

# Oral History Access, or, What To Do With All These Interviews: A Case Study



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# My Pandemic Project:

Make our oral histories accessible

# Oral History is Excellent

- Captures social & contextual history
- Creates emotional resonance - patrons are astounded to hear their grandparents' voices
- Individuals can help capture history by conducting interviews or transcribing
- Builds ties with unrepresented communities
- Captures history of communities without documents

# History Matters

- If we want to be serious about expanding our collections to document the experiences of underrepresented communities, we need to prioritize our oral history collections.

**IMPORTANT**

# Lots of information on conducting oral history available

- Forms
- Selection of interviewees
- Interviewing style
- Equipment
- Transcribing
- Ethics of making available online

## Oral History in the Digital Age



The Library of Congress >> Research Centers



The American Folklife Center



**ORAL HISTORY  
ASSOCIATION**

# Most works on oral history end with a phrase similar to: “Deposit in your local archive for professional cataloging.”

Resulting in archives having:

- Piles of tapes or films
- Widely varying formats
- Often no information on the interviewer or even the interviewee
- Lack of release forms
- Old release forms, created before the internet

No information on:

- Where to host if you don't have server space or I.T. assistance
- Cataloging options
- Techniques of making available online
- Outreach activities





# Issues for Archivists who want to improve access

- Lack of information needed to catalog without listening to the multi-hour interview - no biographical information, no subject lists.
- Lack of paperwork authorizing release, or the form authorizing release before the internet made access so wide-spread, which creates ethical issues
- Bad habits of oral historians:
  - Edited transcriptions, removing racist or sexist comments or language or cursing, or even rewriting the content
  - Interviewers assuring comments would be “off the record”
- Lack of I.T. or budget support for digitizing, transcribing, or support
- Cataloging staff uncomfortable with the oral history being in multiple formats with a finding aid that may change over time



# Proactive tackling attempted

Made a guide to depositing oral histories, including:

- Sample release forms
- Cataloging information sheet to complete with name of interviewee and interviewer, date, time, bio note, interview note, etc.
- Example of a timestamped subject list and biographical note

Oral historians generally not interested in the nitty-gritty of cataloging!



# First Steps to Providing Access

- Digitization. Why first?
  - Huge array of different formats, each needing different equipment
  - Preservation of tapes is a challenge
  - Volunteers can be drafted once they're digitized
- Permission forms updated
  - Send updated form if the interviewee is still alive and the original form doesn't mention the internet
  - Send updated form to their children if the interviewee is deceased
- Ethical considerations.
  - There is lots of information on the ethical issues of making oral histories available online. After this decision-making process, you will end up with a subset of interviews you can make available online.

# Different Levels of Access

- Minimal:
  - Lists on website with links to interviews
- A little more:
  - Individual interview descriptions with biographical information and general subject with link
- Index of subjects talked about
- Full transcriptions
- OCLC / library catalog record of collection or individual interviews
  - Linking to webpage with links
- National/international collections
  - Linking to webpage with links

# Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives Plan (my pandemic project)

1. Digitize and secure updated release form (mostly completed)
2. Create finding aid on each interview
3. Upload to Internet Archive
4. Link from website
5. Catalog in OCLC
6. Add to local catalog
7. Outreach

## Created a Finding Aid on each Oral History

1. Permission/public domain note
2. Disclaimer
3. Biographical information
4. Scope note, describing what's chiefly discussed or not discussed
5. Keywords/subject headings
6. Timestamp of subjects discussed
7. Timestamped transcription with contextual footnotes and more information

