

Reviews of Books

RICHARD G. WOOD, Editor

The National Archives

Disposition of Federal Records: How to Develop an Effective Program for the Preservation and the Disposal of Federal Records. National Archives Publication No. 50-3. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1949. Pp. v, 40.)

There is probably no aspect of archival practice so difficult as the fulfillment of an intelligent program for the retention or disposal of records. The multiplicity of records and the experience necessary for their proper appraisal make the problem a perplexing one. This carefully planned publication reflects the years of experience Dr. Schellenberg has had with the National Archives in work of this kind. Logically he states the objective of such a program and outlines the steps necessary to its establishment. It is indeed commendable that in defining records the author, in the second chapter, states: "*Records made in connection with the transaction of public business or in pursuance of Federal law are public records, it should be emphasized, and as such they belong to the office, not to the officer; they are the property of the Government and not of the citizen; and they are in no sense personal property. The appropriateness of their preservation by the Government must first be decided by the agency in which they were produced and by the National Archives before they can be legally removed or destroyed.*" Historians have long complained of the practice of some high officials who took the records with them when they vacated an office. This practice has been prevalent in state and local government as well as in the Federal service and it is to be hoped that this interpretation will mark the end of it.

Although this publication, as the title clearly states, was prepared for the preservation and disposal of Federal records, much of the text is applicable to such a program in any type of archival establishment. This is especially true of the third and fourth chapters which treat of the evaluation and analysis of records respectively. The author does not attempt to tell "in three easy lessons" how to solve these two difficult and complex aspects of records administration. He does, however, carefully and logically enumerate and define the factors involved, after which he indicates the steps to be followed for their accomplishment. Archivists everywhere will, undoubtedly, recognize these two chapters as being the best contribution in archival literature on this subject.

The remaining portions of the publication treat of the retirement of records, that is transfer to the National Archives, to a records depository or to another agency; the microfilming of records for preservation or for security purposes; and the methods of disposal of records in Federal agencies. These chapters are followed by an appendix containing a bibliography of manuals

relating to the disposition of Federal records and another appendix comprising the laws and regulations pertaining to Federal records. The instructions and suggestions in these portions should provide an invaluable reference source for public officials and records custodians. In the chapter on microphotography of records it would have been better to point out that microphotography is not the cure-all it is thought by some to be and it certainly would have been advisable to emphasize the dangers of residual hypo as well as inadequate storage facilities for such film.

Disposition of Federal Records is among the most helpful of the publications issued by the National Archives. It is not only an essential working tool for administrators of Federal agencies, but is also the best guide available for archivists or records administrators in agencies other than the Federal Government. The publication reflects a comprehensive knowledge of the subject and the ability to expound that knowledge clearly. This booklet will surely take its place as a standard reference text on the bookshelf of every archivist.

LEON DE VALINGER, JR.

Delaware State Archives

Public Record Office. *Guide to the Public Records. Part I. Introduction.* (London. His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949. Pp. vi, 70. 2 s.)

Scholars who use the Public Record Office and archivists will welcome the new *Guide to the Public Records* to which the present pamphlet is an introduction. The preface is signed by the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, and presumably he is responsible for the format and contents. The new guide will differ from the one prepared by Mr. Giuseppi in 1923-1924 in that the old division of records into legal and departmental will no longer be followed. Also, it is to be issued in separate parts which will be published individually as soon as they are ready. Consequently students will need to purchase only such portions of the *Guide* as they will use. A further advantage of this scheme is that partial revision can be undertaken without republication of the whole.

The introduction itself is a new departure for which there is no precedent. Its purpose, which it fulfills admirably, is to introduce the reader to the Record Office, the repository of British national records, and its work rather than to the contents of the various classes of documents. It is thus of importance to the archivist wanting to learn how the British handle their archival problems and to the searcher in the records who will have a more intelligent understanding of the institution he is using. Students who know the Record Office will feel again the sense of pleasure which such work and its contacts have given them. The spirit of the introduction is the spirit of the Record Office itself — a combination of the past and the present, a feeling for origins and for the problems of modern research.

