

**Brief Overview of the Significance of SCAR30, from the University of South  
Carolina Archives  
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The footage in “SCAR30” presents difficulties from an archival perspective. Chief among them is the seeming lack of connective tissue between the various scenes. The reel contains at least four segments spliced together, each likely from different years. The subjects themselves are no less disparate. One segment depicts fires in a forest and an auto parts store, another shows college students on campus, and another still contains shots of families on a lakeside beach. Our research ultimately turned up quite a bit of contextual information for many of these scenes. What the footage lacks in background is made up for in the period signifiers it contains.

We reached out to Lydia Pappas, the Interim Director at the University of South Carolina’s Research Collections, regarding the material conditions of this footage. She responded with some additional information. The footage evidently arrived at the University of South Carolina archives without any paperwork, meaning that we had few leads going in; the additional description provided by Lydia was:

*“Forest fire with men stoking flames? large logs with cables moving logs, sawmill scenes with men at work sawing logs - A man sawing a tree, equipment are shown, wood piled up, forest fire; Scenes include: a kayak/canoe on a lake with a sail, a boatshed with a fire raging behind the shed, man fights flames with hose, a sign on a warehouse for ‘US Royal Tires’ and fire behind, (possibly Camden - Fire at Speaks Oil Co.? 2 people were killed); beach scenes by a lake, a man and a woman picking up flowers around a lake; a small airplane flying; a woman walking on a beach; two women, one wearing swimsuit and the other with dress sitting on a stone, people swimming; Grand ceremony with soldiers and marines and honor guard, civilians attending, men marching on parade, awards/cups given out, then a group of young people outside a large building (church?), a man in a suit near an old car, group of people in front of large building (college?), a squirrel on a bench and more groups of people out walking, sitting on the grass and listening to a brass band give a concert?”*

Additionally, the title of the footage is “Florence Country Forest Fire and Lumber Mill,” and it has the words “Monarch Studios” written on the leader. The cameraman is indicated as a Boyd Cummings. Our attempts to identify Monarch Studios or Boyd Cummings stalled out; it seems the former no longer exists and the latter may not have been local to the area. The only potential name that came up was Alethia Boyd Cummings, a Black woman who lived in the area around the time. However, given that the University of South Carolina was segregated until 1963, it seems unlikely that she was the one who shot the footage on its campus in 1950. The footage is shot on a 400-foot reel of color 16mm film; stock codes are Kodachrome triangle circle, square plus, plus square and triangle plus. Based on the content of the footage itself, we believe this indicates the years 1946, 1950, 1952, and 1955.

The most definite time and place we were able to divine is early May of 1950 on the University of South Carolina campus. In the background of several shots, a poster advertising an SC - Clemson baseball game on May 5th, 1950 can be seen. This correlates to at least one of the Kodachrome stock codes. However, a variety of clips are shown beforehand, and assigning them a particular time, place, and context was nearly impossible given their vague nature. We see, among other things, forest fires, families relaxing at a lake, and workers at a lumber mill.

The fire footage is seemingly contradictory: we see clips of people stoking the flames in what appears to be a controlled burn, as well as what appears to be people attempting to put the fires out. Certain shots are in a forest, while others show a large warehouse on fire behind a sign for a U.S. Royal Tires auto parts store. The spatial and temporal vagueness of this footage makes it difficult to elaborate upon - aside from the title indicating that it took place in Florence County, there isn't much to go on. According to the South Carolina Forestry Commission, 1950 marks

the calendar year with the most acreage burned in the state, with wildfires burning 229,908 acres of forest.<sup>1</sup>

The lumber mill footage is similarly difficult to parse, though, technologically, it aligns with the general post-1930s progression of lumber technology in South Carolina. From the official state website: “Most early mills produced boards by means of large circular saws. Logs were secured on a movable platform (“carriage”) and fed into the rotating saw. The first pass removed a slice of bark and wood (“slab”) from the side of the log; the log was then turned a quarter-turn on the carriage and another slice was taken. Four trips through the saw would yield a square-sided cant which could then be sawed into boards.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, we see logs being loaded into trucks with hydraulic cranes, another component of 1950s mills. Worth mentioning as well is the fact that the workforce seems to be racially integrated; hard labor was likely the only area in which late 1940s/early 1950s South Carolina was afforded integration.)

The gas station fire is particularly interesting. Since there are few identifiers in the footage itself that can reliably place/date it, I took the information provided in the description - of it (possibly) being footage of the Speaks Oil Company fire in Camden - at face value. This provoked a rabbit-hole digression that remains partially unresolved. Going off Camden’s historical timeline on the official city website, the Speaks Oil Co. fire took place on August 13th, 1955 (which correctly corresponds to the stock codes), and killed two people: Glenn Speaks and J.T. Haynes.<sup>3</sup> Speaks was the owner of the company, which was passed on to his son, John Robert Speaks; Haynes’ situation is a bit hazier. In addition to the Camden timeline, we found a John Thomas Haynes on the South Carolina government’s online death index, dated August

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.state.sc.us/forest/firesign.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.sc.us/forest/scindust.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cityofcamden.org/government/history/historical-timeline>

13th, 1955.<sup>4</sup> But we *also* found an obituary for John Thomas Haynes that lists his death as being on March 23rd, 2012. We'd assume it was just a different J.T. Haynes, except for the fact that his obituary notes that he's a "survivor of the Speaks Oil Company fire in 1955."<sup>5</sup> Efforts to find contact information for the Speaks and Haynes families were fruitless, and though Speaks Oil Co. has since been rebuilt, it did not respond to any of our numerous calls. Whether the footage depicts the fire in question remains unclear, but an odd contradiction nonetheless.

