be overjoyed.”

The first two episodes of the podcast will dropped Friday, January 7, on various podcast platforms. Each of the remaining episodes will be released on the remaining Fridays in January.

Many of the stories recount experiences that reinforce, complicate, or broaden peoples’ experience of their identity through visits to the museum or the art it presents. Among examples are visitor memories about Sunday drives through nearby neighborhoods, dancing the 2-Step in the museum’s Bloch Lobby, and conversations about the exterior relief panels designed by sculptor Charles Keck and carved in the 1930s, which depict the glorification of westward expansion and conquest on indigenous peoples, or Glenn’s thoughts on how in 2019, Andy Goldsworthy’s installation Walking Wall helped unite neighbors and communities, instead of divide them. This original podcast invites listeners to consider how a museum, a city, and its people are profoundly interconnected.

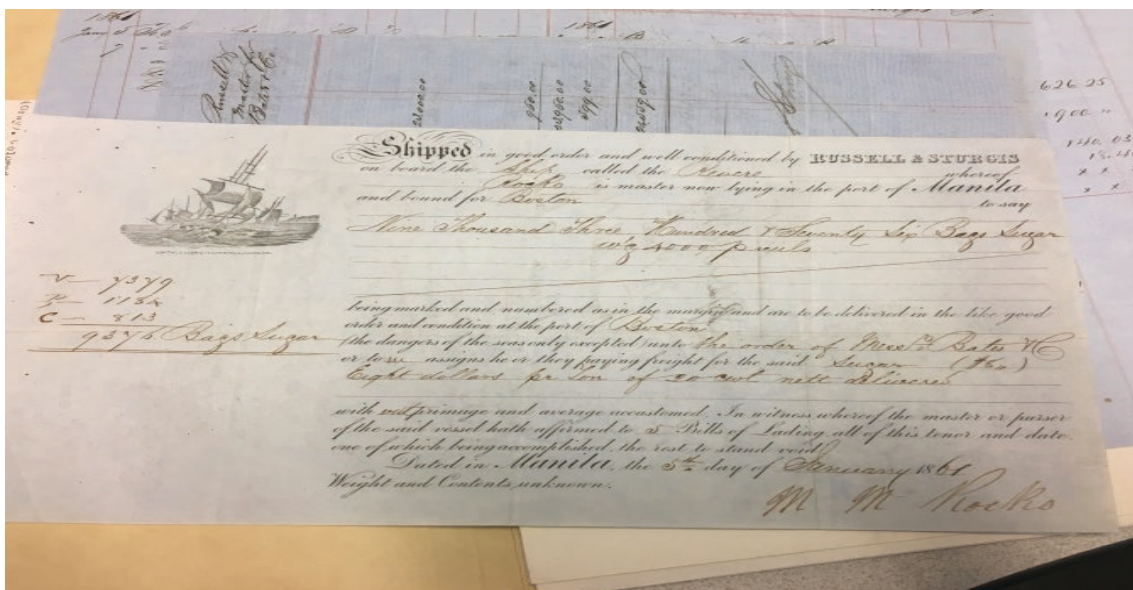
## ***Processing Nineteenth Century Maritime Trade Records at the Peabody Essex Museum***

By Esme Rabin, Manuscript Processor, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum

The Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM), with the generous support of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, is currently processing the Bates & Co. Papers, a nineteenth century collection of

New England shipping and business records. Running from 1807-1895, the collection documents maritime trade and merchant activity from the height of Salem and Boston's prominence to the waning years of the merchant shipping era, and includes ship's papers, correspondence, accounts and account books, bills and receipts, and legal agreements. When processing is complete, updated records will be available online through Philcat, the Phillips Library catalog, and the library's ArchivesSpace repository.

