

#### National Archives 2017 Virtual Genealogy Fair

# A is for Archives, B is for Burn File: Treating Burned Records at the National Archives at St. Louis

When they hear about the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, many people conclude that the information lost is beyond salvage. Not true. Not all of the burned military records from the fire were destroyed. Information on records that even our staff considered completely lost can now be accessed. The process is called "content" recovery" scanning with an infrared camera and is a very exciting development.

Ashley Cox will discuss which files were burned designation and their changed from non-archival to archival, making all burn files available for research relatively soon. In addition, she will cover what information was saved from the fire, the journey of records from archival storage to the research room, why time is needed for them to be available for viewing, and how to request them before visiting the archives.



#### Presenter's Biography



Ashley joined the National Archives as a Preservation Specialist - Team Lead in December of 2016. She first learned of the B file project during graduate school but never realized the extent of each file's journey. Along with her co-lead, Ashley works with a team of 12 dedicated preservation technicians who provide access to military records that couldn't be safely handled for research or requests.

Ashley graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Studio Arts and Minor in Business Management from the University of North Texas. During her time at North Texas, she worked as a

Student at the Hillman Library Government Documents department, here she learned her passion for providing access to cultural and intellectual heritage. She graduated with her Masters of Library and Information Science with an emphasis in Archives and Preservation from the University of Pittsburgh in 2010.

She interned at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History with Head Conservator Gretchen Anderson and was the Conservation Librarian for the CONSOL Energy Mine Map Preservation Project at the University of Pittsburgh, University Library System.



Ashley Cox
Preservation Specialist
National Archives
at St. Louis

### A is for Archives, B is for Burn File:

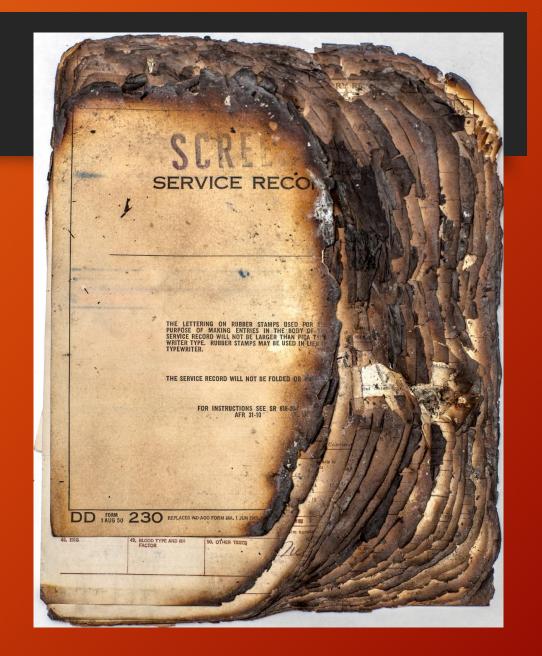
Treating Burned Records at the National Archives at St. Louis

Ashley Cox Preservation Specialist Preservation Program at St. Louis ashley.cox@nara.gov

