

Event ID: 3238953

Event Started: 5/16/2017 1:48:05 PM ET

[Please stand by for realtime captions]

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the FDLP Academy. We've got another terrific webinar for you today. Entitled picturing the big shop. A look behind the scenes of GPO's new photograph book. And with us today is our presenter, George Burnham. George is the GPO historian. He is a long GPO employee. He was the driving force in the creation of the GPO history exhibit base on the first floor of GPO I would recommend you visit that area if you are coming to GPO or Washington in general. Also many years ago, George worked in the depository operation at the Case Western Reserve University Calvin Smith library in Cleveland, Ohio. But before we get into the webinar, I have to go through a few housekeeping comments so there with me a bit. If you have any questions or comments on the presentation, please feel free to chat them in the chat box, which can be found in the bottom right corner of your screen. I will keep track of all the questions that come in and at the end of the presentation, I will read them back to George and he will bond to each of them. We are recording today's session and well email a link to the recording to everyone who registered for this webinar. The webinar will be in our webinar archive along with a PDF of the slide deck. The webinar archive can be found on the FDLP .gov website under FDLP Academy. We will also be sending you a certificate of anticipation using the e-mail you used to register for today's webinar. If anyone needs additional certificate because multiple people watched the webinar with you, please e-mail FDLP outreach at GPO .gov and include the title of today's webinar along with the names and e-mail addresses of those needing certificates. If you need to zoom in on the slides or the website being shown by the presenter, you can click on the full screen button in the bottom left side of your screen. To exit full-screen mode so you can see the chat box and check questions, mouse over the blue bar at the top of your screen so that it expands, and then click on the blue return button to get back at the default view. Finally at the end of the session we will be sharing a webinar satisfaction survey with you. We will let you know when the survey is available, and the URL will appear in the chat box. We very much appreciate your feedback after the session is through today. With that, I will hand the microphone over to George, who will take it from here.

Thanks. Earlier this year the government publishing office brought out picturing the big shop, photos of of the us government photo office 1900 to 1980. The book features over 280 of GPO daily life and work through the Golden age of photography at the agency. I'm George Burnham the agency's during and I'm the compiler and writer of the photo book. We've had a program for collecting preserving, recording and interpreting the his three of the agency often on for about the last 30 years. In 2010, after a few years of there not having been a designated agency historian, I was appointed with the immediate task of marking our 100 50th anniversary in 2011. I recently made a list of that history program projects over that 30 or so years, and I'm pleased to say it's a good long list. And a good amount has taken place on my watch with the inspiration and collaboration of many people, not least our director and my immediate boss, the Chief of Staff Andy Sherman. In the last year, we have published a revised edition of our official agency

history, keeping America informed, as well as the book photographs that I want to talk about today. A useful lesson that I've learned in my almost 20 years that GPO is that most ideas, good or bad, never really disappear. I first heard of a notion that we should publish a book of historic GPO photographs a very long time ago. Around the time when I first came in contact with the photograph collection. That collection at that time lived in the division that was then called typography and design. And they wanted to publish a book, and I was asked in a series of meetings to talk about organizing them because I am a librarian. That effort never came to anything. And later, the photos moved to my predecessor Jim Cameron's office. Jim also had the idea that there ought to be a coffee table book, of photographs. When the photo collection became my responsibility about 10 years ago, I set out to finally restore some order to it, and to look carefully at what was actually making it up. Which turns out to be in a way to different collections. Something over 1000 taken between the turn of the 20th century and World War II which document every last detail of what GPO worked and played like, and the probably 8500 taken between the 50s and the 80s. A couple of examples of which are on your screen now. Which are box upon box upon box of groups of GPO employees gathered in a semicircle around some GPO official or other, having their hands shaken on the promotion or suggestion award or union contract. Most of them are not identified. Often the occasions are. And mostly they are just not very interesting. So the bulk of the work that I have done has been with the first group. Their original organization closely followed the GPO organizational chart. And quite early, I worked out a filing structure that preserves and in some cases reconstructs that. Starting in 2010 we were preparing for the 100 50th anniversary and compiling a new official history keeping America informed. The photo collection was the heart and soul of that book and was also the basis of the research we did to prepare our history exhibit here in the main building. From there we moved on to the history hallways project, which hung about 100 of our our historic photos in the hallways here at headquarters. And that project turned out to be the foundation of yet more work. Picturing the big shop took on or just under a to compiling right. It started with the photos, about two thirds of which have been digitized. Two thirds of that 1900 to 1945. . And it really started with those history hallway photos. I looked at various ways of grouping them. Automatically, chronologically, and finally decided that a slight variation of the org chart -based approach was the most sensible. I looked long and carefully, first just sorting out candidates into the six categories that became chapters. Buildings, printing, binding, support and administration, superintendent of documents, and the category I called life of GPO. Which includes all the recreational and social activities as well as things like the medical section and the cafeteria. I tried to get a roughly proportional number for each category. And to be sure that the selections presented a balanced view. The photos and that main part of the collection show a lot about the plant. Like the one you see here. But they almost always have people in them. It's important and selecting them we be careful to show as much about the whole work force as we can. Men and women, black and white, and all the different trades and skills and professions. This is a very early photo from right around 1900 and very interesting because it shows women in the press room as rest feeders. Once we had that large cut made, which brought the pool down to something like 450 candidates, I began editing and arranging so that the chapters would tell a story. In the case of building or printing or binding to a large asked and Superintendent of documents that Dori is a more or less continuous flow. The support and life sections are necessarily more -- more subdivided. We settled on a goal of about 200 folders for the file book. The last major decision of this stage was that we would put all of the 1939 photos of the apprentice class of 1940, about 25 about 25 of them, together with a separate introduction. I

