

# Creation of Records: The Program of Colonial Williamsburg

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*Colonial Williamsburg*

EARLY in 1948 the Archives Department of Colonial Williamsburg (the corporation which carries on the restoration of Virginia's eighteenth century capital, begun by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in 1927) undertook a study of suitable materials to be used for all of its written records — permanent and temporary. The purpose of the study was to determine what papers, inks, carbons, typewriters, and ribbons would produce the most satisfactory results in each class, especially in view of the large proportion of records of a permanent nature in the archives. The results of this study of materials used in the creation of records, which has in something less than two years proved most rewarding, should be of interest to other archives and records management agencies.

Because of the historical nature of the Restoration project in both the physical restoration of the colonial city and the interpretation of its significance to the public, most of the records created are of long-time research value. It is well to point out, however, that they represent the activities of two interrelated corporations: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., a non-profit corporation with educational functions, and Williamsburg Restoration, Inc., a business corporation which operates the Williamsburg Inn, the Williamsburg Lodge and other related facilities, the Craft House which sells reproductions of eighteenth century furniture and furnishings, and the Williamsburg Theatre (cinema). Thus the archives of Colonial Williamsburg include large groups of business records as well as those pertaining to research of the educational program.

For twenty years, with few exceptions, Colonial Williamsburg's record materials were chosen for low initial cost, rather than by a selective plan based upon long term records keeping needs. The most outstanding defect in this scheme was the use of a highly impermanent sulphite file copy paper, in contrast to a fine rag paper letterhead for all outgoing correspondence. In view of these circumstances the Archives Department directed its attention to the

question of suitable paper for permanent records through a study made by Miss Wanda Castle, then Assistant Archivist.

At the outset it was apparent that in order to achieve economy and efficiency in a program for improved creation of records, at least a rough scheme of classification was needed. Such a classification presupposes that the originators of records decide upon their retention periods. Therefore

... a program [was] adopted for the creation of all written records which [involves] the classification of records when they are created according to the length of time that it is desirable to preserve them, that is, according to their ... value. In addition the program [involves] the following steps:

1. Specification of materials and equipment to be used in the creation of each type record.
2. Distribution of copies of a record in such a manner that copies of suitable quality will be retained for the archives.
3. Establishment of higher standards of workmanship in the creation of records.<sup>1</sup>

Although file copy paper represents the material bulk of Colonial Williamsburg's files, before this program was adopted No. 1 sulphite, substance 16 or 20, blue file copy paper constituted this bulk. Both sulphite and rag content onionskins were used for multiple copies. There was at least one rag copy — usually the original — for most important archaeological, architectural, furnishings, and historical research reports; and for legal documents (this one being frequently an out-going copy). Most printing, mimeograph, and Ditto duplication was done on sulphite paper. Rough drafts of correspondence and reports were written on paper of far too high quality to warrant such expensive waste. In short, no organized classification according to permanency of records was in effect to which a similar classification of suitable grades of paper could be applied.

The first step in the study was the accumulation of technical data on the characteristics and qualities of paper, including a working knowledge of the processes of manufacture and testing of its properties. Considerable help on this subject came from pamphlets published by the Government Printing Office, especially those of the National Bureau of Standards; and from official publications of State archives and libraries, notably the Delaware State Public Archives Commission. The Byron Weston Company, manufacturers of high rag content papers provided valuable technical information in succinct form. In pursuing the specific task of selecting cer-

<sup>1</sup> From Miss Castle's summary report.

tain brands of paper to be used, other paper manufacturers and distributors were most helpful, particularly Mrs. Mary C. Sutherland of the Everett Waddey Company, Richmond, Virginia, which now supplies most of Colonial Williamsburg's paper. Other archivists shared the benefits of their experience with this department. Especially helpful were Miss Margaret C. Norton, Archivist, Illinois State Library; Leon de Valinger, Delaware State Archivist; and Arthur E. Kimberly, Chief, Preservation Services Branch, The National Archives.

