Reviews of Books

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Federal Records of World War II, Volume 1, Civilian Agencies, Volume 2, Military Agencies. (Washington. U. S. Government Printing Office. 1950. Pp. xii, 1073; iii, 1061. $2.50. each volume.)

There has always been a keen interest in the history of war. Often it has been romantic and heroic in its definitions. Scientific interest in the tactical maneuvering and campaigning has likewise engaged much of the historian's interest and military history has become a highly technical branch of historiography. During the twentieth century the growing interest in non-political history made the history of war unpopular save among a small coterie of officers in the services. This lack of interest was perhaps reflected in the fact that during the First World War very little was done either to write the history of American participation in it or even to create a record.

The outbreak of the Second World War found a number of people in key positions aware of this neglect. Those in government found little of coordinated information about what had happened in war-making 1917-1918 to guide them. Scholars began almost immediately after Pearl Harbor to urge a course of action which would insure a record and a history. Pendleton Herring, then of the Harvard University Department of Government, the representatives of the American Historical Association on the Social Science Research Council, and various other historians began to work. Likewise since the First World War the National Archives had been created and there were in that organization a number who were interested in the problem.

President Roosevelt himself was always interested in records and history and the upshot was that in 1942 the President suggested the creation of a Committee on Records of War Administration in the Bureau of the Budget. The Social Science Research Council set up a Committee on War Studies the next year. The American Historical Association and representatives of government gave serious consideration to the desirability of creating an official commission to write a history of the war but finally the decision was against it. Instead, the Budget Bureau's committee and the committee of the Social Science Research Council were merged in a National Advisory Council on War History.

These agencies moved in two directions. One, which cannot be appropriately considered here, was to secure a great variety of historical accounts of all phases of war activity, in both armed service and civilian agencies. The other was to create a great and controlled series of records. The Bureau of the Budget and the National Archives directed this great task under direct mandates from Presidents Roosevelt and Truman.

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Shortly after the War came to its reputed end President Truman moved to continue the collection of the record, and to make it available. He set on foot the project to prepare a guide to this record. Failure of appropriations hindered the project but at length the National Archives has been able to complete these comprehensive guides under the direction of Dr. Philip M. Hamer.

The first of these volumes lists the records of the Civilian Agencies: the legislative, judicial, and the complex executive branches embracing the White House, the departments, the emergency agencies, and a variety of other independent offices, domestic and foreign. The second volume, equally large, is devoted to the armed service record.

The records here listed are amazing in their bulk and comprehensiveness. It is not possible to do more than report that they will be a constant mine of information to all scholars. And "all scholars" can be said advisedly because so immense is modern warfare that it embraces all walks of life. A feature which adds greatly to the usefulness of these guides is the fact that they bring together the bibliography to date of the publications, both governmental and private, pertaining to the war effort. The records were made and are available, if only we could recruit the army of scholars necessary to exploit them properly.

All concerned in the great cooperative effort which resulted in this publication deserve the highest commendation for making such widely scattered information so readily available.

ROY F. NICHOLS

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Where are the Historical Manuscripts? A Symposium, by Herbert A. Kellar, William N. Bischoff, S. J., Harry C. Bauer, and S. K. Stevens. *Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History,* Vol. II, No. 4. (September, 1950.) Pp. 103-127.

Mr. Kellar states the problem and draws attention to the speakers' diversity of viewpoint. He emphasizes the difficulty of locating manuscripts, because of great bulk and dispersal, and suggests a possible solution in the creation of a National Union Catalog. He sees the beginnings of this index in the existing inventories compiled by the Historical Records Survey, along with privately published inventories and unpublished descriptions of individual collections.

Father Bischoff's remarks on "Tracing Manuscript Sources" are effectively illustrated by a virtual case history of a research problem taken from his own experience. He states the possibilities open to a historian: rearrangement of others' work; use of readily available material; exhaustive search for new material. In the latter, which is the only true research procedure, the historian travels many miles and suffers countless disappointments. This is the history professor speaking, the man for whom we are trying to solve the

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problem. He suggests that *regional* union catalogs be established on the same principles that govern bibliographical centers now in existence.

Mr. Bauer, the librarian, attempts to tell us where manuscripts should be. With specific illustrations he discusses the unsuitable location of certain papers. He demands proper cataloging, but admits that we have accomplished miracles when we have rescued the papers and adequately housed them.

Mr. Stevens, a State historian, discusses microfilm. He sees here a possible solution to the problems of bulk and dispersal. He brings out a fact which needs constant emphasis — that great quantities of documents having purely utilitarian value are not sacred relics. Their content can be appropriately preserved on film and sent to the historian. He recognizes the difficulties, a critical one being proper arrangement before filming.

