

The Empire State's Search in European Archives

By NICHOLAS FALCO

Queens Borough Public Library

ON FEBRUARY 5, 1839, the New-York Historical Society (in existence since 1804) officially directed a memorial to the State Legislature of New York. It urged that the State do its utmost not only to better preserve official records then in its care but also to seek pertinent records located in foreign archives. The memorial reminded the legislature that the society had been chartered primarily "to preserve documents, papers and evidences . . . affecting the history of this State." Also, the society had "been advised . . . that there are now in the archives and public offices of Holland and England, many documents, letters, correspondences, and papers relating to, and bearing upon, and directly connected with, the events and prominent persons of our colonial history, and our war of revolution" The memorial continued, stating "that the said documents, letters, correspondences, and papers, illustrate and explain many uncertainties in our colonial history . . . and that without them . . . no true and perfect history of this State can ever be written." The legislature was also informed that the society itself would have undertaken the task if it had had sufficient funds though it knew "The inspection of the archives of governments . . . is not granted on the application of individuals, or even of private associations, but only on requests of a high power." The time was ripe, and the society did not believe "that there will ever be a more favorable opportunity for renewing their request; and in all probability no such attempt will be made by others."¹

Possibly to allay fears or sentiments of those among the State legislature who might be opposed to such a move as a complete novelty, the society stated the fact that an agent from Georgia was at the moment in London on a similar mission. Actually, besides Georgia, the States of South Carolina, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts had a few years

The author received for this paper the 1968 Gondos Memorial Award for the best unpublished essay submitted on "any aspect of the history or administration of archives." Mr. Falco is Assistant Division Head of the Long Island Division (Local History Division) of the Queens Borough Public Library. From 1956 to 1964 he was on the archives staff of the Municipal Archives and Records Center of New York City.

¹The memorial was printed by New York State as no. 153 of its Assembly Documents for 1839. It is also found in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Procured in Holland, England and France, by John Romeyn Brodhead, Esq., Agent, Under and by Virtue of an Act of the Legislature, Entitled "An Act To Appoint an Agent To Procure and Transcribe Documents in Europe Relative to the Colonial History of the State," Passed May 2, 1839, 1:xi-xii* (Weed, Parsons, and Co., Albany; 11 vols., 1853-61).

earlier taken some inconclusive steps to gather pertinent archives kept in Europe.

The Governor in 1839, William H. Seward, a man of learning who was interested in American history, urged the legislature to act favorably on the society's plea, stating that it was owing "to a just regard for the respect of posterity that every important circumstance connected with the rise and progress of our free institutions should be recorded and illustrated."² The memorial was referred to a select committee of three members of the assembly, who 2 weeks later made a lengthy report of their findings. The committee not only agreed with the society's request, but even went a step farther, suggesting that the agent visit not only the Netherlands and England, but France as well, for "The government of France is presumed to be in possession of documentary papers having reference to the part she took in our revolutionary struggle, to her subsequent relations to this country, and to the 'French and Indian Wars,' which by no means form the least affecting and important portions of our colonial history."³ The committee thought that 2 years would suffice for the mission and that an appropriation of \$4,000 would be adequate. The bill, signed into law on May 2, 1839, read as follows:

AN ACT TO APPOINT AN AGENT TO PROCURE AND
TRANSCRIBE DOCUMENTS IN EUROPE RELATIVE TO
THE COLONIAL HISTORY OF THIS STATE

Passed May 2, 1839

The People of the State of New-York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. An Agent shall be appointed by the Governor of this State, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to visit England, Holland and France, for the purpose of procuring, if possible, the originals, and if not, copies, of all such documents and papers, in the archives and offices of those governments relating to or in any way affecting the Colonial or other history of this State, as he may deem important to illustrate that history.

Section 2. The said documents and papers, when procured, shall be deposited in the office of the Secretary of this State, subject to the use of the State Historical Society.

Section 3. A sum not exceeding four thousand dollars is hereby appropriated for defraying the expenses of said Agent.⁴

² O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xii; also in Charles Z. Lincoln, ed., *Messages From the Governors . . . 1683 to & Including the Year 1906*, 3:751-752 (J. B. Lyon Co., Albany; 11 vols., 1909). Several of the Governors' messages in Lincoln's compilation bear on the subject matter of this paper.

³ The committee's report is in O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xiii-xvi.

⁴ The act was printed by New York State as Chapter 315 of its *Laws of the State . . . Passed at the Sixty-second Session . . . [Jan.-May 1839] of 1839*. It is also found in O'Callaghan ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xvi.

