

## Guide to the Jonathan May Collection

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### **Descriptive Summary:**

Creator: Jonathan May, 1939-

Title: Jonathan May Collection

Dates: 1935-2019

Quantity: .25 Linear Feet, 1.35 GB digital

Abstract: This collection contains digital photographs, genealogical information, published and unpublished writings by May discussing his life experience and family of origin in Greensboro, Alabama, and an oral history interview May recorded with Prof. Michael Fitzgerald in 2019.

Accession: 720-2019

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### **Biographical Note:**

Jonathan Bryan May, Jr. was born in Greensboro, Alabama on February 8, 1939 to Jonathan Bryan May and Annie Lee Turberville. May grew up in Sawyerville near Umbria Plantation. His mother was close friends with the last Pickens to own Umbria, Eloise Pickens Lunsford. After receiving his Master's in Library Science from Columbia University May began working in their library. He worked for Columbia in the Journalism Library then as Government Documents Librarian, for twenty-seven years before retiring to take care of his family home. He also worked part time as a postal clerk for ten years.

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### **Scope and Content:**

This collection contains digital photographs, genealogical information, published and unpublished works by May, and an oral history interview May recorded with Prof. Michael Fitzgerald in 2019.

Among the photographs are 52 color images taken in 1971 of the Umbria Plantation shortly before it burned to the ground. There are also 42 black and white images from the Historic Architectural Building Survey taken in 1935 for the Works Projects Administration. There is a handwritten summary of May's memories of Umbria and his mother's friendship with

Eloise Pickens Lunsford. The 2023 accrual [923 MB] includes images of the ruins of Umbria taken in 1999 and numerous May family photographs in addition to copies of 2 published works, and an unpublished autobiography titled, "Telling Stories: Essays at Autobiography."

Topics of note in May's memoir include:

- The rise and fall and possible rise again of a small Black Belt community.
- The tale of a young boy growing up gay in a rural conservative Southern community.
- His subsequent life, loves, and growing old gay.
- Gay history.
- The white May family's discovery and acceptance of their Black cousins.
- Race relations in the rural South 1940s to 2020s.
- Birmingham-Southern College 1957-1961.
- New York City during the period I lived there.
- 1968 riot and revolution at Columbia University.
- History of Greensboro Alabama.
- History of the May family of Hollow Square and Sawyerville.
- History of the Turberville family of Greensboro.
- Impact of deafness on a family.
- The AIDS crisis in New York and at Columbia.
- Big university librarianship 1960s-1980s.
- Family life in the South in the 1900s.

(This manuscript is restricted by Deed from publication until 2030, but is available for research on site).

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**Provenance:**

Gift of Jonathan May, 2019. Additional material received in 2023.

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**Access Restrictions:**

See note above regarding unpublished manuscript, "Telling Stories: Essays at Autobiography."

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**Preferred Citation:**

[Title of Item], Jonathan May Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama.

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**Guide prepared by:** Kristina Polizzi

**Guide updated by:** Deborah Gurt

**Guide last updated:** 7/3/2024

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**Related Content:**

Acc. 546-2011 The Doy Leale McCall Sr. Papers; Pickens Papers

Acc. 721-2019 Sawyerville Oral History Project

Acc. 386-2002 Robert Eugene Bell Papers

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**Content List:**

**1. Writings by Jonathan May:**

"Childhood Memories of Umbria Plantation" (a print copy is housed with Acc. #716)

A Howling in the Night

Siren Song

Rants, Raves, Ruminations, and Ramblifications: Musings from a Hamlet

Telling Stories: Fragments of a Life

Telling Stories: Essays at Autobiography (File location: X:\May, Jonathan (720))

RESTRICTED FROM PUBLICATION UNTIL 2030

**2. Interview:**

Interview with Jonathan May, by Prof. Michael Fitzgerald, 2019.

**3. Genealogy:**

Two May Families, by Berenice May Fuller (PDF)

**4. Photographs:**

Family photographs, pictures of Umbria Plantation, HABS pictures of Umbria

Extent: 1.35 GB

File location: X:\May, Jonathan (720)