Space limitations permit only this unfortunately brief summary of a vigorous discussion wherein logic does not consistently triumph over enthusiasm. Mr. Bauer maintains that Father Bischoff's proposal for a "central depository for manuscripts" is impossible, but Father Bischoff asks for *regional union catalogs*. His citing of regional bibliographical depositories as examples of cooperative effort clouds the issue. Collections and catalogs are two different things. He might better have described the Union Catalog of books at the Library of Congress, and such regional union catalogs as the one for the Detroit area.

As this symposium is in itself an admission that papers cannot always be in logical places, Mr. Bauer's section might have been differently slanted, though in spite of its title, it presents effectively the librarian's place in the picture. This is important, since the librarian will probably be the one to put an index into operation and maintain it. However questionable the extent of progress represented here, this is the sort of thing we must have before planning. It is a good beginning. It would be helpful if, as an addendum, the reader could have some indication of the trend of the discussion which followed.

DOROTHY KING

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La Restauration des Documents aux Archives Générales du Royaume, by Jacques Bolsée. (Extract of *Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées de Belgique,* T. XXI — No. 1, Brussels, 1950. Pp. 11. One illus.)

The archival profession in Europe is much older than in America with the natural consequence that we of the New World have long turned to Europe for guidance and precedent. In some techniques and methods, however, American archivists are considerably more advanced than their Continental colleagues. Consequently, it is of considerable interest to American archivists, as it will undoubtedly be to archivists in other parts of the world, to learn of the reactions of the first European archives to employ the lamination method for the restoration of documents.

Mr. Bolsée tells interestingly of the attempts prior to World War II to

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restore documents by the use of cellulose acetate foil applied with a liquid adhesive rolled on manually. He also refers to unsuccessful attempts to use cellulose acetate to which the manufacturer had applied an adhesive for instant use. The historical background of the lamination process continues by relating that the United States National Bureau of Standards conducted tests which determined the feasibility of employing the use of cellulose acetate foil under heat and pressure for the repairing of documents. In 1936 the National Archives acquired a hydraulic press with steam-heated platens to carry out the recommendations of the Bureau of Standards and dispense with the much slower manual method of repairing documents heretofore employed in archival institutions. Following a comparison of the National Archives method and the process developed by Mr. William J. Barrow of Richmond, Virginia, including his acid-removal method for contaminated papers, M. Bolsée gives a detailed account of the operation of Belgium's Barrow Laminator which was the first one in Europe [France has since purchased one].

American archivists and others who have followed the progress of lamination will undoubtedly be interested to learn from this monograph that the staff of the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels had no antipathy to this process, but were well pleased and enthusiastic about the equipment and procedures for its use as developed here in America. M. Bolsée relates that it soon became evident that some records in their archives required treatment not encountered extensively here. Documents badly deteriorated by mold, charring, or oxidation of the cellulose fibres by acidity were first sized with a solution of cellulose acetate in acetone after which they were successfully laminated. Some of the books badly burned in the fire at the State Archives in Liege, Christmas 1944, were restored in this manner. Another method adopted as part of their regular restoration process was the placing of a badly charred or deteriorated document between sheets of tissue, then between screens preparatory to immersion in the solutions for the neutralization of acidity. It was found that this greatly reduced chances of further damage to already fragile documents.

Although American archivists may not fully comprehend M. Bolsée's pride in calling attention to their collection of 32,000 molds of seals made by the same staff members who attend to document restoration and photography, they understand and hear a phrase familiar to them when he writes: "We well realize that in Belgium we have to, and we know how to do much with very little. . . ."

LEON DEVALINGER, JR.

Delaware State Archives

National Archives, *List of Documents Relating to Special Agents of the Department of State, 1789-1906*, compiled by Natalia Summers. Special list No. 7. (Washington National Archives, 1951. Pp. xi, 229. Processed.)

The foundations for this volume were laid nearly thirty years ago. At that time the documents were still in the Department of State. The condition of

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the Archive Room at that time seems hardly credible. Two persons were in immediate charge. One was a man of unsound mind who was addicted to smoking in the room; ultimately his madness became acute and he was removed. The other was a young man discharged dishonorably from the Navy for imperiling the life of a patient by what can charitably be called a pharmaceutical experiment. Neither had training, background, or interest as foundations for his task. If a document was called for by using the Roman numeral for the volume, it was not delivered because the request was "in Latin."

The only printed list of special agents in existence was a short one in Moore's *Digest of International Law*. The confidential "precedent list" in the Department itself consisted of only about eighty names. There was no careful definition of the status of such agents, and no procedure for expanding the list or improving its quality. On the occasion of my first visit to the Department, I had already compiled from printed sources a list at least four times longer than the Department's own.

