

## **The Thigpen Photography Archive Documenting the History of Mobile, Alabama, and the American Southeast, 1947-2020**

The Thigpen Photography Archive is a large and diverse collection of original and unique photographic negatives and digital images documenting the history of Mobile, Alabama, and the Southeastern United States over seven decades, 1947-2020. Totalling approximately 1.575 million images, the photographs were produced and archived by Thigpen Photography, Inc., one of the South's leading commercial photography studios, under the ownership and direction of founder Roy Thigpen and his son Alec Thigpen.

Roy Thigpen perfected his skill and reputation as an eminent photographer during World War II, serving in the United States Navy, 1942-1945. Receiving training in Navy photography schools, he joined the precision aerial mapping unit and served on the U.S.S. *Midway*. After the war, he worked as a photographer and studio manager with the Nicholas Johnston Studio and the Gabriel Moulin Studio in San Francisco.

Roy Thigpen founded Thigpen Photography, Inc., in 1947 and located his studio at 163 State Street in Mobile. He soon became a successful and prolific photographer. He was a lifelong member of the Professional Photographers of America (PPA) and served as a member of the PPA National Council for twelve years. His photographs were widely featured in exhibits, including the Kodak Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York and on a world tour by the United States Information Service. His photographs were also published in national magazines and commercial publications. In 1965 the PPA recognized Roy Thigpen by awarding him a Master of Photography degree and medal for his "superior photographic skills demonstrated through PPA's International Photographic Competition, advanced education, and service to the industry."

In 1966 the Library of Congress Historic Buildings Survey selected Roy Thigpen to work with the City of Mobile and local historical agencies to photograph important historic buildings, houses, and other structures for documentation and preservation purposes. He also served as president of the Mississippi-Alabama Professional Photographers Association, and he became a valued mentor to young photographers with the Mobile Professional Photographers Guild and the American Society of Photographers.

Roy Thigpen also often judged regional photography exhibits and lectured at state, regional, and national professional conventions. Moreover, he gave numerous public presentations, educating interested citizens about the challenges and rewards of professional photography. Beyond the technical expertise and the finest equipment required, he emphasized a photographer's creativity and dedication. A newspaper journalist noted, "Thigpen stressed that the mind and the eye of the photographer are far more important than the camera and supplementary equipment." Throughout his career, he was also one of Mobile's most prominent civic leaders.

As a result, in 1969 the PPA awarded Roy Thigpen the prestigious Photographic Craftsman degree for “service as orator, author, or mentor,” demonstrating that he had “gone beyond the creation of images and dedicated [his] time to move the industry forward and encourage education.”

In 1983 Roy Thigpen conveyed Thigpen Photography, Inc., to his son, Alec Thigpen, who continued and enhanced the business’s reputation in providing high quality photography services. Having worked as an assistant in all aspects of the business and learning the art and practice of photography from his father, Alec Thigpen became a licensed commercial pilot in order to do aerial photography. Using the most advanced equipment and innovative skill, he specialized in precision aerial photography.

In 1986 Alec Thigpen moved the business to a new custom-designed full-service studio at 2105 Vivian Drive in Mobile. Employing as many as three photographers on staff, he strengthened and expanded the studio’s range of specialties in the areas of architectural, advertising, catalog, food and other products, commercial, large scale industrial, and offshore photography, as well as interior, portrait, wedding, news events, government and municipal projects, along with aerial photography.

The Thigpen Photography Archive comprises a total of approximately 1.575 million images, divided into two subcollections: approximately 1.195 million photographic negatives produced between 1947 and the early 2000s; and approximately 380,000 digital images produced between 2002 and 2020.

Thigpen Photography, Inc., produced photographs for more than 20,000 customers, many of whom requested multiple jobs and assignments. Along with local individuals, private and civic groups, recreational activities, law firms, and commercial businesses, the most important and frequent customers were the following regional, national, and international corporate, industrial, transportation, and governmental organizations and corporate operations, which often called for precision aerial photography:

- A&M Forestry
- Aaron Oil Company
- Adams Mark Hotel
- Addis Advertising
- AIG Baker
- Akzo Nobel Industrial Plant
- Alabama Bankers Association
- Alabama By-Products Corporation
- Alabama Department of Conservation
- Alabama Drydock and Shipbuilding