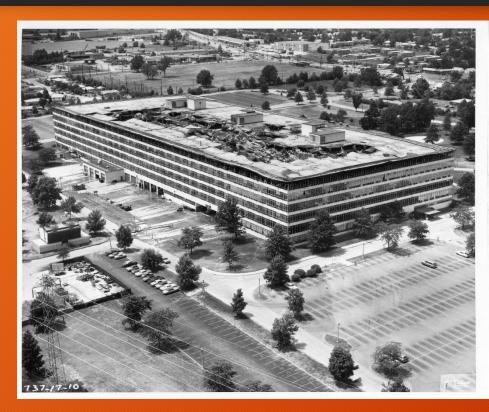


#### Overview

- 1973 Fire
- Reference
- Preservation Treatment



#### The Fire



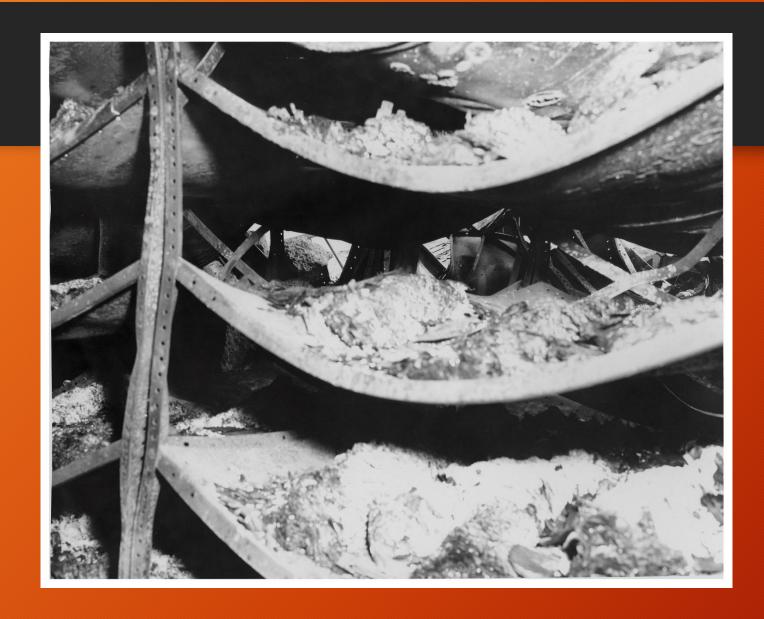




Left: Aerial view of collapsed roof

Center: Warped shelving and piles of wet, charred records

Right: Collapsed roof with visible shelving



Warped shelving and ashes of the records

### Salvage efforts





#### What is a B-file?

Branch	Personnel and Period Affected	Estimated loss
Army	Personnel discharged Nov 1, 1912 to Jan 1, 1960	80%
Air Force	Personnel discharged Sept 25, 1947 to Jan 1, 1964 (with names alphabetically after Hubbard)	<b>75</b> %

# Approximately 6.5 million survived

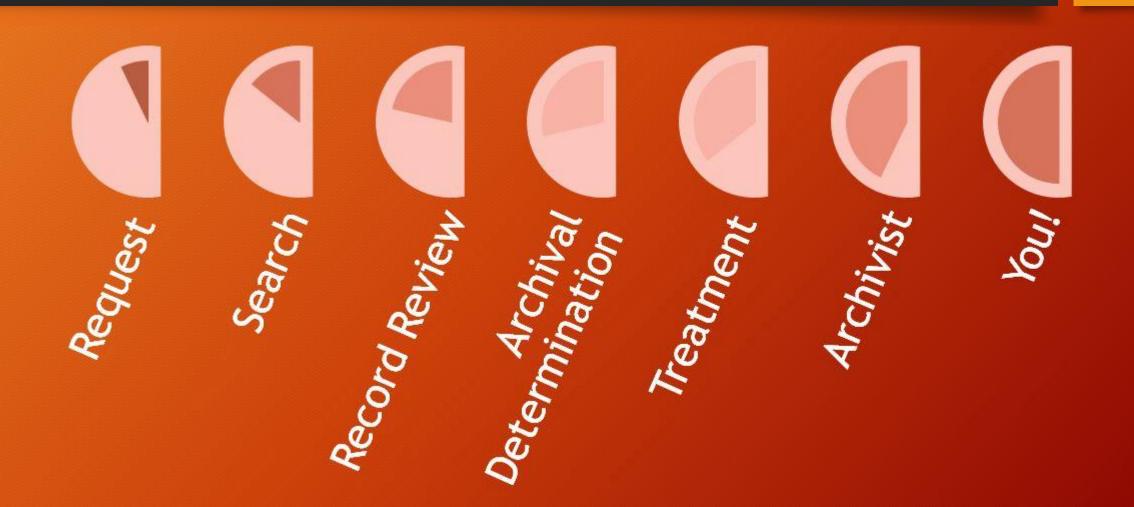
My great grandfather has no record while my grandfather does.



#### R is for Reconstructed File

- R- files and other alternate record groups can help fill in the gaps of the missing records.
- My great grandfather has an auxiliary records, in his case, a QMP or pay file.
- Our archivists can help give you the surviving information or direct you to those that can.

#### B-file life Journey



#### How to request?

Our favorite part of the Government...

