

# The Safekeeping of Business Records in Europe<sup>1</sup>

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**B**EFORE beginning this paper, I must convey the feelings of esteem of the Belgian archivists to the Society of American Archivists and hail, in its members, the mighty American Nation. There is reason for me to rejoice at my presence among you — because, for more than a quarter of a century, the United States and its scholars in particular have been in the van of the study of economic archives.

History, mirror of the past, studies the evolution of society from most varied points of view: political, cultural, religious, sociological, and economic. As H. Pirenne has said, "The historian is a man who loves life and can look at it." By that he meant that the historian must understand human activity in its most complete essence and must endeavor to build it up again faithfully, in the distant or the near past.

Now, surprising as it may seem, it is only since the end of the nineteenth century that historiography has tended towards that perfection. For a long time it confined itself preferably to the political view, rather than deliberately considering other expressions of the peoples' lives: art, sociology, economy.

The modern historian, impressed by a prodigious economic development, soon understood the importance of economics in contemporary society. Indeed, economics has never acted so powerfully on society as during the period that comprises the introduction of mechanism and the birth of great modern industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The progress of science has not only in-

<sup>1</sup> This article is the text, annotated, of a paper read at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, at Detroit, Michigan, September 13, 1953. Besides giving a summary of the survey of economic archives published by the author in 1934, it contains a supplement concerning the period 1935-50. The text of the original survey, entitled "Les archives économiques," may be found in *Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées de Belgique*, 1934, pp. 7-33; *Revue d'Économie Politique* (Paris), 1935, pp. 1567-1568; and the article "Wirtschaftsarchive," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44:113-130 (1936).

Mrs. Moens, R. Van Passen, and A. Jansen assisted the author in translating the original French text.

creased production a hundredfold but has also revolutionized civilization and has set it on new bases: economics has become the lever of the world, of the domestic life of different countries, of relations between nations. Rightly appreciating the incidence of economics on historiography, a French scholar has written that in future the historian will no longer study history with most attention to battles, political parties, and diplomatic treaties, but with consideration of economic plan.<sup>2</sup>

To draw up a perfect picture of our epoch, the historian will have to have frequent recourse to economic records; that is, to the archives of commercial, industrial, and financial concerns.<sup>3</sup> This statement is not yet a truth accepted by all scholars. Too many historians are still under the delusion they can write history, especially economic history, by means only of government records and printed documents. Even in 1951 the Paris professor, Henri Germain Martin, expressed his conviction that the ever-increasing action of the state, the multiplicity of organisms for economic observation, and the abundance of the economic press and annuals have greatly facilitated the historians' tasks.<sup>4</sup>

That is an error against which we must fight. For the study of economic life, preference must be given to business archives rather than to government records, which must assuredly not be neglected but are decidedly not so suggestive. Many a historian has found that out to his own cost. To keep exclusively to administrative archives makes one run the risk of getting imperfect knowledge of events. Professor Ashton has expressed his opinion in formal terms: "differences of opinion may spring from differences in the source of evidence. . . . It is natural, that those who look at the period [of the industrial revolution] through Home Office records . . . should form a less favorable judgment than those whose work has been based on the records of business leaders. . . ." <sup>5</sup> Your learned compatriot, Henrietta M. Larson, adds: "Government publications are rightly used by the business historian sparingly and with sus-

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Schmidt, "Les archives économiques modernes," in *Revue de Paris*, May 15, 1926, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* See also P. Leuilliot, "Les archives d'une banque contemporaine, ce qu'elles contiennent, ce que l'on peut en tirer," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 3:369 (1931); B. Gille, "Les archives d'entreprises," in *Revue Historique*, Oct.-Dec. 1952, p. 186; and N. S. B. Gras, "Les affaires et l'histoire des affaires," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 3:1-10 (1931).

<sup>4</sup> H. Germain-Martin, *Cours de documentation et de méthode économiques*, 375 (Paris, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> T. S. Ashton, "The Industrial Revolution; a Study in Bibliography," in *Economic History Review*, 8:14-15 (1937).

picion, they are rarely original sources, and they are often intended to prove something rather than to present all the evidence."<sup>6</sup>

The study of the nineteenth century is rendered difficult by the fact that many economic records have been destroyed; this destruction has been facilitated by the indifference of the historians and the ignorance of businessmen themselves of the scientific utility of their records. About 1910, among some 100 banks of the Rhineland barely 5 had more or less preserved their records.<sup>7</sup> In 1919, when the records of many German firms became the property of the Belgian state, only a few of them had records prior to 1900.<sup>8</sup> No industrial power of Europe, either in England, Germany, or France, has kept anything of importance among the records of the pioneers of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

It is essential for European countries to gather what still exists today and to secure the future by safeguarding the industrial and commercial records from now on.<sup>10</sup>

That is the imperative and urgent task that historians and archivists have set themselves in many countries. Let us here remember a precursor of the good cause, Malachy Postlethwayt, who, as early as 1774 in his *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, advocated the formation of a college of merchants whose care it should be to collect papers about Englishmen who had enhanced the renown of their country by their economic activity.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that a systematic campaign was opened in favor of the safekeeping of such records. For this, credit must be given to Germany, where the efforts of Tille, Dochow, and Schwann met a favorable response from the German industrial élite<sup>12</sup> and from the Chamber of Commerce of Cologne, which in 1906 founded the Rheinisch

<sup>6</sup> H. M. Larson, *Guide to Business History; Materials for the Study of American Business History and Suggestions for Their Use*.