These were the circumstances under which Mrs. Summers began her work in the Archive Room of the State Department. As long as she stayed there, and all the time she was in the National Archives, this topic remained a major one among her many preoccupations. There was no "systematic" method available, for as this volume indicates, references to special agents occur in so many categories of documents — diplomatic, consular, departmental — that only by continuous attention in the midst of the multifold duties of an archivist could references be accumulated until something like a complete list was compiled. "Something like a complete list" is a deliberately chosen phrase; without a specific review of *all* the archives there could not be a complete list.

Moreover this list deliberately excludes some classifications of agents. One particular group which is omitted had considerable constitutional importance: ceremonial agents were the first to receive titles ordinarily reserved to officers confirmed by the Senate. Agents with the rank of ambassador, now a fairly common occurrence, were first sent on ceremonial errands. Practice has so greatly expanded usage that rank is now assigned agents who conduct important negotiations. In short, precedents were often initiated in ways far removed from their ultimate use.

This work has been done with infinite care over a long period of years. The editing is excellent, the appendix of great utility, and the index makes cross-checking easy. For persons working in American diplomatic history before 1906 it is invaluable. Needless to say, practice since 1906 has expanded the use of special agents immeasurably, but for the earlier period the list will henceforth be indispensable. It is the first special list of the National Archives which deals with foreign relations and the papers taken over from the Department of State. It is to be hoped that others of like quality and utility will follow.

HENRY M. WRISTON

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Selected Writings of Bolívar, compiled by Vincente Lecuna, edited by Harold A. Bierck, translated by Lewis Bertrand, published by Banco de Venezuela. (New York. The Colonial Press Inc., 1951, 2 vols., Pp. liv, xv, 822.)

The purpose of the compiler and the publisher of this work was to make known to English-speaking countries Bolívar's part in the war of independence, his ideas on the solidarity and union of the peoples of America, and his views on the form of government best suited to them. To accomplish this purpose the compiler selected 327 documents from his *Cartas del Libertador,* (11 vols., Caracas and New York, 1929-1930 and 1947) and his *Proclamas y Discursos del Libertador,* (Caracas, 1939). With a few exceptions these are letters or public pronouncements by the Liberator. To a preponderant extent the letters were addressed to persons relatively obscure to the English-speaking world. Perhaps a dozen of these were directed to British subjects, but none to acquaintances in the United States. Among the Spanish American participants in the correspondence, Santander received approximately 50 of those appearing in the collection.

The compilation is provided with a chronological list of the documents which gives the name of the person addressed and only occasionally his official or unofficial position. Much of the usefulness of the volumes depends upon the index. To compile an index satisfactory to all the varied uses to which a book may be put is well-nigh impossible, but one might wish that the indexer of this work had been a little less correct in including all the host of proper names and instead had expanded the entries dealing with the political philosophy of Bolívar. Clues to his thinking on many problems of government that remain as unsolved today as in the time of Plato, are buried under the name of a country or under the entry "Bolívar".

The compiler, the editor, the Banco de Venezuela, and all the others who participated in producing this work should, however, be commended for the many points of real excellence. The introduction dealing with "The Life", "The Man", and "The Sources" provides a very good account of the Liberator and of his archive. Equally deserving of praise are the carefully drawn maps and the magnificent illustrations. The neat appearance, the clear print, and the smooth translation make this compilation a pleasure either to consult or just to browse within.

ALMON R. WRIGHT

The Department of State

Great Britain. Public Records Office. *Summary of Records.* ([London], 1950. Pp. ix, 366. Processed.)

The *Summary,* a copy of which has been recently added to the Library of the National Archives in Washington, is a large volume in typescript and comprises some 366 folio pages. It represents the present state of a work which, as may be learned from the first — introductory — part of the new *Guide to the Public Records*[1], has been in course of preparation, amendment,

[1] *Guide to the Public Records: Part 1 — Introductory.* London, His Majesty's Sta-

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and amplification since work upon it began in 1907. It was in 1912 that a new era opened for the student, when a copy of the *Summary* in its original form, typed on the typewriter which was itself then a novelty in the Department, was first placed in one of the Search Rooms in the Public Record Office. At the time this was regarded as a revolutionary proceeding, so great, one must assume, was then the secrecy surrounding the "Mystery" of Archive collation. Since that time, however, it has made steady progress, passing through a number of editions, but remaining throughout in typescript and intended essentially for internal use in the Department. In the near future, however, it may achieve a wider publicity, for we are promised that a shortened version of it, in narrative form, will be the next part of the new *Guide* to be published, and that this will give an *aperçu* of the whole contents of the Public Record Office.

