



## **Space, Memory, and Photography: A Cross Disciplinary Approach to Analyzing Mid-Century Domestic Life in Florida**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Oral history, when combined with other disciplines like Sociology, Architecture, Anthropology, and Photography, can uncover often-neglected elements of our past leading to breakthroughs in preservation projects. Oral history works with other disciplines (i.e. photography and studies of domestic space) to help us understand the layers of memory and history. This article aims to demonstrate how a methodological approach can coalesce three different disciplines—photography, oral history, and domestic space—to provide a unique, more intimate narrative of the use of the domestic spaces of historically unknown individuals in the 1950s. Usually, architectural historians present information visually through drawings, photographs, books, and other forms of written sources. Rarely do architectural historians use oral narratives in their works. For this reason, readers who have not really considered architectural and oral history within the same context will be interested to learn about this cross-disciplinary approach. Using a case study of one family's personal photo albums, their elicite memories, and their house, this article employs what I have termed a tripod methodology to examine the century-old home of the Eaton Family, long-time residents of the historic Duck Pond community in Gainesville, Florida. Although this paper features only one model, the tripod approach can go in many directions as needed for future research areas like preservation, historical, and anthropological studies, etc. This study serves as an example of how this methodology helps us better understand the 1950s and 60s domestic life in Florida by closely examining one historic home—the Eaton House.

**Keywords:** Cross-disciplinary approach, mid-century domestic life in Florida, oral history methodology, oral narratives.

### **1.Introduction**

Within the broader world of social sciences and architecture, academics have become more proficient in the use of photography, architectural space, and narrative analysis to form a better understanding of architectural history and oral history. In the case of this study I have employed a cross-disciplinary approach to my project in an attempt to obtain a deeper understanding of domestic space in a historic neighborhood through the mid-century. My approach to this case study began with finding a family living in a historic home located in a historic neighborhood. The family has owned the home for many decades and has seen a great deal of changes within the community since the 1950s and 60s. After finding this family, my interviewing strategy highlighted the use of three areas: oral history, photography from personal albums taken within the home, and domestic space. This article combines analysis of the physical space of the house, personal photography, and the oral history methodology to explore the home of the Eaton Family, residents of the Duck Pond community in Gainesville, Florida.

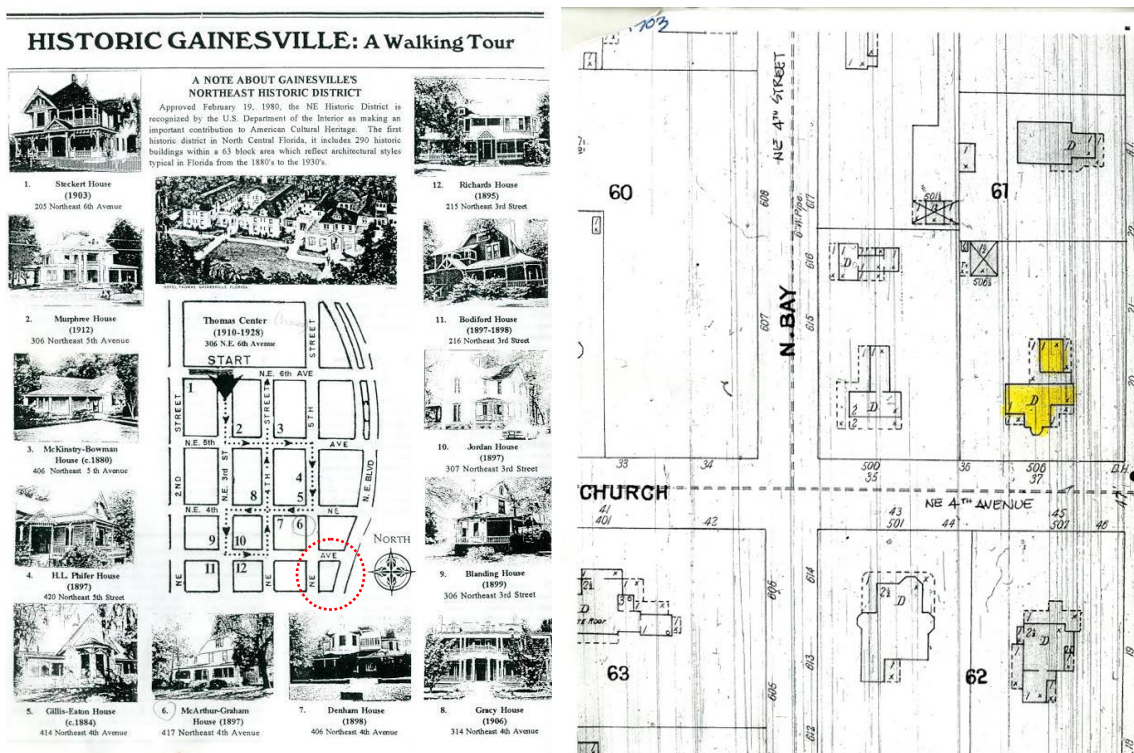
### **Rationale for choosing the Duck Pond Historic Neighborhood and the Eaton House for this study?**

The Duck Pond district was the first residential neighborhood in North Central Florida and includes 290 historic buildings within a 63 block area. These buildings have been an important part of Gainesville for several decades and have become historic preservation areas. However, prior to this project we knew little about the community that lived there



or their domestic lifestyle. Therefore, I wanted to explore this aspect of the Duck Pond Community. I planned on collecting pictures, stories, and other important documents to learn more about how people lived in the community and learn more about these iconic homes and memories behind them. By doing so, I hope to preserve the history of the community along with the physical homes (Hood & Johnson, 1983).