After a discussion of the meaning and relative merits of the terms "archive" and "record," which, as students know, are synonymous, the author sketches

briefly and with great clarity the development of the various departments of British administration. He then considers the care or lack of care of records in the medieval and early modern periods and the interest in their preservation which developing gradually brought about the passage of the Public Record Office Acts of 1838-1898. One of the interesting results of this legislation is the distinction made between records in the custody of the Master of the Rolls and those under his charge and superintendence. In this connection the old division between legal and departmental was developed. Because this division was based on status rather than on treatment or contents it is to be dropped in the new guide.

The remainder of the introduction is concerned with the functions of the Public Record Office which fall into two categories — the conservation of the national records and the making of them available to the public. In discussing these functions the writer considers them historically and as problems of the archivist.

The chief problem connected with the conservation of the records is that of bulk, bulk which is rapidly increasing due to the complexity of modern administration. The British government has a long continuous history; its earliest document, exclusive of Domesday Book, is a Pipe Roll of 1311. Consequently the natural accumulation of documents over the centuries has been great even though additions have not been made by the purchase or deposit of personal papers or local records. The author deals with the question of elimination and the problems which arise from the fact that the records are rarely used for the purpose for which they were compiled. Conservation also involves such matters as storage, sorting, labeling and listing, for documents must be accessible to both the public and the office itself. There is interesting information concerning upkeep and repair. The poor quality of much modern paper and the possible deterioration of film present problems quite different from those of parchment which has suffered from age and neglect. In all these matters the policy of the Record Office seems to have been to make haste slowly.

The second function — that of the relation of the Record Office to the public — is of particular interest to those who benefit from this function. The elimination of fees for literary searchers, the changing character and increasing numbers of the reading public, the problem of providing space and adequate means of reference to the documents, the increasing use of photography and the facilities for it available in the Record Office, the editing and publication of records, and the office staff are among the problems considered.

The introduction contains a select bibliography and four illustrations, of the building, a storage room, the literary search room, and one showing records housed at Haddon Hall during the war. The cover is a reproduction of an old manuscript.

ELIZABETH G. KIMBALL

University of Massachusetts

Fifteenth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States for the Year Ending June 30, 1949. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1949. Pp. v, 57.)

An "insert" warns us that this interesting and highly informative report is the last of the present series. It may be said that it chronicles the end of an epoch, for on July 1, 1949, the National Archives ended its independent existence and became part of the new General Services Administration. For this reason the report is somewhat more retrospective than usual, and at many points it surveys the events of fifteen years, rather than those of the last twelve months. The record is one of which Dr. Grover and his staff may well be proud. It is indeed "an impressive achievement that between 1935 and 1949 the National Archives, beginning without precedent, has been able to select and transfer to the National Archives Building practically all the noncurrent valuable records of the Government from 1789 to about 1930, as well as others of later date, including the records of the emergency war agencies, and at the same time to give essential service on the records."

Even in purely physical terms the measure of what has been accomplished is astonishing. In round figures the National Archives on June 30, 1949, had just short of 900,000 cubic feet of records in its custody, and this vast manuscript collection was supplemented by 741,000 maps and charts, 37,000,000 running feet of motion picture film, approximately 2,000,000 still pictures, and 300,000 recordings. Equally impressive is the effort the Archives has made to make the material available, and the extent to which it is being used. Reference services during the fiscal year 1948-49 numbered more than 365,000 (or an average of more than 1200 for every day the building was open), and it is noteworthy that nearly 193,000 of these came from various officials and departments of the United States Government.

Yet it is evident that the Archives feels that the great battle still lies ahead. Since 1937 the records of the Federal Government have been piling up at an average rate of a million cubic feet per annum, and at the moment the backlog that must somehow be stored, sifted, and ultimately reduced to manageable proportions has reached the dizzy total of 20,000,000 cubic feet. It is this problem — which differs only in scale from that being faced by lesser governments and many business concerns — that has produced the new profession of records management. Whether one can be both an archivist and a records manager remains, perhaps, to be seen; the one would appear to be governed primarily by immediate and pressing problems, whereas the other must give due consideration to the long-term point of view. Perhaps the solution lies in the creation of a system of transitional half-way storage centers to which the managers may banish documents, but within which only the archivists may exercise the power of life or death.

