

# The Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists

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MEMBERS of the Society, representing 27 states, Hawaii and Canada, assembled for the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists at Glenwood Springs, Colorado, from September 3 to 5. The emphasis of the several sessions was upon international aspects of archival work. Arthur H. Leavitt, former member of the staff of the National Archives and more recently archivist for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, described the archival work of his agency under the title "UNRRA Archives Around the World," and presented a graphic description of the activities of his organization as he had witnessed them during a tour of Europe in the summer of 1947. Mr. Leavitt outlined the complicated problem of creating a records management program for an agency which had created tons of records in many languages and in many countries. The problem of centralization, analyzation, and servicing of records from China, Moscow, Rome, Helsinki, and Athens, among a score of other capitals, gave the assembled members a foretaste of the second paper on the first morning session.

In discussing "The Archives Program of the United Nations," United Nations' Archivist Robert Claus pointed out that his staff at Lake Success consisted of only fifteen persons representing five nations, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Yugoslavia, and Switzerland. Mr. Claus made reference to the already familiar problem of arriving at a concise definition of what constitutes archives and securing the proper authority for treating archives as integrated bodies of records.

Continuing the international complexion of the first day's meetings Mr. George Simpson, Archivist of the Province of Saskatchewan, presented at the luncheon meeting an informative outline of the evolution of archival institutions and their present position in Canada. In addition to describing Dominion archives, Mr. Simpson laid stress upon the archival situation in the various provinces, depicting a slow but steady progress in most regions. Members of the Society attending the

luncheon meeting were welcomed by Senator Wayne Aspinall representing the Honorable William Lee Knous, Governor of Colorado.

"Legal Aspects of Microphotographed Business Records," a paper by Mr. Daniel F. Noll of the National Archives, was read at the first afternoon session by Dr. Philip C. Brooks. Mr. Noll's scholarly paper sketched the problem of using microfilms in private business, emphasizing the position of such microfilms as primary and secondary evidence in the State and Federal courts. Despite limitations and some reverses he reported a definite trend toward the acceptance of micro-filmed copies in place of the original documents. He concluded his paper by presenting simple precautions to be taken to assure the admissibility of such films in court in place of the original documents. The second paper on the afternoon session, "Planning of an International Archives Organization," by Oliver W. Holmes of the National Archives, was somewhat in the nature of a report on the work of the Committee on International Relations. Mr. Holmes summarized the results of a questionnaire in which views were sought relative to a proposed international organization of archivists and which had been sent to selected archivists throughout the world. The text of this questionnaire, signed by Dr. Solon J. Buck, then president of the Society, was published in the July issue of the *AMERICAN ARCHIVIST*. There appeared to be unanimity concerning the desirability of an international organization. Mr. Holmes pointed out that in connection with the UNESCO program the problem of forming such an organization was an immediate one since steps toward its realization were already under consideration in Paris.

Dr. Ben M. Cherrington, member of the United States National Commission for UNESCO and director of the Social Science Foundation at the University of Denver, presided over the well attended evening session devoted to a round table discussion of "A Proposed Archival Program for UNESCO." Dr. Cherrington spoke briefly and pointedly concerning the work of UNESCO and the problems faced by such an organization in America. As a former member of the State Department he described the dangers of the present location of America's UNESCO direction in the State Department, and the need for the immediate divorcing of the cultural program from the political and international relations activities of the Department of State. Participating on the Round Table panel were Dr. Solon J. Buck, Archivist of the United States; Ernst Posner, American University; George Simpson, Archivist of Saskatchewan; Oliver W. Holmes, National Archives; and Herbert O. Brayer, Consultant for Archives, UNESCO. The active participation of the audience in both questioning the panel and commenting upon the observations of the "experts" made the evening interesting

as well as informative. There was little evidence, however, of any well formed opinion among the members present as to just what the functions of such an international organization should be. Dr. Posner's emphasis upon UNESCO's assistance in securing international agreement as to accessibility and use of archival materials within the depositories of the member nations received the approbation of all present. Speaking for the UNESCO Secretariat, Mr. Brayer laid emphasis upon the fact that UNESCO's archival efforts must of necessity be limited, but that its principal efforts would be in cooperation and assistance with international and national associations of archivists. He warned, however, that in the creation of an international organization American archivists should strive for the highest degree of diplomacy so as to avoid any appearance of American domination, pressure, or "Cultural Imperialism." Based upon his visits to archival institutions throughout Europe during 1946 and 1947, Mr. Brayer pointed out that American Archivists could learn much from contact with their European colleagues and that the exchange of techniques and information was not going to be entirely one-sided.