# Uploaded to the Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/details/@bbcl-archives>

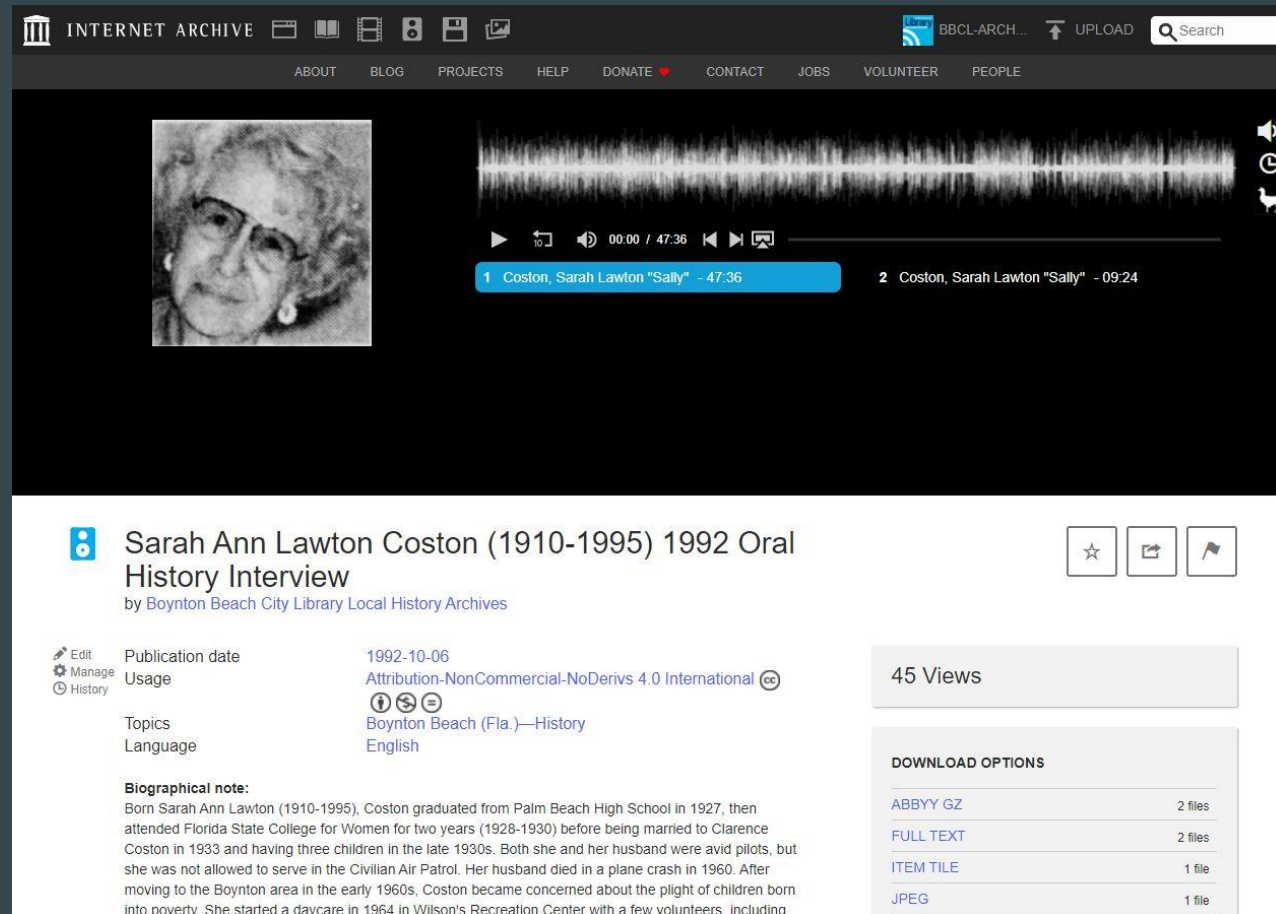
- Finding aid as an ADA compliant PDF and Word
- Photograph of subject
- Recording
- Cut and pasted sections into Internet Archive

The screenshot shows the BBCL-Archives profile page on the Internet Archive. The page features a navigation menu with options like ABOUT, BLOG, PROJECTS, HELP, DONATE, CONTACT, JOBS, VOLUNTEER, and PEOPLE. The main header includes the BBCL-Archives logo and a mission statement: "The mission of the Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives is to collect, preserve, and make accessible the heritage of the people of our region." Below the header, there are tabs for UPLOADS, POSTS, REVIEWS, COLLECTIONS, and WEB ARCHIVES. The main content area displays a grid of 52 uploads, each with a thumbnail image, a title, and a date. The uploads include oral histories and photographs of individuals such as Ann Thleman Barrett, Shirley Ann Metcalf Adams, Allen Lester Merritt, Hazel Lacey, Sarah Ann Lawton Coston, and Hazel Lacey McGregor. A search bar and filter options for Media Type (audio, texts, movies) and Year (2007, 1999, 1996, 1995, 1992, 1984) are visible on the left side of the page.