Some aspects of this enactment are noteworthy. First, it is interesting to note that New York could envision the possibility of the agent returning with original documents from a foreign archives. It is appealing to speculate, in the absence of documentation, whether the State had in mind a concept of the right of replevin regarding certain documents. This, however, is extremely improbable, even if such a course was deemed possible or feasible. One can only conclude that the appeal of history and the wish to have archives as authentic as possible was so overriding in those who drew up the act and urged its passage that this phrase regarding originals was inserted, in the hope that, in some cases at least, the agent would be successful in obtaining some original records. Second, though the New-York Historical Society was (and is) a non-governmental agency, the State acknowledged the prominent part that this private institution had played in advancing the concept of sending an agent abroad, by stipulating that the documents were to be "subject to the use of the . . . Society."⁵ Third, the law was rather vague in its wording regarding the exact kinds of documents that the agent was to obtain, simply stating that they had to be "relating to or in any way affecting the Colonial or other history." This phrase, of course, gave the agent some desirable freedom.

Though the law was placed in the public record on May 2, 1839, the beginning of its implementation was not to occur until almost 2 years had elapsed. There can be little doubt that what held up the program was obtaining a suitable agent to fulfill the mission. There was little enough precedent to follow in making such a choice, and there were few historically minded and qualified individuals willing to spend 2 or more years in Europe on such a venture. The New-York Historical Society as chief promoter of the law eagerly followed the course of events. On March 3, 1840, it formed a special committee to report on the best method of using the appropriation for procuring documents from Europe.⁶

The committee reported 4 days later, suggesting that the president of the society immediately write to the Governor on the matter. Since the appropriations for the implementation of the law were rather inadequate, the society felt that if the Governor appointed someone already residing in Europe, travel expenses would be lessened so that "the entire appropriation might be preserved for the great object." The committee suggested two individuals, "eminently distinguished for their researches on historical subjects, now representing the United States at the Courts of Berlin and the Hague, and whose public position

⁵ The society, naturally, had no exclusive use to the documents that eventually were to be obtained, and the insertion of the phrase was no doubt largely a gesture of acknowledgment for the role the society had played in the passage of the law.

⁶ New-York Historical Society, "Minutes of meeting held March 3, 1840." These manuscript minutes have never been published.

would give them superior facilities in gaining access to the Archives of foreign Governments."⁷

The two gentlemen to whom the society referred were Henry Wheaton (1785-1848) and Harmanus Bleecker (1779-1849). The Governor, however, appointed neither of them, but rather a distant relative of Bleecker, a young man of only 26, John Romeyn Brodhead. Brodhead, it cannot be doubted, was given this appointment largely on Bleecker's suggestion. Distantly related to Bleecker on his maternal side, Brodhead was young, energetic, and intelligent. He was descended from a long line of settlers who had arrived in New York State during the 17th century, and both Dutch and English blood flowed through his veins. Though born in Philadelphia, he spent the major part of his life in New York. William Paklow, the author of the Brodhead sketch in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, states that he was educated at Albany Academy and at Rutgers University, and that he graduated from Rutgers at the early age of 17, with honors. After reading law for several years he was admitted to the bar in 1835. The practice of law was short lived, however, for 2 years later he went to serve as attaché to the legation at The Hague, where Bleecker was Chargé d'Affaires. Bleecker, therefore, had more than ample opportunity to note the capabilities of young Brodhead and could without scruple recommend him to be considered for appointment as historical agent for the State of New York.

Brodhead had an interest in history, and while he served as attaché in the Dutch capital, his specific concern with Dutch culture and the Dutch background of New York became more pronounced. An interest in this history and an experience in actually working in the Netherlands would, of course, augur well for any applicant who might be considered for the post of historical agent. As New York had been originally settled by the Dutch, the agent would have to spend considerable time searching in Dutch archives. Brodhead also knew the language to some extent, though by no means (as can be gathered from several entries in his diary) did he know it well or in detail.⁸

Brodhead served in the legation at The Hague through the closing months of 1840 and then returned to the United States to be near his ailing mother, for whom he had very great devotion. His stay was

⁷ New-York Historical Society, "Minutes . . . March 7, 1840." The society evidently recognized the inadequacy of the State's \$4,000 appropriation. As events were to show, more than \$12,000 was needed for the completion of the mission.

