

Reviews of Books

RICHARD G. WOOD, Editor

The National Archives

Dominion of Canada, *Report of the Public Archives for the Year 1949*, by Wm. Kaye Lamb. (Ottawa. Edmond Cloutier, 1950. Pp. xxxiv, 462. Illustrations, appendix. Paper bound, \$1.00.)

Though one might suppose from the title that this entire volume or at least the major part thereof would be the report of the Public Archives of Canada, actually only the first thirty-four pages make up that report. The remainder of the volume consists of a 359-page calendar of the despatches of the lieutenant governors of Nova Scotia, 1834-1867; an eighty-nine page summary of the Minutes of the Executive Council of Nova Scotia, 1720-1732; a nine page "Guide to Calendars of Series of Collections in the Public Archives"; and a three page list of "Series and Collections [in the Public Archives] Having Registers or Descriptive Lists." To the present reviewer it seems unfortunate that such a diversity of material has been included in this publication, especially the calendar and summary of the Nova Scotia material. This latter is an entirely different sort of thing from the report of the Archives and more properly should have been issued separately — but perhaps that would have been impracticable.

For present purposes the brief report of the Public Archives bears the chief interest. The most important events of the year, says the Archivist, "were probably the revival of interest in transforming the department into a full-fledged public record office for Canada, and the purchase of a microfilm copying camera." Lack of space has prevented the Archives from taking custody of more than a small fraction of the government's records relating to the period since the Confederation (1867), and the searcher for this later period frequently finds that the records are scattered. The proposed solution is "the construction of a large half-way house for departmental files, controlled and staffed by the Public Archives, but not necessarily situated in downtown Ottawa." When the records in this depository had ceased to have value for official business, they would be reviewed by the Archives staff, those appearing to have value for research would be transferred to the Archives and the rest would be authorized for disposal. A step in the right direction has been made by the Public Records Committee, established several years ago, which has been handling efficiently the disposal of records.

The use of microphotography will change considerably the program of the Archives in obtaining copies of records in London and Paris. For more than seventy years such copying has been done, and most of the copies, even those made in 1949, are handwritten. Obviously microfilming will speed up the

process enormously, errors will be eliminated, and the marginal notes on documents, most of which previously have been omitted, will now be reproduced.

A list of papers or copies of papers acquired by the Manuscript Division during the year is given, with a brief description of each. The Map Division reports the acquisition of some 2,000 maps, charts, and plans during the year, and lists some of the more significant items. The Print Division tells of two notable loan exhibitions made during the year and reports a number of acquisitions. The Library states that its chief need is to round out its collections and fill in the gaps, and that a good start has been made in that direction. There are also reports regarding the Museum, the Research Division, Publications, and Technical Services.

This is an encouraging report. While a great deal remains to be done before Canada can claim to have an up-to-date, adequate archives establishment, at least the Archivist and his staff have visualized what is needed and are attempting to develop a suitable program. That in itself is a long step forward.

CHRISTOPHER CRITTENDEN

North Carolina Department of Archives and History

The Essex Record Office, 1938-1949, a Report, prepared by the County Archivist F. G. Emmison for the Records Committee of the Essex County Council. Essex Record Office Publication, No. 10. (Chelmsford. Essex County Council. 1950. Pp. 28.)

Directly east of the wien of London and north of the Thames Estuary, athwart the seasonal mists that roll in from the German Ocean, smiles the green county of Essex, an undulating suburban countryside larger in area than Rhode Island and as populous as Connecticut or Maryland. While residents of the county have long been articulate in the literary and historical world, not until the era of the Munich Pact did the Essex Record Office come into being at Chelmsford, the centrally located shire town of 26,000 persons, only thirty miles from London.

Designed from the first to be more than a storehouse of local government documents, this county archival institution was in fact intended to gather and preserve in safety "accumulations of official, ecclesiastical, parochial, estate, family, and historical documents relating to Essex." The present pamphlet, in Sunday-go-to-meeting format, is an official report of the up-to-now variety, elaborated by the County Archivist for the Records Committee of the Essex County Council. Herein are found a listing of the members of the Committee; a preface by their chairman, A. Laver Clarke; an acknowledgment to donors and depositors as well as a roster of them; a chart showing possible changes in the custody of estate and family muniments; a statistical table showing services rendered in 1949; and the report proper detailing an enviable record of achievement under the single County Archivist whom Essex has been fortunate to engage, F. G. Emmison. There are seven or eight illustrations and four appendixes.

