

The Georgia Archives Building— A Case Study in Promotion

By MARY GIVENS BRYAN*

*Department of Archives and History
State of Georgia*

THIS paper deals exclusively with the personal experiences of the Archivist of Georgia in the promotion of a State archives building. The campaign was carried first to the grassroots through intelligent organized voters in every hamlet in the State. It was necessary to remind our people of our rich heritage in a State now having a population of nearly 4 million people with an annual income of over a half-billion dollars. Our promotion was educational, through the press, radio, television, and other audio-visual aids, through official archival activities, and through the spoken word, historical liaison with other State and local agencies, and personal contacts in our services to the public.

We pressed into action to aid us in the fight for an archives building such patriotic societies as town committees of the Colonial Dames, chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, divisions and camps of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Veterans' organizations of later wars were not overlooked. The Georgia National Guard became a great power in our fight. Others pressed into service in our behalf were such groups as the Georgia Bar, County Officers, County Commissioners, Sheriffs, Peace Officers, Municipal, Georgia Library, Georgia Education, and Georgia Press Associations; local and State historical societies, museum groups, Civil War Round Tables, and university groups; and such civic organizations as Kiwanis, Rotary, Civitan, the Lions Clubs, the Optimists, the League of Women Voters, and the Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs. Every known church group in Georgia became conscious of our

*The author, Director-Archivist of Georgia's Department of Archives and History and Fellow and former president of the Society of American Archivists, read this paper on Oct. 4, 1963, at the 27th annual meeting of the Society, in Raleigh, N.C., as chairman of the session on archival buildings and equipment. Mrs. Bryan died on July 28, 1964; an obituary is printed on p. 505-507 of this issue; her photograph appears as the frontispiece; and the several other articles in this issue were derived from the aforementioned session of the 1963 annual meeting.

need because they wished valuable church records preserved. Through engagements arranged with the above-named powerful organizations and groups, our message was brought to them in speeches, on radio and television, and by other audiovisual aids.

Organizations and associations asked for articles for their journals about our need for an archives building. Local and State newspapers cooperated by taking advantage of every chance to publicize our archival program and our great need for a building. Newspapers and periodicals throughout Georgia carried the caption "Squirrels love nutty history and are gnawing away at Georgia's rich heritage poorly housed in a fire-trap." We soon learned in our early promotional activity that a slogan to capture the imagination of the public of all ages and from all walks of life is most essential.

We learned also that the people on the local level had archival problems and needed aid from the State. In plunging ourselves into the local problems with an inadequate program and building at the State level we found that the local authorities in turn began to solve our problems. The people at the grassroots made their interest known to the Governor, the Georgia legislature, and State officials. As a result the Study Committee on Construction of an Archival Building was set up in 1958, composed of three members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker and two senators appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, president of the senate. Secretary of State Ben W. Fortson, Jr., was appointed chairman of the committee, and the Archivist of Georgia was appointed secretary. Thus began tours financed by the legislature for the committee to visit other archival agencies in the United States. Colleagues from coast to coast who are members of the Society of American Archivists and the American Association for State and Local History gave us their wholehearted support in assisting in the planning of the building.

The local program, headed by County Archivist Beatrice F. Lang, began in 1951 to microfilm the permanent records of Georgia's counties, municipalities, and churches, with the aid of the Genealogical Society of Salt Lake City, Utah. This program aided tremendously in making our services known to the people at the local level. Our laminating services were also offered to localities. Laminated records returned to county, city, and church officials further publicized our need for an archives building so that our services to the public could be expanded.

In 1959 Gov. S. Ernest Vandiver established the Governor's

Commission on Economy and Reorganization, headed by Morris W. H. Collins, Director of the Institute of Law and Government at the University of Georgia. Secretary of State Fortson and his Archivist worked closely with this commission on its staff studies and findings pertinent to records management and the archival program. The report stated that "until something is done about the physical facilities available to the Department of Archives, Georgia cannot operate effective archival and records management programs." This clinched the argument for the building; and, with every organized force in the State wholeheartedly behind it, an act of the legislature in 1961 made provision for the building. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on June 7, 1962.

A dream of the people, of Secretary of State Fortson, and of his Archivist became a reality after 15 years of unified campaigning—a case study in perseverance.

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