



Austin Volunteer Fire Department Records

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The Collection

- Our collection was the Austin (Tex.) Volunteer Fire Department Records, 1868-1916
- The collection holds the records of 10 volunteer fire companies
- Most of the records are take the form of ledgers/volumes, but the collection also contains:
 - Photographs and paintings
 - Invitations and programs to events
 - Correspondence
 - Checks and contracts
 - Certificates of commission
 - Buttons, ribbons, and plaques

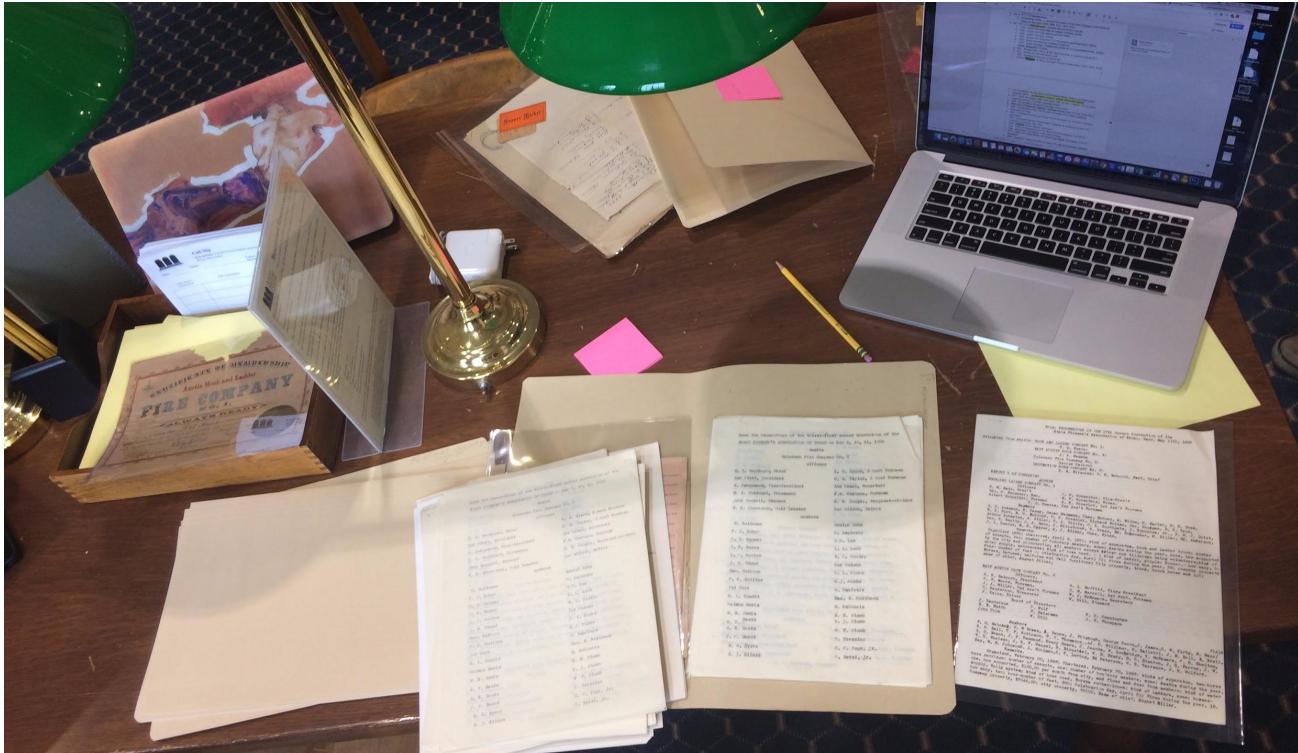


Provenance and Fun Facts

- accessioned in 1964, donated by the Austin Heritage Society
- Originally catalogued around 1970 by Austin Public Library librarians
- The series were catalogued and organized using a British system (letters for the subseries)
- Other pieces have been donated by other organizations or people, or separated from other collections over time.