Starting in 1939 with a staff of six who quickly established a reputation for carefulness and progressiveness, the Essex Record Office easily attracted to its protected semi-basement muniment rooms in the County Hall at Chelmsford many pertinent documents that but for the war might have continued to languish in London or elsewhere. Even so, a precautionary program of photographing 800 maps and making 80,000 microfilm exposures was effected, along with temporary dispersal of some of the Chelmsford holdings to Hertford, Aylesbury, and Wales. The post-war years, captioned years of opportunity, saw these further developments: enlargement of the staff to a permanent complement of sixteen; increased emphasis upon restoration of documents; methodical exploration of outlying private and family collections; reciprocal interchange of documents with nine Essex borough libraries approved as manorial repositories; collaboration between the Education Committee and the Records Committee of the County Council toward ample space for a county museum of historical records; extension of exploratory educational work such as lectures at colleges and schools; and marked improvement of reference facilities particularly the enlargement of three principal indexes — personal names, parishes and subjects. The index of personal names has now grown to 450,000 entries, while cataloging and calendaring have produced some 25,000 sheets of typescript. Best of all, printing is not only being systematically done but it is being done on a very nearly self-liquidating financial basis. Publication in two parts in 1946 and 1948 of the *Guide to the Essex Record Office* comprising 276 illustrated and conveniently indexed pages is being supplemented with the issuance of other publications of which the present item can be greeted as the tenth.

The urgent need now, says Mr. Emmison in a look to the future, is for enlarged physical accommodation, something the County Council may well be weighing. Readers of this report or of Mr. Emmison's short article of similar essence in the second number of *Archives* will certainly conclude that the Essex Record Office is doing a substantial work. Already from the Chelmsford staff have been drawn the county archivists of Berkshire, Gloucestershire, and Glamorgan; and because Essex has demonstrated the community value of a dynamic local records policy, eyes both in Britain and beyond will continue to watch, not without fascination.

H. B. FANT

National Archives

Archivo de don Bernardo O'Higgins. (Santiago. [Archivo Nacional], 1946-1950. Vols. 1-2, Editorial Nascimento and Vols. 3-7, Imprenta Universitaria. 7 vols. Pp. xi, 364; xi, 479; xxvi, 419; 350; xxv, 321; 368; xvii, 383.)

This series of documentary volumes represents an excellent example of what an archive can contribute to the historiography of a nation. Bernardo O'Higgins is regarded by Chileans as the Father of his Country and he holds high

place in their esteem, because of his achievements in the movement for independence and in the establishment of the national government. His was a life of hardships, with its corresponding successes and disappointments. During his lifetime he obtained high honors, played an outstanding role and then finally endured many years of exile. Thus it was natural that a plan was adopted for the complete publication of the documents relating to his activities during the early years of the republic.

By law 7367 of November 20, 1942, a committee headed by the able director of the National Archive, Dr. Ricardo Donoso, was formed to carry out the project. His associates are Sr. Jaime Eyzaguirre Gutiérrez of the Academy of History, Dr. Eugenio Pereira Salas of the Chilean Society of Geography and History, and Sr. Guillermo Feliú Cruz of the National Library. Their task is to assemble and edit all pertinent papers, in an undetermined number of volumes of which the first seven are here mentioned. According to Dr. Donoso, there is to be included in the series "all the documentary material relating to his (O'Higgins) life, to his efforts in favor of the independence of the nation, to the policies which he carried out in the government and to the relations which he maintained with the eminent servants of the cause of Hispanic-American emancipation."

The great bulk of the documents are in the National Archive, others are in the collections of the National Library and some are in private hands. There is included not only the direct correspondence (letters to and from him) and papers of O'Higgins, but also the official correspondence of ministers and diplomats, which reveals the course of events in which he participated. It is to be noted that a large proportion of the documents were inedited, which serves to give the volumes singular importance.

The volumes are well edited, with information as to the source of each document and an indication of those which have been published previously. Helpful introductions by members of the committee have been provided to explain the documents and their setting. Indexes of names are included in each volume. In volume one, which deals with the early life of O'Higgins and the first months of the struggle for independence (1811-1813), the documents are arranged chronologically. Beginning with volume two, the documents are assembled in subject groups, within which they are chronological. This serves more effectively to present the materials for each period. Volume two pertains to the military operations of 1814. Volumes three and four comprise the correspondence of Antonio José Irisarri, the Chilean representative in Europe (1819-1826). Volumes five and six relate to the diplomatic mission of Miguel Zañartu to Buenos Aires (1818-1822). Finally, volume seven deals with the organization of the Army of the Andes under San Martín, the expedition to Chile and the appointment of O'Higgins as Supreme Director of Chile, 1814-1817.

The National Archive of Chile and Dr. Donoso are to be congratulated upon the presentation, in printed form, of such valuable material to interested historical scholars. These volumes may well serve as a model to other national

archives for their programs of documentary publication. This publication project may even suggest procedures which may be helpful to our own National Historical Publications Commission.