<sup>7</sup> M. Schwann, "Wirtschaftsarchive," in *Deutsche Wirtschafts-Zeitung*, 9: 287-293 (1913).

<sup>8</sup> *Les archives de l'État en Belgique de 1919 à 1930*, pp. 388-391.

<sup>9</sup> T. S. Ashton, "Studies in Bibliography," in *Economic History Review*, 5: 104-109 (1934); Gille, in *Revue Historique*, Oct.-Dec. 1952, pp. 190-191.

<sup>10</sup> Ch. Schmidt, "L'organisation rationnelle des entreprises," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 2: 65 (1930).

<sup>11</sup> I. Stuart Sutherland, "The Accounts of an Eighteenth Century Merchant," in *Economic Historical Review*, 4: 367 (1932).

<sup>12</sup> A. Tille, "Neuere Wirtschafts Geschichte," in *Deutsche Geschichts-Blättern*, 6: 193-195 (1901); V. Dochow, "Wirtschaftliche Archive," in *Jarbüchern für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 85: 681-685 (1905); M. Schwann, "Wirtschaftsarchive," in *Deutsche Wirtschafts-Zeitung*, Zentrall Blatt für Handel Industrie und Verkehr, 9: 287-293 (1913).

Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv there.<sup>13</sup> In October 1913 in the same city there followed the meeting of an Allgemeiner Wirtschafts Archivtag.<sup>14</sup>

This German action soon influenced Switzerland and Holland, where the Schweizerische Wirtschaftsarchiv was created at Basel<sup>15</sup> and the Archiv für Handel und Industrie at Zurich,<sup>16</sup> both in 1910, and the Nederlandsch Economisch Historisch Archief at The Hague in 1914.<sup>17</sup>

After the lull caused by World War I, propaganda was set going again. Then in succession came in 1923 the declaration of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, urged by Professor Below; in 1925 at Boston the foundation of the Business Historical Society; in 1926 the appeal of the Academie des sciences morales politiques de Paris.<sup>18</sup> Three years later, two new periodicals, the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* and the *Economic Historical Review*, the former in France, the latter in England, launched an enthusiastic contest, the effects of which caused the creation in London in 1934 of the Council for the Preservation of Business Archives.<sup>19</sup> In Germany several studies relative to business archives were published between 1935 and 1942.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> M. Schwann, "Die Aufgabe, die Organisation und die bisherige Tätigkeit des Rheinisch-Westfälischen Wirtschaftsarchiv zu Köln," in *Commission permanente des Congrès internationaux des Archivistes et des Bibliothécaires, Congrès de Bruxelles 1910; Actes publiés par J. Cuvelier et L. Stainier*, pp. 390-398. On pp. 393-394 is a list of archives acquired up to 1910.

<sup>14</sup> Ch. Schmidt, "Les archives économiques modernes," in *Revue de Paris*, 1926, p. 372.

<sup>15</sup> R. Wackernagel, *Des Schweizerische Wirtschafts-Archiv in Basel* (Basel, 1911); Ch. Schmidt, "Les archives économiques modernes," in *Revue de Paris*, May 15, 1926, p. 375; *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 37: 281-282 (1928). See also a sketch of the contents of this depository by Et. Sabbe, "Les archives économiques," in *Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées de Belgique*, 1934. An inventory of the collections appeared in 1914 and 1919.

<sup>16</sup> *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 37: 282 (1928).

<sup>17</sup> *Nederlandsch Archievenblad*, 24: 21 (1916); H. Hauser, "Les archives privées," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 2: 558 ff. (1930). This organization until 1943 published an annual *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek, Bijdragen tot de Economische Geschiedenis van Nederland*.

<sup>18</sup> Ch. Schmidt, "Les archives économiques modernes," in *Revue de Paris*, May 15, 1926, pp. 371 ff.

<sup>19</sup> A. V. Judges, "The Preservation of Business Records," in *12th Annual Conference of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaus*, Sept. 21, 1935, republished in *British Records Association*, 1: 8 ff.; A. V. Judges, "Wirtschaftsfakten, ihre Sicherung und Benützung in England," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44: 131 (1936); *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 7: 448-449 (1935); H. Jenkinson, "Ziele und Arbeiten des Britischen," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44: 144 (1936). Dispersed English business archives are described by Sabbe in *Revue d'Économie Politique*, Sept.-Oct. 1935.

