

Staying Within the Parkways:

The Shelby Foote Collection Comes to Rhodes

The Shelby Dade Foote Jr. (1916-2005) collection, acquired by the College from the Foote Estate in 2010 has taken a short journey from East Parkway to North Parkway, but a huge journey in being readied for use by scholars. Shelby Foote's son, Huger, has said "My dad would be glad that the collection has stayed within the Parkways." Neither journey would have been possible without the support of many people at the College.

On a damp day in December 2010, Darlene Brooks (Barret Library Director), Bill Short, (Associate Library Director), Elizabeth Gates, (College Archivist and Special Collection Librarian) and Brian Foshee (Director of the College Physical Plant) went with a crew from Ewing Movers to Foote's home to take possession of the collection from the Foote family lawyer. Also at the Foote home to help with the transition was Carol McCarley, an independent, professional librarian and private library consultant who had spent nearly a year organizing the materials, had created a detailed inventory and had packed the items for the move. The content of every box was carefully compared to the McCarley inventory and the box was resealed before it left the Foote home. Ideally the collection would have been moved directly to the Barret Library, but there was no secure space large enough in the Barret Library to accommodate the items while they were being processed and the finding aid was being created. Ms Brooks had arranged for temporary storage in a secure off campus site, so that a convoy of moving trucks and college

vehicles traveled the short distance from the Foote home to the storage unit. Again the boxes were carefully checked against the inventory as they were moved into the storage unit.

On March 4, 2011, Rhodes College President William E. Troutt announced at a breakfast gathering in the Barret Library, that the College had acquired the Foote collection. Items that were temporarily displayed for this announcement were returned to secure storage.

Ms Brooks goal was to store the collection at the off campus site for the shortest time possible. John Bass, Director of the Mike Curb Institute and a member of the Foote Collection Task Force which was established by President Troutt offered two rooms for a short term in Harris Lodge. The task force was chaired by Darlene Brooks task force and included members of the Library and Information Technology Services division, faculty representatives from the History, English and Religious Studies Departments, Suzanne Bonefas (Director of Special Projects) and Bass was charged with developing the process by which all of the materials would be cataloged and preserved.

Shelving and computer service were added to the Harris Lodge space and Ewing Movers again moved the collection from its off campus temporary home to another temporary home in the Harris Lodge.

The processing of the materials and creating the finding aid would take a great deal of time and expertise. The library staff had the expertise, but not the time. Ms Brooks and Suzanne Bonefas found funding to hire Carol McCarley who was already very

familiar with the collection and the ideal person to process the collection and to create a finding aid.

Professor Tim Huebner arranged for two history interns, Jordon Redmon and Laura Peterson both of the Class of 2013, to assist Ms McCarley. Both interns had received training on processing manuscripts at the Memphis and Shelby County Room at the Memphis Public Library. The first part of the processing was to transfer the items to the archival quality storage provided by the College Archives. The second phase entailed the careful work of creating the detailed finding aid and was completed by Ms McCarley and Jordan Redmon in May, 2012. The outcome of both phases is a well conserved collection and a document that makes the Foote Collection materials easily located by scholars, researchers and students

While Ms McCarley and the interns were working in Harris lodge, the library staff started creating space for the collection in the Archives vault. The vault did not have enough space to accommodate the large Foote Collection, so that the Archivist designated some materials that were low use and that could be stored outside the Archives. Ms Brooks negotiated with Physical Plant to take a small portion of a mechanical room on the fourth floor of Barret Library and to retrofit and install moveable shelving that was being discarded from the Biology Department Library in the space which was being called the Upper Annex (UA). The mechanical room space had never been intended for storage so that the floor had to be reinforced with steel bars that would allow the floor to accept the weight of the shelving and the content. A wall and lockable door were added to secure the storage space. In August of 2012, Ms Brooks again hired Ewing Movers for the

day transfer of the low use archival materials to the UA, to move collections within the vault and to bring the processed Foote papers to their final and secure home in the College Archives vault.

In September, 2012, Jordan Redmon became the first Shelby Foote Fellow and began transcribing the 1986 Foote diary. He is using software called "FromthisPage" which Stacy Pennington, Associate Database Analyst, installed and modified to meet the needs of this transcribing project.

The announcement that the Shelby Foote Collection is available for use was made on October 29, 2012. When the Collection was acquired in December 2010, the task force members speculated that it could be available to the public in three years. The hard work of all involved reduced that time to just less than two years!

Elizabeth E. Gates, College Archivist , October 2012