

## **Photo Archives Acquires Jeffcoat Photos**

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The Tampa Tribune

Published: August 20, 2008

PLANT CITY - Longtime local photographer Gladys Jeffcoat has agreed to sell thousands of photos she took and acquired throughout the years to the Plant City Photo Archives.

Jeffcoat, who retired in 1990, was the official photographer for Plant City High School and the Florida Strawberry Festival. She also took photos for The Plant City Courier and owned a photo studio.

She said she is transferring ownership to the archives to preserve the photographs of people, places and events she took for generations.

"Most of all she wants to make the photographs available to the public," photo archives Executive Director Gil Gott said. "We believe there are around 30,000 photos in the collection. Many of them are historic. All of them are a part of the local history."

Jeffcoat, 83, Plant City born and raised, said she is excited about her deal with the photo archives. She declined to say how much money was involved in the sale.

"It wasn't much," Jeffcoat said. "What is most important is that these photos will be saved down through the years and made available for viewing by the general public."

Jeffcoat's professional career dates to about 1941, when she was a 16-year-old student at Plant City High School. She convinced Myrtle Young, who ran the Hollywood Studio on Reynolds Street, to hire her for \$1 per week.

Within a few years, Jeffcoat had learned the photography business from the ground up and was operating a shop of her own.

Jeffcoat took photos of many Plant City events, including family reunions, high school events, the strawberry festival and more.

"Part of the collection includes photos Gladys acquired when she took ownership of operating studios," Gott said. "Some of those photos go back to the end of the 1800s. In all, there are about 20 boxes of material. We will digitally scan each photo and categorize each one. It will take years to get them into the system."

The archives was created by businessman Ed Verner in 2000, when he purchased 20,000 photographic prints from the estate of Bill Friend, another prolific local photographer. Today the nonprofit organization has more than 50,000 prints in its system.

Jeffcoat's portion will keep the mostly volunteer staff busy for some time to come, Gott said.

The photo archives is at 119 N. Collins St.