⁸ Some insight into this period of Brodhead's life, as well as a fairly detailed account of Bleecker's adult life, is found in Harriet Langdon Pruyn Rice, *Harmanus Bleecker, an Albany Dutchman 1779-1849* (W. Boyd Printing Co., Albany, 1924). Though not a definitive biography of Bleecker, the volume, written by the daughter of a close friend, offers a very good introduction to the subject's very active life and to his circle of friends and acquaintances. It also contains some half dozen letters written by Brodhead to Bleecker in 1842, at which time Brodhead was fulfilling his duties as agent of the State.

not to be long, however, for within a few months, specifically on January 20, 1841, Governor Seward finally made an appointment to fulfill the law passed 2 years earlier, and it was Brodhead whom he chose. Two months later young Brodhead received from Seward instructions to be considered "advisory only." They briefly outlined what was hoped to be found in each country to be visited. The Governor noted, for example, the desirability of obtaining "in England the copies of those papers relating to the occupation of the Colony, which are said to have been removed to the mother country, together with such official documents, memoirs and statistical details as were doubtless communicated from time to time to the British government by its agents here." It was hoped that in the Netherlands documents giving "details in relation to the patents, manorial rights, etc. . . ." would be found. From documents in French archives the expectation was that more would be learned about "settlements bordering upon the colony of New-York." The remainder of the instructions consisted largely of specifics regarding Brodhead's remuneration, which was to be at \$2,000 a year, payable quarterly.⁹

Within 5 weeks of the receipt of the Governor's instructions, Brodhead was off to Europe. Before sailing, however, he spent most of his time examining the records in the State capital at Albany, so that he would be in a better position to know which groups needed supplementing and to avoid, insofar as possible, the copying in Europe of documents already owned by the State. Thus on May 1, 1841, he sailed for Europe on a mission that was to see him spend not 2 years, as was first thought, but almost 3 and a quarter years. In just a little over 2 weeks he arrived in London. His initial stay there was brief, intended simply to acquaint the United States Minister to Great Britain, Andrew Stevenson, of his mission. Stevenson apparently had not been officially notified about Brodhead's plan but was immediately enthusiastic upon hearing it, and he at once sent out letters to the proper British authorities. In the meantime, Brodhead set sail for The Hague, where Harmanus Bleecker was waiting for him.

His reception in the Netherlands was extremely cordial. Bleecker presented Brodhead to the King himself and, as Brodhead was to relate later:

it was soon found that His Majesty took a lively interest in the objects of the mission, and was disposed to grant every possible facility to aid the researches. . . . It seems to have been regarded in that country as a gratifying circumstance that the descendants of Dutch ancestors who had left the father-land two centuries ago, should so far cherish the remembrance of their ancient lineage, as to dispatch one of their number across the wide ocean to seek memorials of the olden time; and

⁹ The Governor's instructions were printed by New York State as no. 111 of its Senate Documents for the year 1841. They are also in O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xviii-xix.

a warm feeling of kindness was extended by all classes . . . , and liberal arrangements were made to lighten and facilitate his labors.¹⁰

The fact that Brodhead had been stationed as attaché in The Hague just a few years earlier also aided him greatly, of course. He was familiar with local customs, modes of travel, and some of the language. While in Europe on his mission, Brodhead maintained diaries that make interesting reading and tell more about his work than can be recounted in this paper. "Nulla dies sine linea" he inscribed on the flyleaf of one diary volume, and he was certainly true to the motto; hardly a day passed in which he did not write three or four sentences concerning its events. The diaries are replete with fascinating allusions to his work.¹¹

The death of his mother in May 1841 brought him great sorrow, but he continued on with his work though temporarily some of its joy had been lost. On July 20, just about a month before he was to leave The Hague to begin searches in Amsterdam, Brodhead wrote in his diary:

I ought to be contented—every thing now goes on well. I have a most delightful apartment, & every domestic comfort I could expect *away from home*. I have a most excellent coadjutor at the archives & am making some proficiency in my Dutch studies. Still I long (foolishly perhaps) to get through here, & see what is to be gotten at Amsterdam.

From time to time, Brodhead referred to a coadjutor. Such coadjutors or assistants might have been employees of the various archives, employees or attachés at the legations, or any others whom Brodhead thought capable of assisting him in overseeing the copyists who were employed to transcribe the documents, in sorting papers, or in making any necessary arrangements. One of his coadjutors was the then unknown Benjamin Perley Poore (1820–87), who soon was to achieve prominence as an author and editor. In fact, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was to appoint Poore to a position similar to Brodhead's the following year. As Brodhead stated from time to time, without the aid of trusted coadjutors, he could not have hoped to complete his mission. Indeed, if he himself had had to supervise every transcription, he could not have managed to find time to visit fruitfully the various archives he did. Thus, for instance, while he was in London, searching

¹⁰ *Report of the select committee on the Colonial Agency*, May 5, 1845. This report was printed by New York State as no. 111 of its Senate Documents for the year 1845. It is also in O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, 1:xxxvi–xli. As stated above, Brodhead had to submit a final report upon completing his mission. It was submitted to the Governor, who in turn had to present it to the State legislature. The report referred to in this citation is that of a committee created by the legislature to judge Brodhead's accomplishments.