# FORMS! FORMS! FORMS!

OMB No. 3095-0029 Expires 04/30/2018

artment of Veteran: Affair: Record: Management Center ATTN: Release of Information P.O. Box 5020 St. Louis, MO 63115-5020

National Personnel Records Cent

Division of Commissioned Corps Officer Support ATTN: Records Officer 1101 Wooton Parlway, Plaza Level, Suite 100 Rockville, MD 20852

The various categories of military service records are described in the chart below. For each category there is a code number which indicates the address at the bottom of the page to which this request should be sent. Please refer to the Instruction and Information Sheet accompanying this form as needed. CURRENT STATUS OF SERVICE MEMBER

avy Medicine Records Activity (NMRA)

#### By mail or online:

- Online via eVetRecs
- SF-180

  - Mail
- Other
  - FOIA: (Freedom of Information Act)
  - Contact your state or county
  - Write us a letter
  - Hire an independent researcher

Discharged, deceased, or retired before \$11/1994 Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 - 9/30/200 Discharged, deceased, or retired 10/1/2004 - 12/31/2 Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/201 urrent National Guard enlisted not on active duty in the Air Force Discharge , deceased, or retired before 1/1/1898 REQUEST Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1898 - 3/31/19 SECTION I - INFORMATION ! Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1905 - 4/30/19 NSTRUCTION AND INFORMATION SHEET FOR SF 180, REQUEST PERTAINING TO MILITARY RECORDS Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/2014 Individual Ready Reserve Active, Selected Marine Corps Reserve, TDRL Discharged, deceased, or retired before 11/1/1912 (scalinted) or before 7/1/1917 (officer)
Discharged, deceased, or retired 11/1/1912 – 10/15/1992 (scalinted) or 7/1/1917 – 10/15/
Discharged, deceased, or retired 10/16/1992 – 9/30/2002 Discharged, deceased, or retired (including TDRL) 10/1/2002 - 12/31/20 Discharged, deceased, or retired (including TDRL) on or after 1/1/2014 Online requests may be submitted to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) by a veteran or deceased veteran's next-of-kin using eVetRecs at NO Current Soldiner (Active, Kesenve (including Individual Kandy Kesenve) or National Guard)
Discharged, deceased, or retired before 19/1358 (editined) or before 19/1393 (edition)
Discharged, deceased, or retired 19/1358 – 19/1394 (editined) or 19/1393 – 19/01394 (edition)
Discharged, deceased, or retired 19/13/1494 – 12/31/1994 2. Personal Record-Offiliary Human Researce Records Official Military Personal File (OMFI) and Medical Records-Oracle Testimate Records (STR). Records (STR) records (STR) records (STR) and the Records (STR) recor OM MILITARY ECTION II - I E REQUESTING Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1995 - 12/31/2013 a. Release of information; Release of information is subject to restrictions imposed by the military services consistent with Department of Defense regulations, the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974. The service member (either part or present) or ADDRESS LIST OF CUSTODIANS and SELF-SERVICE WEBSITES (BY CODE NUMBERS SHOWN ABOVE) - Where to write/send this form

Air Reserve Personnel Center Record: Management Branch (DPTSC) 18420 E. Silver Creek Avenue Building 390 MS 68 Buckley AFB, CO 30011

Commander, Personnel Service Cen (BOPS-C-MR) M57200

75 Coast Guard 703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE Vashington, DC 20593-7200

Headquarter: U.S. Marine Corps Manpower Management Records & Perfo (MMRP-10) 2008 Elliot Road

signature is required if the request if for archival records.)

registrons, the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOM), and the Frency Act of 1974. The service member (either past or present) of the number (sales guardanian has access to shoots any unformation contained in that number) over sure could be such cased to a feet of the number (sales guardanian is seeded in Section III of the 19710). Others requesting information from unlimp personnel records and or section of the number (sales guardanian is seeded in Section III of the 19710). Others requesting information from unlimp personnel records and or section of the ent UNLESS YOU <u>Fees for records</u>: There is no charge for most services provided to service members or next-of-kin of decessed veterans. A nominal fee is charged for certain types of service. In most instances, service fees cannot be determined in advance. If your request involves a service fee, you will receive an involve with your record. 3. Archival Records. Personnel records of military members who were discharged, retired, or died in service 62 OR MORE YEARS AGO have been SECTIO a. <u>Rolesse of Information</u>. Archival records are open to the public. The Privacy Act of 1974 does not apply to archival records, therefore, written authorization from the veteran or next-of-kin is not required. In order to protect the privacy of the veteran, his ber finnily, and duity parties assured in the records, the personal privacy exemption of the Frenchoon of Information Act (G US. C. SSZ) (6) (6) many still apply and many practicable the release. NEXT-OF-KIN (M b. Fees for Archival Records: Access to archival records are granted by offering copies of the records for a fee (44 U.S.C. 2116 (c)). If a fee applies copies of documents in the requested record, you will receive an invoice. Photocopies will be sent after payment is made. For more ation see http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/archival-programs/military-personnel-archival/ompf-archival-requests.html MENTS TO:

4. When reply may be set. The mply may be set to the service number or may other address designant by the service number or other understand response. If the designant does is 100 Temperated of the selection of the service number of the service number of the service number of the service of

5. Definitions and abbreviations. DISCHARGED - the individual has no current military status; SERVICE TREATMENT RECORD (STR) -- The chronology of medical, mental health, and dental care received by service members during the course of their military career (does not include records of treatment while hospitalized); TDRL - Temporary Disability Retired List.

6. Service completed before World War I. National Archives Trust Fund (NATF) forms must be used to request these records. Obtain the forms by e-

PRIVACY ACT OF 1974 COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

TRUACY ACT OF 1911 COMPILANCE NFORMATION

FRUNCY ACT OF 1911 COMPILANCE NFORMATION

FRUNCY ACT OF 1911 COMPILANCE NFORMATION

FRUNCY STATE (\$10,000) and \$10,000 a

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

PAPERWORK EDUCTION ACT PURIL O RUDDEN STATEMENT

Public burden reporting for this collection of information is entitled to be for miners per request, including time for reviewing instructions and completing and reviewing the rollection of information is send comment regarding the burden estimate or any other respect of the collection of information, including supersions for relating this burden or relating this towns, on National Archives and Records Administration (ISSS), 6001 Adapt Read, College Park, 200 2740-6001, DO NOT SEAD COLDELETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS, SEND CONFILETED FORMS TO THE APPROPRIATE ADDRESS LINTED ON PAGES OF THE STATE OF THE SENDENCE ADDRESS AND AD

#### Or visit us in person!

### The NPRC in Spanish Lake, Missouri

- Dedication ceremony October 2011
- Delightfully fire free



#### ...but still has forms.

- Onsite -
  - E-mail: <a href="mailto:stlarr.archives@nara.gov">stlarr.archives@nara.gov</a>
  - Telephone: 314-801-0850

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#### Planning ahead...



# Why are appointments so important?

- Does the record even exist?
- Is the record archival yet?
  - Does it need treatment?

#### Search & Storage

Roughly 50 degrees Fahrenheit 35-45% RH

Holds maximum of 125,000 cubic feet



#### Record Review (Mold ID)

•Identify the type of request and the needs of the record based on condition.



#### **Archival Determination**

#### • What is archival?

- 62 years after the individual's separation from the military
- For example, my grandfather's discharge was in September 1957
  2017 62 = 1955
- His record will become archival in September 2019

## When will all B-files be archival?

Bulk date before early 60s

1964 + 62 = 2026

#### CODE OF ETHICS

I. The conservation professional shall strive to attain the highest possible standards in all aspects of conservation, including, but not limited to, preventive conservation, examination, documentation, treatment, research, and education.

II. All actions of the conservation professional must be governed by an informed respect for the cultural property, its unique character and significance, and the people or person who created it.

III. While recognizing the right of society to make appropriate and respectful use of cultural property, the conservation professional shall serve as an advocate for the preservation of cultural property.

IV. The conservation professional shall practice within the limits of personal competence and education as well as within the limits of the available facilities.

V. While circumstances may limit the resources allocated to a particular situation, the quality of work that the conservation professional performs shall not be compromised.

VI. The conservation professional must strive to select methods and materials that, to the best of current knowledge, do not adversely affect cultural property or its future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, or function.

VII.The conservation professional shall document examination, scientific investigation, and treatment by creating permanent records and reports.

VIII. The conservation professional shall recognize a responsibility for preventive conservation by endeavoring to limit damage or deterioration to cultural property, providing guidelines for continuing use and care, recommending appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encouraging proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport.

IX. The conservation professional shall act with honesty and respect in all professional relationships, seek to ensure the rights and opportunities of all individuals in the profession, and recognize the specialized knowledge of others.

X. The conservation professional shall contribute to the evolution and growth of the profession, a field of study that encompasses the liberal arts and the natural sciences. This contribution may be made by such means as continuing development of personal skills and knowledge, sharing of information and experience with colleagues, adding to the profession's written body of knowledge, and providing and promoting educational opportunities in the field.