Alabama State Highway Department  
Alabama State Port Authority  
Alabama Power Company  
Alabama State Docks Department  
Alcoa Steam Ship Company  
All Southern Advertising  
Allied Paper Company  
Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company  
Allright Mobile Company  
Allstate Insurance Company  
Aluminum Company of America  
American Cyanimid Corporation  
American General Life Insurance  
American National Bank  
American Red Cross  
Arlington Properties, Inc.  
Atlantic Marine Construction Company  
ATOCHEM North America  
Austal USA

B-R Dredging Company  
BAE Systems, Inc.  
Bagby Elevator Company  
Baggett Transportation Company  
Baker Properties, Inc.  
Barney and Patrick Advertising, Inc.  
Bass Pro Shops, Inc.  
Bay Towing and Dredging Company  
Beck Construction Company  
Bellwether Group  
Bender Shipbuilding Company  
Bender Welding and Machine Works  
Berg and Diehl, Inc.  
Berkley-Small Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Bernard and Byrd Construction Company  
Bethlehem Steel Company  
Better Business Bureau  
Big Three Motors, Inc.  
Bird Johnson Propellers, Inc.  
Birmingham Steel Corporation  
BLB Mobile Paint Company  
Blackwell Nurseries

Blount Brothers Construction Company  
Boise Cascade, Inc.  
Boy Scouts of America  
Braco Industries  
Broadmoor Group Construction, Inc.  
Brown and Brown Insurance Company  
Brown and Root Construction Company  
Bullard Oldsmobile, Inc.  
Burford Equipment Company  
Burger King Corporation  
Butler Manufacturing Company

Camp and Company  
Capital Airlines, Inc.  
Case Construction Company  
Ceco Steel Products, Inc.  
Champion International  
Chevron Asphalt Company  
Chevron Oil USA  
Chiles Drilling Company  
Chiles Offshore Corporation  
China Doll Rice, Inc.  
Ciba Geigy, Inc.  
Ciba Specialty Chemical Corporation  
Cinema Distributors of America  
Coastal Ford, Inc.  
Coca Cola Bottling Company, Inc.  
Conlan Company  
Consolidated Commercial Contractors  
Container Corporation of America  
Continental Oil Company  
Converse and Company  
Cooper Marine and Timberlands, Inc.  
Cooper Stevedoring Company  
Cordo Chemical Company  
Country Club of Mobile  
Courtaulds Fibers North America, Inc.  
Courtney Advertising Agency  
Cowan-Irvine Company, Inc.  
Crawford and Company  
Crystal Ice Company  
Cummings and Atkinson, Inc.

Cummings and White-Spinner Properties  
Cunningham and Foley, Inc.  
Cunningham, Bounds, and Byrd, LLC  
Cypress Equities, Inc.  
Cytec Industries, Inc.

Dauphin Way Baptist Church  
Davidson, Falls and Company  
Davis Construction and Erectors Company  
Dawson Construction Company  
Day Communications, Inc.  
Dearborn Chemical Company  
Decker Corporation  
Degussa Corporation  
Delchamps Stores, Inc.  
Delta Construction Company  
Demeranville, Carter and Sturges Advertising  
Denson Reed Marketing  
Devan Motor Company  
Diamond-Shamrock Oil Corporation  
Diamondhead Corporation  
Ditmars, Demeranville and Gray  
Dixie Machine Works and Sales  
Doctors Hospital  
Dodd Nursery, Inc.  
Dodson, Craddock and Born Advertising  
Donhart Sales Company  
Dow Chemical Company  
Drummond Coal Sales, Inc.  
Duke Energy Corporation

E. C. Management Company  
Eagle Chemical Company  
Eastern Air Lines  
Economy Electric Company  
Employers Group Insurance Company  
EnergySouth, Inc.  
Entertainer Dinner Theater  
Equipment Sales Company  
Equitable Life Assurance Company  
Ernest Construction Company  
Ernest-Martin Construction Company

Escambia Chemical Company  
Ewin Engineering Corporation  
Exchange Club of Mobile  
Exeter Drilling Company  
Exxon Mobil Corporation  
Exxon Oil Company USA

Fairchild Publications  
Fairhope Title Company  
Farm Bureau Insurance Company  
Federal Aviation Agency (FAA)  
Federal Barge Lines  
Ferguson Industrial Engineers and Builders  
Ferro Corporation  
Film Productions  
First American Life Insurance Company  
First Baptist Church  
First Chemical Company  
First Commercial Bank  
First Federal Savings and Loan  
First National Bank  
Flowerwood Nursery  
Folmar and Associates Agency  
Foreman and Foreman  
Foreman and Weller  
Friede Goldman International  
Friend and Associates Bread Packages  
Fuller Construction Company