In any event, what happens in Washington in the next few years is going to be of great interest to archivists everywhere.

W. KAYE LAMB

Public Archives of Canada

Annual Report of the Public Archives Commission, State of Delaware, by the State Archivist, for the Fiscal Year July 1, 1948 to June 30, 1949. (Dover, Delaware. Hall of Records, 1949. Pp. 55.)

In his report to the Public Archives Commission, Leon de Valinger, Jr., again demonstrates the scope of the archival program in the State of Delaware. In addition to acquiring public records and initiating techniques for their preservation, the staff at the Hall of Records has developed still farther its broad services to the public. Significant features of this service program are the planning of a museum, the appearance of *A Calendar of Ridgely Family Letters*, Vol. I, placing of new historical markers, the compilation of a Memorial Volume listing men who served in World War II and the preparation of an *Approved List of Papers and Inks*.

In the summary of materials received during the year, Mr. de Valinger comments on the sound recordings as a source for the historian and research worker. He calls sound a "third dimension," which, added to words and pictures, provides more complete research material than has hitherto been available. A total of 826 recordings on subjects as diverse as sports, folk songs, and fires was received during the year.

In 1948-1949, more rapid progress than ever before was made in laminating manuscripts. By using the Barrow Lamination Process and a new technique for handling bound books, the document restorer processed 10,317 pages, more than twice as much as was done in the previous year. Work was undertaken for the three counties and for the Historical Society of Delaware as well as on the records in the care of the Archives Commission.

To make available the best amount of information in War and Navy Departments Separation Form 53, a punch-card system was devised and put into operation. Although but a small portion of the records has been compiled, the Commission was able to use the cards for compilation of statistics used by the State Senate in the consideration of the veterans' bonus. Only such a system can make usable this mass of records lying dormant in many states.

Mr. de Valinger has in his report enumerated the activities of his staff — a satisfying summation. More important to members of the archival profession, he has described the activities specifically enough to be of real assistance to those who have similar problems.

LUCILE M. KANE

Minnesota Historical Society

Annual Report of the National Archives of India 1947. (New Delhi. Manager of the Government of India Press, 1949. Pp. 29.)

This report reflects the enthusiasm with which Dr. Surendranath Sen and his colleagues are transforming the former Imperial Record Department into the National Archives of the new Republic of India. With the aid of the Government of India which recognizes the importance of an archival establishment of the first rank, the staff are already well embarked on a program of

development which includes the publication of important material, the micro-filming of documents relating to India in foreign depositories both private and public, the building up of a library, and the air conditioning, repair, fumigation, and better arrangement of records. The director and other staff members have had leave to visit foreign archives, including the National Archives at Washington. It is to be hoped that these visits will be reciprocated. Many American and other foreign scholars are not sufficiently aware of the richness of India's archival collections, and archivists visiting India will be particularly interested in seeing how the menace of insects, fungi, and damp are combated.

Independence has brought to all scholars interested in India the opportunity to examine large masses of records either formerly closed or not easily accessible. Perhaps the most important of these is the vast collection of the former Viceroy's Political Department both at the capital and in the agencies and residences throughout the former Indian States. This will all be assembled in New Delhi, transferred to the National Archives, and opened down to 1900. Another rich collection recently transferred is that belonging to the Survey of India. These records range from 1777 to 1898, contain much material which is not merely of a technical topographical nature, and will prove of great interest to historians as well as to geographers. Colonel R. H. Phillimore has described this collection in the January 1947 number of *Indian Archives*, a journal which has been founded to make India's archival collections better known and to publish articles of interest to Indian and foreign archivists and scholars. The first item of a five-year publication program to appear is the *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri* (National Archives, New Delhi, 1949) edited by Dr. Sen in the revived Indian Historical Records Series. Volumes of various classes of correspondence between the presidency governments and the East India Company's Court of Directors (chiefly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century) are to follow. There is also a plan to publish in the original texts much of the Sanskrit, Hindi, and Persian material. The appendixes to this report contain lists of the members of the Indian Historical Records Commission, of the sixty-three scholars (with their subjects) who used the archives during the year, and of the thirty-three search requests answered by the staff.