¹¹ The Brodhead diaries are in the special collections division of the Rutgers University Library in New Brunswick, N.J. There are diaries for several years both preceding and following his mission in Europe, as well as for most of the period in which he was actually engaged as agent. These diaries will, hereafter, be cited as Brodhead Diary.

for documents to be transcribed, a coadjutor was in Amsterdam overseeing the transcriptions being made there.

Brodhead remained in the Netherlands until December 1841. He visited Amsterdam and took advantage of every opportunity to search for pertinent records. Here he examined the archives of the Classis of Amsterdam, under whose care the Dutch Church in the Colonies had remained. In Amsterdam he also noted that many records of the Dutch West India Company (the organization largely responsible for settling the area that was later to become New York) had been destroyed about 20 years earlier. Several letters written to friends and notations in his diary clearly indicate that this discovery upset him greatly.¹²

As his stay in the Netherlands drew to a close, Brodhead, in a letter addressed to his future wife (he was to marry Eugenia Bloodgood in 1856) expressed mixed feelings over his accomplishments in the Netherlands. He was still brooding over the loss of the West India Company archives, for he knew that they could have shed much light on the very early years of New York's history. "I do not know why I feel as I do," he wrote to Eugenia. "Perhaps it is entirely wrong. But when I look at what has been accomplished here, I feel a sort of loathing and disgust. I feel as if I had not got enough yet. It seems to me as if scarcely anything has been done, in comparison with what I ought to have accomplished."¹³

Brodhead had no need for misgivings, however. The final tally would indicate that eventually what was to be transcribed in the Netherlands would amount to 16 volumes "containing upwards of four thousand pages," which were eagerly awaited by historians. He had been treated extremely well by all the individuals he had met, and it is both interesting and important to note that in a progress report sent to the Governor about a month before he left the country, he (probably one of the earliest Americans to do so) urged that New York donate to the Royal Library at The Hague

a series of the public documents of the State of New-York [which] would not only be greatly valued as containing in themselves, the most authentic information in regard to subjects, to which the public mind in Europe is daily becoming more and more awake, but would at the same time, be highly appreciated as a testimonial of the grateful sense entertained by the State, of the importance of the obligation

¹² Attention must be directed, however, to the fact that Brodhead had been misinformed or had misinterpreted his information. Some of the papers may have been in disarray, but only a relatively small part of the West India Company archives were lost—more specifically, most of the papers for the 13-year period, 1623–36. These were, nevertheless, years in which the Dutch had been active in colonizing New York, and Brodhead would have been interested, of course, in examining the missing records. For more information consult Engel Sluiter, "The Dutch Archives and American Historical Research," in *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 6, no. 1:21–35 (Mar. 1937).

¹³ Brodhead to Eugenia Bloodgood, Nov. 23, 1841, in Brodhead papers, New Brunswick.

that has been conferred [that is, granting New York State permission to search Dutch archives].¹⁴

Brodhead departed the Netherlands in December 1841, ready to undertake his researches in England. Two important changes had taken place since he had earlier passed through London. A new British Ministry had come into power, with the Earl of Aberdeen as principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (the department through which Brodhead had to receive permission to examine archival materials). The United States Minister, Stevenson, had been succeeded by Edward Everett, who showed himself as enthusiastic as Stevenson had been. Brodhead thought that the change in British administration augured well for his mission. The initial correspondence between Stevenson and Aberdeen's predecessor, Lord Palmerston, had indicated that Brodhead could not be given permission to examine all the archives of the State Paper Office (the agency where the most important and relevant archives for New York were kept), but that, if Brodhead were to submit "a list of any particular documents [he] wished to obtain," the list would be examined by competent persons and if no objection were found, the requested documents could then be copied.¹⁵ Brodhead, of course, did not have particular documents in mind, so that submitting a list would have been difficult if not impossible. In the interim the two principals, Palmerston and Stevenson, were out of office, and now he had to deal with two new individuals.