ROSCOE R. HILL

Washington, D. C.

Current Records Management Handbook, by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. Records Management Bulletin, No. 3-49. (Washington, 1949. Pp. iii, 16 and unpagéd exhibits interspersed. Mimeographed.)

Although this handbook is intended as an operating manual for the records and communications section of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, with a few deletions of those passages which deal specifically with the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and further elaboration on records management technique, this handbook could be converted easily into a brief source book on records management information. The material covered includes: organizing records and communications; the purpose, scope and responsibilities of the records management section; procedures for handling incoming and outgoing communications; a detailed explanation of the subject-numeric system which is now in force at the Pan American Sanitary Bureau together with an explanation why this particular system was selected. Exhibits of all forms, stamps, sample letters, reports and the like in use, have been included to complete this handbook. Although specifically written for the Pan American Bureau, it also should prove of value to records managers and mail room supervisors in commercial fields.

ANN McDONALD

Records Management Association of New York

Standard Correspondence Filing System Handbook. Part 1. Installation and Operating Procedures. Part 2. File Outline. Part 3. Subject Index. Specialist Supplement No. 2 to Volume XXI, Office Services Reclamation Manual of the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation. (Washington. Bureau of Reclamation, 1949. Pp. xi, 150, unpagéd exhibits. Processed.)

This handbook, issued as "Specialist Supplement no. 2 to Volume XXI Office Services Reclamation Manual," is intended primarily for the use of the employees engaged in communications and records filing operations, and constitutes a revision of the Bureau's *Standard Correspondence File System*, dated October 12, 1943. This revision effects approximately a fifty percent reduction in the number of decimally coded subject files prescribed in the 1943 edition, notwithstanding the inclusion of many new subject files occasioned by changes in Bureau operations and interests.

Special features in the revision are: (1) the incorporation of "Use" statements under many of the file subjects; (2) the insertion of "#" symbols following many code numbers and "Use" statements, designed to guide coding

clerks to the use of more appropriate subject files; (3) a subject index, to be used by correspondence coding clerks and searchers as guide in the use of the File Outline.

The handbook was prepared by the Office of Supply in collaboration with other branches and offices, and with regional and operating offices. It supercedes Circular Letter 3195, dated October 12, 1943. The loose-leaf form, for use in ring binders, permits the insertion of local office instructions or record sheets in close proximity to applicable subject codes. It is divided into three parts, namely: (1) Installation and Operating Procedures; (2) File Outline; (3) Subject Index. Part 1, Installation and Operating Procedures, contains a table of major subdivisions showing their respective classifications and illustrations of "catch cards"; "cross references"; "dummy for files"; and "promise cards."

The basic plan of a decimal file system is used with the following classifications:

- 000. General
- 100. Administration and planning
- 200. Finance
- 300. Property and supply
- 400. Research, testing and technical miscellany
- 500. Design, construction and operation, and maintenance
- 700. Lands and water rights
- 800. Economics
- 900. Personnel

Major and minor subdivisions are indicated. The division of each Classification into its nine subgroups, or so-called *Major Subdivisions*, are represented by a second digit of the primary number; the division of each Major Subdivision into its nine subgroups, or the so-called *Minor Subdivisions*, by the third digit of the primary number. For instance, Minor Subdivisions under the 110 Major subdivision (Authorizations and Policies) are indicated by the following codes and titles: 111. Rules and Regulations; 112. Order and Circular Letters; 113. Memoranda and Bulletins. The three digits making up the primary numbers are reserved for the Classification, Major and Minor Subdivision groups. Additional subdivisions, or so-called *Decimal Subdivisions*, are represented by the assignment of numbers after the decimal and shows the relationship of each subject file to its general antecedents, and also shows its position with respect to subjects of equal rank.

Although essentially a decimal system of classification, examination of the File Outline discloses four variations from the decimal system of classification: (1) state symbols where states and territories are given numbers which are representative of their sequence in an alphabetical list, each state retaining the same symbol number whenever used in the Outline; (2) basin symbols where numbers are given to investigations and planning for proposed Federal Reclamation projects, but without decimal value; (3) numerical sequence symbols when greater subdivisions of a basic subject is required than can be accomplished readily with the true decimal pattern; and (4) dash subdivisions. Care-

ful consideration has been given to all phases of filing: master files, project files, correspondence, tickler call-up system, transfer files, disposition of records, and library operations.

The File Outline (Part 2) includes the ten classification groups with necessary subdivisions. Notes appear under each classification number to assist coding clerks in classifying material to be filed. “#” calls attention to special filing instructions. “Use” statements guide coding clerks to the use of more appropriate subject files. The File Outline has been designed to meet local operating circumstances, recognizing the necessity for the exercise of independent judgment and initiative.