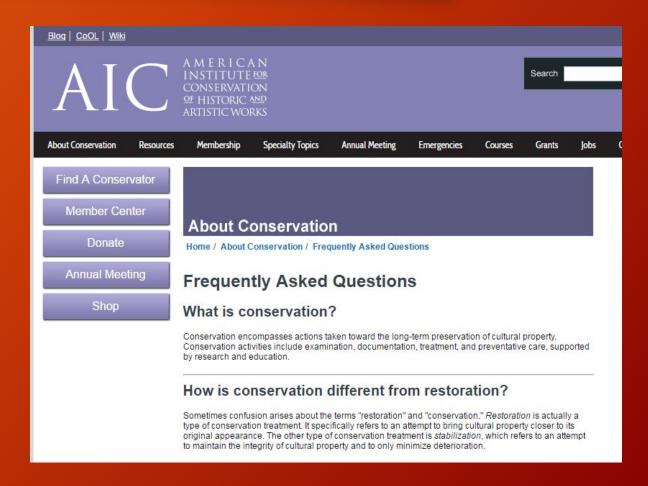
XI. The conservation professional shall promote an awareness and understanding of conservation through open communication with allied professionals and the public.

XII. The conservation professional shall practice in a manner that minimizes personal risks and hazards to co-workers, the public, and the environment.

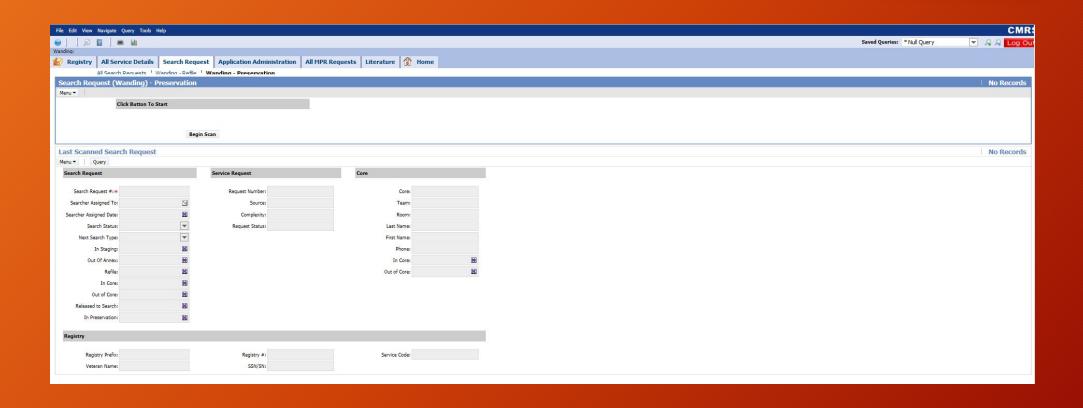
XIII. Each conservation professional has an obligation to promote understanding of and adherence to this Code of Ethics.

#### Documentation

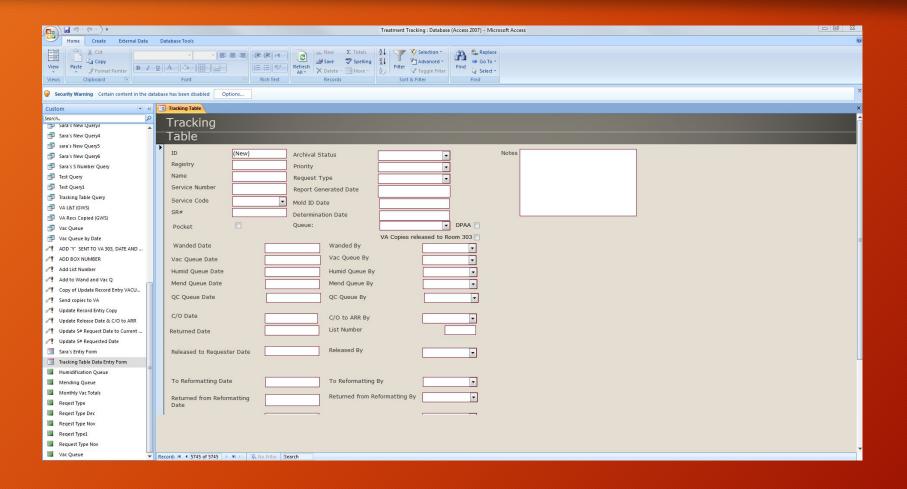
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# CMRS = Case Management and Reporting System