# Why Internet Archive?

1. No I.T. assistance needed
2. Storage space
3. International exposure and distribution

If you're not working at a major university with lots of server space and an I.T. staff, Internet Archive is an excellent choice.



INTERNET ARCHIVE

ABOUT BLOG PROJECTS HELP DONATE CONTACT JOBS VOLUNTEER PEOPLE

BBCL-ARCH... UPLOAD Search

1 Coston, Sarah Lawton "Sally" - 47:36 2 Coston, Sarah Lawton "Sally" - 09:24

## Sarah Ann Lawton Coston (1910-1995) 1992 Oral History Interview

by Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives

Edit Manage History

Publication date 1992-10-06  
Usage Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International  
Topics Boynton Beach (Fla.)—History  
Language English

**Biographical note:**  
Born Sarah Ann Lawton (1910-1995), Coston graduated from Palm Beach High School in 1927, then attended Florida State College for Women for two years (1928-1930) before being married to Clarence Coston in 1933 and having three children in the late 1930s. Both she and her husband were avid pilots, but she was not allowed to serve in the Civilian Air Patrol. Her husband died in a plane crash in 1960. After moving to the Boynton area in the early 1960s, Coston became concerned about the plight of children born into poverty. She started a daycare in 1964 in Wilson's Recreation Center with a few volunteers, including

45 Views

**DOWNLOAD OPTIONS**

ABBY GZ	2 files
FULL TEXT	2 files
ITEM TILE	1 file
JPEG	1 file

# Created entry on our website

- Created website
- Listed by name of interviewee
- Biographical information
- Photograph
- Interview date, interviewer, and subjects discussed
- Link to Internet Archive
- Take down request link to contact form

## Lee, Randolph Melvin (1920-2001)

### Lunsford, Arris Ozzie (1909-2003)

Arris Ozzie Lunsford (1909-2003) came to Boynton Beach in 1924 at age 15 with his family, including father J.J. Lunsford (1882-1952), mother Ida Garrett Lunsford (1880-1935), and several siblings. Lunsford worked as a carpenter, cleared land, and installed ditches for the Drainage District. He married Nellie Mae Lewis (1913-1987) in 1932 and they had five children.



**1992 Oral History Interview:** Interviewed by Caryn Neumann on 26 June 1992 for the Boynton Beach City Library Oral History Project. Topics discussed include Lunsford's family, including his parents, children, and wife; life in Boynton Beach during the 1930s, including pranks played on each other by local business owners and mayor H.D. Stevens; experiences during the 1928 hurricane, including losing their house, then being in the Boynton school when it collapsed, and then going to the Seaboard Depot; Boynton Beach during World War II, including working as civilian patrol and having to turn people away from the beach, German U-Boats being bombed, and several local residents who were of German heritage being arrested as spies; local moonshiners during prohibition; and seeing the Palm Beach County Sheriff's men ambush the Ashley gang. Listen to the interview (transcription available)

## McGregor, Albert Leslie (1908-1997)

The screenshot shows the website for the Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the City of Boynton Beach logo and links for Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Services, and Government. Below the navigation bar is the title "BOYNTON BEACH CITY LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES" and a sub-header "HOME / BOYNTON BEACH CITY LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES". A large black and white photograph of a group of people is featured. Below the photo is the mission statement: "The mission of the Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives is to collect, preserve, and make accessible the heritage of the people of our region." A section titled "SHARE YOUR COVID STORIES." contains six thumbnail images with labels: "Images", "Digitized Publications", "Collections", "Information & FAQ", "Research Help", and "Oral Histories". At the bottom right of this section is a "SHARE" button with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Email. The footer of the website features the City of Boynton Beach logo.



# Cataloged on OCLC

- Cataloged the streaming interview, not the finding aid or the other formats of the interview.

