

# Archives of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church

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## THE EARLY YEARS: 1804 TO 1894

**D**URING the formative years of the Episcopal Church in America the General Convention was concerned with matters more pressing than the preservation of archival records. At the Convention in 1804 a canon was approved "providing for an accurate view of the state of the Church from time to time."<sup>1</sup> Since this canon prescribed the preservation of reports, records, and journals it represents the starting point in collecting the Church's historical records. The canon directed each parish priest to present an annual parochial report to his bishop and directed each diocesan secretary to present to the House of Deputies documents reflecting the state of the diocese.

On May 24, 1820, a layman from Pennsylvania, Samuel Sitgreaves, offered a historic resolution in the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies:

[that a committee] make a collection of Journals of the general convention, and of the several diocesan conventions, and of the important documents, connected with the history of the church of the United States; and to deposit the same, subject to the disposal of the general convention, in such hands as may be deemed proper, for the present, and until a further order of the convention.<sup>2</sup>

The House of Bishops concurred and appointed the Presiding Bishop, William White, as a committee.

Three years later the Joint Committee reported that it had collected most of the required records and had deposited them in the library of St. James's Church, Philadelphia, under the care of the Society for the Advancement of Christianity in Pennsylvania. The committee recommended that all the documents thus collected be placed under the care of the society.

A decade later Rev. Francis Lister Hawks, rector of St. Thomas's Church, New York, proposed to the General Convention, meeting in Philadelphia in 1835, that

some individual be appointed by the General Convention as a collector and conservator of all books, pamphlets, documents, manuscripts, &c. which are connected with or throw light upon the proceedings of the Church in any part of our country

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the General Convention* ([n.p.]. Printed for the Convention, 1790- ), 1804, p. 10, 19, 38-39. Cited hereafter as *Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, 1820, p. 41.

either in past or present times. And to this individual, let there be confided such documents as the Church already possesses.

He also proposed that the conservator be authorized to collect materials "in the name of the Church" and not merely as an individual, suggesting that access to much material might be better gained in this matter, especially manuscripts in England. Hawks concluded:

Let some safe place of deposite be selected (the writer would suggest the Library of the General Theological Seminary,) and let the books, documents, &c., belonging to the General Convention be there kept in a case by themselves, under a lock and key, accessible to all persons under proper regulations, for consultation, but to be removed by no one. Make the conservator, or some one to be appointed by him, responsible for their preservation.<sup>3</sup>

Hawks's proposals were submitted to a Joint Committee. The committee reported favorably on all of Hawks's suggestions, requested that Bishop White and Hawks seek out historical material in England, that the material already belonging to the General Convention be transferred from Philadelphia to the General Theological Seminary in New York, and that Hawks be asked to act as "conservator." The General Convention adopted all the committee's resolutions. Dr. Hawks sailed for England in March 1836 and spent several months making transcripts from material in various depositories.<sup>4</sup>

The "Conservator of the Records and Documents of the Prot. Epis. Church in the United States," as Hawks signed his report, concluded his first report to the General Convention (1838) with an exhortation to the Convention to take care to add material to the valuable "library" that was now established.

At this same Convention Dr. Hawks was appointed Historiographer of the Church and was requested to prepare "at his earliest convenience, a condensed view of the documents he has collected, so as to form a connected History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." Rev. Samuel F. Jarvis was also appointed a historiographer.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in the 18 years since Sitgreaves' resolution in the General Convention of 1820 authorizing a committee to collect the available historical documents, the Church had its first "Conservator," its first official historiographers, and a collection of invaluable source material for the study of the history of the Church in the United States. The Convention of 1835 had authorized the transfer of the material from St. James's Library, Philadelphia, to the General Theological Seminary, New York, but this was not done. Apparently Dr. Hawks took personal possession of the material and transferred it to New York.