For this study I interviewed Edward Sinclair Eaton, Jr., a resident of the historic Duck Pond area at his home. This neighborhood was a middle-upper class area, which was home to several professors of the University of Florida. The home had no fence separating the Eaton property from its neighbors. Mr. Eaton's mother was an active volunteer and career woman which was unusual at the time, and his father was a business owner who ran a store in town. Both parents were active members of civic clubs, and having confederate ancestors, Mr. Eaton grew up in a fairly conservative home. Mr. Eaton, a Duck Pond resident who was born in 1943, died in 2021 in the home he grew up in. Interview with Mr. Eaton, 2016. Edward Sinclair Eaton, (homeowner), interviewed with the author, October 10, 2016. His house is located on the corner of N.E. Fourth Avenue and Fifth Street, and has been the home of the Eatons since 1936 with records of the property dating back to 1884. (Figure 1).

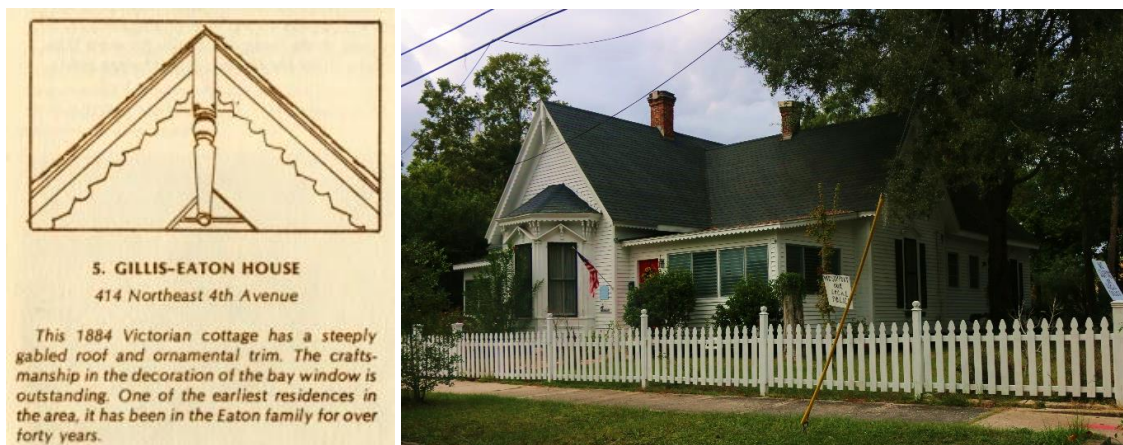


**Figure 1.** Gillis-Eaton House (c.1884), 414 Northeast 4th Avenue Historic Gainesville, Florida and the house in relation to its immediate surroundings. Historic Gainesville Walking Tour brochure from the Historic Gainesville organization indicates that there are 290 buildings in the Northeast Historic District which depict traditional Florida architecture from the late 19th century.

During my first interview with Mr. Eaton about growing up in the historic Duck Pond district, he stated, "When I grew up here, there wasn't anything special about this then. I don't think anybody really thought of it as the Duck Pond area. The historic Duck Pond. It was just where we lived." Little had been documented about domestic life during the 1950s and 60s in this area, save a few images taken of the fronts of houses by some magazines available in the Matheson Library, Gainesville. Having scarcely anything to focus my interviews on regarding domestic life in this area, I found this was the perfect opportunity to apply a more unconventional approach to the oral history interview

format. Once Mr. Eaton agreed to participate in my study, I collected pictures and recorded memories from his childhood. Of the approximately 70 pictures he provided me, I asked him to select six pictures that were most memorable and emotionally significant to him. After selecting these pictures, I asked him to describe the events taking place in the picture and any other memories the image illicit. From these accounts I was able to use photographs not as supplemental material proving his accounts to be true, as traditional oral historians might, but as documents which can be used to contextualize the significance of certain events in people's lives and thereby inform the experience of living in the Duck Pond area as a whole.

The Eaton House reflects architectural styles typical in Florida from the 1880's to the 1930's. This 1884 Victorian cottage is one of the earliest residences in the area. It features a steeply gabled roof with fancy ornamental trim. The decoration of the bay window with its unusual bracketed pediments is an outstanding example of Victorian craftsmanship (Historic Gainesville Walking Tour brochure). As a result, the U.S. Department of the Interior has recognized it as an important contribution to American Cultural Heritage. It is a Victorian cottage with a steeply gabled roof and ornate bay windows and unusual bracketed pediments (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Eaton House is a Victorian cottage with a steeply gabled roof and ornate bay windows (author's photo).

This study draws specifically from the experience of Mr. Eaton because his grandfather was the second owner of this house, and Mr. Eaton himself has lived in this same house since he was a child. He and his family have resided in their home for the last three generations, and therefore, are able to attest to the changes in the use of their living space over a considerable amount of time. It is also difficult to find an original family who has owned a house since the 1950's. The function of many historical homes has changed into business or rental properties. However, this house is still used as its intended function. As noted by Mr. Eaton, this house is also the second oldest house in the Duck Pond district. Mr. Eaton is an excellent subject upon whom to try my approach because he and his family consist of historically obscure figures, and therefore, this approach is a way to understand histories that are not as visible or well-documented as others.

