

# Reviews of Books

HENRY P. BEERS, *Editor*

*National Archives*

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*The Committees of Safety of Westmoreland and Fincastle; Proceedings of the County Committees, 1774-1776*, edited by Richard Barksdale Harwell. (Virginia State Library, *Publications*, No. 1. Richmond, 1956. 127 p.)

Supplementing what the Virginia State Library has already published from the Revolutionary proceedings of Cumberland, Isle of Wight, Caroline, and Southampton Counties in Virginia, this booklet rescues from obscurity two more counties. Part of Westmoreland County's proceedings had wandered into Fordham University; the manuscript from Fincastle was buried in the files of Montgomery County. The *Virginia Gazette* and many parts of the proceedings, reprinted in the *American Archives*, have also been levied upon. As one who has labored long with Revolutionary documents, manuscript and printed, the present reviewer can duly appraise the work of the editor of these proceedings. He is conscientiously careful; hardly one of the 50 footnotes is unnecessary and none are unduly long.

Richard Henry Lee, delegate to the Continental Congress, 1774-80, and its President, 1784-85, was a dominant voice in Westmoreland County, hence we have had cause to hear more of this county's part in the revolutionary movement in Virginia. The work of Fincastle County (which had come into existence in 1772 and disappeared by 1777) deserves attention; for its territorial limits were in both Tennessee and Kentucky, truly the frontier in 1774 and 1775. Those who view frontiersmen with romantic eyes will be interested in the brief "Instructions to the Scouts Appointed by the Committee of Fincastle County," one of the six excellent appendixes in the booklet. The scouts were to "carefully watch the motions of the Indians" around Culberson's Bottom, Maiden Spring, Crab Orchard, and equally remote settlements. An excellent index, tested well by this reviewer, concludes the work.

ROGER THOMAS

*Hall of Records, Annapolis*

*Grainger County, Tennessee, Federal Census of 1810; Population Schedule (Third Census) and County Tax Lists for 1810*, edited by Pollyanna Creekmore. (McClung Historical Collection, *Special Studies*, No. 1; Knoxville, Lawson McGhee Library, 1956. 71 p., index.)

Many of the early population census schedules are not known to be extant. Some officials have assumed that they were burned when the British captured Washington in 1814. But there are better reasons for believing that the records were destroyed in the States before Congress authorized their transmittal to Washington in 1830. In any event, new information about these missing

schedules is rare. Not long ago the discovery of enumerator's copies of the schedules of the 1800 census for Oglethorpe County, Ga., and Accomack County, Va., was reported by the Georgia Department of Archives and History and the Virginia State Library, respectively. They constitute the only schedules of that census for these States that have been found.

The more recent discovery of an enumerator's copies of some of the 1810 census schedules for Grainger County, Tenn., is equally interesting. Save for the 1810 schedules for Rutherford County, Tenn., no other Tennessee schedules of a date earlier than 1820 had been known.

The discovered schedules for Grainger County have been transcribed and printed in 21 pages of the publication here under review. The remaining pages contain transcripts of 1810 tax lists for Grainger County. This publication constitutes only a part of Miss Creekmore's effort to restore or reconstruct from tax lists the early Tennessee schedules in published form. Her work is a distinct contribution to Tennessee genealogy and local history and deserves praise.

MEREDITH BRIGHT COLKET, JR.

*National Archives*

*Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey; Autobiography and Letters*, edited by William B. Hesseltine. (Nashville, Tennessee Historical Commission, 1954. xviii, 367 p. \$5.)

The career of James Gettys McGready Ramsey (1797-1884) spanned the first 87 years of the history of his native State, Tennessee. Outstanding in his services to the public, he was a general practitioner of medicine, a planter, a ferry operator, a trustee of three colleges, a main support of one academy and one church, a postmaster, a banker, a railroad promoter, an officer of historical societies, author of an able history of Tennessee, a collector of historical manuscripts, and a Confederate fiscal agent. His career to 1870 is delightfully recounted in this *Autobiography*.

The interest of the *Autobiography* for archivists, manuscript custodians, and historiographers is enhanced by the inclusion of 77 letters from Ramsey to Lyman Copeland Draper, here printed by permission of the Wisconsin State Historical Society. The book is rounded out by two illustrations, a satisfactory index, a discerning prefatory analysis of Ramsey's many services, and helpful if sparse footnotes. It adds another facet to our knowledge of the history of Tennessee and the South. The Tennessee Historical Commission is to be commended for having made its publication possible.

Doubtless in order to enhance the literary attractiveness of his material the editor has done a number of things that one school of historical editing frowns upon. A few examples must suffice. The *Autobiography* has been divided into chapters and paragraphs; a few pages have been rearranged "to bring matter on the same subject together" (p. xv); old-style capitalization and spelling have been modernized; incomplete and incorrect names of persons have been filled out and corrected without, save in the preface, so indicating. According

to the editor (p. xvi), he worked from a typescript of the autobiography in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee. An earlier reviewer has pointed out that the original has been in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina since 1941.

If the editor looked for unpublished Ramsey letters outside the library of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, he does not say so. Three record groups in the National Archives include Ramsey letters, apparently unpublished: No. 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 3 letters; No. 56, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, 7 letters; and No. 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 7 letters. The James K. Polk papers in the Library of Congress include approximately 100 Ramsey letters. It would have been a service to scholarship had the editor included these Ramsey letters, and perhaps others unknown to the reviewer, in his edition.

W. NEIL FRANKLIN

*National Archives*

*The Papers of Cornelius Cole and the Cole Family 1833-1943; A Guide to Collection 217*, compiled by Elmo R. Richardson. (University of Calif. at Los Angeles, *Occasional Papers*, No. 4; Los Angeles, 1956. iv, 53 p.)