The Conservator evidently was considered to be a collector and keeper

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, 1835, p. 89-91.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, 1838, p. 123-136; letter from Hawks to Bishop White, London, May 24, 1836, in Bird Wilson, *Memoir of the Life of the Right Reverend William White* (Philadelphia, James Kay, Jun. & Brothers, 1839), p. 258-263.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal*, 1838, p. 113.

of historical records rather than a true archivist. A committee to whom the subject of preserving the records of the consecration of bishops was referred reported to the House of Bishops in 1841 that, "in absence of all provision for keeping the official papers and documents of this House," they recommended that a

suitable person be chosen by this House to be called the Register of the House of Bishops, whose duty it shall be to procure all the Journals of the proceedings of this House, in manuscript, where they may exist; and when not to be found in manuscript, to obtain the printed Journals and keep the same . . . that the Register procure, for the safe keeping of all papers and documents entrusted to his care, a fire-proof box, to be kept in the Library of the General Theological Seminary, with the consent of the Trustees thereof.

The House of Bishops approved the committee's recommendations, and the librarian of the General Theological Seminary, "for the time being," was chosen to be the "Register of the Convention."<sup>6</sup>

This action thus, in effect, established two custodians of the records belonging to the General Convention: the "Conservator" (Dr. Hawks) and the "Register" (the librarian of the General Theological Seminary, then the Reverend John D. Ogilby). It also established, in effect, two depositories, one with Dr. Hawks<sup>7</sup> and the other the General Theological Seminary Library.<sup>8</sup>

Three years later the Register reported to the House of Bishops that he had "refrained from any active measures for procuring accessible documents" because the Treasurer of the Convention had replied to his request for an iron safe that no funds were available for its purchase. He reported that he had no documents in his custody "save one parcel, sent by the Bishop of Ohio, which is as safe as I can at present make it."<sup>9</sup> The Register's title was changed to "Registrar" though no formal action approving the change appears in the *Journal*.

The Conservator reported to the 1847 Convention that he had bound "the Documents from England" and had added to the periodicals, pamphlets, books, historical manuscripts, and documents in his possession. These apparently included some archival material, for he mentioned that he had bound "the Documents which Bishop White had in the case of the Consecration of our Bishops anterior to his death. These are the *original* evidence of our Episcopal succession, and therefore important." Hawks added, "Now, all these Documents are kept by me with great care, and it is perfectly understood by my family and brethren of the Clergy living near me, that all, (should I die,) must be delivered to the General Convention."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Journal*, 1841, p. 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> For the transcripts from England and the material that had been deposited in St. James's Library, Philadelphia.

<sup>8</sup> For the archives of the House of Bishops.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal*, 1844, p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> *Journal*, 1847, p. 153.

Hawks's assurance did not satisfy Bishop Whittingham, who moved that, to protect the rights of the General Convention Hawks be asked to execute "a declaration of trust" for the materials in his possession. Whittingham also moved that Hawks be allowed to continue to retain the "books, pamphlets and manuscripts" so long as he required the use of them but that the archives (i.e., "the original documents and evidences pertaining to the consecrations of Bishops") in Hawks's possession be placed in the General Theological Seminary Library as ordered 12 years earlier. Bishop Whittingham's resolution was approved by the Convention.<sup>11</sup>

In 1853 the General Convention amended the canons and provided additional duties for the Registrar. In effect he was made the Archivist of the Church, though with the title of "Registrar." The new canon read in part:

It shall be the duty of the said Registrar to procure all such journals, files, papers, reports and other documents now in existence; to arrange, label, file, index and otherwise put in order and provide for the safe keeping of the same, and of all such others as may hereafter come into his possession.<sup>12</sup>

The House of Bishops, in the same year, passed a rule that there be appointed at each General Convention a Standing Committee on Records to report to the House the location, state, and condition of the records and papers under its control. This committee reported to the House in 1856 and 1859 but ceased to function thereafter.

In practice, the Standing Committee on Records simply presented the Registrar's triennial report as their report. Rev. John Henry Hobart, Jr., an assistant at Trinity Church, New York, upon the death of Ogilby became the Registrar in 1853. He reported to the Standing Committee on Records in 1856 that he had secured the use of a large iron safe, standing in the North Vestry of Trinity Church as a place of deposit. In this safe, he reported that he had put the papers in his custody and had filed and arranged them, as required by Canon IV of 1853. To his report he appended a complete list of the archives. In 1865 the Registrar reported that the archives in his possession had been moved from Trinity Church to the residence of the Registrar in Baltimore because the space occupied by the safe was required for other purposes. Hobart pleaded for funds for the purchase of a safe.