### 1.1 Literature Review

A search of the literature shows that there has been little done in this area using cross-disciplinary examples, oral history, photography, and space in architectural studies to research domestic life during the mid-century. While researching the incorporation of various disciplines to enhance the resourcefulness of oral history, I did not find any sources which detailed the combination of three disciplines the way my approach demands. Much less did I find any sources on the use of physical space to trigger a subject's memory during the interview process. However, the references I did find and





relied on throughout this process provided me with invaluable insight on the use of personal photographs when analyzing oral history.

In learning how to analyze personal photographs, I referred frequently to John Berger's *Understanding A Photograph* (Berger, 2013). While exploring how to relate photographs to Oral History, the book *Photography and Oral History* (Freund & Thompson, 2011) was extremely resourceful, particularly the articles "Photographs from the Shoebox" by Janet Elizabeth Marles (2011) and the article "Committed Eye: Photographs, Oral Sources, and Historical Narrative" by Ana Maria Mauad (2011), which specifically highlight the use of personal photographs to find the stories behind personal images. Tinkler (2011) argues in her article that photo albums do not speak for themselves; yet, even retrospective interviews with the creators of the albums do not simply open windows onto the ways in which these albums had once been meaningful to them. I also found the article "Family Photographs as Traces of Americanization" by Maris Thompson (2011) from this very same book useful as it helped shed some light as to how photographs can be used to document family histories over time. Finally, the article "Imagining Family Memories: My Mum, Her Photographs, Our Memories" by Janis Wilton (2011) allowed me to see photographs as objects that reflect the significance of the moment in which they were captured.

According to Freund and Thomson (2011), oral history and photography intersect at important epistemic points: evidence, memory, and storytelling. Both are used as forms of evidence; both require "memory work"; and both are forms of storytelling. Despite these intersections, oral historians find little guidance in their literature on the use of photographs in oral history. All of the major English-language oral history guides and handbooks mention photographs only in passing, if at all. Photographs, these guides suggest, should be sought out from interviewees as further documentation, and they may be used as memory triggers. In his article called "A Theoretical Construct for Interpreting Photographs," Terry Barrett (1986) writes, "The new category system which follows is based on an analogy of visual images and verbal statements. It is posited that it is interpretively beneficial to see photographs as if they were analogous to descriptive, interpretive, explanatory, ethically evaluative, aesthetically evaluative, and theoretical statements in language."

The *Changing Meanings of Memory, Space, and Time in Photography* reveals how the meaning and importance of photographs shift over time from the perspective of the photographer to that of the observer. Moreover, Rawles (2017) discusses the psychology behind taking a photograph and looks at the art history and philosophical writings of Susan Sontag (1977) and John Berger to discover how photography relates to memory, nostalgia, mortality, and the presence of the absent. Martha Langford (2001) in her work *Suspended Conversations* shows how photographic albums tell intimate and revealing stories about individuals and families. Rather than isolate the individual photograph, treat albums as texts, or argue that photography has supplanted memory, she demonstrates that the photographic album must be taken as a whole and interpreted as a visual and verbal performance that extends oral consciousness.

To sum up, my search of the literature shows that there has been little done using multi-disciplinary examples and sources, particularly the combination of the three specific disciplines (oral history, photography, and architecture) that my approach demands. This literature search also shows the value of photographic records as well as significant intersections of oral history and photography.

## **2. Analyzing The Eaton House By Using The "Tripod Approach"**

Previous architectural scholars have attempted to study historic architectural spaces through oral history projects but have limited themselves to the traditional interview format, primarily by conducting sit-down interviews with other architects specifically



about the conception of the structure in question (Thomson & Perks, 1998). However, my approach is unique because it applies three separate disciplines and seeks to analyze the inhabitants of this historic home. The goal of this research project was to achieve a more profound understanding of the domestic space in the Eaton House, which led to the adoption of a multi-disciplinary (cross-disciplinary) oral history methodology for this project, termed the Tripod Approach.

This name serves as a metaphor expressing how the application of three disciplines at once in an oral history interview is more useful than utilizing only one or two at a time. The three disciplines used in this study were photography, oral history, and architecture. Combining the three elements can allow us to find a more vivid and personal representation of domestic life in a specific time in a historic area. It integrates personal photos of inhabitants interacting within the architectural space as well as the memories of one of those inhabitants through personal accounts also recorded within that space. This methodology is also more uniquely illuminating because rather than using photographs and physical spaces as supplementary materials to validate certain narratives, it instead uses them as tools to trigger more lucid memories and helps with documentation and analysis as well.

This article will first explore how these disciplines, applied in pairs, are more useful together than apart in analyzing Mr. Eaton's childhood. It will focus primarily on the binary approach as the basis for the tripod approach. It will conclude with a couple of examples of how all three disciplines combined provide an even deeper understanding of what changes happened, where, when, by whom, and why. The theoretical questions guiding the analysis are as follows: How can the use of architectural space and personal photographs in an oral history project provide us with a richer and more intimate perspective of domestic space? How do we analyze and correlate all of these disciplines?