The Collection: Before

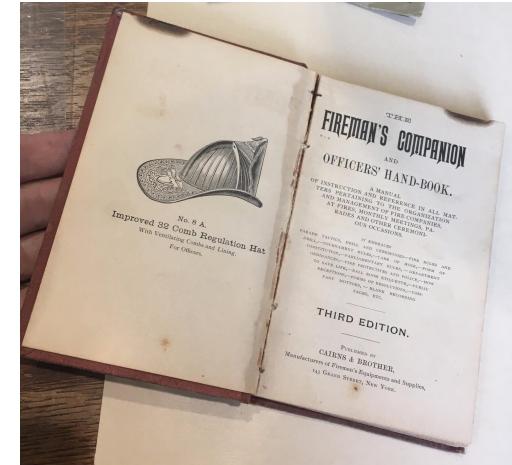


Preservation

- Many of the volumes are falling apart
- “Fire damage” on some of the pages
- Fragile ribbons in danger of falling apart

Solutions:

We separated the ribbons into Artifact boxes.

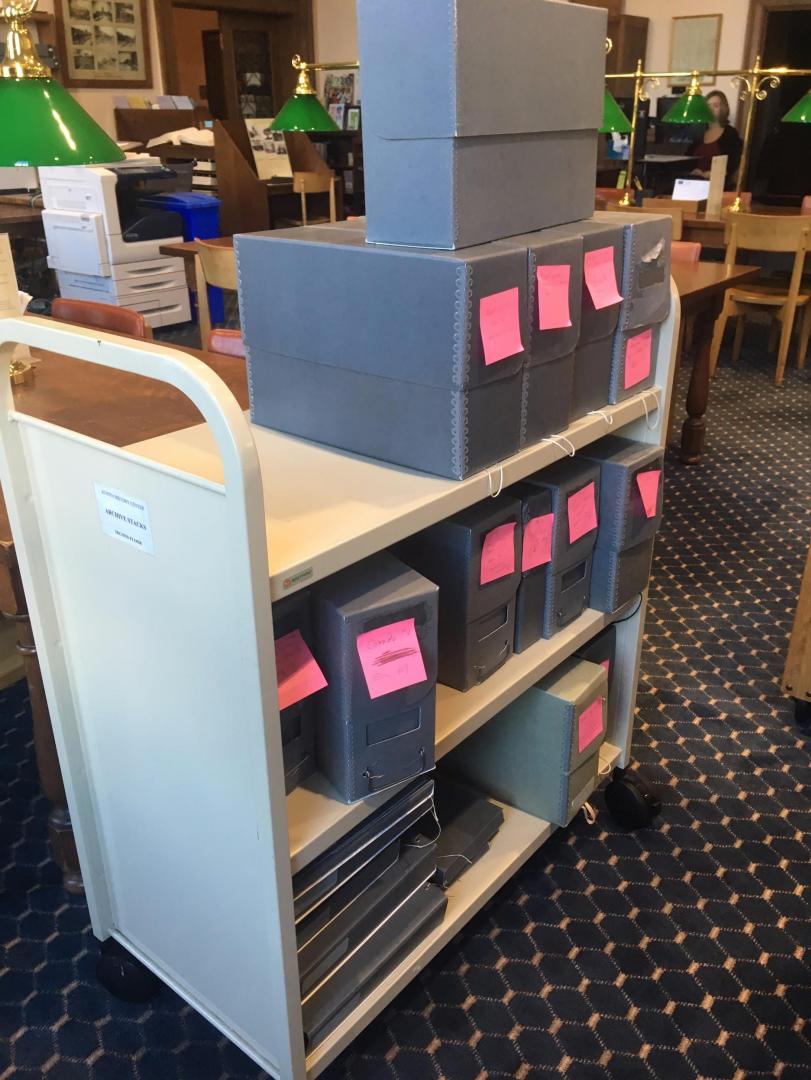


The Collection in Process

The original order was straightforward, though documents were unorganized.