It was unfortunate that, as fate would have it, Brodhead's mission was undertaken while relations between Britain and her former colony were somewhat strained. The "Creole Affair," involving a highjacked American ship taken to a British port in the Bahamas, had caused some bad feeling between the two countries. In 1839 a much more serious incident had occurred: a boundary dispute between the State of Maine and Canada—a dispute not compromised until August 9, 1842, with the signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. During the interval open war threatened to erupt on several occasions. Perhaps it was this boundary dispute that made Brodhead gleeful in several instances when he came upon various maps in the archives of the three countries he visited. Boundary disputes had occurred between several of the States, let alone with Canada. The discovery of good maps

¹⁴ The report, dated Oct. 25, 1841, was printed by New York State as no. 2 of its Senate Documents for the year 1842. Besides his final report at the completion of his mission, Brodhead was to issue at least two others to the Governor. These reports (or communications, as they were usually termed) were dated July 12, 1842, and Dec. 3, 1842. The former was printed by New York State as no. 106 of its Senate Documents for the year 1842; the latter as no. 2 of the Senate Documents for the year 1843.

¹⁵ Brodhead, *The Final Report of John Romeyn Brodhead, Agent of the State of New-York To Procure and Transcribe Documents in Europe, Relative to the Colonial History of Said State. Made to the Governor, 12th February, 1845*, p. 5-6 (E. Mack, Albany, 1845). The report was also printed by New York State as no. 47 of its Senate Documents for the year 1845, and is in O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xxii-xxxvi.

could help settle many questions. There can be little doubt that the friction between Great Britain and the United States at this time was part of the reason why Brodhead received, at least initially, a cool reception from British governmental authorities.

The strained relations between the two countries at this time, however, were only one of the reasons why Brodhead experienced difficulty. The main explanation was, no doubt, the extreme strictness with which access to archives was allowed. This policy may be understood to some extent, by the reasoning expressed in the following excerpt from a letter written by Sir Robert Peel to Lord Aberdeen more than a decade before Brodhead's visit:

I confess to you that I doubt the policy of giving such unrestricted access to American writers to our State Papers . . . I can readily believe that it might serve powerfully to confirm an anti-English feeling even in the present day. Is it fair towards the descendants of those who favoured the mother country—and adhered to her cause—to disclose the communications which they had had with the British government . . . Huskisson, when he was Secretary of State gave facilities to another American writer to inspect the correspondence in the State Paper Office of which he soon found reason to repent.¹⁶

Lord Aberdeen, however, finally granted the needed and long-awaited permission to examine the records in the State Paper Office. This resulted probably from persistent prodding by Everett on special direction of President John Tyler. Aberdeen's approval carried several stipulations. First, Brodhead had to present a general written statement indicating the type of material for which he was searching. Second, an official of the State Paper Office had to be present at all times while the records were being examined, and no documents could be transcribed until they had been reviewed and approved by Aberdeen's office.

With these understandings, Brodhead finally commenced his examinations at the Office on April 6, 1842. Progress was slow, for he had to examine the various documents, draw up lists of what was desired to be transcribed, wait for approval (there was always an element of doubt whether items on the list would be allowed or disallowed), and then begin transcriptions. Incidentally, he desired to hire his own copyists whose services he could have obtained at a lower fee (thus allowing his meager funds to last longer), but he was restricted in so doing and forced to use the clerks of the State Paper Office itself, whom he had to pay "4d. sterling, for every folio of 72 words, that they transcribed," a fee that he considered excessive for the large amount of material he wished to copy.¹⁷

As he did in the Netherlands and would do in France, Brodhead also

¹⁶ Quoted as an introductory remark preceding the preface of B. R. Crick and Miriam Alman, eds., *A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to America in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, New York and London, 1961).

¹⁷ Brodhead, *Final Report*, p. 13; also in O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xxviii.

visited other repositories besides the main Government archives. Most notably, during his stay in England, he examined materials in the British Museum (where he located a rare Dutch manuscript for which he had advertised in vain in the Netherlands), the office of the Privy Council, and the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. Young Brodhead also found opportunities on some weekends and evenings to take advantage of the cultural offerings in London, but he also had to put up with the British weather. He often complained about the very cold temperature in many of the rooms where he had to search through archives.

Brodhead made slow but steady progress. On April 29 he was given more leeway in examining the records in the State Paper Office. For a while his enthusiasm even made him contemplate a possible visit to Spain to explore archival repositories there. On May 9 he had breakfast with Washington Irving, who at that period of his life was spending much time in Europe. Brodhead noted on that day that Irving was in "most excellent spirits" and wrote: "He wants me to come to Spain to look among the Archives there, & offers to make me an attaché to his Legation!"¹⁸

In June 1842, with the actual copying of some of the documents finally underway, Brodhead thought it best to go to Paris in order to begin his researches there. Before leaving London he had written to the United States Minister, Gen. Lewis Cass, notifying him that he was coming, and requesting that Cass begin to acquire the necessary permissions so that no time would be lost. The French authorities greeted Brodhead cordially and quickly gave him permission to examine various archival materials. Most of his researches in Paris were to be centered in the Archives of the Marine and the Colonies, the French department to which the general management of French dependencies had been entrusted. He also searched in the Royal Library and planned to examine the Archives of the Department of Foreign Affairs as well. He was informed, however, that the latter institution would have no material whatsoever pertinent to his investigations.