<sup>20</sup> A complete bibliography for Germany and neighboring countries (entries 63-150) has been published in *Archivar*, 3: 143-145 (July 1950).

Since the Second World War the campaign in favor of economic records has revived and has even extended to new countries — Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. In England, the works of W. H. Chaloner, *Business Records as a Source of Economic History With Special Reference to Their Selective Preservation in Libraries*, and F. G. Emission, *Business Archives; the Selection of Records for Retention*, once more drew the attention of the business world and of historians to the question.<sup>21</sup> In Finland appeared, in 1947, a call by Otto Brenn, *Några synpunkter på vår firmanistika*. Ake Kromav, a Swede, published in 1947 a study about industrial records and in 1948 one about those of the banks of his country.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of economic records figured on the program at the International Congress on Archives held in Paris in 1950. Yet, for lack of time, the debate was curtailed; and the reporter himself, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, upset his report.<sup>23</sup>

From this quick survey it is obvious that even now, in most European countries, men of science are concerned about the conservation of economic records, in behalf of today's and tomorrow's historiography. If now we make up the final accounts of the practical results that have been achieved, we cannot but notice that, however encouraging they may be, they don't come up to the promoters' enthusiasm. Germany and France, the latter quite recently, have achieved the greatest success.

In Germany, the Rheinisch Westfälische Wirtschaftsarchiv has displayed, ever since its foundation in 1906, an effective activity. Having, before 1914, the disposal of an annual budget of 30,000 marks, this institution enabled the Rhein-Nordsee Schifffahrtsgesellschaft, the bank of Schaffhausen, the mines and blast-furnaces of Stolberg, the firm of Mathias Stinnes, and the railway directorates of Cologne, Essen, and Elberfeld, to deposit their records. Afterwards, the firms of Rautenstrauch and Co., Hugo Stinnes Schmidt, the Neuss Papierfabrik A. G., the Verein Deutscher Hussingwerke, and the bank Deichnau and Co., contributed to enrich its collections. During the last war these archives suffered heavy losses.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> W. H. Chaloner, "Business Records as a Source of Economic History With Special Reference to Their Selective Preservation in Libraries," in *Journal of Documentation*, 1948, and *Genealogist's Magazine*, vol. 115.

<sup>22</sup> Otto Brenn, *Några synpunkter på våra firmanistika* (Helsingfors, 1947); V. Dybdahl, "Ehrversankiver i undlander," in *Ehrvervshistorisk Arbog*, 1:19-34 (1949); A. Kromnow, "Hur Man Ordinar ett Industriarkiv," in *Handledning utarbetad på uppdrag av Sveriges Industriförbund* (Stockholm, 1947).

<sup>23</sup> See the report of H. Jenkinson, in *Archivum*, 1:104-109 (1951).

<sup>24</sup> See the bibliography mentioned in note 13 and "Bericht über die Aufgaben, die Organisation und die bisherige Tätigkeit des Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschafts-

The big German concerns, generally, understand the practical interest of creating a perfectly ordered record office and of entrusting professional archivists with management. That is the reason why, in Germany, there are so many *Werkarchive* — record offices of works and factories — which, however, are not all open to the public. Let us mention in the Ruhr: the Vereinigte Stahlwerke, Mannesmannröhrenventes, and the Gebrüder Böhler and Co., at Düsseldorf, the Hüttenwerke Ilsede-Peine, the Guttehoffungshütte at Oberhausen, which are said to be very rich, Hösch A. G. at Dortmund, Klöckener at Duisburg and the Deutsche Röhrenwerke A. G. at Mülheim. Some of them have suffered from bombardment or from humidity in provisional shelters. The records of the Bergwerkgesellschaft Hibernia A. G., at Herne, were completely destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

The record office of Friedrich Krupp Aktiengesellschaft, whose prominent part in German economic and political life is well known, was the first among the archives of companies and concerns. Founded in 1905 and reorganized in 1938, it is not open to general searchers. Its contents have been the subject of a description in *Thünenarchiv*, 1909, and have been used for elaborating a history of the firm. This record office and its collections were damaged in 1945.<sup>26</sup>

The records of the Siemens concern, founded in 1847 and having some 70 branch establishments in the country and some 110 abroad, with a total staff of 110,000 men, are very remarkable. Created in 1907, by Wilhelm von Siemens, to centralize the records of the Berlin factory and of the German branch establishments, the office, managed by a professional record keeper, covers a surface of 775 square meters in the building of the general administration and (in 1937) 3,080 meters of bookshelves. Though in 1907, before the foundation of the office, the records from 1849 to 1873 had been largely destroyed, the holdings are still very rich. They comprise 60,000 files, a considerable series of patents, 7,000 original or copied letters dating from 1841 to 1892, reports, papers concerning managers and staff, and a series of some 5,000 technical archiv zu Köln" and "Dreissig Jahre Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv zu Köln; Festschrift" in *Archivar, Mitteilungsblatt für Deutsches Archivwesen* (1929 and 1937).

