Your 'junk' might be the Furman archives' treasure

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Recommended Citation
Walters, Ashley '06 (2006) "Your 'junk' might be the Furman archives' treasure," Furman Magazine: Vol. 49 : Iss. 2 , Article 33. Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol49/iss2/33
On two small shelves in a corner of 
the James Buchanan Duke Library sits Furman’s entire memorabilia collection: 78 items. These general artifacts, collected or given to the university during the course of its 180 years, fill only five boxes.

As the Special Collections and Archives intern for History 84 (Experiential Learning in History) in the spring of 2006, I was assigned to catalog and organize these links to the past. I did find additional collections of artifacts, but they focused more on a specific person or organization.

As for the general collection, the artifacts are surprisingly varied. A tintype of a Civil War soldier who attended Furman was in the same box as a bumper sticker from the school’s 150th anniversary in 1976. Furman University Student Activities Board (FUSAB) sunglasses were wrapped in old baseball stockings in another box.

Did you know that Wedgwood once created a series of plates that featured the original Bell Tower from the men’s campus in downtown Greenville? Furman has the plate in mulberry, but green and blue plates also exist. The archives would love to find a complete set.

Do you think that Furman placed more emphasis on saving football memorabilia during the glory days of the 1930s, when the university won state championships and consistently defeated Clemson and South Carolina, or the 1980s, when the Paladins became a Southern Conference power and Division I-AA national champions? The archives boasts seven footballs from the 1930s, but the only thing commemorating the 1988 national title is a T-shirt.

Other unusual items in the collection are an 1856 cast of the face of student William Nathaniel Rosamond, a hitching-post ring from the president’s home on the men’s campus, and a plastic construction hat from the Cherrydale moving party in 1959.

Special Collections and Archives would like to find more such items to strengthen and expand its collection of historical artifacts.

To do so, it needs the help of alumni and friends. If you have an item of historical significance that you would be willing to donate, please contact Debbielee Landi, department director, at (864) 294-2194 or e-mail debbielee.land@furman.edu.

Memorabilia is considered any item with a connection to alma mater, whether it’s a class ring, a photograph or a ticket stub for a campus event. So when you come across an old Beach Weekend T-shirt that’s a bit too snug or a stack of extra Commencement invitations that you never mailed, think of Special Collections and Archives at Furman.

That’s just the kind of treasure they’re looking for.

— Ashley Walters ’06