The following is a visual graphic developed to help illustrate this methodology more clearly and to explain the significance of combining these elements. By analyzing Mr. Eaton's interview, we can capture his perspective of what it meant for Mr. Eaton to live in the 1950s and 60s. The interview focused on three critical elements. Through his interview we see a dynamic relationship between these elements; they are interconnected throughout the dialogue. This relationship is best understood through a simple three-way Venn diagram of these elements (Table 1). Each element can act on its own or act in conjunction with the others. Ultimately with all three together, we get not only an understanding of Mr. Eaton's life, but also of life in the 1950s Duck Pond District.

Before I illustrate the tripod approach, I would like to explain the relationship between the binary pairs. When any two of the elements are paired together, more information is present, but limited. Adding the third element gives the complete picture. Before adding the third element, however, we must understand the binaries through some examples. Only after we understand how the binaries coexist will we understand the tripod approach. Within each pair, there is a directional flow; the first element listed leads into the second element listed by either explaining it or giving rise to it. Combining any two of the elements together enriches our understanding.

**Table 1.** Three-way Venn diagram on **Tripod Approach** (drawn by author)

\* **Space**

Space--» Memory  
Space--» Photography

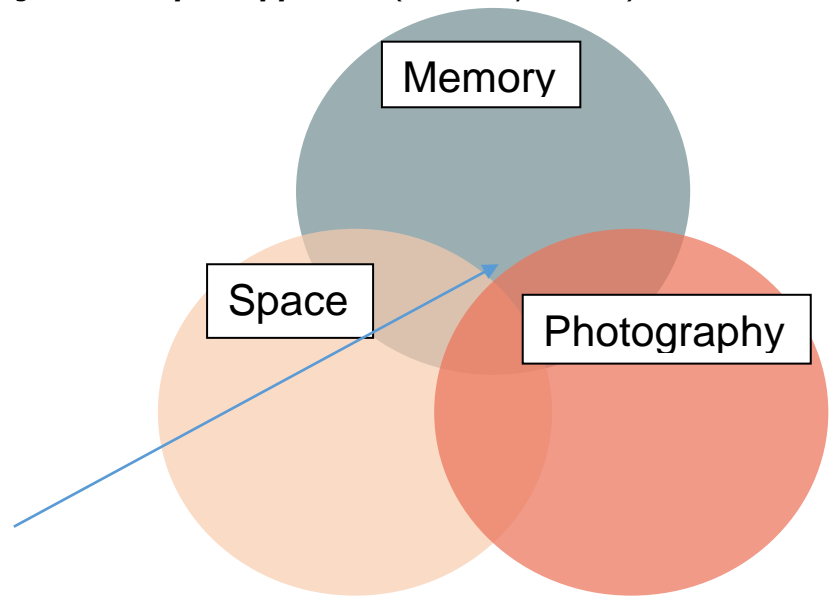
\* **Photography**

Photography--» Memory  
Photography--» Space

\* **Memory**

Memory--» Space  
Memory--» Photography

Culmination of all three disciplines



This article focuses primarily on the binary approach as the basis for the tripod approach. It will provide two concrete examples of the tripod approach at the end, which hopefully illustrates the effectiveness of using this combined multi-disciplinary method.

### Space

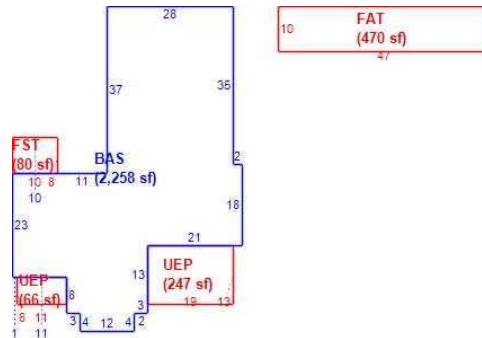
#### Space → Memory

How does physical space make the oral history process more efficient in gaining a better understanding of the 50's and 60's lifestyle in this area?

The typical methodology of an oral historian involves sitting with a subject and recording his or her narrative through an interview process. However, the intention of this project was to find a new approach to the oral history interview process. Initially, the objective was to use personal photographs of Mr. Eaton's family albums to jog his memory of his domestic life. However, unprompted, Mr. Eaton found it more useful to walk around his home describing its evolution than to sit at a table and discuss whatever changes came to mind. When asked about changes made to the house, before using the space as a tool, Mr. Eaton had very little to say. It was only while touring the home that he went into great detail about several elements of the space. For example, he described a recreation room in his home that was once a front porch. His parents had converted it into a room complete with windows and shutters called jalousies, which were reminiscent of the 1950's. Had this interview occurred in a library or any other separate location, he may never have mentioned this area of the house. This is a concrete example of space giving rise to a memory, hence the directional flow from space to memory. As Mr. Eaton recalls:

*That was an outside door or window, and they turned it into a door ... and so the porch was added ... you can see where they had the shutters right here.... In 1884 this was the outside of the house... My mother, probably in the 50s, changed this... And that was an outside window too, and they just turned it into a door, and so in 1884, this was the outside of the house, and so they came along and changed things and changed things and my mother... probably in the 50's this was probably just screened up until then, and maybe even before then it was just open, and then my mother changed this and turned it into windows. These are called jalousies... (Edward Sinclair Eaton (homeowner), interview with the author, October 10, 2016).*

The image below is a diagram of the layout of the house today (Figure 3). The areas in red are new spaces added to the home. The area marked UEP on the bottom right side is a rec room. However, according to Mr. Eaton, that room was once a front porch used for entertaining guests (Figure 4). Today the room is used as a recreational space for reading, talking, etc. (Figure 5).