#### Treatment Tracking database



### Treatment Tracking log

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#### Once in Preservation

# Surface cleaning

All records

If needed:

- Humidification and flattening
- Mending
- Content recovery (CR)

Quality check

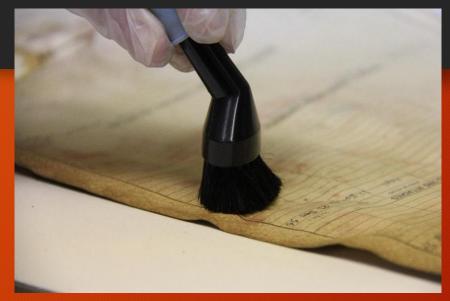
• Final set of eyes

### Surface Cleaning





Left: Schucco-Vac
Below: Schucco brush attachment gently removes
debris



#### Preservation tools:

- Soot sponges traps particulates
- Brushes loosens debris
- Bone folder smoothes out creases
- Holbien spatula separates and lifts pages
- Teflon lifter separates especially fused pages
- Microspatula removes fasteners, separates pages

#### PPE = personal protective equipment



Examining a selective service ledger in the fume hood while wearing gloves.



A technician utilizing the fume hood while wearing a mask, gloves, and smock.

### Humidification and flattening



#### Preventing cross contamination

While mold is inactive and has been brought to 'normal' levels, we don't want to introduce mold spores to unaffected records.



B-files have a specific dome, press, and materials.







Clean dome and press



# Tray humidification vs Dome

- increased efficiency



#### Before & After







### Mending





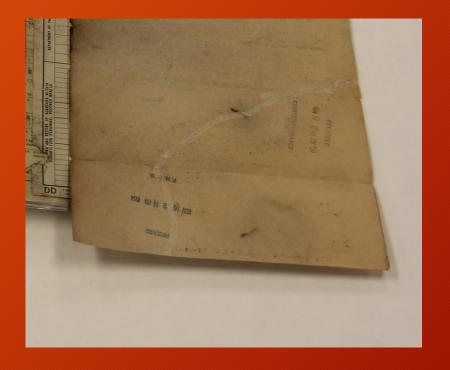
#### Reversibility is key

Using conservation grade adhesive and strips of Japanese tissue, we mend large tears and completely detached fragments.



Wheat starch paste being strained through a NORIKOSHI, or horse hair strainer.