This guide to the Cole family papers shows a good balance between what is to be desired in such a work from a researcher's point of view and what may be justified in the light of cost. It exemplifies methods probably most appropriate to the processing of relatively small collections (this one totals around 9,500 pieces).

The essential elements of adequate reference and finding controls have been incorporated. An introductory statement points out the scope of the collection and its significance in relation to California and United States history. A table on the physical arrangement explains the collection's six main parts and further subdivisions; the arrangement of the papers themselves was an essential phase of the total work. Then follows an inventory of the materials, part by part, which includes useful though brief description of the contents of each box and folder. A detailed index of the persons mentioned and subjects dealt with in the papers completes the volume.

That the importance of the collection justifies the labor of making the guide, there can be little question. Cole, United States Senator from California and long a confidant of national leaders in government and industry, was "a public man" in the venerable sense of the term. His influence matched his remarkable longevity (he cast his first vote for Polk, his last for Coolidge).

It is of significance for institutions planning the production of such tools of research that a grant from the Friends of the UCLA Library made possible the publication of this guide.

W. N. DAVIS, JR.

*California State Archives*

*State Archives (Records) Committee Reports, the Society of American Archivists*, comp. by Mary Givens Bryan, Chairman. ([Atlanta, Ga.], 1956. 23, 20 [34], 6 p. Processed.)

This is another useful volume incorporating reports from State and Territorial Archives on record disposal laws and practices, a discussion of the use of microfilming, and a salary survey. It is a companion to the 1956 report, *A Comparative Study of State and U. S. Territorial Laws Governing Archives*.

Most State archivists have experienced the frustrations incident to a search for comparative information on the problems of budgeting, personnel classification and pay, legislation, the use of microfilming, the setting of retention schedules for records, and other archival matters. It is a baffling job to extract this information from State codes, governors' budgets, departmental reports, and similar sources. In fact, such is the diversity of archival establishments and functions and so easily is their importance overlooked that one is lucky to find a straightforward reference to either archives or records in the indexes and tables of contents of such sources. This volume therefore is most welcome for bringing the elusive information together for us.

These committee reports are mimeographed and paperbound and are not intended as permanent or definitive works. It is fair to suggest that future editions could profit from more editorial attention. The logical arrangement seems to be by the roll of the States in alphabetical order, and convenience would decree that all material should be so arranged.

Many of us busy archivists will recall that the questionnaires which formed the basis of the reports rather crowded in on us and invited the characteristically fragmentary replies that we find here. We therefore appreciate the thoughtfulness of the reporters who, in organizing the section on microfilming, cast our answers into sentences and paragraphs. In contrast, the preceding section requires the user to turn to the front for the question that elicited such a typically cryptic reply as: "No."

Although the reports would be improved by a more unified organization and some editorial polish, we should recognize that conditions did not permit or demand a finished work and should appreciate the very considerable and devoted labor that went into gathering the material.

ROBERT C. NESBIT

*Washington State Archives*

*1956 Comparative Study of State and U. S. Territorial Laws Governing Archives*, comp. by Mary Givens Bryan. ([Atlanta, Ga.], Georgia Department of Archives and History, [1956]. [147 p.] Processed.)

This 1956 handbook furnishes us the latest information on State and Territorial archives. Archivists and users of archives are indebted to Mrs. Bryan for her persistence in obtaining answers from all the States and Territories. They are also indebted to Ben W. Fortson, Jr., secretary of state of Georgia, who made it possible for Mrs. Bryan to publish and present her handbook to

the Committee on State Archives and others at the October 1956 meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Washington, D. C.

As a directory, the handbook brings up to date the "Directory of State Archives" published in the *American Archivist* in July 1954. Here are names of agencies and officials, citations to laws, the number of employees, classifications of collections and of the legal means of transfer, and lists of nonarchival functions performed and of available photographic services. In addition to this information, Mrs. Bryan prints reports on recent legislation, organization of work, and budgets. Much is new and has not appeared in the *American Archivist* news notes. The data are arranged by State or Territory, and for those interested in a particular State or Territory, this arrangement is ideal. The handbook, however, lacks an index to functions or problems and is difficult to use if one is concerned with common problems.

The diversity of types of State archival establishments is well demonstrated by this handbook. Administered as independent departments or commissions are 17 archives, 9 of which are in the South. There are 12 widely scattered archives administered by State libraries. Archival programs are the responsibility of 11 State historical societies, mainly in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Rocky Mountains. Five secretaries of state are still charged with the archival function. In some States the responsibility for records is divided; New York State's system is the most complicated. Unique are the Archives of Washington, functioning under a Department of General Administration, like that of the National Government. Five States have no archival program, although most have passed laws relating to records: Maine, New Hampshire, Missouri, Montana, and New Mexico.

If the rest of the information in this handbook is studied, it becomes obvious that other data and reports are uneven and in many instances not comparable. What is needed is a comprehensive survey of State archives, starting with the information that Mrs. Bryan has gathered and with the other reports of her committee. It should include data on the size of collections, their comprehensive coverage and storage conditions, principles of record selection and destruction, the character of record administration programs (including an appraisal of microfilm projects), and the extent to which other agencies are engaged in record work. It may be possible to assemble data on some of these problems through the committee; but only if the Society is able to obtain funds for an adequate survey to appraise the archives of the States shall we have a true picture of our shortcomings and our strengths. The data in this 1956 handbook are suggestive but not always definitive.

DAVID C. DUNIWAY

*State Archives*  
*Oregon State Library*