**Figure 3.** This image shows in blue the original plans of the house, while in red showing the later additions to the house (Eaton family archives).



**Figure 4.** Sally and Sinclair Eaton, Sr., in 1946 standing in front of the front porch with the screen visible (Eaton family photo).



**Figure 5.** Pictures depict the porch today, which has been converted into an entertainment room with the jalousie windows present (Photographs by author).

The use of space as a tool allowed for a more thorough interview:

- Touring the home brought more details to his attention than he mentioned before the tour.
- Each room contained memories of its evolution.
- Each room also contained memories of his life and how the space was used.

So, during this interview, Mr. Eaton used the architectural space as a tool to spark memories about specific incidents in his domestic life. Had the house been the only resource available with which to study this subject, the specific use of certain areas of the house may have remained unknown.

## Memory

### Memory → Space

How did oral history make the study of the Eaton House more productive?

Architects are not only concerned with blueprints, dimensions, and construction; architects are also concerned with the use of space. The only way to truly understand the way space is used is through firsthand accounts. It was only through touring the home with Mr. Eaton that a better representation of domestic life in this house during the 1950s and 1960s came to light. This aspect of the interview process came naturally and without any planning. Mr. Eaton found it more useful to walk around his home describing its evolution than to sit at a table and discuss whatever changes came to mind.

Initially, when asked about changes made to the house, Mr. Eaton had very little to say. However, at one point he stood up from where we were sitting and took me on a tour throughout the house, at which point he showed me his old bedroom. It is now filled with antiques, pictures, and old possessions (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** These images of Mr. Eaton's room were taken in November of 2016. Today, it is used more as a storage area for antiques and memorable items such as pictures, typewriters, old furniture, etc. (Photographs by author).

The image here shows Mr. Eaton's office (Figure 7). It is filled with antiques and memorabilia. However, this space was once his sister's bedroom. There are no pictures of this space back in the 50's or 60's, and there is nothing in the room today to suggest that it was once a girl's bedroom.

"This was my sister's bedroom," Mr. Eaton told me. Her bedroom has been turned into his workshop/office area. "A lot of this is my life. This is when I was in the Coast Guard... This was my sister's record player... This is a lot of when I was in politics... The bed was right here, the dresser was over here."





**Figure 7.** This is a picture of Mr. Eaton's office today, which used to be his sister's room growing up (Photographs by author).

Mr. Eaton was reminded of far more changes that were made to the house than he could recall sitting in one location (Figure 8). Using the physical space where he spent his childhood to trigger his memory was extremely useful in providing a more complete picture of how the space was used. Had our interview taken place at a separate location, such as a library or another public location, he may not have recalled all of the intricate details of the changes made to his house.



**Figure 8.** Mr. Eaton walks around his home describing its evolution (Photographs by author).

Mr. Eaton's account is the only source available to attest to the changes made to this space. It is his "memory" that gives rise to understanding this "space." By repeatedly standing and moving around in one's personal, familiar space, memories can come flooding back because space and memories are often interwoven and intricately connected. Unconscious memories rise to the surface when one's recollection is stimulated by spatial perception.

Without Mr. Eaton's memory, we would not have as good an understanding of how the space was used.

- Mr. Eaton's office was once his sister's bedroom.



- There are no pictures of his sister's bedroom.
- Mr. Eaton's account is the only source that can tell us the historic details of this house.

## **Photography**

### **Photography → Memory**

How did personal photographs make the oral history process more productive?

Because oral historians mainly use recording devices, it is uncommon for them to use physical resources like photographs, antiques, physical spaces, etc., as part of the interview process. This paper aims to encourage interviewers to adopt newer and more innovative strategies for using physical resources, like photographs, when capturing oral narratives. Elizabeth Edwards (2005) also considered family photography an important part of oral culture. A photograph is a representation of a subject's specific place and time. Rose Gillian (2003) points out,

*The referentiality of a photo means that it is treated as a trace of the person it pictures, and can thus bring their presence into the home. But that presence is most valued when the actual person is in fact absent or changed. Hence looking at photos stretches domestic space through a relation with people, places, and times that are not in the home at the moment of looking, or at least if they are, they no longer appear as they did in the photo.*

As Olga Shevchenko writes (2014), "Photography and memory have long been interconnected, with photographs enmeshed in everyday practices of remembering, and such practices mediating how photographs are viewed and influencing the meanings made of them." Photos by themselves are ambiguous, but within the context of stories their meaning can be uncovered, expanded, and detailed. Memories are stored in photographs at their specific moment in time. This allows us to analyze a specific event in the place where it happened, within its historical context. The knowledge contained in photos is distinct from our traditional conception of written histories, and together proves to give a deeper understanding than what each discipline can offer on its own. This photograph would allow the interviewee to focus his narrative on the details that the photograph represents for the interviewee. Using photographs during the interview process allows for more specific examples of daily life and a more intimate account of specific attitudes to certain people, places, and events in their life. It is only within the context of a story that a photograph becomes useful to a historian. One can find a string of memories attached to a photograph as they mark a specific event in the life of a subject. Through photographs we can observe a different kind of historical account than written history can provide. Together, oral narratives and photographs give us a clearer picture of the past than either source can provide alone. This methodology can be understood more clearly through the pioneering work of John Collier. In the mid-1950s, "John Collier introduced photo-elicitation methodology. In initial experimentations he juxtaposed the identical interview settings, where, in one, photos were introduced and discussed and, in the other, only verbal questions were asked. He found that looking at photographs while reminiscing sharpened memories, reduced misunderstandings, and created longer and more comprehensive interviews" (Mannik, 2011). To put it another way, "Photography has become the family's primary instrument of self-representation" (Hirsch, 1997).