HOLDEN FURBER

University of Pennsylvania

The Jefferson Papers of the University of Virginia. A Calendar, compiled by Constance E. Thurlow and Francis L. Berkeley, Jr. University of Virginia Bibliographical Series, Number Eight. (Charlottesville, Virginia. University of Virginia Library, 1950. Pp. xii, 343. \$5.00.)

For many years the Library of the University of Virginia has been actively collecting the letters and papers of Thomas Jefferson. The items acquired by gift and purchase, added to the papers relating to the founding of the University which were already in the university archives, today form one of the

finest collections of Jeffersoniana. The present holdings of the University of Virginia Library amount to over 2500 items and are exceeded only in size by the Library of Congress (50,000), the Massachusetts Historical Society (7,000) and the National Archives (5,000). The calendar prepared by Miss Thurlow and Mr. Berkeley provides a ready guide to this important collection.

The University of Virginia collection is of particular value in relation to the interests and activities of Jefferson in the years of his retirement, reflecting the gradual decline of direct connection with politics and his growing concern with humanitarian projects. The larger portion of these papers falls in the years after 1809 with about 300 items relating to the presidential period. The holdings of the University are very scanty before 1783 (only 51 items). In calendaring the papers the compilers have made a particular effort to list completely the names of persons and places and a detailed index makes their efforts completely accessible. The care and skill with which the calendaring has been done is worthy of special consideration. Though by no means an essential part of the usefulness of the work, the handsome typography and press-work deserve particular notice.

Mrs. Helen D. Bullock's informative essay on the Jefferson Papers is appended to the volume. This essay, originally printed in Volume 4 of the *American Archivist*, pp. 238-249, provides considerable insight not only into Jefferson's own attitude concerning his papers, but also describes their dispersal after his death and the location and provenance of the larger collections. Having worked for many years on a checklist of the Jefferson Papers and upon the calendar in its early stages, Mrs. Bullock is in a position to write with judgment and authority.

H. AMMON

Maryland Historical Society

Tenth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N. Y., for the Year Ending June 30, 1949. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1950. Pp. 12.)

Despite the lack of any special publicity program, the sale in June 1949 of the one millionth ticket of admission to the museum of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library indicates public appreciation of its establishment by Congress in 1939 with provision for administration by the Archivist of the United States. This informative eleven page pamphlet depicts progressive enlargement of public service augmenting the primary purpose of preservation and making available for research the Franklin D. Roosevelt presidential papers, his private collections of valuable historical manuscripts and books, and interesting gifts from many nations presented to him and Mrs. Roosevelt.

Acquisitions of the year include daily records of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., as Secretary of the Treasury; papers of John G. Winant during his entire public official career; loaned personal papers of Harry L. Hopkins from the late 1920's to his decease; loaned records of Franklin D. Roosevelt as Gov-

ernor and of Herbert H. Lehman as Lieutenant Governor, 1928-1932, which are to be microfilmed and returned to the Office of the Governor of the State of New York; segments of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal papers relating to her activities as Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights; motion picture film taken at Moscow, Cairo and Teheran Conferences and President Roosevelt's review of the troops in North Africa; photographs and negatives of the Roosevelt family and of people and places associated with them; and sound recordings of speeches of President Roosevelt, Hopkins, Churchill and Stalin.

Limited research privileges in the Library search room are available. A stack area in the attic has been completed. An adequately equipped photographic laboratory has made possible the supplying to the public of photostatic, photographic and microfilm copies at cost.

Preparation of analytical subject indexes of the Roosevelt papers is the major current project.

Administration personnel during the year included for a short period Martin P. Claussen as Acting Director, followed by the appointment of Herman Kahn as Director. He was formerly of the Natural Resources Division of the National Archives. Edgar B. Nixon was reappointed Assistant Director and later became archivist-in-charge of the Library's publications.

The financial report for the fiscal year shows Library expenditures covered by appropriations for the National Archives and a special Treasury account which includes admission fees and certain other income.

HAROLD S. BURT

Connecticut State Library

Colony of Mauritius. *Mauritius Archives Bulletin No. 1, 1948.* (Port Louis, Mauritius. Government Printer, 1949. Pp. 24. \$0.75.)