<sup>25</sup> "Lagebericht der Staats . . . und Wirtschaftsarchive der Britischen Zone," in *Archivar*, 1947, p. 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> K. Burhenne, "Betriebsarchive," in *Thünenarchiv*, 2:700 (1909); W. Berdrow, "Krupp d'après la correspondance et les archives de la maison Krupp, traduit de l'allemand par H. Beson, ingénieur-conseil," in *Collection d'études, de documents et témoignages pour servir à l'histoire de notre temps* (Paris, Payot, 1928).

drawings and photographs. According to regulations, several services are to deposit annually all documents over 10 years old. When handed in at the central record office, the documents with neither administrative nor scientific value are eliminated by the archivists. These records have supplied all necessary documentation for a scientific work of 1930, *Siemens Pionierarbeiten, Wirtschaftliche Ereignisse, 1847-1929*.<sup>27</sup>

The records of the Allgemeine Elektrizität-Gesellschaft are restricted to the correspondence of Emile Rathenau, from 1880 to the beginning of the twentieth century, and to the proceedings of the Council of Administration. The other canceled business files are being gradually eliminated by the heads of the departments, without any intervention of archivists.<sup>28</sup>

The records of the Deutsche Bank, an institution founded in 1870 to finance German foreign trade, are kept at the secretary's office and are closed to the public. What is called its Record Service is but a documentary office, containing printed documents.<sup>29</sup> Let us mention furthermore the Archiv der Bayerischen Eisenbahnen und Verkehrsanstalten in Nürnberg, incorporated in the Verkehrsmuseum.<sup>30</sup>

In Eastern Germany, a regulation of April 27, 1950, relating to nationalization, orders the establishment of record offices for every factory or group of factories. These business archives will be subject to the jurisdiction of the Public Records Office, also in matters of disposal. However, it is to be noticed that a large part of the business archives of the eastern zone were destroyed at the very moment of the collectivization of the works. According to a report presented at the Congress of Archivists in Weimar in 1952, the application of the above-mentioned law would have supplied the archives of thousands of nationalized concerns to the public records offices of the Democratic Republic. In the factories themselves the archivists are given a proper preparation by means of cycles of courses the duration of which varies between 1 and 6 days. On

<sup>27</sup> K. Demeter, "Private Wirtschaftsarchive in Berlin," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44: 105-108 (1936); "Siemens Pionierarbeiten, technische Leistungen, wirtschaftliche Ereignisse, 1847-1829," published in 1930 as *Siemens-Archiv-Verwaltung*. See also the descriptive notes by Hölscher, appearing in *Siemens Wirtschaftliche Mitteilungen*, 1922, and Dr. Natales, "Technische Betriebsarchive," in *Siemens-Archiv und Siemens-Museum*, 1931.

<sup>28</sup> Demeter, in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44: 108 (1936).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44: 108-110. It may be noted that the Archives Général du Royaume at Brussels has preserved the archives of the Deutsche Bank, Filiale Brüssel, 1911-18; see *Les Archives de l'État en Belgique, de 1930 à 1936*, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> W. Leesch, "Archivgutschutz und Archivpflege," in *Archivar*, 1949, pp. 5-19.

the other hand, models of classification, worked out for each branch of industry, were imposed on the factories.<sup>31</sup> In the course of the last years the Leipzig Chamber of Commerce has founded the Archiv für Wirtschaftsgeschichte, to receive the records from industrial and commercial concerns.<sup>32</sup> The nationalization of banks and industrial and commercial concerns caused the system of decimal classification to be imposed throughout Czechoslovakia.<sup>33</sup>

In France, the appeal issued in 1926 by M. Schmidt, Inspector of the Public Records, gave the impulse to the campaign for safeguarding economic records.<sup>34</sup> A ministerial circular letter of March 28, 1931, prescribed that archivists should negotiate with commercial houses and manufactories in liquidation, to make them deposit before liquidation such documents as might be useful to history.<sup>35</sup> Some departmental record offices saw their collections being extended in this way.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Rist and Lemaître founded in Paris, in 1933, the Institut Scientifique de Recherches économiques et sociales, "for better knowledge of the present time." This institution, however, confined its action to the collection of printed documents.<sup>37</sup>

Palpable results have been achieved only recently, in consequence of the initiative taken by M. Braibant of France. On June 4, 1949, the Comité de sauvegarde des archives économiques was constituted, including statesmen, teachers, archivists, and leading personalities of commerce, finance, and industry. The new institution aims at permanent conservation of economic records and tries to acquire them or at least to be allowed to microfilm them.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the Archives Nationales in Paris was enriched with a subsection of economic records, the management of which is under

<sup>31</sup> J. Sydora, "Das Archivwesen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," in *Archivar*, 1951, p. 58; *Mededelingen van en voor oud-leerlingen van de Archiefschool te 's-Gravenhage*, no. 7, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Archivar*, 1950, p. 137.