Such experience was true in the Eaton case study. Upon being asked about childhood activities that he would engage in for entertainment, Mr. Eaton did not go into great detail. He remembered only that he would occasionally go out fishing and hunting with his father. It was only when asked about a specific photograph that he was able to remember additional, specific details worth mentioning. He noted that this area once had a pond, which held catfish, where he would go fishing (Figure 9). He reminisces, "There used to be a pond about the size of the room but dried up. That's a catfish. I caught it

myself and brought it home. My mother took this picture between two palm trees, in the side yard.” This was a detail about the area that easily could have gone undocumented and forgotten had this image not been presented to jog his memory. He also went on to mention that his mother was the one who took the picture and took most of the pictures in the family. Without the use of this photograph as a tool to jog his memory, Mr. Eaton might have never thought to mention this detail about life in the Duck Pond area. As you can see, the photograph gave rise to his memory that would have been otherwise unstated.



**Figure 9.** Mr. Eaton is approximately seven years old in this image and is depicted holding a catfish on a fishing line in the sideyard of his house. The photograph was taken by his mother circa 1950 (Eaton family photo).

Photography can enhance a subject’s memory, and therefore, his or her oral narrative:

- Photographs are not typically used in this way.
- Photographs give us specific examples of personal life to ask about.
- Using photographs while interviewing allows us to ask why those photographed moments are significant.

As Marianne Hirsch (2020) explained that “images and stories can be manipulated to reveal alternative stories, reinventions of the events and the social roles.”

### **Memory → Photography**

How did oral history improve the study of Mr. Eaton’s personal photographs?

Memory is what makes personal photographs personal. Photographs are images of significant moments in people’s lives which those who captured the image deemed significant enough to remember. A stock photograph, such as one found in a magazine, may not give the viewer as much insight into what life was truly like in a specific place and time in the way personal photographs can. For this reason, personal and family photographs serve as invaluable tools for any historian.

Without the stories behind them, photographs are deprived of usefulness. The photos and narratives together support one another to generate meaning about family and domestic life of the time. Often, photographs are taken at face value, but stories give us more information to explore what is visibly seen in the image. Together, they create a history about the people who live in the Duck Pond community and capture what this community has meant and continues to mean to its current residents, ultimately letting us peek into

their private and very intimate lives. Like Annette Kuhn (2007) writes, "Memory work with photographs offers a particularly productive route to understanding the social and cultural aspects of memory."

Adding memory to photographs makes them personal and more authentic, a more vivid account of 50's, 60's life, rather than stock photography one would find in a magazine or a newspaper. A stock photograph of the house records the way a space looks. A personal photograph reveals how a space was used by recording life in action. In this way we see how memory adds depth and significance to a personal photograph, making it more useful in an analysis of the use of space rather than relying solely on photographs. Like Borden (2007) said that "whether historicised or not, experiential or not, photographs of the everyday life of buildings help disclose that which lies secret within them – not just the life of humans, but the way that this life re-activates architecture..."

The personal photographs in this study came directly from Mr. Eaton and could not be found in any magazine or historical collection. They enlighten us about how the space was used and who inhabited those spaces. However, without the recollections of Mr. Eaton and his accounts, we would not have nearly as much information to interpret these personal images, thus emphasizing the benefit of having oral historical accounts when analyzing photographs such as these.

The following left image was an image found in a magazine taken in the 1950's. While this image accurately depicts what the house looked like at the time, it gives us a very two-dimensional view of daily life at the Eaton House (Figure 10). However, the image to the right depicts children playing in the carriage house in the backyard of the house (Figure 11). It is only when Mr. Eaton described the scene in the image that it can be understood where the scene was taking place. The carriage house no longer exists at the Eaton House, and it was only through Mr. Eaton's memory and explanation of the photograph that the truth was revealed about this part of the house's evolution and how that space was used. Without Mr. Eaton's account, it may have never been known where this photo was taken or that the home once had a carriage house in the backyard. Mr. Eaton's account is the only resource that could inform us how the carriage house was used over time.



**Figure 10** (left): Photo of Eaton House featured in a magazine in the 1950's (Eaton family photo).



**Figure 11** (right): Photo taken in the 1950's of children playing in the carriage house in the backyard (Eaton family photo).

During our interview, Mr. Eaton discussed the use of the carriage house that was never recorded by any historical documents. He remembers, "Yes, the carriage house. Right back in this corner here somewhere... I guess my family kept their carriage in it and that in the 1900's they parked their cars in it."



It is the memory that comes first. Mr. Eaton's account is the only resource that could inform us about what the carriage house was used for over time.

Memory is what makes personal photographs personal.

- Photographs are images of significant moments in people's lives that they want to remember.
- Personal photographs give us insight into what life was truly like in a specific place and time in better ways than stock photographs can.
- Personal photographs serve as useful tools for oral historians.

### **Space → Photography**

How did the use of physical space in this study improve the study of Mr. Eaton's personal photographs?

A photograph shows us what was. Space shows us what is. Space provides a context for what subjects in those photographs changed.