Francis Hawks, who had kept custody of the historical manuscripts and much other material since his return from England in 1836, died on September 26, 1866. At a special meeting of the House of Bishops, October 3, 1866, the House authorized Rev. William Stevens Perry to receive from Hawks's executors all the documents belonging to the General Convention that at the time of Hawks's death were in his hands, to give receipts for the papers, and to hold them subject to the order

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154, 158.

<sup>12</sup> Canon IV, section 2, Canons of 1853.

of the next General Convention.<sup>13</sup> This was done and, as Hawks had done before him, Perry took the material into personal custody.<sup>14</sup>

In 1868 the General Convention took a step potentially equal in importance to its action of creating a Conservator in 1835. Initiated in the House of Deputies, a resolution was passed creating

a permanent Commission . . . who shall have power to control the archives and other articles belonging to the General Convention, and who may direct their removal and provide for their safe keeping, to whom in the interval between the sessions of the General Convention application may be made for copies of important documents, and who shall have power to edit and publish any manuscript without charges to this body, and, in case of the death or resignation of the Registrar or of his disability, shall appoint a successor until the next meeting of the General Convention.<sup>15</sup>

This resolution also shows that the Registrar, not the Historiographer, was looked upon as the real archivist of the Church. The General Convention of 1865 had given permission to the Registrar to appoint an Assistant Registrar if he so desired. Under this authority, the Registrar, John Henry Hobart, appointed William Stevens Perry, the Historiographer, to be Assistant Registrar, thus bringing the two Church recordkeepers into a closer relationship.

The Commission on Church Archives made its first report to the General Convention in 1871. The report summarized the holdings<sup>16</sup> and indicated that they were in the possession of Dr. Perry (who was then rector of Trinity Church, Geneva, N.Y.) and of Dr. Hobart.<sup>17</sup> The commission's report made a strong appeal for a central and safe place of deposit for the archives of the Church. The Bishop of New Jersey, W. H. Odenheimer, chairman of the commission, then presented a resolution asking permission to seek a suitable depository. The Convention quickly voted authorization, but there is no record of any further reports or actions by this commission.

The General Convention of 1880 again turned its attention to the problem of a depository for its archives. Resolutions were passed authorizing the Joint Commission on Church Archives, in connection with the Registrar, to take "conclusive action" to obtain a "proper place for disposing [*sic*] the documentary and other matters that now are,

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Lowndes, ed., *Archives of the General Convention*, 1:1vi (6 vols., New York, privately printed, 1911-12).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Perry compiled a list of the material in his possession and reported to the General Convention which met the following October (*Journal*, 1868, p. 227-228). This list shows that most of the materials in Perry's possession were historical manuscripts rather than archives.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.

<sup>16</sup> Manuscripts obtained from Hawks's executors; manuscripts received from White's family; transcripts procured in England by Hawks; collection of General Convention and diocesan journals and pamphlets begun by White, continued by Hawks, and added to by Perry, and "other papers." *Journal*, 1871, p. 612.

<sup>17</sup> The records in Hobart's custody must have been the true archival material which Hobart took with him to Baltimore from Trinity Church, New York. *Ibid.*, p. 351, and 1874, p. 198.

or may hereafter come, under the care of the Registrar of the General Convention."<sup>18</sup> Six years earlier the Registrar had reported that "the entire collection . . . will be gathered and deposited . . . in Geneva." In 1880 he reported that "they are deposited in a room in Grace Hall in this city [New York]." Hobart added that the use of the room was due to the courtesy of the Rector of Grace Church, that the room was needed and used for other purposes, and that he "would respectfully suggest" that, in view of the importance of the archives and in view of the explicit directions of the canons, more satisfactory provisions be made.

In 1886 Hobart reported that the archives, except for a few papers in the Registrar's hands, were still at Grace Church. The materials Perry received from Hawks were held by him as Assistant Registrar. Hobart gave no location for the material in Perry's care.