### Content Recovery (CR) Scanning

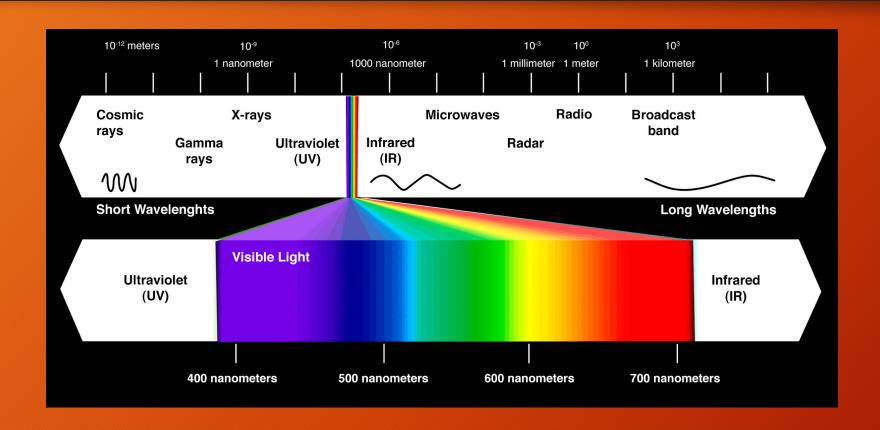








#### How does it work?

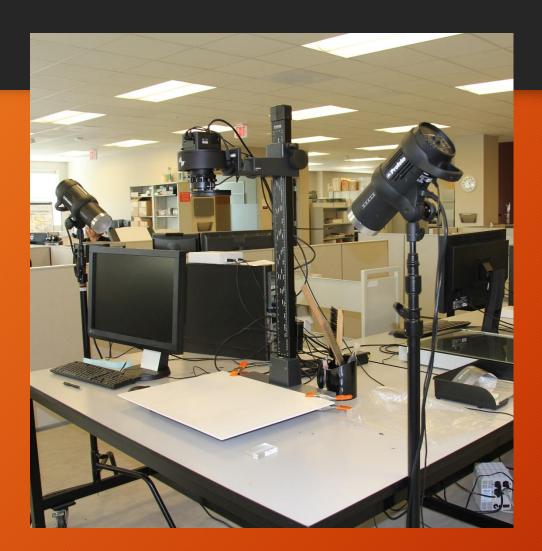


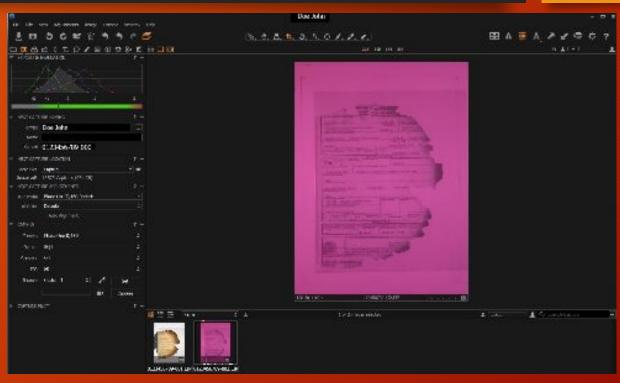
Itilizing infrared filters, we can recover information previously considered 'lost'

#### What is a good candidate for CR scanning?

- Information cannot be revealed via a copier.
- Printed or typed inks.
- High amount of dark brown to black charring into areas of information.
- Brittle and fragmented charring that would be damaged with repeated handling.

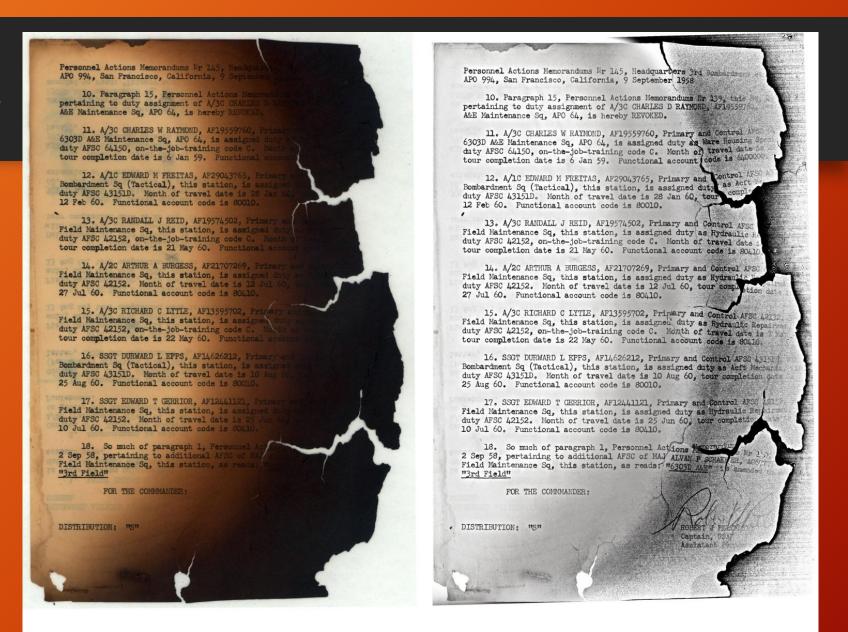






#### 40

#### Results



Without digital enhancing

With digital enhancing

#### **Quality Check**

Each record receives a final inspection by a preservation specialist.



#### S is for Safeguarded File

B and R files that received treatment are converted to S files, or safeguarded files, in the registry (inventory system).

These records can be requested and utilized without having to go through preservation.



#### Want to learn more conservation?

#### **National Archives**

- Visit our webpage: <u>https://www.archives.gov/preserv</u> ation
- Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/nationalarchivespreservation/">https://www.facebook.com/nationalarchivespreservation/</a>
- Instagram: @preservearchives

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) webpage:

http://www.conservation-us.org/



#### Questions?







### Thank you for attending!

If we did not get to your question, you may submit it to inquire@nara.gov

Today's video recording and materials will remain available at www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-fair