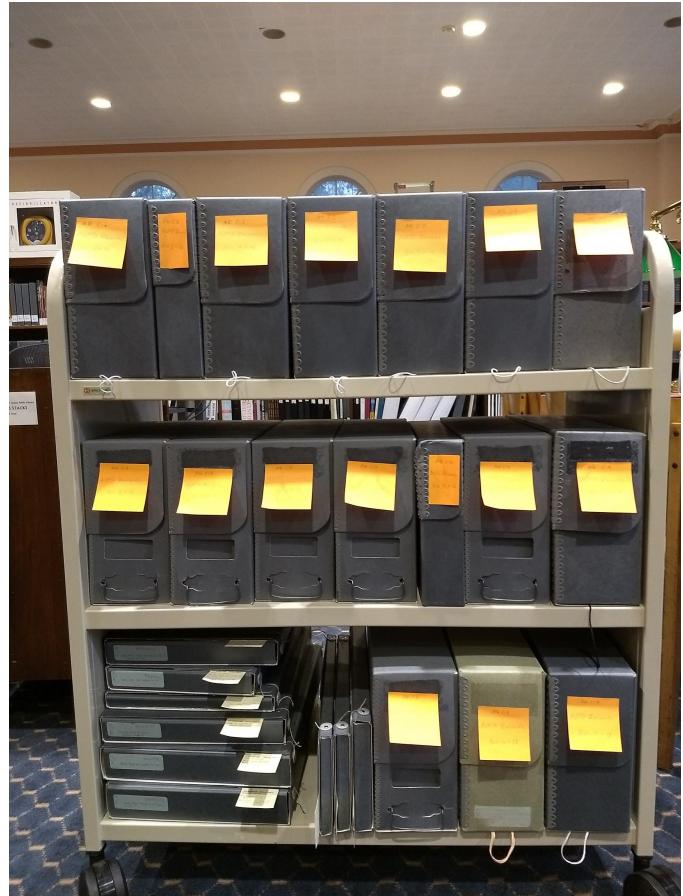
Our main goal was to divvy up the Miscellaneous file into a more logical series/subseries.

Most of our Miscellaneous files comprised the Department-Wide Records series



Arrangement

1. Department-Wide Records
2. Company Records
 - a. Austin Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1
 - b. Washington Steam Fire Engine Company, No. 1
 - c. Colorado Fire Company, No. 2
 - d. Hope Hook and Ladder Company, No. 2
 - e. Protection Hose Fire Company, No. 3
 - f. East Austin Hose Company, No. 4
 - g. South Austin Fire Company, No. 5
 - h. North Austin Fire Company, No. 6
 - i. West Austin Fire Company, No. 7
 - j. Tenth Ward Fire Company, No. 8



Challenges

- Pre-processed collection (trying to recreate what was done in the past)
 - Lesson learned: keep good processing notes/administrative metadata!!
- Interspersing ledgers with documents - difficult to manage
 - Lesson learned: can intersperse various media for a consistent intellectual arrangement (YMMV)
- Arrangement conundrum
 - Some companies had tons of records (East Austin), others very few; trying to maintain consistency of description and efficiency in hierarchy
 - Because pre-processed, impulse to over-describe



Former fire chief C.L. Woodward is deeply concerned about our processing choices

What stories can this collection tell?

- History of the AVFD
- History of firefighting technologies and practices
- Municipal history of Austin: development of neighborhoods and local governance
- Social history of Austin: “who’s who” of a certain class of Austinite in this era (white, male, English-speaking)
- Material culture of the late 19th and early 20th century:
 - Printed ephemera
 - Typography
 - Bookcraft

Mr. Peter Kroger's individual property, was burned to the ground." ♦ ♦ ♦

Social Firemen

All the bloods and blades of the early days were volunteer firemen because it was the thing to be. If you weren't a volunteer you just weren't—socially. Every man went to the fire or paid a fine of 50 cents if he didn't have an excuse. He also paid a fine if he didn't attend his company's meetings.

Every company had different kinds of uniforms, one for instance using a blue shirt, black pants, red belt and white gloves while another had red shirts, with shields bearing hook and ladder emblem, black pants and black belt. Each company also had a motto. Some of them were: "Deeds, Not Words," "Where Duty Calls, There You Will Find Us," "Ever Brave and True."

The present day fire station on Blanco street houses many relics of the volunteer fire company days, and memories of many still living hold yet others. These reflect the glamor that surrounded these men of yesteryear, a glamor that has survived even till this day, though your modern firemen might scoff at your so arguing.