<sup>33</sup> R. Schreiber, "Van Archivwesen der neuen Tschechoslowaki," in *Archivar*, 1950, p. 194.

<sup>34</sup> Ch. Schmidt, "Les archives économiques modernes," in *Revue de Paris*, May 15, 1926, pp. 367-385.

<sup>35</sup> G. Bourgin, "Les archivistes français et le travail d'histoire économique, in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 4:386 (1932).

<sup>36</sup> A. de Montessus de Ballore, *Index Generalis*, 1933, passim; Ch. Schmidt, "L'organisation rationnelle des entreprises," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 2:66 (1930); note in the same periodical, 8:545 (1936); Et. Sabbe, "Les archives économiques," in *Revue d'Économie Politique*, Sept.-Oct. 1935, p. 13; B. Gille, "Les archives d'entreprises," in *Revue Historique*, Oct.-Dec. 1952, pp. 188-193.

<sup>37</sup> *Rapport de l'Institut Scientifique de Recherches économiques et sociales*, 1933-34; *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 1940, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> B. Gille, "Les archives d'entreprises," in *Revue Historique*, 1952, p. 186.

M. B. Gille, an enterprising archivist, with a Centre de recherches sur l'histoire des entreprises, managed by M. R. Gourmelon. The centre publishes a processed bulletin.<sup>39</sup>

Another felicitous initiative came from M. Denizet, Record Keeper of the Navy Department of France — the foundation, in 1950, of a committee of historical documentation of the merchant-navy. This committee intends to safeguard the records of maritime firms and to publish a bulletin.<sup>40</sup>

On a prospecting trip in several French departments, M. Gille, of the Archives Nationales, proceeded to make a census of the records of public services. The results were published in the *Révue historique*, October-December 1952.<sup>41</sup> Here is the summary: the pitiful disappearance of many financial records, in consequence of the suppression of numerous private banks from 1929 to 1933; the mass destruction, too, of the records of the Lyon silk industry; the loss, during the last war, of most of the records of the commercial houses at Le Havre. As to records of the metal-working industries at Saint-Gobain, they disappeared sometime in 1914-18; those of Anzin in 1945. However encouraging they are, the positive results seem to be rather weak; and, indeed, the situation is the same in Germany, when compared to the whole of the national economy. M. Gille has made the following list:

Banks: Banque Seillières, inventory registers 1830-50, and correspondence with partners; a rich collection of the Banque Neufville, founded in 1800, with 3,000 volumes, 1808-1935. Banque Thunet, documents 1800-1839; Banque Camondo, registers of accounts, 1832-1917; Gouin at Tours, accounts from 1845; Banque de France, no organization or inventory.

Credit companies: Crédit Lyonnais, some records kept since 1863; Société générale, since 1862; Crédit industriel et commercial, since 1859.

Textile companies: Borel de Crest, scattered records, 1780-1830; Oberkampf (Drôme), 1763-1821; same situation in the wool factory Morin at Dieulefit.

Business houses: the Archives Nationales succeeded in gathering a dozen archival collections from great eighteenth-century firms, whereas fairly important archives about colonial plantations have remained the property of some families at Nantes and elsewhere.

Industrial archives: satisfactory preservation of the coal-mining archives, less complete, however, for the eighteenth than for the nineteenth century; also of the Montmort salt works in the Jura, which include documents from 1740 to the present; the archives of Savoie and Calvados include respectively those of the Moutiers salt works, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the

<sup>39</sup> *Bulletin du Centre de Recherches sur l'histoire des entreprises*, Jan. 1, 1953.

<sup>40</sup> Gille, in *Revue Historique*, 1952, p. 193, n. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-204.

Littry salt-works, 1718-1879. M. Gille has drawn up short inventories of 84 metallurgic concerns, although numerous factories have destroyed their records. The modern big metallurgic companies have kept their abundant archives themselves. The archives of the Allevard Society, founded in the fourteenth century, fill a whole building; Le Creusot has kept its records since 1836; Givors since 1840. Many provincial record offices possess blast-furnace archives, dating from Clairvaux (Aubé), thirteenth through eighteenth centuries; Carrouges (Orne), nineteenth century; Ottrange (Moselle), eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Belâbre (Indre), seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and Doubvant (Haute-Marne), 1755-1829.

Records of railway companies, the Suez and Panama Canal companies, and the General Transatlantic Company show good conservation. Apart from these records, there are interesting records of shipowners at Nantes.