In its present form, however, and lacking the "narrative" it is justly claimed that the *Summary* furnishes a survey of the Public Records such as does not exist, it is believed, in any other National Archives. This claim must not, of course, be taken as in any way reflecting upon the general usefulness of other guides, such for example as Mr. M. S. Giuseppi's *Guide to the Public Records,*[2] or the National Archives Guide.[3] The importance of the *Summary* derives from the fact that in the Public Record Office it serves so many essential purposes. Primarily its object is the location of any given record, but as well it forms the basis of all working indexes used in the Office — indexes, for example, of production, of repairs, of photographs made, of documents in the Museum, and so forth — and is the basis of the comprehensive *"Catalogue"* of all official calendars, lists, indexes, etc., which was compiled by Mr. M. S. Giuseppi in connection with his edition of the *Guide.* It governs, so far as is possible, the order of these works on the shelves in the Search Rooms, and of the records in the Strong Rooms. In this way it brings together otherwise unconnected groups of the records as parts of a single whole, maintaining that relation even where some decentralisation may become necessary, and so acts as a link between all sections of the work of the Department.

A work of this nature, therefore, hardly lends itself to immediate comparison with a work such as the *National Archives Guide,* which is conceived upon entirely different lines. Where, however, it may stimulate interest and discussion is in the differences which it reveals in the methods of record conservation and indexing. In the present edition of the *Summary,* for example, we find some 82 groups arranged in strict alphabetical order, the group headings being of the most general nature, e. g., Admiralty, Chancery, Exchequer (11 groups), and so forth, while within the groups the records are sub-divided under a large number of class headings. In the *National Archives*

tionery Office, 1949. (The sole portion of the new *Guide* which has so far been published).

[2] *A Guide to the Manuscripts preserved in the Public Record Office,* by M. S. Giuseppi, London, H.M.S.O. 2 Vols. 1923, 1924.

[3] *Guide to the Records in the National Archives.* Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1948.

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Guide the group headings, numbering some 224, are much more particular in their nature, and the classes within the groups correspondingly much more limited. The sequence followed is not alphabetical.

It is obviously not possible here to go into the reasons, historical and other, underlying the differences between the two systems outlined. Which of them proves superior in dealing with ever expanding collections of archives will no doubt emerge in course of time.

J. A. GIUSEPPI. F.S.A.

Thames Ditton, Surrey, England

Annual Report on the National Archives and Records Service. From the Annual Report of the Administrator of General Services for the Year Ending June 30, 1950. (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1951. Pp. 51-74.)[1]

Those who have followed the work of the National Archives in Washington or have read its important series of *Annual Reports* in order to obtain information concerning it, will take a lively interest in the present publication. It is doubtless no exaggeration to say that the report for the year 1949-50 marks an event in the archival world. Confronted by the ever-growing mass of official records, a consequence of general evolution and also a direct effect of World War II, the National Archives in less than ten years has found itself faced with a situation which, without the making of tenacious efforts to meet it, might have been catastrophic: buildings overflowing, annexes becoming insufficient, inability to receive new accessions and to handle former accessions, danger of seeing its reference service finally paralyzed, even the risk to agencies, submerged by records, of losing their efficiency. The postwar reports have given the alarm and sketched partial solutions: the submission by the agencies of lists and schedules; the organization of provisional repositories for records not to be permanently retained.

In 1949, as a result of the Hoover Task Force Report and the desire to increase the efficiency of the Executive Branch, the National Archives was transferred to the General Services Administration, whose head has received responsibilities for all records of the Federal Government. The report for 1949-50 sets forth the measures which have been taken to attack the problem at its roots: a survey by agency of records, even of the organizational set-up of the agencies. After the survey the agencies have had to prepare lists of the records that they create in order to determine rules of disposal and retention. A manual on the *Disposition of Federal Records* has been published. The question of disposing of records that have been microfilmed has been discussed. After the taking of a census of agency repositories, the possibility of regrouping a large number of them in a dozen Federal Records Centers was studied; a pilot center has been established for the New York zone in Brooklyn, other centers will be established. These centers will receive the records to be temporarily

[1] This review, originally submitted in the French language, has been translated by Carl L. Lokke, associate editor.

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retained and the National Archives will continue to receive the records which constitute the historical capital of the Union. At the National Archives the records already accessioned have been reevaluated to the end of gaining space; for the preservation of records (repair, lamination, and microfilming) further steps have been taken. The number of reference services is increasing (from 78,000 to 88,000), yet the inventorying of records has not suffered, witness in particular the publication of the *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States* and the guide, *Federal Records of World War II.*

There is appended a report on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; the Library's year was marked by the opening to historical research of 85% of the late President's papers, 1910-45.

The report for 1949-50 presents, then, such a total array of efforts that one can only render homage to the clearness of perception and the vigor of the men who administer the agency. They set a magnificent example for archivists of all countries.

CHARLES BRAIBANT

Direction des Archives de France

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