The Subject Index (Part 3) is for the use of the correspondence coding clerks and searchers as a guide in the use of the File Outline. It is arranged alphabetically by subject matter with “*See” reference to classification number. If the number refers to a “series” it is so indicated. Each letter of the alphabet is paged separately, i.e., A 1-12; B 1-5, etc.

The system covered by this *Specialist Supplement* is prescribed as the official standard correspondence filing system for the Bureau. All installations and operations conform to the File Outline. Any proposed changes in the prescribed system by the establishment of new subject files and the assignment of code numbers thereto, must be submitted to and approved by the Commissioner before such changes can be made. This order makes it possible to maintain uniformity through the Bureau.

Separator sheets, with staggered position extended tabs bearing classification numbers, helpful for quick reference, will be furnished all offices using the handbook.

EMMA M. SCHEFFLER

Illinois State Archives

Report of Survey of the Records and Filing Equipment in the Orphans Court, County of Philadelphia, [by Thomas Amelia]. (Philadelphia Committee Pennsylvania Economy League, March, 1950. Pp. iv, 17. Processed.)

This report, as its title implies, consists of a survey of both records and filing equipment. It tells the not-surprising story of inadequate equipment, insufficient storage space, and lack of an adequate inventory upon which disposal of useless papers could be based. The Committee's primary recommendation is that adequate five-drawer file cabinets be acquired. With illustrations, it shows how maximum space can be utilized by the careful placement of such equipment in available space.

Of special interest to the records administrator is the Committee's strong advocacy of the swing-front file cabinet. Many arguments, given to show its superiority to the rigid-front cabinet from both economy and efficiency points of view, are supported by diagrams. The arguments have added weight, coming as they do from an economy group where the emphasis is savings to the taxpayer, not sales profit.

Little is written of the records themselves. The legal value of the records is stressed and certainly this argument has the greatest appeal to officials directly concerned with records preservation. But consideration also ought to be given to their potential historical and genealogical value, which is great. The records date from 1719, and apparently for the greater period of their existence are of more value for research than for legal purposes. It would be interesting to see a discussion of the merits of removing Philadelphia's non-current files to a records depository, thus releasing valuable central city space for present administrative needs.

MEREDITH B. COLKET, JR.

National Archives

General Services Administration, National Archives. *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States Senate*, compiled by Harold E. Hufford and Watson G. Caudill. Preliminary Inventory No. 23. (Washington. National Archives, 1950. Pp. x, 284. Processed.)

This twenty-third preliminary inventory issued by the National Archives is devoted to the "materials from the First through the Seventy-ninth Congress in Record Group 46, Records of the United States Senate, that had been transferred to the National Archives by December 31, 1949." In effect, this group includes all the records of the Senate through the Seventy-sixth Congress which have been preserved. Some of the later materials are still in the custody of the Senate. The actual inventory is preceded by a short statement of the purposes and limitations of the "Preliminary Inventory," a table of contents, and an introduction which in a very few pages sketches the history of the Senate, its major functions and records, and an explanation of the development of this inventory. An index concludes the work. It is of limited usefulness because "the index refers only to names and subjects mentioned in the text of the inventory, and as the inventory gives little of the contents of the records it covers, its index will give no more."

Arrangement of the material is of the simplest. One Congress follows another in chronological order — the table of contents refers only to Congresses — and within each Congress there is a sequence beginning with the Minutes and Journals and proceeding to "Other Records," obviously from most fundamental to least important. The physical description of each record series or group is as complete as ought to be expected in a work of this kind, and the subjects mentioned in the treatment of each group are no doubt those which long experience has indicated are most sought after. Much credit is due, therefore, to Roscoe R. Hill and William J. Van Schreeven and their assistants for developing the "classification scheme" for these records which was used as a guide by Messrs. Hufford and Caudill, who compiled the inventory.

Some questions inevitably present themselves to the reviewer of a work of this kind. One wonders whether the records of the United States Senate are made very much more available by a preliminary inventory. Would it not

have been possible with little more expenditure of time and effort to have completed a final inventory which need not have followed so awkward an arrangement? For example, would it not have been more useful to group all the Presidential Messages together in one entry and include a well-digested analysis of their purpose, their content, and their history? The choice of subjects to be mentioned in the entries — in the final analysis, subjective — may not be worthwhile, and it is possible to doubt whether the labor devoted to an index of this kind is justified. To sum up, is the "Preliminary Inventory" a suitable finding medium for the records of an agency of long history and primary importance?

MORRIS L. RADOFF

Maryland Hall of Records

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