Many of these fonds have been acquired since 1949 by the Archives Nationales in Paris, where they form the series A-Q, of which an inventory was published in January 1953.<sup>42</sup> There is also a fond of private commercial archives at the archives of the Aube, which since 1936 has had a numerical repertory. The archives of the Rhône (Lyon) hold the records of the Banque Guérin, complete since 1851. At the archives of the city of Nice are conserved the records of the Banque Colombo.<sup>43</sup>

In England, the publication, about 1930, of histories of private enterprises, based on their archives, called attention to economic archives.<sup>44</sup> Thence came in 1934 the constitution of the Council for the Preservation of Business Archives, which grouped representatives of industry, commerce, banks, and the scientific world, with the object of discovering business archives, promoting their methodical classification, and making them accessible for searchers. The secretary, A. V. Judges, argued for the preservation of business records in September 1935, at the annual conference of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux, and also some time later at a meeting of the British Records Association. By circulating questionnaires the council was able to enumerate extant economic archives; the data constitute precious documentation and make access to the records easier for historians. The success, of course, is still limited; only rarely has the council obtained the deposit of such records in libraries and similar institutions. Moreover, the procedure may create troublesome dispersion, for instance,

<sup>42</sup> *Bulletin du Centre de Recherches sur l'histoire des entreprises*, Jan. 1, 1953, pp. 36-40; *État Numérique de la Série A-Q des Archives Nationales*.

<sup>43</sup> Gille, in *Revue Historique*, 1952.

<sup>44</sup> Sabbe, in *Revue d'Économie Politique*, 1935, p. 1581; W. H. Chaloner, *Business Records as a Source of Economic History, With Special Reference to Their Selective Preservation in Libraries*, p. 7, n. 2, and p. 9.

the papers of Boulton and Watt were placed in three different institutions at Birmingham; and the University of Manchester retains the records of Herman E. Falk, 1820-93, and his son, founders of the Salth Union.<sup>45</sup> John Clapham, in order to elaborate the Jubilee-book of the 250th anniversary of the Bank of England, was allowed to examine the archives, otherwise not easily accessible for searchers.<sup>46</sup> In 1951, the British Transport Commission centralized the archives of the various transport societies.

In Holland, the problem of safekeeping the archives of private enterprises has been since 1914 in a fair way of realization, thanks to the foundation and the action of the *Nederlandsch Economisch Historisch Archief*, of which the library is situated in Amsterdam and the record office has been in The Hague since 1937. Its publication, the *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek, Bijbragen tot de Economische Geschiedenis van Nederland*, has unfortunately been suspended during and since the recent war. The *Nederlandsch Economisch Historisch Archief*, even before 1940, had remarkable collections, the most important of which are:<sup>47</sup>

Banks: Stadniski and Henkelom, 1700-1913; Telders and Co. (The Hague), 1887-1914; Goll and Co. (Amsterdam), 1779-1826; Chabot (Rotterdam), 1840-1911.

Railways: Bataviaanse Ooster-Spoorweg Maatschappij, 1884-98.

Industrial undertakings: Industrial Company, 1777-1890; H. J. Raymakers (cotton-mills and linen factories, Helmond), 1840-71; Copper Foundry Vaasen, 1780-1869, J. and A. Le Poole (textiles), Leyden, 1860-1929; Brewery Het Scheepje Haarlem, 1818-75; Soda-Salt Factory van Eelde, Utrecht, 1798-1920; Soap-Works J. J. de Lange, Alkmaar, 1836-1937; Shipyards Feyenoord, Rotterdam, 1822-80; Society for Industry and Commerce, Haarlem, 1777-1913.

Business houses: *Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappij*, J. H. van de Wall-Bake 1921-29; Society for Commerce and Industry, Rotterdam, 1853-63; *Overzeesche Hardhout Import Maatschappij*, Rotterdam, 1779-1932; Loopuyt (bank, corn-trade, distillery), Schiedam, 1778-1882; Van Stolk (corn-trade), 1855-1906; Sybouts, tea-trade, 1845-1900; ships' equipment, Boisevin and Co., 1796-1882; and *Transvaalsche Handels Maatschappij*, Rotterdam, 1899-1909.

Professional organizations: Merchants' Association, 1827-60; Syndicate of Factory-workers, 1901-6; General Dutch Diamond Cutters' Association, 1893-1913; Cabinet-Making Works Society, 1885-1906; Railway-Staff Association, 1893-1920.

<sup>45</sup> See the publications mentioned in notes 19 and 21.

<sup>46</sup> J. Clapham, *The Bank of England; a History* (Cambridge, University Press, 1944. 2 vols.).

<sup>47</sup> *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek*, 22: 52-54.

Moreover, 33 professional organizations regularly deposited their archives; and several financial, industrial, and commercial undertakings sent their balance-sheets, proceedings, and circulars there.