Gas Appliance, Inc.  
Gauld Equipment, Inc.  
Geigy Chemical Company  
General Adjustment Bureau  
General Electric Corporation  
General Motors Corporation  
Georgie Pacific Corporation  
Geographic Solutions, Inc.  
Getty Oil Company  
GHK Development, Inc.  
Gill Printing Company  
Gilley Timberlands, Inc.  
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company

Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO)  
Grand Hotel  
Gray and Company Construction  
Great Southern Life Insurance Company  
Greater Gulf States Fair  
Guaranty Savings and Loan  
Gulf Coast Realty Company  
Gulf Coast Truck and Equipment Company  
Gulf Electric Company  
Gulf Lumber Company  
Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad  
Gulf Oil Corporation  
Gulf Oil Refining Company  
Gulf States Engraving Company  
Guthans Engineering Company

Haiman Realty Company  
Halliburton Services, Inc.  
Hamilton Brothers  
Hamilton, Denniston, Butler and Reddick  
Hand, Arendall and Bledsoe  
Hardy Motor Company  
Harris Advertising Agency  
Harrison Brothers  
Harte, John J., and Company  
Head, Inc.  
Heggeman Realty Company  
Higgison, Peyton, and Company  
Historic Mobile Development Commission  
Historic Mobile Preservation Society  
H/M Partners, Inc.  
H.O. Weaver and Sons, Inc.  
Hoar Construction, Inc.  
Home Savings and Loan Association  
Howell, Johnston, and Landford  
Huls America, Inc.  
Humble Oil Company  
Hume and Company Agency  
Hutchison, Moore and Rauch, Inc.

I.B.M. Corporation  
Ideal Cement Company

Illinois, Central Gulf Railroad  
Independent Grocery Association  
Ingalls Shipbuilding, Inc.  
Inge, Twitty, Armbrecht and Jackson  
International Paper Company  
Interstate Printing Company  
Ipsco Steel, Inc.

J. B. Construction Company  
Jesco, Inc.  
Joe Jefferson Players  
Johnstone, Adams, May, Howard and Hill  
Johnstone, Harry Inge, Agency  
Jordan Industries  
Junior Miss America Pageant  
Just Dry Publishing Company

Kaiser Aluminum Corporation  
Kalman, Rogers and Smith  
Kelley, Mary, Weddings  
Ketchum, McLeod and Grove  
Kimberly Clark, Inc.  
Kittrell Milling Corporation  
Kraft Foods

Ladner and Company  
Lapeyrouse Grain Corporation  
Lewis, J. H., Advertising Agency  
Liberty Mutual Insurance  
Life and Casualty Insurance Company  
Lockwood Greene Engineering, Inc.  
Louisville and Nashville Railroad  
Lowder Construction Company  
Loyal American Life Insurance Company

Maisel-Malkove and Company, Inc.  
March of Dimes  
Marion Oil Corporation  
Marketing Concepts, Inc.  
Marriott Corporation  
Marschalk and Pratt  
Martin Builders, Inc.



Marx Realtors, Inc.  
Mason Communications  
McDevitt and Street  
McDonalds Corporation  
McKenzie Industries  
McNeil Specialty Products, Inc.  
McPhillips Manufacturing, Inc.  
Medical Society of Alabama  
Medical Society of Mobile County, Alabama  
Merchants National Bank of Mobile  
Metcalf and Company  
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company  
Midstream Fuel, Inc.  
Miller Brewing Company  
Mississippi Power Company  
Mitchell Corporation  
Mobil Oil Corporation  
Mobile Aerospace, Inc.  
Mobile Airport Authority  
Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce  
Mobile City Bus Lines  
Mobile City Planning Commission  
Mobile Civic Ballet  
Mobile College  
Mobile Country Club  
Mobile County Health Department  
Mobile Dodge  
Mobile Fixture and Equipment  
Mobile Air Service  
Mobile Bar Pilots Association  
Mobile Elevator and Equipment Company  
Mobile Gas Company  
Mobile General Hospital  
Mobile Infirmary Hospital  
Mobile Junior Chamber of Commerce  
Mobile Junior League  
Mobile Museum of Art  
Mobile Paint Company  
Mobile Plastic Company  
Mobile Public Library  
Mobile Pully and Machine Works  
Mobile River Sawmill

Mobile Ship Repair  
Mobile Shipbuilding, Inc.  
Mobile Steel Company  
Mobile Towing and Wrecking Company  
Modern Industries, Inc.  
Monsanto Chemical Company  
Moore Management, Inc.  
Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company  
Mutual Construction Company

Nall Printing Company  
National Airlines  
National Floor Products  
National Food Stores  
National Gypsum Company  
Nationwide Insurance Company  
Newman, William E., Company

Occidental Chemical Corporation  
Olen Company  
Olin Chemical Corporation  
Oppenheimer Company  
Otis Elevator Company  
Overseas Hardwood, Inc.