Specifications for papers used by the National Bureau of Standards were adopted as the basis of paper selection, and the "Approved List of Papers and Inks" of the Delaware Public Archives Commission (which used the Bureau's specifications to test a number of papers) contained adequate suggestions for specific brands. 100% rag paper, substances 20 and 13, were prescribed for permanent records—including basic reports, legal documents, and corporation records. Sulphite No. 1, substance 16, for ribbon copies and 50% rag, substance 13, for record copies were specified for routine correspondence and reports. Record copy paper of only 50% rag content (rather than 100%) was selected because it is filed with incoming correspondence which frequently is not on high rag content paper. Buff rather than blue color record copy paper was chosen for good contrast between typewritten characters and background so necessary if photographing is desired; yet it is easily distinguished from other papers, all white. The light weight permits legible typewritten copies to be made behind the record copy, and yet it stands well in vertical file drawers. For multiple copies in general, No. 1 sulphite, substance 9 (onionskin), is used; for special documents (and outgoing copies) 25% rag onionskin. It was felt that two 100% rag copies of permanent and the 50% rag copy of routine records are adequate from an archival viewpoint.

The file copies of duplicated records (mimeograph and Ditto) are a 50% rag typewritten file copy together with a 50% rag duplicator paper copy. Multiple duplicated copies are put on two grades of sulphite duplication paper, depending upon their use. For accounting type records, 100% rag paper was originally recommended for permanent record purposes, but because of the bulk of this group, the Archivist subsequently recommended a return to high grade, inexpensive, low rag content and sulphite papers with a view to microfilming them regularly.

Government specifications and other information from commercial firms were obtained, giving the properties which carbon paper

and typewriter ribbons should have to produce permanent records. However, no agency was found which has selected from the market those products which meet the standards required through a program of testing, such as the one carried out by the Delaware Public Archives Commission in the case of paper. Recommendations from leading manufacturers of carbons and ribbons were considered, and Colonial Williamsburg personnel (in cooperation with sales representatives) made tests on these commercial products, using standard, noiseless, and electric typewriters. Most high grade commercial carbons, and fine cotton, nylon, and silk ribbons were found to be satisfactory. The particular choices of brand are purely empirical and represent the consensus of those engaged in the testing. Remington Rand "Rembrandt" (fine cotton) ribbons were specified for noiseless typewriters, nylon ribbons for standard and some electric (I. B. M.) machines, and I. B. M. paper ribbons for other electrics. After many trials, Miller-Bryant-Pierce "Durite" carbon paper was selected, in light, split, and medium weights, medium finish. The choice of carbon for a particular task depends upon the kind of machine, the typist, and the number of copies to be made.

Colonial Williamsburg uses mostly Remington Rand Noiseless and standard (KMC, Superwriter) typewriters, together with a few Royal models and International Business Machines electric typewriters. These have all proved satisfactory and no change was necessary in this category. It has been found, however, that some typewriters are best suited to certain types of work. Noiseless machines are consistently good for correspondence-type work, and the quality of workmanship in their manufacture gives them long life — hence economy in spite of the high initial cost. Standard machines are preferred by some typists for multiple copies and stencils. Electric typewriters are ideal for multiple copies, cut the most uniform stencils, and are useful in the speedy production of large quantities of copy.

Another important consideration in the preservation of records is the kind of folder used in filing. The paper study revealed that the bleached folder in use for 20 years in the Williamsburg files was subject to acid "bleeding" and hence dangerous to longterm preservation of records. Accordingly, after much investigation, an unbleached kraft stock of considerable stiffness was selected: Remington Rand catalogue Nos. 50488 (letter-size) and 52488 (legal size). This same acid-free quality was desired for index cards, and

a 25% rag, substance 110, stock was selected for archival card records. These items have been most satisfactory.

Some increase in cost of materials for records was anticipated at the outset, but the increase brought about by using higher quality paper, ribbons, carbons, folders, and cards was offset to some extent by quantity buying of specified materials, and by using the most inexpensive materials for temporary records. To this latter end, a low grade of what the trade calls "Canary writing paper" is employed for rough drafts; and multiple copies of duplicated material for wide distribution are placed on low quality paper. And Miss Castle pointed out that the use of carefully selected materials "will constitute a saving in the long run because a number of [Colonial Williamsburg's] records which are now classified as permanent have been placed on impermanent papers in the past and must be copied or photographed in order to insure their life for an indefinite period." This prediction has already proved its truth.

The most notable gain arising out of this program — from an archival viewpoint — is the gratifying result of achieving the second aim of the program, that "[record] copies of suitable quality will be retained for the archives." It is this aspect of the program that Colonial Williamsburg has particularly stressed in urging organizations with which it has close ties to consider for their own records programs. Not only the New York office of Colonial Williamsburg, but the adjacent Rockefeller offices in Rockefeller Center have adopted for their use some of the papers suggested in this program; and the Boston architects, Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, consultants to Colonial Williamsburg, now also use 50% rag paper at least for file copies of their records concerned with Williamsburg, which they regularly transfer to the Williamsburg archives.