Mauritius, a British colony in the Indian Ocean since 1810, and held for 200 years before that by the French and the Dutch, has had an archivist off and on since becoming a British possession. The first bulletin issued by the Mauritius Archives Office, this pamphlet contains several sections. An introduction presents a brief history of the public records, which reveals the usual story of neglect and indifference on the part of the island government. A report on the work of the archives for the years 1945-1948 shows the progress made in accessioning and preservation of records, their cataloging and indexing, and the extent to which they are used for reference purposes. Recent steps taken to improve the organization and status of the office are also mentioned. The archives serves as the official depository for government publications and local imprints, and the bulletin contains a list of publications printed in Mauritius in 1948 received in the office. The checklist of notarial records at the end of the bulletin covers one of the most valuable collections in the depository.

HENRY P. BEERS

U. S. Department of State

Guía de Instituciones que cultivan la historia de América, by Carlos B. García. (Mexico, D. F. Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1949. Pp. 231.)

This guide, listing 835 hemisphere institutions (including Canadian), aims to provide a descriptive entry for each item to include name, location, date of founding, officers, members and membership, library reference, services, objectives and publications. But in too many instances only the name is given. All descriptions are in Spanish and are occasionally too brief to be of much assistance.

Unfortunately this volume was published too soon. There appears little justification to spend so much time, effort, and money on so incomplete a work. The listing of names of institution officers gives the work a temporary and transient nature. There are numerous inaccuracies in names and places, and the "Índices por Países," especially for the United States, is of very little value. The United States section is generally weak since many of the state historical societies are omitted. There is no evidence that any one in this country checked these entries. If a title subheading had been added to this guide stating that it was a preliminary or trial edition, the work might have been warranted.

A. CURTIS WILGUS

The George Washington University

Misiones Mexicanas en Archivos Europeos, by Manuel Carrera Stampa. Publicación Num. 93 Instituto Panamericano de Geographia e Historia. (Mexico, D. F. Instituto Panamericano de Geographía e Historia, 1949. Pp. x, 120.)

This little volume was published pursuant to a resolution of the Fourth Assembly of the Panamerican Institute of Geography and History which met in Caracas in 1946. The Commission of History, created by this body to collect the materials necessary for the history of the continent from various parts of the world, commissioned the author of this volume as the first of a series dealing with the American nations. In selecting the missions for his discourse the author asserts that he excluded those not officially commissioned by the Mexican Government or by some scientific Mexican institutions as well as those members of religious orders sent abroad to study in European seminaries, and yet in a position to devote time to the study of history in the archives and libraries.

Of the nine missions which Manuel Carrera Stampa includes, the first, that of Francisco del Paso y Froncoso, dominates the whole book. Not only are half the pages given to this mission, but references to it appear frequently and extensively in subsequent parts of the book. For each of the sketches there appears information on the history of the mission, the present whereabouts and condition of the copies made, the catalogs and inventories, and the lists of records. The accounts of the travels, the programs of work, the details as to pay and clerical help, and the numerous irritating handicaps are highly interesting particularly those pertaining to del Paso y Froncoso. The statements

on the present state of the fruits of these missions, that is, the condition of the copies, reveals a surprising dispersal and possession in private hands. The lists, of necessity, are extremely uneven and dissimilar. Some are numerical lists of legajos with no indication whatsoever of subject matter. Others give an inkling of a very wide variety of subjects. The entries represent the titles of individual documents or maps in some of the lists while in others they are bibliographical tools to library collections. One might wish that the author had had an opportunity to indicate much more extensively than he did, an appraisal of the value of many of the titles and entries. With the aid of an unusually good index, investigators, not only of Mexican history but that of areas adjacent to Mexico also, may find this a useful tool in their researches.

ALMON K. WRIGHT

U. S. Department of State

Archives de l'Etat à Mons: *L'Ancien état civil en Hainaut*, by Maurice A. Arnould. (Brussels. Archives Generale de Royaume, 1949. Pp. 214.)

Archives Générales de Royaume: *Inventaire des archives de la famille de Fourneau de Cruquembourg*, by E. Lejour. (Brussels. Montagne de la Cour, 1949. Pp. 78.)