believe these to be the most beautiful and artistic photographs in the entire collection and I really wanted to highlight them. But as I learned the hard way, when we hung the first group of history hallway photos, in addition to the marvelous narrative about work in the plans that this collection presents, they also tell a story about the dark chapter of official segregation at GPO. That had to be acknowledged and explained in the introduction. When the selection was basically final, I began writing captions. It was also at this stage that our wonderful designer Dean [Indiscernible] worked out what the book would look like. I had to be sure that what I wrote would fit without crowding the images. 50 to 75 words each caption. Somewhere in there I wrote the chapter introductions and the book introduction. At this stage of writing and editing which took several months, I had to rethink some of the selections. To add some and subtract others to make it all work as a cohesive whole. As I wrote, some things became clear to me. Many of the photos are pretty technical, like this one from the bindery. And in some cases I was describing processes and machines that haven't been current in over 50 years. And I didn't know what I was looking at. I found I had to do a lot of research and a lot of talking to some of our resident asked, people who have been here really long time so I understood what I was describing and could do so accurately and succinctly. Of course, sometimes this just meant staring at photos for a really long time, which seemed to help. In a lot of cases, it's very hard to date the photos precisely. So the for the most part, in the book. They are placed only in a decade rather than a specific year. In the end, we cut off the selection with a couple of exceptions in the 50s or 60s. Because for the most part, our photos from the mid- 50s onward are still quite an organized and are the reasons I have already mentioned not very interesting. There are of course exceptions like this one. Of the offset negative preparation room that I think are almost art. Dean and I worked very closely throughout and I appreciate his wonderful I and brilliant taste for design merit -- more than I can say. The result is the book that we are very proud of. We think of it as a companion to keeping America informed, but but it also stands on its own very admirably. GPO photos record the ways in which thousands of people and a seemingly endless variety of technology have worked together in these buildings. The agency today is a very different place than the one in most of the different photos that we still see change continually. The photos are a tribute to all the people they show and many others who work alongside them. It's an organizing principle of our history program that we look to the challenges of our future more confidently if we understand and embrace our past. So this GPO family album is a tribute to the men and women who since in early March day 156 years ago have worked here on this corner of North Capitol Street in the District of Columbia, making government information available to all.

The next images are some of my personal favorites from the book. And I will talk a little bit about them as we go along. One of my great fascinations in dealing with GPO history is the impact that the two systems for machine typesetting had, both here at GPO and in the world of graphic communications at large. These two machines came in at the beginning of the 20th century, Linotype which you see pictured here and mono type which you will see in a little while. They are remarkable, confusing, beguiling machines. And they are great fun to learn about and talk about. This is a Linotype probably from the 1940s. It is 7 feet tall, tall, weighs about 2500 pounds in cash the entire length of type from molten lead. The operator that is shown in this picture is setting up US patents. On the Linotype machine. And we had the largest battery of these machines in the world. Over 120 of them. Beginning in the 1920s, the public renter, George Carter, was very keen to make improvements to not only the way GPO worked but in the way the buildings were used. Wanted to make the buildings a pleasanter place for the employees