Favorite Things

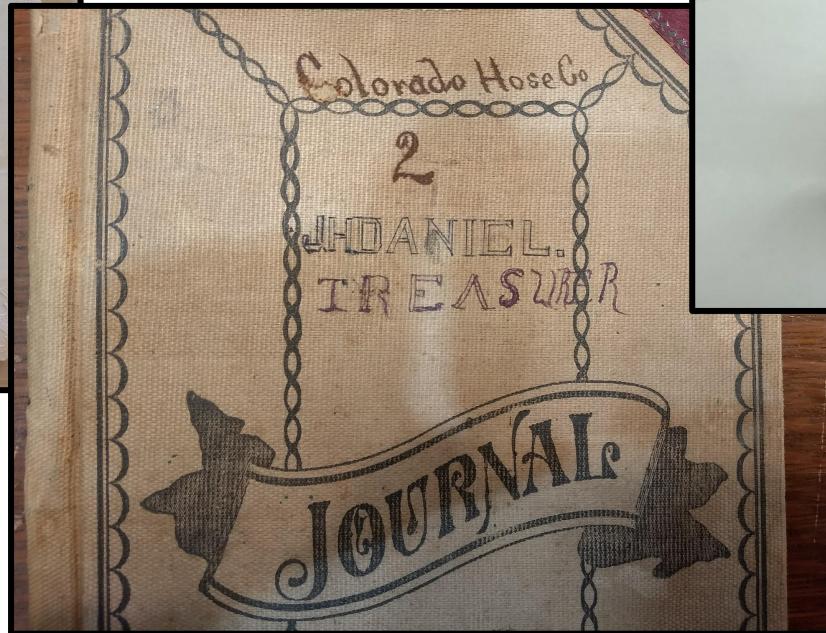
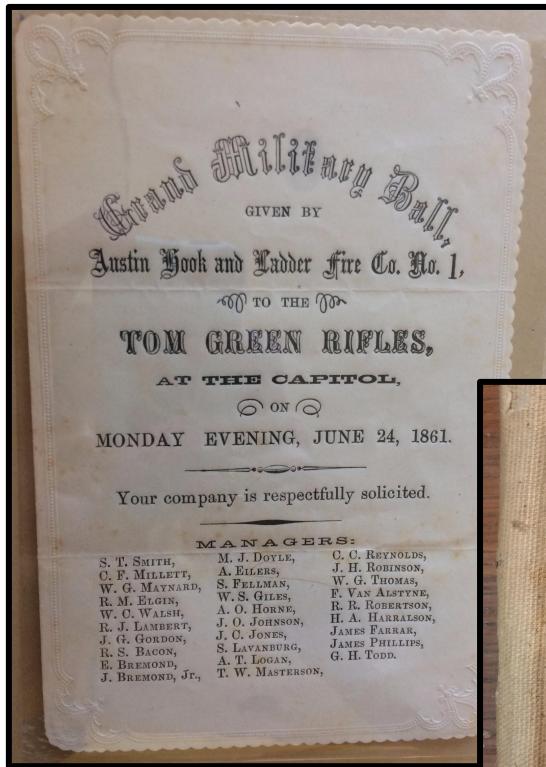


W.M. Book End Binder for our
Editorial Secretary.