In 1940 the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorwegmaatschappij placed its archives in the charge of the Nederlandsch Economisch Historisch Archief for at least 25 years; consultation of these records will be profitable for the history of South Africa during the nineteenth century. During the Second World War the measures decreed with a view to recovering old paper incited the Netherlands Archives to issue a circular concerning the necessity of saving nineteenth and twentieth century archives. This initiative was followed by interesting acquisitions, among which were the archives of two Dutch daily papers, 1870-1923, and 1896-1926; the papers of the Transvalia Land Exploratie en Mijnmaatschappij, 1890-1927; those of the Hollandsche Societeit van Levensverzekering in Amsterdam, founded in 1907; and those of the Asahan Tabak-Maatschappij, founded in 1891 in the same town; and moreover the documentation of several technical offices and some factories.<sup>48</sup>

In 1928, the city of Amsterdam published an inventory of the archives of the Bank van Leening, a pawnbroker's shop, dating from the seventeenth century to 1863, of which the city has taken charge.<sup>49</sup> Let us mention further, that a Dutch historian, J. Rogge, published in 1949 a volume of 422 pages, devoted to the history of the Van Eeghem firm from 1780 to 1914, whose spheres of interest were, among others, in California.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, in the same country, the Archives of the State seems to have directed its activities to commercial archives. The Archives of the State at Middleburg conserves those of the *Commercie Compagnien*, 1720-1888, and the *Zeeuwse Spoorbootmaatschappij*, 1864-1913. The General Archives at The Hague conserves the archives of the *Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij*, while those of *N. V. Maatschappij von Nassau en Lecq* are there on deposit.<sup>51</sup>

At Maastricht, in Dutch Limburg, the mine region of Holland, there was constituted in October 1940 a new group, the *Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg*, which strives to centralize for social history the archives of industrial and commercial enterprises,

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 22: 313-334.

<sup>49</sup> H. Hauser, "L'exposition d'histoire économique d'Amsterdam," in *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 2: 90-92 (1930).

<sup>50</sup> J. Rogge, *Het Handelshuis Van Eeghen* (Amsterdam, 1949), p. 422.

<sup>51</sup> *Verslagen Omtrent 's Rijks Oude Archieven*, 2d series, 19: 54-56 (1946), 20: 59 (1947), 21: 63 (1948).

as well as those of professional organizations, either by purchase, donation, or loan.<sup>52</sup>

On the excellent initiative of Dr. Graswinckel, General Archivist, and of the Mine Direction of the State, the General Archives of the Kingdom at The Hague has sponsored, every year since 1950, a course of lectures for the training of business archivists. About 50 are enrolled for each course. The archivists of businesses of Holland recently founded a private professional association, which will become, we hope, decisive as to what concerns the conservation of the records themselves.<sup>53</sup>

The Schweizerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, founded in 1910, held before the last war more than 100,000 bundles, partly bank and partly industrial archives, but chiefly printed documents such as balance-sheet accounts and circulars. According to the last report, 1941, the activity of this organization continues.<sup>54</sup>

In Belgium, alas, practically everything that concerns business archives is still to be done: there is no organization for safekeeping, and no association of business archivists is assured. An embryo of economic archives, limited to the sequestered records of German firms, dates to 1920. This laudable initiative permitted the gathering of the archives of about 30 industrial enterprises — commercial houses as well as banks — especially of the Deutsche Bank, Filiale Brussels.<sup>55</sup> The depot has been without archivists since 1945.

Most interesting of these archives are those of the Société Générale de Belgique, conserved at the bank itself (and of which I have arranged the part from 1822 to 1870). These records constitute an inexhaustible mine for the history of the industrial and commercial expansion of Belgium in the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Inso-

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 22:117 (1949).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 22:7 (1949), 23:7 (1950), 24:28 (1951). These lessons are now suspended. For the classification system of records of Dutch enterprises, see J. Silver, *Het Moderne Bedrijfsarchief, Zijn inrichting en toepassing*; L. Neher, K. Soesbeek, D. Dresden, and D. C. Renooy, "Debetekenis van de documentatie voor de leiding van het bedrijf," in *Nederlands Instituut voor Documentatie en registratuur*.

<sup>54</sup> R. Wackernagel, *Das Schweizerische Wirtschaftsarchiv in Basel* (Basel, 1911); *Katalog des Schweizerischen Wirtschaftsarchiv in Basel* (Basel, 1914, and supplement 1919); W. F. Wagner, "Das Schweizerische Wirtschaftsarchiv in Basel," in *Schweizerische Technische Zeitung*, 16:535 ff. (1941); R. Blenler, "Die Bestände des Schweizer Wirtschaftsarchiv," in *Schweizerische Technische Zeitung*, 16:539 ff. (1941).