to spend time. Would've his innovations was this roof terrace on the building of building one. Which public printer Carter said had the finest view of the surrounding countryside available in Washington. It is still available to us today and I'm very much inclined to agree with him about the view. This is the first of our four buildings, actually the first and the second. The building we call building one, the front. Building two was added onto the back of it. Building one was opened in 1904, the eighth for was added about 20 years later. And then building two was added to the back of that about 20 years after that. And it's all very seamless, hard to tell where one stops and the other one starts. This picture is interesting because it gives such a good sense of what the neighborhood around the buildings was like. And how much the buildings dominated the neighborhood. This is an artist's rendering of a proposal for the last of our buildings to be billed, building three. Which is the building at the corner of North capital and H Street. It's about the size of the building that actually got built, it in detail it is not very much like it at all. The North capital Street façade is just a sort of duplication of the 1904 building next to it. And then around the corner and H St. There is this rather stern Art Deco face. What got built is like that but is really sort of that stripped-down federal Art Deco look all over. This is the picture that we chose to be on the cover of the book, and we like it quite a lot. It was probably taken right as the building was being opened in 1940. And this is the fourth of the buildings, which is the paper warehouse across the street from the main buildings, across from Capitol Street backing up from Union Station. It is now where passports are produced. Again, it is interesting to be able to see what the neighborhood around it look like. The building just to the right of the warehouse was quite well known local bar. This is the public documents library. GPO operated a library starting in 1895 when the superintendent of documents responsibilities came to GPO. It was in several locations. It settled in this spot in building two in the 1920s. And as you see, it was quite a large and elaborate set up. With two-tiered iron and deal book stacks, and lots of space for library staff and the many files of indexes and cards. It remained in that location until it was broken up and sent off to the national archives in the early 1970s.

This is the bindery. And some more really wonderful machines that we were were early adopters of Ed heavy users of. These are sewing machines. They sell a very strong, very tidy back to our hardbound book. And we still use these machines today. There is nothing else quite like them. This picture is from the 1940s. Some of the most interesting photos in the entire collection are the ones from the World War II era. There aren't a great many of them but the ones there are are very interesting. This is another shot from the bindery. The women that you can see our collating sets of training posters for the Army. They are very large as you can see. This is another one from the World War II area. From the end of 1941 and it is a war bond rally and dance to raise money for war bonds at GPO. Uniforms as you see, quite quite a great picture, I think. I love pictures of the main pressroom. We had so much equipment here, so many presses. The place was so much bigger. Than anyplace else as far as the amount of machinery that we had. In this picture alone, this was just a corner of the main pressroom. You see three different types of press. Sheet cylinder presses in the foreground, websites in the foreground. Sheet said presses in the middle ground and the big sheet set presses called Bob tell us off in the far distance. And we don't have just one or two. There are lots of them. This is extraordinary. Large printing operations might've had two or three altogether. This photo is from around 1915. This is always a photograph that gets lots of comments in the history hallway. The main switchboard for GPO. In building one. About late 1930s I should say. And anybody who has been in the library business for more than 20 or 25 years will immediately recognize the card X visible files that are