To implement the program of improved materials the Archives Department drew up a set of instructions for their use, together with recommendations for the maintenance of highest standards in records creation, including the care of typewriters, use of ribbons, carbons, and inks, and the selection of proper paper for each task. This, point three of the program, has resulted in the improved appearance of the records, and is likewise of great importance for the permanence of the records.

The following chart shows, in condensed form, the application of papers to the various classifications of records now in use by Colonial Williamsburg.

## RECORD PAPERS

## PERMANENT RECORDS

Class I *Special reports and minutes, and legal documents*

Original copy — typewritten	Extra No. 1, 100% new cotton fibre, white bond, substance 13, 16 or 20, depending upon the record	Weston's Bond Byron Weston Company Dalton, Massachusetts
Original copy — ink (accounting)	100% white ledger paper, substance 36	Byron Weston Linen Record
Original copy — Ditto, mimeograph	100% white duplicator, substance 20	Defiance Duplicator Bond Byron Weston Company
Second copy	Extra No. 1, 100% new cotton fiber, white bond, substance 13	Weston's Bond
Third (record) copy (not necessary for legal documents)	50% buff bond, substance 13	Winchester Bond Byron Weston Company
Multiple copies — typewritten	25% white, cockle finish, onionskin, substance 9	Clear Copy Onion Skin Esleek Manufacturing Company Turners Falls, Massachusetts
Multiple copies — mimeograph	No. 1 sulphite white bond, mimeograph, substance 16 or 20	Hamilton Mimeo Bond W. C. Hamilton and Sons Miquon, Pennsylvania
Multiple copies — Ditto	Sulphite Ditto "B"	Ditto, Incorporated Chicago, Illinois

Class II *Outgoing correspondence*

Original copy — typewritten	Colonial Williamsburg letterhead (specially designed)	Eaton Paper Corporation Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Original copy — mimeograph		
Second (record) copy — typewritten	50% buff bond, substance 13	Winchester Bond
Second (record) copy — mimeograph	50% rag white duplicator bond, substance 20	Winchester Duplicator Bond Byron Weston Company
Multiple copies — typewritten outgoing	25% white, cockle finish, onionskin, substance 9, bearing imprint "Copy" and "Colonial Williamsburg"	Clear Copy Onion Skin
interoffice	No. 1 sulphite, smooth white onion-skin, substance 9	Alpena Manifold Fletcher Paper Company Alpena, Michigan

Class III *Routine reports and minutes, and interoffice correspondence*

Original copy — typewritten	No. 1 sulphite white bond, substance 20	Mead Bond The Mead Corporation Chillicothe, Ohio
Original copy — ink (accounting)	25% rag white ledger paper	Blackstone Ledger Byron Weston Company
Second (record) copy — typewritten	50% rag buff bond, substance 13	Winchester Bond
Second (record) copy — Ditto, mimeograph	50% rag white bond, duplicator, substance 20	Winchester Duplicator Bond

Multiple copies — typewritten	No. 1 sulphite, smooth white onion-skin, substance 9	Alpena Manifold
Multiple copies — mimeograph	No. 1 sulphite white bond, mimeograph, substance 16 or 20	Hamilton Mimeo Bond
Multiple copies — Ditto	Sulphite Ditto "B"	Ditto, Incorporated
TEMPORARY RECORDS		
Class IV <i>Rough drafts and widely distributed duplicated material</i>		
Drafts	No. 1 carbon copy sheets	Canary Writing Paper Fraser Paper Company Madawaska, Maine
Widely distributed copies	White Wove, unwatermarked, not suitable for writing, substance 20	Clinto Mimeograph Southern Paper & Supply Co. Richmond, Virginia

# RECORD INKS

Permanent Blue Black Record Ink	The Carter's Ink Company Boston, Massachusetts
Blue Black Permanent Writing Ink Federal Specification TT-I-521	S. S. Strafford, Inc. 603-609 Washington Street New York 14, New York
External Black Writing Ink	Higgins Ink Company 271 Ninth Street Brooklyn 15, New York
Blue Black Electro Chemical Fountain Pen Ink	Thaddeus Davids Ink Company 325 West 66th Street New York 23, New York
Blue Black No. 132 and Jet Black No. 732 for Permanent Records	L. E. Waterman Company 344 Hudson Street New York 13, New York

NOTE: Ball point pens and others containing ink units using writing fluids other than those on this list are not approved for permanent record use.