Palmer and Baker Engineers  
Pascoe Steel Company  
Peyton-Higginson Company  
Pillians Law Firm  
Pizza Hut, Inc.  
Professional Forestry Services, Inc.  
Providence Hospital  
Providence School of Nursing  
Prudential Cooper, Inc.  
Prudential Life Insurance Company  
Pure Oil Corporation

Racon, Inc.  
Radcliffe Gravel Company  
Rankin Publishing Company  
Remington Rand  
R. H. Industries, Inc.

Roberts Brothers, Inc.  
Rollings, Inc.  
Rotary Club International of Mobile  
Royal Indemnity Company

SAAD Development, Inc.  
SAAD Realty Group  
Salvation Army  
Schlitz Brewing Company  
Scott Bridge Company, Inc.  
Scott Paper Company  
Sears Roebuck and Company  
Security Carton Company  
Senior Bowl Association  
Seventh Day Adventist Church  
Shell Chemical Company  
Shell Oil Company  
Sizeler Real Estate of Alabama  
Smith, Hand, Arrendall, and Bledsoe  
Smith Lumber Company  
South Central Bell  
South Coast Engineers  
Southeastern Natural Resources  
Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company  
Southern Bottling Company  
Southern Furniture Manufacturing Company  
Southern Industries  
Southern Lithographing Company  
Southern Marine Services  
Southern Oyster Shell Milling Company  
Southern Pine and Hardwood Lumber Company  
Southern Pine Construction Company  
Southern Railroad System  
Southland Nursery  
Spring Hill College  
SSAB Alabama, Inc.  
St. Louis Motors  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
St. Regis Paper Company  
Standard Furniture Company  
Standard Oil Company  
State Farm Insurance Company

States Marine Isthmian Agency  
Stauffer Chemical Company  
Steele Motor Company  
Stillwell Industries  
Stone and Gray  
Stone Container Company  
Stone-Mann Paper Company  
Strachan Shipping Lines  
Stran Steel Corporation  
Sunbelt Creative Services, Inc.  
Swift and Company

Taylor-Wharton, Inc.  
Teamsters Union  
Teledyne-Continental, Inc.  
Texaco Oil, Inc.  
Thompson Engineering, Inc.  
Thyssen Krup Steel Corporation USA  
Timbes and Yeager Advertising Agency  
Title Insurance Company  
Tonsmeier Construction Company  
Trailways, Inc.  
Transit Casualty Company  
Travelers Insurance Company  
Trawick Contractors, Inc.  
Treadwell Ford Company  
Triangle Refineries  
Turner, Onderdonk, Kimbrough, and How PA

Underwood Buildings  
Underwood Supply Company  
Union Carbide Corporation  
Union Pacific Railroad  
United Fidelity Guaranty Company  
United Fruit Company  
United Fund  
United Gas Pipeline Company  
United Oil Company  
United States Casualty Insurance Company  
United States Coast Guard  
United States National Park Service  
United States Plywood Corporation

United States Rubber Company  
University of South Alabama  
University of South Alabama Medical Center  
USS Alabama Commission

Van Antwerp Company  
Virginia Chemicals, Inc.  
Volkert, David and Associates  
Volkert Engineering

WALA Fox Television  
Warner and Todd Company  
Warranty Corporation  
Warrior and Gulf Navigation Company  
Warrior-Tombigbee Development Association  
Waterman Steamship Company  
Whatley Communications, Inc.  
Waukehsa Motor Company  
Westinghouse Electric Corporation  
White-Spunner and Associates  
WKRG Television  
Williams Brothers Realty Company  
Winn-Dixie Groceries  
Winter and Ellis Company  
WKAB Television  
Wolf Ridge Plastics Corporation  
Woolpert Consultants  
World Omni Leasing, Inc.  
World Plastics, Inc.  
Xerox Corporation  
Youngblood-Marx Company