When the fireproof library building of the General Theological Seminary opened in 1885, rooms for the archives of the General and Diocesan Conventions were provided.<sup>19</sup> The Convention of 1886 voted to accept this depository with thanks. Hobart reported that he had been prevented by serious illness from moving the archives from Grace Church to the General Theological Seminary.

Hobart died in 1889 before the General Convention met in October. No registrar's report appears in the 1889 *Journal*, nor is there any other report indicating whether or not the archives were moved to the General Theological Seminary library. At a special session of the House of Bishops on October 28, 1887, however, the bishops received with thanks an announcement from the Bishop of New York that a room had been reserved in the See House at New York, for the Presiding Bishop, the Clerk of the Council, and the Secretary of the House, and that the room contained a fireproof safe for the archives. There is no evidence, however, that the archives were deposited in the See House.

Though there is no indication of the date of the removal of the archives to the General Theological Seminary, proof that they were moved before 1892 is shown in a resolution offered by Bishop Perry. The Registrar, Rev. J. Livingston Reese, reported that in 1891 he had received from Bishop Perry, the Historiographer and former Assistant Registrar, the first installment of the documents belonging to the General Convention in his possession. An attached list of these documents show that they were some of the Hawks manuscripts, books, and diocesan journals. Reese also reported receiving from Hobart's family several boxes of pamphlets and manuscripts. He expected to receive more documents and papers that were in the keeping of Bishop Perry and concluded pessimistically, but honestly, that "it will be very difficult to gather together original documents which should be in the Church's

<sup>18</sup> *Journal*, 1880, p. 192-326.

<sup>19</sup> *Journal*, 1886, p. 631; *Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the General Theological Seminary*, 6:47-48 (New York, Henry Bessy, 1886).



possession but which are now scattered, or have found their way into private libraries. Many priceless papers have been destroyed."<sup>20</sup>

#### CHURCH MISSIONS HOUSE: 1894 TO 1940

Two important resolutions were presented to the General Convention in 1892 by Bishop Perry. One was a proposal that the archives of the General Convention, with the archives of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, be deposited in "a suitable room or rooms, with a fire-proof safe in the Church Mission Building . . . under the exclusive direction and control of the Registrar and such other officers of the Convention as may have, by vote of the Convention, care and charge of these papers." A committee reported that the authorities of the Church Missions House approved and the Convention adopted the resolution. This was to be the home of the archives until they were moved to Philadelphia in 1940. The second important resolution presented by the Bishop of Iowa was a call to create a Commission on Archives to replace the long inactive Joint Commission created in 1868. The first commission made only one report to the General Convention (1871) and though it was reappointed by several Conventions there is no evidence that it functioned after that date. Perry's resolution, adopted by the Convention, called for a commission "to co-operate with the Registrar of the Convention in securing, arranging, and caring for all documents, manuscript or in print, illustrating the history of the American Church, which are already, or may hereafter become, the property of the General Convention."<sup>21</sup>

In 1895 the Registrar reported that the archives were then deposited in an adequate room in the Church Missions House. And the same year Bishop Perry, as secretary of the Joint Commission on Archives, made a lengthy report to the General Convention, summarizing the history of the archives and historical manuscripts. He indicated that many of the valuable papers he had received from Hawks were still in his possession but that he was preparing to deposit them with the other archives in the Church Missions House. In 1898 the Registrar reported that he had received from the executors of Bishop Perry 3 volumes of the Hawks manuscripts transcribed from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and 40 collections of manuscript letters.

William Stevens Perry, the Bishop of Iowa, Historiographer of the Church since 1868, fourteenth Secretary of the House of Deputies, Assistant Registrar from 1868 to 1889, and a prime force in the creation of the two Joint Commissions on Archives (1868 and 1892), died in 1898. Rev. Samuel Hart, Secretary of the House of Bishops, was elected Historiographer in 1898, and in 1899 he was appointed acting Registrar.

In 1901 Dr. Hart reported that the archives in the Church Missions

<sup>20</sup> *Journal*, 1892, p. 535-536.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1892, p. 111-112, 146, 387.

House had been moved to a large room in the Church Missions House, formerly the office of the Secretary of the House of Bishops and then assigned for the use of all officers of the General Convention. It contained a large vault, in which all the more valuable documents had been stored.