Archives Générales du Royaume: *Inventaire des archives des Monts-de-Piété*, by I. Delatte. (Brussels. Archives Generales du Royaume, 1949. Pp. 22.)

These three inventories of Belgian archives will be invaluable instruments for research into social, economic, and local history, especially for the Old Regime. In the first volume, Arnould provides a fifty-page comprehensive, fully annotated introduction, information on parish registers from 112 out of 407 parishes of former Hainaut, and an index. Each parish is listed alphabetically, followed by indication of the years covered by the various records, and detail as to the extent of each register. The largest number of registers and the most complete sequence comes from the Howardries, but only for the eighteenth century. The thirty-seven registers of Ramagnies-Chin and Esquermes cover the seventeenth century through the Revolution. Records of births, deaths, and marriages are cited, but also notices of baptisms, the licensing of midwives, indications about Protestants and other information inserted in the original registers. Arnould cautions against incompleteness of statistics drawn from the registers, especially as regards deaths. During the French Revolutionary Regime in Hainaut civil control of all parish records was achieved, and the French language and a uniform system of recording were adopted. Arnould's inventory should serve as a model for archivists, and will save historians hours of research.

The second volume provides an inventory to the private archives of a big estate from the thirteenth through the twentieth centuries. This rich collection was given to the Belgian National Archives in 1938. In his introduction, Lejour traces the genealogy of the family. Documents have been classified into personal papers, property (which includes Belgian, Luxembourgish, French and Dutch estates), and two annexes, one of manorial documents and

the other of miscellaneous documents. The chronology covered has been indicated within each category. Lejour gives greater detail on the content of the two annexes than for the personal and property sections. Manorial registers, accounts, deeds, sales and receipts should be compared with Old Regime documents already utilized. Aside from genealogy, these archives will provide new light or confirm the fine work of Henri Pirenne on the social and economic history of Belgium. Since the papers cover seven centuries, sidelights on foreign rule and wars should emerge from these records as well as valuable chapters to personal and local history.

The third inventory is of documents of the *monts-de-piété*, or public pawnshops instituted in the seventeenth century to provide low-cost loans for the poor during an era when rates were commonly usurious. The introduction furnishes a useful summary of legislation on the Belgian *monts* from their institution in 1618, through financial tribulations in the seventeenth century, improved administration in the eighteenth, suppression during French rule, and reconstitution under Napoleonic law in 1804. The present constitution of pawnshops dates from Belgian law of 1848. Liquidation of the debts of former *monts* during Dutch rule resulted in the deposit of much material in the National Archives at Brussels. Although Delatte is inventorying only documents at Brussels, he has drawn together documents from several classes of archives. Additional documents exist in the local archives of Mons, Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, and Courtrai, but those of Ypres and Tournai do not survive. Although scattered references to *monts* have been given in former inventories of state and local archives, this is the first inclusive inventory of materials of this nature, for any country. The inventory is divided into sections on the successive supervisory organs, the committee on liquidation, the *monts* of Brussels and Louvain, and a few items on those of Antwerp, Malines, Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres. The archives for the *mont* of Brussels are the most extensive, consisting of thirty-seven registers and twenty-seven portfolios covering 1618 to 1810, while the four portfolios and thirteen registers from Louvain cover only 1782 to 1802. Documentation for the eighteenth century is particularly rich. M. Delatte gives little information on the nature of the documents he lists, yet subclassifications of documents suggest their value, not only for the *monts* themselves, but for historians of the relation of the central government (including Spanish, Austrian, French and Dutch administration) to the administration of public welfare, financial history, the rise of capitalism, sidelights on Flemish industry, and the whole field of social and economic welfare. This inventory should stimulate the preparation of similar instruments whenever collections of documents from the *monts-de-piété* exist.

While new implications for the successive governments of Belgium may emerge from the use of the documents inventoried in these three volumes, their chief value will be in the fields of demography, humanitarianism, the development of capitalism, and the social and economic history of both private and public enterprises. These guides to archives will greatly facilitate such research.

BEATRICE F. HYSLOP

Hunter College