<sup>55</sup> *Les Archives de l'État en Belgique de 1919 à 1930*, pp. 347-372, gives a descriptive list of the series. See also *Les Archives de l'État en Belgique de 1930 à 1936*, pp. 42-44; and Sabbe, in *Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées de Belgique*, 1934, pp. 21-23.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27; *La Société Générale de Belgique, 1822-1920*, a book published for the centenary of this institution.

far as the archives of the Banque Nationale de Belgique are concerned — for which I established a project for reorganization and arrangement — few records still exist of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century of this vital organization, founded in 1849. Still, the extant records enabled P. Kauch to publish a substantial history of this financial institution, on the occasion of its centenary.<sup>57</sup>

The Antwerp Municipal Record Office keeps among its records of bankrupts' estates, invaluable documents of business houses, besides the archives of the General Indian Company, 1723-77, and those of the de Pret firm, the oldest of which date back to 1671. The Plantin Museum keeps the archives of the famous Plantin printing office.<sup>58</sup>

At the Archives Générales du Royaume (General State Record Office), in Brussels, are to be found the archives of the principal Belgian chambers of commerce, as well as those of the Limited Liability Company of the Charleroi Canal, 1839-69.<sup>59</sup> The d'Arenberg archives, deposited at the same office, contain documentation concerning the lead mines at Vedrin and Marche-les Dames.<sup>60</sup>

The Brussels and Ghent municipal record offices also possess some papers referring to private economic life. The latter keeps important archives regarding the linen factory la Texas, founded in the early nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> The Municipal Record Office at Nieuport owns an interesting documentation, originating from the company of codfishery in Ireland.<sup>62</sup> R. Warocqué has bequeathed to the Belgian state several files concerning the Hainaut coal-mines, which are kept in the Castle of Mariemont.<sup>63</sup>

In Austria, the action of the Österreichische Forschungs Institut für Geschichte der Technik, begun in 1934, with a direct campaign conducted with the concerns, stating the historic importance of their archives and giving directions for classification, was interrupted by rather recent events.<sup>64</sup> We are not informed about the con-

<sup>57</sup> P. Kauch, *La Banque Nationale de Belgique, 1850-1950* (Brussels, 1950).

<sup>58</sup> Sabbe, in *Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées*, 1934, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Et, Sabbe, "Les archives des mines de Vedrin et de Marche-les-Dames," in *Annales de la Société d'Archéologie de Namur*, 42: 1-26 (1937).

<sup>61</sup> Sabbe, in *Revue d'Économie Politique*, 1945, p. 1575.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1576.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1575.

<sup>64</sup> J. Seidl, "Archivaliensschutz in Österreich," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 44: 162 (1936); L. Erhard, "Markblatt zur Anlegung von Betriebsarchiven, Entwurf des Österreichischen Forschungsinstitutes für Geschichte der Technik in Wien," *ibid.*, 45: 164-167 (1939).

dition of business archives in Poland, Romania, and Russia; in those countries the archivists before 1940 worked well, in favor of the safekeeping of business archives. After the First World War the Record Offices of Political Economy, Civilization, and Ethnology were founded in Moscow and Leningrad. These offices contain the archives of banks and commercial and industrial concerns. Before 1940, the archivist N. A. Rozkov inventoried the records of the Trechgor'naja Krasno Preserenskaja Manufaktura. On the other hand, on the initiative of Mrs. Paukratova, a commission was set up, whose purpose was the collecting of documents concerning the history of the Russian proletariat.<sup>65</sup>

As concerns Italy, the government seems recently to have taken the initiative for the commercial organizations.

In Denmark, the idea of creating a central record office of business archives at Aarhus, conceived in 1942, was carried out in 1948. By then the office, headed by V. Dybdahl, contained 350 series of archives, of industrial, commercial, and agricultural companies, and roughly dating from 1670 to 1947.<sup>66</sup>

In Sweden there is the record office of the Stora Kopparberg Bergslag Aktiebolag, a mining company founded about 1820, the documentation of which, so far published in part, is accessible to historians.<sup>67</sup> In a recent Swedish publication of 1951, *Ehrvervs-historik Arbog, Meddelelser Fra Ehrvervsarkivet*, Bjorn Helanfrid describes the Holmens Central Arkiv and supplies information about Swedish business archives in general.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> O. Meisner, "Über das Archivwesen der russischen Sowjet Republik," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 1929, p. 186. In Poland, N. Orlowski published in 1913 a study of the Polish iron industry based on the archives of business enterprises; see *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, 6:262 (1934).

<sup>66</sup> A. Kromnow, "Affärsbankernas Archiv," in *Ekonomisk Revy*, 1948, pp. 18-19; V. Dybdahl, "Erhvervsarkiver i udlandet," in *Erhvervsarkivet*, 1:19-34 (1949).

<sup>67</sup> "A Medieval Swedish Mining Company," in *Journal of Economic and Business History*, vol. 2 (1930).

<sup>68</sup> B. Helmfrid, "Holmens Centralarkiv," in *Erhvervshistorisk Arbog, Meddelelser fra Erhvervsarkivet*, 2:81-106 (1951).