Throughout his stay in Europe, Brodhead was troubled by financial worries. Without additional appropriations, his work would come to a halt. It was vexing for him to discover hundreds of relevant documents and at the same time to be kept in a state of suspense about sufficient funds being forthcoming. When the legislature did appropriate for his work, it did so largely at the instigation and chiding of the Governor and those friends of Brodhead who may have had influence at Albany. An appropriation made in the early part of 1842 had been passed by a vote of 22 to 5—a good vote but, of course, not unanimous.

¹⁸ Brodhead Diary, May 9, 1842. In later life Brodhead was to write a history of New York State. It is interesting to observe that Paklow, writing of Brodhead in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, states that the history was extra favorable to New York's Dutch settlers and this "may have been caused by a reaction, more intense than he [Brodhead] realized, against the ludicrous impression given in Irving's *Knickerbocker History of NY*."

There were individuals both in and out of State government circles who did not think too highly of his mission. Brodhead wrote to his confidant, Bleeker, giving vent to his feelings by stating "that it is utter folly to undertake to procure 'documents' . . . and have one's self restricted to the expenditure of a limited sum, which those who appropriated don't know how far it may go, or how short it may come."¹⁹ On July 12, 1842, Brodhead submitted another progress report to the Governor. Work was proceeding satisfactorily, he wrote. In London, the documents selected were being transcribed. Expenses were heavy, however, coming to "one shilling per page, or about one hundred dollars for every four hundred pages."²⁰

Brodhead continued in Paris throughout the summer and returned to London on November 14. He remained in Europe for about another year and a half, most of the time in England. In London Brodhead examined the transcriptions that the copyists had produced, and he continued to seek out more documents. It was during this second visit to England that he viewed the records of the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. Occasionally there were delays at the State Paper Office while he waited for documents, which he had selected, to be approved by Aberdeen's office. Most of his evenings he spent calendaring the transcriptions that had been made in the Netherlands and had now been shipped to him in London. At this time he also had these documents bound. He examined the archives of the Privy Council and availed himself of every opportunity to search for more relevant items. On one occasion he was extended first choice on documents that a dealer was offering for sale. Brodhead had to refuse the offer, however, for shortage of funds.

For a very brief period at this time, as might be expected, he was asked by others if he would make note (during the course of his document search) of certain items in which they were interested. For example, the historian Jared Sparks had made a request to watch for any of "Franklin's correspondence in 1754" (Brodhead notes that he was unsuccessful in this matter), and Minister Cass, himself a keen student of history, wished him to note documents relating to the "Wyoming Inquiry" (Brodhead notes that he was successful with this topic).

Brodhead's mission was now drawing to a close. The New York State Legislature had made its final appropriation; he had located most of the documents for which he had come. He remained in London until October 4, 1843; then he left for Paris to make a final inspection of what the copyists had accomplished there and to undertake one last search for more materials. He wrote in his diary on October 9 that his coadjutor, Mr. Poore, whom he liked "highly" had "fulfilled his function very admirably."²¹

¹⁹ Brodhead to Bleeker, Aug. 6, 1842, in Bleeker papers, New York State Library, Albany.

²⁰ See note 14, above.

²¹ Brodhead Diary, Oct. 9, 1843.

Needed funds to pay the copyists and to settle other bills arrived the following week, the specific day being "marked with a white stone!"²² so elated was Brodhead. On November 15 he entered in his diary a complaint common to those who worked with manuscripts at that time (no doubt, in our period as well) that he was "suffering very severely with pain in the Head and Eyes. I begin to fear that my sight is becoming weaker, & I find it more difficult to read at the Archives."²³ On December 30 he was happier, for he had an opportunity to attend a royal reception. He found the day to be "quite a remarkable one"²⁴ for having the opportunity of speaking with Louis Philippe.

From January to July 1844, Brodhead was busy making preparations for his journey home. He had, of course, to oversee the transcribing of the remaining documents, the payment of final fees to the copyists, the payment of his rent bills as well as other financial obligations he had incurred, the packing of the transcriptions, and so forth. Indeed, he may have been so busy that he did not maintain his diary, for so far as is known, there is none extant for his last 6 months in Europe.