* WorldCat		Browse Options	Create Options	Show Options
040		FLV	eng	FLV
092		\$b		
049		FLVA		
100	1	Lunsford, Arris Ozzie, \$d 1909-2003, \$e interviewee		
245	1 0	Arris Ozzie Lunsford oral history interview, \$f 1992 June 26 / \$c conducted by Caryn Neumann.		
300		\$3 sound recordings: \$a 2 digital files		
306		003158 \$a 003158		
336		spoken word \$b spw \$2 rdacontent		
337		computer \$b c \$2 rdamedia		
338		online resource \$b cr \$2 rdacarrier		
500		Originally recorded on audiotape.		
518		Interview conducted by Caryn Neumann, for the Boynton Beach Oral History Project, 26 June 1992.		
520	2	Topics discussed include Lunsford's family, including his parents, children, and wife; life in Boynton Beach during the 1930s, including losing their house, then being in the Boynton school when it collapsed, and then going to the Seaboard Depot; Boynton Beach during World War II; several local residents who were of German heritage being arrested as spies; local moonshiners during prohibition; and seeing the Palm Beach		
545	0	Arris Ozzie Lunsford (1909-2003) Came to Boynton Beach in 1924 at age 15 with his family, including father J.J. Lunsford (1882-1952) for the Drainage District. He married Nellie Mae Lewis (1913-1987) in 1932 and they had five children.		
555	0	Finding aid available online.		
600	1 0	Lunsford, Arris Ozzie, \$d 1909-2003, \$v Interviews.		
650	0 0	Hurricane, 1928 \$v Personal narratives.		
650	0	<a href="#">World War, 1939-1945</a> †x <a href="#">War work</a> †z <a href="#">Florida</a> †z <a href="#">Boynton Beach</a> .		
650	0	<a href="#">World War, 1939-1945</a> †z <a href="#">Florida</a> †z <a href="#">Boynton Beach</a> .		
651	0	<a href="#">Boynton Beach (Fla.)</a> †x <a href="#">History</a> .		
650	7	War work. \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01355300		
651	7	Florida \$z Boynton Beach. \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01215455		
647	7	World War \$d (1939-1945) \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01180924		
648	7	1939-1945 \$2 fast		
655	7	Oral histories. \$2 aat		
655	7	History. \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01411628		
655	7	Interviews. \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01423832		
655	7	Personal narratives. \$2 fast \$0 (OCoLC)fst01423843		
700	1	Neumann, Caryn, \$e interviewer.		
710	2	Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives (Boynton Beach, Fla.)		
773	0 8	\$i Forms part of: \$a Boynton Beach City Library Oral History Project		
856	4 0	\$3 Interview and finding aid including transcription available at Internet Archive \$u <a href="https://archive.org/details/alunsford1992oralhistory">https://archive.org/details/alunsford1992oralhistory</a>		

# Downloaded to local Koha catalog

- Check display - your local catalog may not show all your fields
- Check URL link is functioning
- Added item

**Arris Ozzie Lunsford oral history interview, 1992 June 26 / conducted by Caryn Neumann.**

By: [Lunsford, Arris Ozzie, 1909-2003 \[interviewee\]](#) [Q](#)

Contributor(s): [Neumann, Caryn \[interviewer.\]](#) [Q](#) | [Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives \(Boynton Beach, Fla.\)](#) [Q](#)

Material type: [Mixed materials](#)

Description: 2 digital files

Content type: spoken word Media type: computer Carrier type: online resource

Subject(s): [Lunsford, Arris Ozzie, 1909-2003, -- Interviews](#) [Q](#) | [Hurricane, 1928 -- Personal narratives](#) [Q](#) | [World War, 1939-1945 -- Florida -- Boynton Beach](#) [Q](#) | [Boynton Beach \(Fla.\) -- History](#) [Q](#)

Genre/Form: [Oral histories.](#) [Q](#)

Online resources: [Interview and finding aid including transcription available at Internet Archive](#)

Forms part of: [Boynton Beach City Library Oral History Project](#)

Scope and content: Topics discussed include Lunsford's family, including his parents, children, and wife; life in Boynton Beach during the 1930s, including owning and mayor H.D. Stevens; experiences during the 1928 hurricane, including losing their house, then being in the Boynton school when it collapsed during World War II, including working as civilian patrol and having to turn people away from the beach, German U-Boats being bombed, and being arrested as spies; local moonshiners during prohibition; and seeing the Palm Beach County Sheriff's men ambush the Ashley gang.