In architecture, photography is also used to depict what a home did and did not consist of. Changes made to space suggest a change in those who inhabited that space in reaction to their outside influences or circumstances. For example, there is no swing in the backyard to show how it was used, so it would never come to light that it was taken down or why.

If given only the information available in the Matheson History Museum or the personal photos of Mr. Eaton to analyze, an interviewer would not know what specific questions to reference when inquiring about changes made to the house. It is when one can walk through the house and compare the physical space to the space depicted that one can ask the interviewee, such as Mr. Eaton, about these specific changes. As a resource, the physical space provides clues about how the people inhabiting the space changed.

However, during this interview, Mr. Eaton used the architectural space as a tool to spark today. Had personal photographs been the only resource to represent the space and memories about specific incidents in his domestic life. For example, the lefthand figure depicts Mr. Eaton in the front yard next to a swing. This swing was not there during a visit of the house (Figure 12). In the righthand figure, Mr. Eaton's mother sits with a friend beside a fireplace with a door behind her. While walking through this house, it was evident that this door led to a dining room and that the door does not even exist in the house anymore (Figure 13).



**Figure 12** (left). Mr. Eaton and a friend stand by an old swing in his front lawn (Eaton family photo).

**Figure 13** (right). Mr. Eaton's mother sits with a friend (Eaton family photo).

In Figure 14 below, Mr. Eaton sits on the floor with his mother in front of a Christmas tree in the living room. It is clear that this was an open space with a carpeted floor. Walking through the living room today, one would notice that the room is now filled with furniture and that the carpet has been taken out and replaced with wood flooring. We can also note a change in the furnishing style.



**Figure 14.** Mr. Eaton sits on the floor with his mother in front of a Christmas tree in the living room, 1957 (Eaton family photo).

This space provides a context for what subjects in those photographs changed.

- If given only the photographs to analyze the house's development, we would have little to compare them to.
- The physical space today, as a resource, gives us clues about how the people inhabiting the space changed.
- Changes to the house architecturally and aesthetically could be found throughout the space.

### **Photography → Space**

How did Mr. Eaton's personal photography make the study of the Eaton house more useful as an architectural historian?

Photography enhances the usefulness of the physical space as a resource. From simply observing the current differences between a physical space and a photograph in which that space is depicted, we can see that change occurred within the space. Given only the house and Mr. Eaton's accounts to learn about changes made to the space, a researcher might miss key changes they could notice for themselves through the use of personal photographs as a reference material.

Upon visiting the house, we can clearly see that the entrance of the home in the lefthand image (Figure 15) is different than what is depicted in the righthand image (Figure 16), suggesting a change in materials used for the front steps, a change in architectural taste, perhaps damage to the original entrance, etc. Mr. Eaton notes, "Now I have done this. Now these are hundred-year-old bricks. They didn't come off my property. They came from the Pfeifer house next door."



**Figure 15** (left): Mr. Eaton and his sister Sally (Sarah Ruth Edith) holding hands in front of the front steps of their home in the late 1940s (Eaton family photo).

**Figure 16** (right): The front steps of the Eaton House as seen today (Photographs by author).

Space enhances the usefulness of photographs:

- By comparing photographs to physical space today we can analyze changes to that space.
- By recognizing changes, we are better equipped to ask questions about changes to the space.
- We can see the difference between the wood steps in the old photograph and the brick steps that exist now.

### **Combining the Three Elements: The “Tripod/Three Part Approach” of Space, Memory, and Photography**

This approach is only one model to get a better understanding of how one person lived in this area. Because it uses one person’s account at a time, it is a very subjective narrative approach. Should other historians apply this approach to other past residents of the Duck Pond area, we would be able to get a clearer, more general understanding of the 1950’s and 60’s lifestyle of this neighborhood.

The previous section analyzed how two disciplines could be combined to provide a better picture of what changes over time in the use of a physical space. The following section will attempt to describe how all three disciplines can be combined to give a complete account of **what changed, where, when, by whom, how, and why**. Together these elements give us a more thorough account of what changed, where, when, by whom, how, and why.

Like a tapestry, all of these elements are interwoven, and without one, the others lose meaning or relevance. Each element enhances the other in its own unique way. Mr. Eaton’s fence and carriage house are two such examples.

### **Example 1: Story of the Fence**

By being in the actual physical location in question, it is evident that there is a fence in the backyard. However, by analyzing the photographs side by side, it is also clear that the fence did not exist in the backyard sixty years ago (Figure 17). So, from these two elements a researcher can note **“what”** changed in the space and **“where.”** It is only once Mr. Eaton is brought into the equation and questioned on specific details that he can

inform the interviewer about “**who**” put up the fence, “**when**” the fence was actually added, “**how**” it was put in, and “**why**.” These three elements together give us a better picture of “how the space was used” and “how that use changed over time.”



**Figure 17.** Eaton house in 1976 (Historic Gainesville Walking Tour brochure) and in 2017 (Photographs by author).

After combining these three elements, one can conclude that the Eaton House was not built with a fence. Mr. Eaton did not grow up with a fence. He and his wife (who) decide to add the fence (what) around 2014 (when) because (why) it accentuated the unique features of the house and also kept in their dogs. Mr. Eaton (who) was the one who put up the fence (what) in his front yard (where).

### **Example 2: Story of the Carriage House**

Another example is that of the carriage house (Fig 18). By combining these elements, we can conclude that the Eatons (who) had a carriage house (what) in the backyard (where), which was taken down in the 70’s (when) to make space for a larger parking lot (why).