He finally embarked from Europe on July 7, and by the end of the month he was back in New York. Brodhead had previously shipped the Dutch transcriptions to New York City. All that now remained to be sent from Europe were the English and French documents. Though he had intended to bring the French documents home with him on the same vessel in which he was sailing, he was unable to; for, as Poore explained in a letter to Frederick A. Hanford, an insurance agent in New York City, they "were detained at Havre in consequence of the Insurance Office not being willing to insure the documents for so large a sum without receiving additional information as to their value."²⁵ Therefore, Poore was shipping them a week later, on July 15. Poore also sent out a case containing some personal belongings of Brodhead's, which the latter had neglected to take with him when he embarked for home. Hanford was also informed that Brodhead wished the documents to be deposited in some secure place. He wrote: "They have been insured from Paris to New York for 3500f=\$700. They cost over that sum."²⁶

Brodhead, after first visiting Governor William C. Bouck to inform him that his mission was completed, stayed in New York City or its vicinity, where at this time his father and several friends resided, and

²² *Ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1843.

²³ *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1843.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Dec. 30, 1843.

²⁵ Poore to Hanford, July 24, 1844, in Brodhead papers, New Brunswick.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Subsequently Brodhead, after receiving these documents, discovered that several were missing (misplaced or stolen) and wrote to Poore about the matter. Poore then recopied most of these missing items and wrote to Brodhead, Jan. 1, 1845, that he was shipping "all the missing Documents which, after the most careful research, I have been able to discover." Poore was clearly upset over what had occurred and continued, "No pains have been spared on my part, I assure you to find them, for the defalcation has exceedingly chagrined me."

waited for the English and French documents to arrive. Instead of immediately depositing the documents in the office of the secretary of state as had been the original intention, the Governor agreed with Brodhead's suggestion that they should be properly arranged. Brodhead was to spend most of the remainder of 1844 in so doing. Thus, when the shipment finally arrived from Europe, he had the papers stored in a brick house on Prince Street in lower Manhattan and insured for \$5,000. He had them bound, and with some aid arranged the documents in chronological order and prepared a complete calendar of the collection. This calendar was probably the first one ever prepared for such an extensive collection in a State office; indeed, it was among the earliest calendars prepared in the United States.

And so, the documents were finally ready to be deposited in the office of the secretary of state at Albany, and on February 12, 1845, Brodhead was able to submit his final report to Governor Silas Wright, who the previous month had succeeded Governor Bouck. Brodhead also included his very extensive calendar as part of the final report. The calendar, when finally printed, consisted of almost 350 pages, and, as Brodhead stated in his final report, with the aid of the calendar "persons at a distance will be enabled to ascertain at once, the contents and the bearing of each paper in the whole series of eighty volumes of European Transcripts."²⁷ The final tally showed that Brodhead had made some 5,000 transcriptions. They were arranged in 16 volumes of Dutch transcriptions, 47 volumes of English transcriptions, and 17 volumes of French transcriptions.

Between the time of his arrival from Europe and the submission of his final report to the Governor of the State, Brodhead was invited to speak at the New-York Historical Society's 40th anniversary dinner on November 20. Quite naturally the society, as the original sponsor of the law which sent Brodhead on his mission, was eager to learn at first hand what had been accomplished. His address was a lengthy one (it was later printed by the society and encompassed almost 51 pages). He outlined his visits to the various archives, and told of the different receptions he had been given. Most of the speech, however, was in the nature of a scholarly treatise on various points of interest in New York State's early history. The documents that had been collected in Europe could now clear up matters which heretofore were in dispute owing to the lack of evidence. Brodhead lavishly praised all who had aided him and stated that New York State had now regained a measure of self-respect for rescuing its history.²⁸

²⁷ Brodhead, *Final Report*, p. 25. Also in O'Callaghan, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xxxv.

²⁸ *An Address Delivered Before the New-York Historical Society, at its Fortieth Anniversary, 20th November, 1844; by John Romeyn Brodhead . . . With an Account of the Subsequent Proceedings at the Dinner Given in the Evening, passim* (Press of the New-York Historical Society, New York, 1844). Brodhead's delivery was received most enthusiastically. There were numerous dignitaries at the function, including John Quincy Adams, Albert

It will be recalled that when the law sending an agent to Europe was passed in 1839, a section in it stated that the documents that ultimately would be gathered were to be "subject to the use of the State Historical Society." There is no evidence to indicate that the society desired a "monopoly," so to speak, concerning the use of the documents, nor would such action have been tolerable to the State. The section had been inserted, no doubt, simply to acknowledge the part that the society had played in fostering the law and to emphasize that it was the leading society of its kind in the State, and one of the leaders in the Nation.