The small-scale military parade and awards ceremony depicted are a formation of the University of South Carolina's Navy R.O.T.C. (N.R.O.T.C.). The organization enrolls prospective soldiers into a pre-combat, pre-enlistment training program where they learn the disciplinary, cultural, and technical aspects of life in a military unit. This Navy-specific organization grew in popularity post-World War Two, when many teens and young adults who were too young to fight in the Great War were able to emulate civic responsibility—accounting for the sudden boom in membership throughout the early, pre-Korean War 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the university footage, we see teenagers and college students donning white ribbons like prize winning hogs. Jokes aside, it is not immediately clear from the footage what this stylish flair signifies but upon further research we discovered that the white ribbon was a symbol of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, an anti-alcohol, anti-drug, coalition that was a notable fixture in many small towns. However, this organization was strictly defined by gender lines, and men were explicitly prohibited from associating with the group. As many of the adorned students are male, it is unlikely that the group in the footage is a branch of the WCTU itself. Researching deeper into the case, however, we discovered that certain offshoots of the WCTU were, in fact, co-ed.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/vitalrecords/deathindexes/vrlist.aspx?c=Haynes>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/104755232/john-thomas-haynes>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/artsandsciences/rotc/navy/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/rotc/navy/index.php)

The Youth Temperance Council is our best projection on what this organization could be; the ribbons are affixed in the same manner, the ribbons are identical in style, and the age range seems properly aligned with the children we see in the footage; high school and early college-aged. Furthermore, membership of the YTC was at its highest in 1950 and was predominately a community found in southern, conservative states.<sup>7</sup> Without specific detail or clearer imagery of the ribbon's text, it is impossible to be 100% sure of the exact origin, but given textual and contextual evidence, we all believe this to be a fair assessment. We see from a sign on the window a poster for the May 5th, 1950 SC/Clemson baseball game.

This baseball game is a somewhat legendary one for Clemson. Former Clemson football star Fred Knoebel engaged in the second game of his transition to baseball. Knoebel hit for the cycle, the first for a Tiger, at South Carolina. "He walked in the first, tripled in the second, singled in the fourth and hit a home run in the fifth. Knoebel also doubled in the seventh and was hit-by-pitch in the eighth. Clemson won the game 14-5." He was ranked the 49th greatest Clemson athlete by Fansided Magazine and was a two-time inductee to the Clemson Hall of Fame (once for baseball, another for football)<sup>8</sup>.

As opposed to these earlier predictions, there is more concrete evidence that the fraternity and sorority depicted working the cook-out are Kappa Sigma Kappa and Kappa Delta, respectively; the former is marked by distinctive red armbands sporting their Greek call letters, while the latter is marked by red roses pinned to the chest. Kappa Sigma Kappa, a once-popular military frat, disbanded in 1992 as a greater call for the separation between the Military-Industrial-Complex and panhellenic culture became prominent.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://piedmontvahistory.org/archives14/index.php/items/show/378>

<sup>8</sup> <https://rubbingtherock.com/2019/06/10/clemson-football-greatest-50-tigers-time/2/>

Various sequences from the footage - including the lake scenes, the couple picking flowers, and the small plane taking off - still elude us. The vagueness of these sequences, combined with the order of the stock codes being largely unclear, makes them especially opaque. There are not enough details in any of them to properly gauge what is being shown; the lake could be any lake, the plane lacks any immediately identifiable features, etc. The best we can do is assume that this all takes place in South Carolina.

The good news about SCAR30 from an archival perspective is that the footage seems to be in remarkably good condition. The images are clear, and there is very little visible damage to speak of. Aside from some scratches on certain shots of the fires, SCAR30 has been quite well maintained. If the reel is kept in cool and dry conditions, its lifespan should be extended even further.

The more complicated question is the context with which SCAR30 should be archived. As Lydia notes in her email, the lack of information associated with it makes it impossible to catalogue in the University of South Carolina Home Movies collection, meaning it currently rests unceremoniously in General Collections. Still, it's not without value. The shots of the U of SC campus in 1950 will be of obvious historical interest to the university. The current incarnation of their N.R.O.T.C. chapter may be able to identify the officers shown and the ceremony they were taking part in. The shots of the fires, meanwhile, offer visual illustration of a historic year for South Carolina fires. The other scenes are too vague to conclusively contextualize. However, this is a good starting point for archival work on the reel. If more is discovered about the specific subjects depicted therein, such as the Speaks Oil Co. victims and the identity of Boyd Cummings, archiving it in the Home Movies collection may eventually be feasible.

## Additional Works Cited

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Florence, Florence County, South Carolina. Sanborn Map Company, Jun, 1884. Map. [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08138\\_001/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08138_001/).