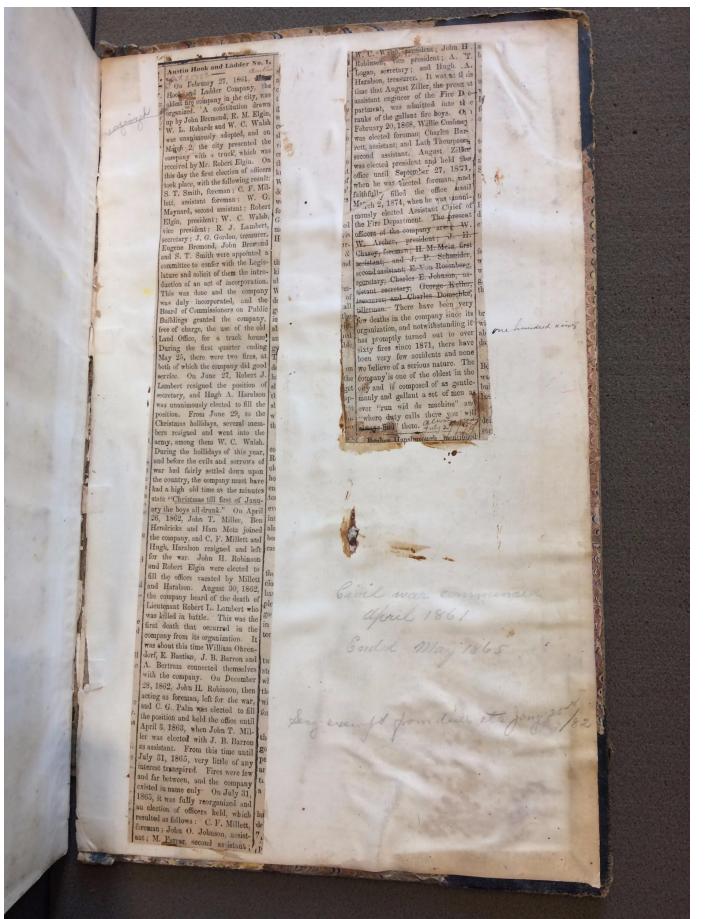
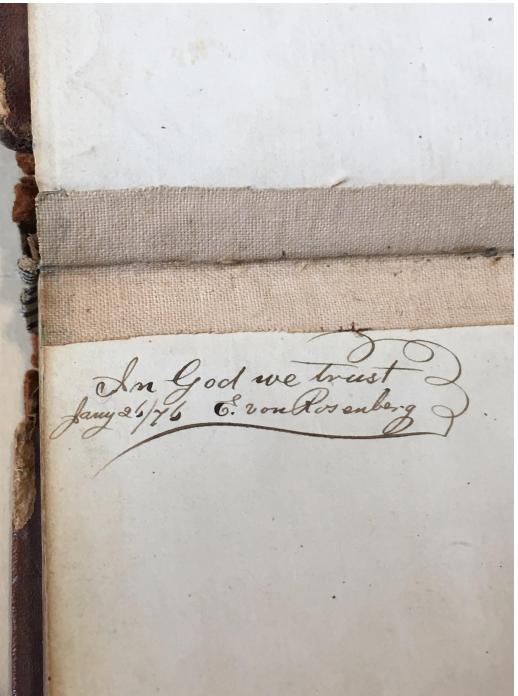
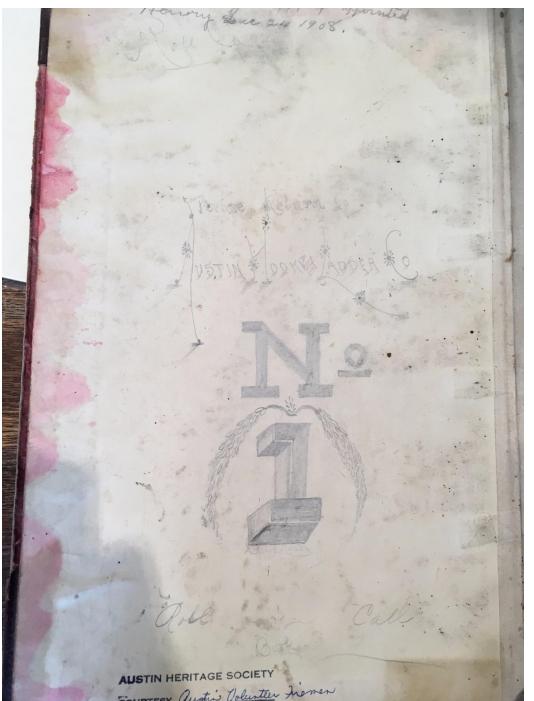
Blue
Book
Day
Bills
Bills

	Nov 1st 1864	Mon 4th 1864
1.	J. B. Abbott	as a
2.	J. B. Abbott	as a
3.	W. B. Abbott	as a
4.	G. B. Abbott	as a
5.	J. C. Abbott	as a
6.	J. C. Abbott	as a
7.	J. C. Abbott	as a
8.	J. C. Abbott	as a
9.	J. C. Abbott	as a
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32.	J. C. Abbott	as a
33.	J. C. Abbott	as a
34.	J. C. Abbott	as a
35.	J. C. Abbott	as a
36.	J. C. Abbott	as a





Ledgers as Scrapbooks



The Fire Record

- Meticulous record-keeping
- Organizational value
- “May 29, 1938 - These records of the volunteer fire department which were lost and found by J.C. Eckert while wrecking the old building for the new Austin National Bank building and were turned over to the secretary of the Ex-Volunteer Fireman’s Association , Henry L. Kuhlman, on Nov 4, 1929. The Ex-Volunteer Fireman’s Association presented them to Chief John Moody of the A.F. Dpt. for future preservation.”

Questions?