**Figure 18.** Carriage House in 2017 (Photographs by author), and in the 1950’s (Eaton family photo).

We can observe by being in the actual physical location in question that there is a fence in the backyard. However, if we also analyze the photographs at the same time, we can see that the fence did not stand in the backyard 40 years ago. So, from these two elements we understand “what” changed in the space and “where.” If only once we bring Mr. Eaton into the equation and question him on this specific detail that he can inform us





about “who” put up the fence, “when” the fence was actually added and “why.” These three elements together give us a better picture of “how the space was used” and “how that use changed over time.” As we can see from this account, the fence was only added very recently because he and his family did not feel the need to have a fence in the past (Figure 19). However, this has changed because fences might be used to guard a toddler, to keep a dog in the yard, and to protect a lawn or garden, and so on.

### Physical space

There is a fence in front of the house (where).



**Figure 19.** There is a fence along the four corners of the house currently (Photographs by author).

### Photography

There used to not be a fence (what, what changed) (Figure 20).



**Figure 20.** Eaton House in 1976 (Historic Gainesville Walking Tour brochure) and in 2017 (Photographs by author).

### Memory

Mr. Eaton put up the fence in 2014 because it accentuated the unique features of the house and also keeps in their dogs (**who, what, when, where, why**).

“In the past, there wasn’t a fence,” Mr. Eaton commented. “I just put the fence up in the last couple of years, because it accentuated the unique features of the house and also keeps in the dogs.”

Combining these elements we get the following information: The Eaton House was not built with a fence (what). Mr. Eaton did not grow up with a fence in his backyard (where). He and his wife (who) added the fence (what) around 2014 (when) because (why) it accentuated the unique features of the house (what) and also keeps in their dogs (what).

One could find countless more examples of how these three disciplines could be combined to give a more complete analysis of how the Eaton house has changed over time. Other researchers can apply this same methodology to seek a more thorough



representation of what life in the Duck Pond area was like in the 1950's and 1960's in general.

### **3. Evaluation and Conclusion**

In this study, I interviewed Mr. Eaton to give us a critical approach to understand the 1950's and 1960's domestic space in Duck Pond district. This interview is not only an interview, but consists of a dynamic process using the tripod approach; architectural space, old pictures and stories/memory to explain 1950's and 1960's domestic space in the Duck Pond district.

What can be learned by using the tripod approach?

In conclusion, I found this approach to be more innovative and objective than previous approaches to oral history by allowing for crossover between three different disciplines. It also allows for a more thorough investigation of past lives by improving the interview process and by using physical resources as tools rather than supplemental materials. This methodology can be used to collect more useful information for historical restoration projects.

We found, through the tripod approach, information that was not on record. We learned personal information also not on record. We used personal photographs and accounts from a resident, who has never been interviewed on the subject, and who had opportunity to walk around the physical space in question. Through this approach we gained a more in depth perspective than a simple interview or personal photographs would have provided alone, or the space itself would have provided alone. For example, there are no records of how the interior of the house changed such as furniture, technological advances, and social changes of the home. Having been to the house and interviewed a longstanding resident, observing his personal photographs and navigating through the space today, we were able to discover the narrative of a life few historians would have studied. From the interview, we have not only physical element changes about the house, we also have personal life information about the family life during the mid-twentieth century.

Architecture as part of oral history is not used as a methodology for collecting the subjects' narratives. Most oral historians would overlook this step of using a physical space as part of the interview process. This also applies to the use of photographs as anything other than evidence which validates the narrative of an interviewee. These materials focus an interviewees' narrative on specific events in a person's life. They allow for a clearer trajectory for the path of an interview.

Local foundations like the Matheson History Museum and University of Florida libraries did not have any personal photographs or interviews regarding the Eaton family's domestic space or any other residents in the Duck Pond area. The information I gathered from this study would be a tremendous addition to future preservation projects in the Duck Pond area. For example, there are no records of how the interior of the house has changed, such as furniture, technological advances, social, structural, and spatial changes to the home. The function of the home was not documented initially. Having been to the house and interviewed a longstanding resident, observing his personal photographs and navigating through the space today, I was able to discover a narrative of a life very few scholars have ever considered.

Learning from the interview, I have not only documented physical element's changes about house, I have also personal life information about the family life during the mid-twentieth century, specifically referring to their interior space as follows.



### **Furniture:**

How did they incorporate old furniture with new furniture? Which pieces did they decide to keep or abandon or move? What furniture did they adopt and why, for example, the piano? Such questions may be useful for future research.

### **Technological Advances:**

Before air conditioning, the Eaton family used wet towels and fans to cool off. The family installed air conditioning very late in the 1970's.

### **Social, structural and spacial changes:**

We learned about Mr. Eaton's personal life: His relationship to the space itself, such as having his first wedding in the living room. That's an intimate space. Was it common for people to get married in their living room? What can we say about holding such a significant ceremony at home and what that space meant to Mr. Eaton at that time to want to hold such a personal event there?

It is important that we understand that this one example is not indicative of what 1950's and 1960's domestic space was like for all Americans and that it is simply an example to apply this tripod methodology. This model is only one way to get a better understanding of how one person lived in this area. Because this model uses one person's account at a time, it is a very subjective narrative approach. Should other historians apply this approach to other past residents of the Duck Pond neighborhood, we would be able to get a clearer, more general understanding of the 1950's and 1960's lifestyle of this neighborhood.

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