Now that the documents lay in the State's possession, it soon became apparent that they would have to be published in order to make them available to all and to facilitate the answering of questions on the part of researchers. The New-York Historical Society had hoped that the publication of the documents would definitely be placed under its auspices but, as events were to show, this was not to be done.²⁹ Brodhead had entertained hopes that the legislature would choose him for the final editing and general supervision of the publishing project. The legislature moved slowly, however, and Brodhead took advantage of the opportunity to serve under George Bancroft as Secretary of the United States Legation in London. After his return in 1849 Brodhead made an offer to the State to superintend publication of the documents gratis.

Brodhead's very successful mission could not help but be an inspiration and example to others. Almost immediately upon the conclusion of his mission he was sought after for advice and suggestions by others who wished to undertake similar investigations. For example, within 3 months after Brodhead's return to America, Benjamin Blake Minor, editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, stated in a letter to Brodhead "though your researches were confined principally to [documents relevant to] New York, I have thought it probable that you could give some general idea, at least, of the benefits Virginia might expect to reap from also sending over an agent." Minor continued to explain that he cherished "the hope that our State may soon be induced to follow the bright example of yours & Georgia, in availing herself of whatever documents the archives of England afford."³⁰ Within a decade

Gallatin, Mayor Philip Hone of New York City, and representatives from nearly all major historical societies. It was the last public function at which Adams and Gallatin (then very advanced in age) were to meet face to face. Letters of regret at not being able to attend were read from other notables such as Martin Van Buren and Millard Fillmore. Brodhead received praise for the successful completion of his mission from every quarter. Six weeks after the reception, the New-York Historical Society voted to make him "a life member without the payment of dues" (Minutes, Jan. 7, 1845).

²⁹ A brief survey of the events leading to publication may be found in the preface to the actual publication. It was written by Brodhead, who had been asked to do so by a committee of the Regents of the State University, under whose supervision the program was placed. The publication itself was edited and supervised by the eminent historian, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, who also translated the Dutch and French documents.

³⁰ Minor to Brodhead, Oct. 9, 1844, in the Brodhead papers, New-York Historical Society.

of Brodhead's return, several States had begun to make plans for similar missions. On June 26, 1847, the New Jersey Historical Society addressed a letter to Brodhead (who, incidentally, had been made an honorary member of the society) on this topic and enclosed a report of its committee that had been formed to look into this matter. The society's committee stated that it was informed that a similar undertaking was being planned by the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

Perhaps one of the best compliments which Brodhead was to receive (somewhat ironically) came from London. In 1880 W. Noel Sainsbury, writing in the preface of the work he had edited—a multivolume series listing thousands and thousands of documents located in British archives—had occasion to speak of documents relating to New York State. Sainsbury referred to the *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* and stated that "Nearly all the New York papers calendared in this volume [that is, the work that Sainsbury was editing] are printed in the above magnificent collection, and with but rare exceptions, most accurately, and *they have been of great assistance to me in my labours.*"³¹

Brodhead spent most of the remainder of his life as naval officer of the port of New York. He was an active member of various historical and learned societies and began to satisfy a lifelong ambition to write a comprehensive history of New York State. It was to be a multivolume work tracing the State's past from the first Dutch settlements up to his day. Only two volumes, however, ever appeared (carrying the history from 1609 to 1691). A third volume was begun but never concluded. The two complete volumes, nevertheless, are still considered the definitive study of the subject.

On May 6, 1873, Brodhead died. A phrase that Bancroft had used to describe the fruits of Brodhead's search among the European archives is still, no doubt, the most appropriate one to use to characterize his achievement. Bancroft had stated that the ship in which Brodhead returned "was more richly freighted with new materials for American History than any that ever crossed the Atlantic."

Indeed, it was a most accurate statement. Every year, the documents that Brodhead caused to be transcribed are used by thousands of researchers, who have found them to be rich and rewarding. Not a single worthy history of practically any community within New York State is written without consulting them. It was most fortunate that the State saw fit to have them published, for on March 29, 1911, the transcribed documents that Brodhead had brought over with him in that memorable year of 1844 were destroyed in a disastrous fire, which destroyed innumerable other historical documents as well.

³¹ Italics supplied. W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1661-1668, Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, p. xxii (London, 1880); reprinted in 1964 by Kraus Reprint, Ltd.