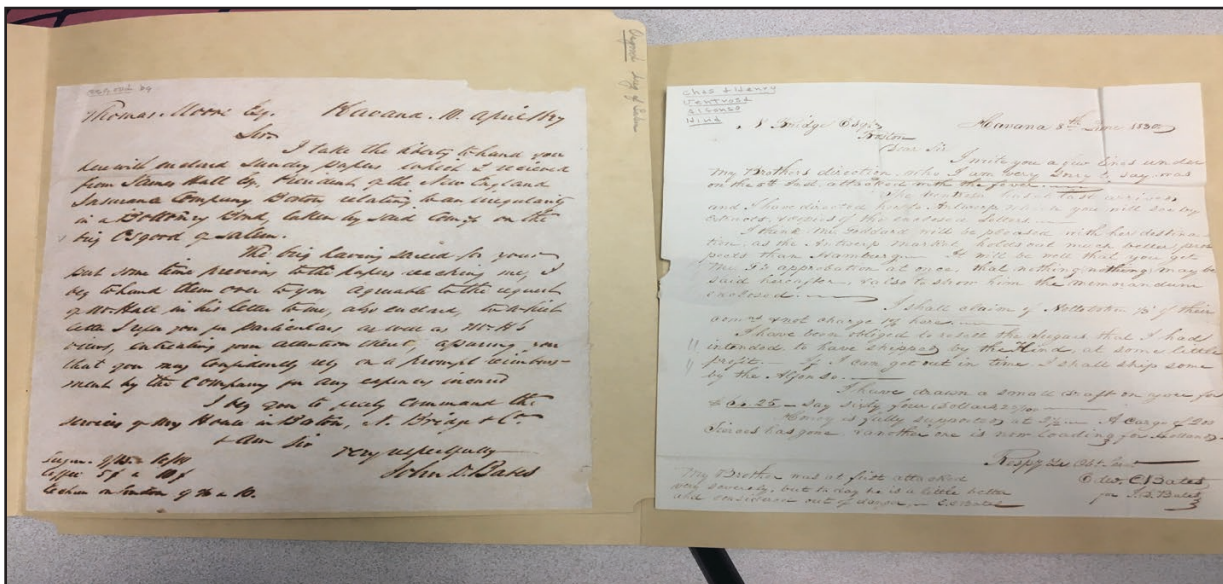
Bates & Co. was a merchant shipping company headed originally by co-partners John Douglas Bates (1797-1863) and Adam Wallace Thaxter, Jr. (1807-1862). Both men had worked together under a previous company, Nathan Bridge & Co. After the unexpected death of Nathan Bridge in 1830, the two men changed the name of the company to Bates & Co. and entered into business together. In the 1850s, Bates brought on his son, John D. Bates, Jr. (1835-1900), who continued on as surviving partner in the company after the deaths of Thaxter and his father.



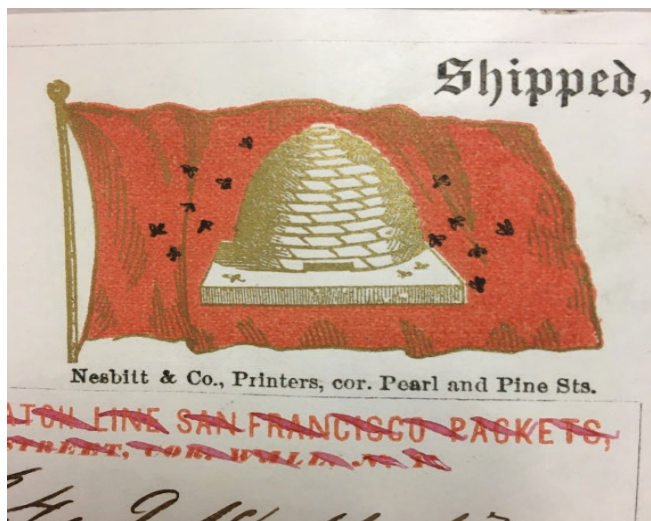
Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum

A sizable portion of the collection is made up of ship's papers. These include charter parties, articles of agreement, manifests and crew lists, bills of lading, documentation of damages and repairs, bills of sale of registered ships, insurance policies and premium notes, accounts, and correspondence detailing voyages. Several records recount inci-

dents at sea, including several harrowing leaks and one instance of a cannon accidentally shooting on a Bates & Co. ship as it left harbor after having just completed repairs. A series of letters from 1863 from captains and company agents in China discuss changing ships' flags to those of other countries to avoid the dangers of Confederate privateers attacking the American flag, offering insight into wartime shipping risks. Furthermore, throughout the ship's papers, crew lists, articles of agreement, and receipts for wages offer a connection to the nineteenth-century captains and seamen who made international maritime trade possible.



Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum



Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum

In addition, the collection holds substantial materials documenting the sugar triangle trade. John D. Bates was active in the sugar trade during his work with N. Bridge & Co., and he continued this work through Bates & Co. until it became financially unsustainable. Bates & Co. ships loaded sugar in the Cuban ports of Matanzas and Havana and shipped it to St. Petersburg, before returning to New

England with European goods. As the sugar trade weakened, they expanded their network to include trade in Antwerp, imports from various tea merchants in China, charters between Boston, New York, and San Francisco, sales of salt from Trapani to Boston, exports of hides and leather from Latin American, and numerous smaller ventures between ports around the world. The collection includes extensive and detailed accounts and correspondence between Bates & Co. and their consignors and business associates, which provide insight into the daily operations of a merchant shipping company. The Phillips Library looks forward to making these valuable materials more widely accessible and available to our community of maritime scholars.

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*Dear MAS newsletter reader:*

*If you would like to include an article, news, or highlight piece to the upcoming Summer 2022 newsletter, please email [saamasnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:saamasnewsletter@gmail.com) for more information or pitch us an idea. We rely on this community to keep the newsletter engaging and informative. We look forward to learning more about our museum archives community. Thank you for reading this issue of the Winter 2021 MAS newsletter.*