"Western Archival Activity" was the subject under review at the morning session of the second day of the annual meeting. The first of the three papers presented at the meeting in the Convention Hall of the Colorado Hotel in Glenwood Springs, was a description of the manuscript collections in the Bancroft Library by Dr. George P. Hammond, Director of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Hammond declared that, far from being just a static collection of valuable papers, dealing with the West and Spanish America, the Bancroft Library has an active acquisition program and is engaged in the preparation of indices and other guides to the vast collection under his administration. William English, director of the program at the University of Missouri for the assembling of basic source materials connected with the history of that state, described the "Planning and Building of a Manuscript Collection in Missouri." Mr. English emphasized the fact that the creation of historical archives is not a haphazard task but one requiring planning and foresight. The final paper of the morning session was in the nature of a "progress report" on the "Oregon State Archives" by Mr. David C. Duniway, State Archivist of Oregon. Mr. Duniway left the impression that the creation and organization of a State Archive requires not only the professional training of an archivist, and the administrative and sales ability of a department store manager, but also the diplomacy of an ambassador. The meeting was presided over by Miss Lola M. Honsher, Archivist, University of Wyoming.

A joint luncheon meeting with the American Association for State and

Local History was presided over by Dr. S. K. Stevens, president of the Association, and the discussion following the luncheon considered "Some Aspects of the Training of Special Personnel for Park and Museum Positions with Emphasis on the Use of Archival and Historical Materials." Mr. Ronald Lee, Chief of the Division of Historic Sites of the National Park Service, discussed briefly some of the problems involved in the work of personnel engaged in historical activities for the National Park Service.

Mr. John Andreassen of the Library of Congress opened the afternoon session with a lively treatment of "Archives in the Library of Congress," briefly noting that other than the archives of the library administration there were vast quantities of archival material which had been deposited in the library previous to the establishment of the National Archives. Mr. Andreassen's paper evoked considerable discussion and the conclusion that the Library of Congress might well publish additional guides to its valuable archive of manuscript collections.

Mr. Emmet J. Leahy, war-time head of the Navy's archival program reported on "Progress in the Management of Business Records." Miss Lillian Baker of the Southern Union Gas Company, Dallas, and Miss Dorothy Taylor, Supervisor of Records for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, briefly commented on Mr. Leahy's report and described progress in their own organizations.

Of special interest to the membership was the final paper of the Eleventh Annual Program, "Hawaii Territorial Archives in the War," by Miss Maude Jones, Archivist of the Territory of Hawaii, who had flown from the Islands to attend the Colorado sessions. Miss Jones described the unique problem of caring for the territorial archives previous to the war as well as on the actual day of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the critical period that followed. For all intentions and purposes the Hawaii Territorial Archives became an actual war agency and Miss Jones and her assistants, for a time at least, engaged in "front line operations." The program was concluded by the presentation to Miss Jones of a beautiful gardenia lei which members of her staff in Hawaii had air mailed to the convention arrangements committee.

At the annual business meeting on September 4 Christopher Crittenden, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, was elected president of the Society to succeed Solon J. Buck. Herbert O. Brayer, Archivist of Colorado and Director of the Cooperative Project for Research in Western Americana in Europe, was selected as Vice-president. Oliver W. Holmes, Program Director of the National Archives, was named council member. Helen Chatfield, Records Officer of the Budget Bureau, and Lester J. Cappon of the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburgh, Va., were re-elected

Treasurer, and Secretary respectively. The time and place for the twelfth annual meeting in 1948 were left undecided by the business meeting and the matter referred to a joint committee of the Society and the American Association for State and Local History.

The Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Society concluded with a barbecue amid the towering pines and pungent spruce at Grizzly Park near Glenwood Springs. Both associations were the guests of the Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club and were entertained by "Tall Tales of the Rockies" recounted by Dr. Levette J. Davidson, President of the Colorado Folklore Association, and Director of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

Members of both organizations attending the sessions at Glenwood Springs took advantage of the recreational facilities offered at Glenwood Springs; many swam in the "World's Largest Outdoor Swimming Pool," rode horseback, climbed the mountains surrounding the typical mountain community or motored to scenic and historical areas in the vicinity. The success of the program was due in large measure to the splendid cooperation of the members of the program committee and the joint committee on arrangements. The hospitality of the State Historical Society of Colorado, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company, the Denver Public Library, and the Glenwood Springs Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club made possible an enjoyable meeting for all who attended.