in the center of this photo. This is in the general stores. The department who did all of the buying and maintaining of spare parts and supplies for all of the presses and so on. And so these card X files were used for keeping track of the many kinds of spare parts of materials that we had. This is also general stores. And I like to point out a couple of things about this photo. First of all, it's just amazing how clean everything else. Printing -- especially printing and a big factory, is a dirty business. And it looks as though you could eat off the floors of this part of general stores. The other thing that is rather striking is that everything is so astonishingly organized. Look at every row of shelving has a stepstool at the end of it. It is quite clear that time and motion study was in full play here. You only had to take a few steps to get a stool to reach something off a high shelf. Everyone of those ranges of shelving is labeled, and within them, everything has a number, and a been, for every part. And there were tremendous systems of indexing to keep it all straight. Witness those files we saw in the previous shot. This is one of the photos I had to sit and stare at for a really long time. I had no idea what the women at the left-hand side of those machines were doing. This is again from the bindery, and it turns out those machines cut the little half-moon shaped notch into the fore edge of books that are getting from indexes. This process and the bindery was very misleadingly referred to as indexing. This photo is from about 1910. And this is one of my favorite photos in the entire collection. It is one of two that we bought at auction last year. It shows one of our Linotype machines the general Persian. Which traveled around in the back of a truck across France during World War I, and a motorized renting battalion that followed general Persian headquarters. Behind the lines of the war. It eventually made it's way back to GPO, and and was used along with the 120 or so or so of its brother in. But in 1946 it was bundled up again, shipped from Washington to Cleveland, Ohio, for Cleveland, Ohio, for the 1936 annual convention of the American Legion. The American Legion of course was an organization of World War I primarily World War I veterans. And so we shipped this World War I veteran off to Cleveland to be in the American Legion convention prayed. This parade was seen by over half a million spectators. And the parade went on for 11 hours. The picture was taken on Euclid Avenue in Cleveland in front of the Ben Franklin five and 10-cent store and the department store to the right. And just to the right of the picture was another cart in which the public renter was riding. Up on the truck, sitting on the keyboard of the machine is the man who operated it in France, Cpl. Jimmy Carter and he came back and spent the rest of his career operating it here at GPO. Really wonderful picture.

And that is just a taster of what you will find in the book. If there are questions, I'm happy to try to answer them and I thank you you for your time today.

Thank you George. Great webinar. Those are some great stories you have to go along with the picture. Things I had no idea about. Any questions for George? We've got a little bit of time, so Ashley just put the satisfaction survey in the chat box so please fill that out. Any questions for George? I think you are so thorough you cover just about anything. Does a fantastic presentation. I really enjoyed it. I'm sure the audience did to.

One question. Where the photos being kept now?

They are all stored here at GPO. And all of them that are in the book and a bunch more as well. Are digitized and we are working to get them available online. A very small selection available on the website now. Not very beautifully organized and not very easy to use in the form so we

are hoping to get them up in a sharing service like Flickr or photo bucket or something like that. In the relatively near future.

David asked are those online photos in the public domain? 'S my sure, of course course. Yes, they are. Because they are -- they belong to us, and we are a governor -- government agency. We believe that some of them there may once have been eight -- cap rate issues with them because they were taken by contractors who were professional photographers in the city, but not we don't think there are many concerns about that now. Thank you for putting the history page up.

Ashley just put our history link there. Any other comments or questions?

There will be another book covering the 1980s to present.

Considering that all of them would look very much like like they I think the answer is no. It is and they find a variety in the kind of interest to get another whole book out of that period. I'm afraid.

Any other questions? A nice shout out here from Carolyn [Indiscernible]. There is a question about documenting activities no. We are indeed. We have on the staff a full-time photographer again. And we have had in the last seven or eight years, a sort of renaissance of photography around here. In part brought on by the fact that it so much easier than it used to be with digital photography. And in the last few years, we've had a real uptick in getting new equipment in the plant. So there's been a real big effort to document a lot of the new process coming in and a lot of the new equipment in the bindery coming in. So yes, there are a lot of photographs being taken out. And they are not all these grip and grin shots.

Some good shout outs here. Thank you. Any other questions for George? Or shallots. Okay, I'm going to go into my wrapup comments, but we we still have time for questions. Please, if you you have them, chat them in the chat box. First off I'd like to thank George for a great webinar. A lot of terrific information. I want to go out and I'm sure the audience does to, also like to thank my LSCM colleague Ashley Dahlen for her great work today as tech support person, keeping keeping everything running smoothly as she always does. And again, thank you audience. I hope you enjoyed this webinar is much as we did here. Don't forget our upcoming webinars. We have three more scheduled for May. The next one is this Thursday May 18 entitled centers for disease control, dated two is part one. And you receive notice of upcoming webinars when they are announced, news and events e-mail alert service at FDLP .gov. From the FDLP Academy webpage which is linked to in the index session -- section homepage you can view a calendar of upcoming webinars and upcoming events, access past past webinars from our webinar archive and you can link to a web form to volunteer to present and FDLP Academy webinar. I'm sure there are people in this audience who could do a great webinar on some topic related to the FDLP. Any other questions for George? Any last questions? I don't see any. So with that, I would like to thank everyone once again, and please come back to the FDLP Academy. Come back this Thursday for another webinar and have a great rest of the day. [Event Concluded]

| | | |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| Actions | Save as Text | Save as HTML |
|---------|--------------|--------------|