★★★★★ Average rating: 0.0 (0 votes)

[Holdings \( 1 \)](#) [Title notes \( 5 \)](#) [Images](#)

Originally recorded on audiotape.

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Finding aid available online.

# Outreach

- Displays, digital and physical
- Sharing to other organizations
- Social media through the library social media manager

## Sarah Ann Lawton Coston (1910-1995) An Oral History

From the Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives  
Edited for publication by Lisa M. Steinhauer



Sarah Ann Lawton Coston waving from a Seabee, 1940. Courtesy HSPBC.

Note: Oral history cannot be depended on for complete accuracy, based as it is on complex human memory and communication of that memory, which varies due to factors such as genetics, social culture, gender, and education. Nevertheless, oral history is a valuable tool in historical study. The HSPBC has noted any known inaccuracies in footnotes.

### Introduction

Born Sarah Ann Lawton, "Sally" graduated from Palm Beach High School, attended Florida State College for Women, and married Clarence Coston. Both she and her husband were avid pilots. After moving to the Boynton area in the early 1960s, Coston became concerned about children born into poverty and started a daycare center. It became the model Head Start program for Palm Beach County. Sally Coston's views, like all those in history, should be considered in the context of the era.

### THE INTERVIEW

Interviewer: Caryn Neumann, writer, Boynton Beach City Library,  
for the Boynton Beach City Library Oral History Project

**Interviewer:** Today is August 6, 1992. I am Caryn Neumann. This interview is being conducted at Mrs. Coston's home at 10802½ Kingston Drive (in Lake Osborne area of Lantana, Florida).

**Interviewer:** What is your full name?

**Coston:** Sarah Lawton Coston. They called me "Sally" all the time.

**Interviewer:** When is your date of birth?

**Coston:** December 17th, 1910.

**Interviewer:** Where were you born?

**Coston:** Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Interviewer:** Where did you grow up?

**Coston:** I went to boarding school in Washington, DC, and then on to another boarding school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and then I came down here [where] I was 15 and went to Palm Beach High School.

**Interviewer:** What line of work was your father [in]?

**Coston:** He was a civil engineer.

**Interviewer:** Was he doing work down here?

**Coston:** Well, at that time, there was that real estate boom down here and he had some interest in real estate. He was in back and forth.

**Interviewer:** You graduated from—

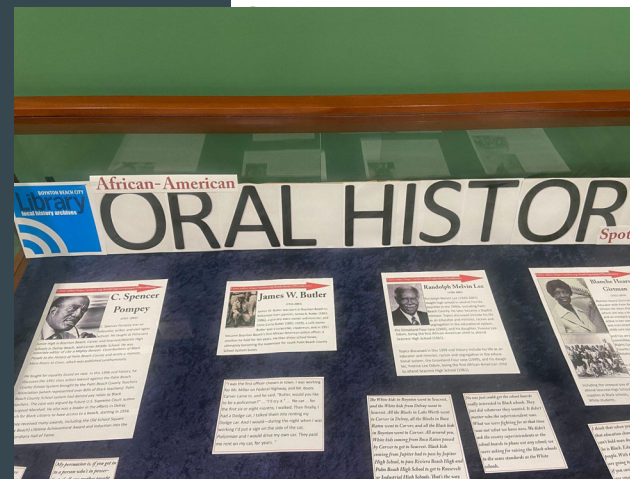
**Coston:** Palm Beach High in 1927.

**Interviewer:** What did you do upon graduation?

**Coston:** I went to Florida State College for Women for two years—no, I was 16 when I graduated, he thought I was too young to go to college. So, he sent me to a Catholic—they used to call them—kind of prep school. It's a fifth year finishing school kind of thing. And then I went two years to Tallahassee. And then that was the Depression years, and we had three in college at that time, so I couldn't go back. I came back down here with my mother, and then I met my husband.

**Interviewer:** What year were you married?

**Coston:** 1933, right in the bottom of the Depression. Hate to think we didn't even have any money. I mean any money. We had \$40, and the ring was



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