By about 1898 the archives and other material belonging to the General Convention had, at long last, been gathered together into a single depository under a single custodian. Here the documents (except for the Hawks Collection) were to remain for the next 40-some years.

The Commission on Archives created in 1892 did not prove to be much more effective than the earlier commission appointed in 1868. The commission even failed to report to many General Conventions, and when it did, the report consisted of little more than a reference to the Registrar's report. One notable accomplishment, however, may be noted: in 1910 the commission reported that a subcommittee had been appointed (Dr. Hart and J. Pierpont Morgan) to supervise editing and publication of the manuscript collections in the Archives without expense to the Convention. Unfortunately, this project was terminated after the publication of only six volumes, because of a difference of opinion between the editor (Arthur Lowndes) and the financial backer.<sup>22</sup> The six volumes<sup>23</sup> contain most of the Hobart papers.

The inactivity of the Commission on Archives led to a resolution in the 1919 General Convention requiring the commission to make a brief report to the Convention and, at the next Convention, to give a full report. In obedience to this directive, the commission made a full report in 1922. The commission had examined the archives at the Church Missions House

and found the documents in great disorder. Important documents were wrapped in unlabeled packages . . . certain important documents were missing, especially in connection with the Hobart correspondence . . . the safe in which our important archives are kept is not regarded as fire-proof or burglar-proof, and further that many of our most important archives such as original editions of the Book of Common Prayer, dating back to King James and Queen Elizabeth, are kept on ordinary shelves without cover in open forms, and surrounded by no security against fire or theft.

The commission examined all the archives, labeled them, and put them in good order in metal boxes. Two indexes, one chronological and one alphabetical, were compiled. The commission concluded its report with several recommendations, including "that some person be given authority by the General Convention to be known officially as the Custodian of Archives who shall be responsible for the proper placing, recording and safekeeping of the Archives."<sup>24</sup> Probably never before had the historical collections of the Church been put in such good order. The recommenda-

<sup>22</sup> See files of the Church Historical Society: "Archives—PECUSA—Old Correspondence."

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Lowndes, ed., *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> *Journal*, 1922, p. 683-684.



tion for the appointment of a "Custodian of Archives" was long overdue. The Convention approved a resolution calling for a custodian but referred the other recommendations to the Presiding Bishop and Council.

Rev. Edwin B. Rice was appointed Custodian of the Archives in December 1922, by the Presiding Bishop, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the General Convention in that year. The appointment of a Custodian of Archives relieved the Registrar of responsibility for the archives that he had had since 1853 and for the *Journals* since 1841. In 1925 the Custodian submitted a long report to the Convention summarizing the steps he had taken to bring the collections under control and to protect them. Dr. Rice resigned as Custodian on January 1, 1928, and the Presiding Bishop appointed Rev. Franklin J. Clark to succeed him.

The report of the Commission on Archives in 1922 had infused new life into churchmen concerned with the archives. The Custodian reported in 1928 that the archives were "in orderly condition" as the result of the work of his predecessor but that the facilities were too limited to permit proper supervision of researchers and made it impossible to utilize modern methods of preservation. He therefore suggested that some of the more valuable documents be turned over "to a central, easily accessible, organization equipped for the proper care, supervision, and preservation thereof." Clark reported that the New-York Historical Society, the New York Public Library, and the Department of History at Columbia University "are very anxious" to receive the documents. Since much other Episcopal Church material was already in the New-York Historical Society, Clark suggested that this depository would be best.<sup>25</sup>

The 1928 Convention empowered the Commission on Archives to make arrangements with the New-York Historical Society or some other appropriate institution for the temporary safekeeping of the archives of the Church and to consider what arrangement could be made for the permanent custody of the archives. The Convention also appointed a Joint Committee to study and report on the repair and custody of the archives of the General Convention. An agreement was signed in January 1930 with the New-York Historical Society for the repair, preservation, and temporary keeping of the Hawks papers.<sup>26</sup> The Joint Commission appointed in 1928 to consider the repair and custody of the archives made a report to the next General Convention but there is no extant record of this report.

#### CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: 1940 TO DATE

The Church Historical Society was founded on May 17, 1910, in Philadelphia under the leadership of Henry Budd and William Ives

<sup>25</sup> *Journal*, 1928, p. 395-397.

<sup>26</sup> *Journal*, 1931, p. 418-420. This collection is now called the Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts.

Rutter, Jr., first president and secretary, respectively. The society is the spiritual successor of an earlier organization known as the Protestant Episcopal Historical Society which had been founded at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., in 1850.<sup>27</sup>

The General Convention of 1937 referred to the Joint Committee on the Historical Magazine a resolution regarding the preservation and safekeeping of "Church Records." This committee, after consultation with the officers of the Church Historical Society, recommended that the society be appointed and designated

an official agency of General Convention for the collection, preservation, and safekeeping of records and historical documents connected with the life and development of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and to foster as far as possible the investigation of its history and the development of interest in all relevant research.<sup>28</sup>

The Convention approved this resolution and also one providing for the removal to the society's library at the Philadelphia Divinity School of the "archives of General Convention, and/or of either House, not now or hereafter suitably and satisfactorily housed and serviced."<sup>29</sup>

The Church Historical Society reported in 1943 that about 20 large parcels of General Convention's archives had been sent to the society's library by the Secretary of the General Convention, along with many journals of the General Convention and of different dioceses. The secretary announced that all the archives at the Church Missions House in New York had been turned over to that society.

In 1949 the House of Deputies refused to adopt a resolution to authorize the Church Historical Society "to appeal to the Church for one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000), or whatever sum may appear to be necessary, to provide adequate and permanent quarters" for the archives and other collections in the care of the society. The reason for this resolution was the overcrowded condition of the society's library in the crypt of St. Andrew's Chapel at the Philadelphia Divinity School.

A description of the conditions at the society's headquarters is given in a *Living Church* editorial:

We met with an appalling sight. Here were the official archives of General Convention together with valuable collections of books, periodicals, and papers of the Church Historical Society, so packed in that they filled every available cranny, including the wash room. Not only does this overcrowding present a fire hazard, but it makes priceless documents inaccessible and subject to deterioration and the risk of loss . . . . If the Church does not make proper provision for the preservation of its vital records, it is likely to find some day that they have been lost, through fire, flood, or other contingency.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Lowndes, ed., *op. cit.*, 1:xliv-l. See also *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 1:3-4 (Mar. 1932).

<sup>28</sup> *Journal*, 1940, p. 239-240. For the full Committee report see *Journal*, 1940, p. 404-408.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>30</sup> *Living Church*, Apr. 27, 1952, p. 17-18; *Journal*, 1952, p. 366.

In 1952 the society again asked permission to appeal to the Church for building funds. The Washington Cathedral Library, the Bishop White House in Philadelphia, the General Theological Seminary Library, and the De Lancey Divinity School building in Buffalo were all suggested as possible depositories, but the House of Bishops failed to concur with the House of Deputies' vote to study these locations. Instead, the Convention charged the managers of the Church Historical Society to "proceed by all proper means and with all possible speed to remedy the overcrowded conditions and lack of fireproof housing under which it now operates as an official custodian of this Church."<sup>31</sup>

In May 1955 the managers of the Church Historical Society entered into an agreement with the trustees of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Tex. This was the only "firm" offer of fireproof and air-conditioned quarters and, after a year of conferences and study, the society had decided to accept it under the authority granted them by the General Convention of 1952.<sup>32</sup> The General Convention approved these arrangements and appropriated \$9,000 to cover the cost of the move from Philadelphia to Austin. The materials under the care of the Church Historical Society, shipped in two freight cars, arrived in Austin on August 3, 1956. In April 1962 the historical documents deposited with the New-York Historical Society were transferred to the archives of the Church Historical Society by action of the General Convention.<sup>33</sup>

The action of the General Convention in 1804, appointing a committee to make a collection of journals and other documents, was the beginning of the Church's concern for its recorded history. In 1835 Francis Hawks stimulated the Church to further action, which resulted in his appointment as the first custodian of the historical documents of the Church. Hawks's efforts in securing transcripts of invaluable historical material in England, and the contribution of his own historical collections, gave the Episcopal Church a foundation of source material. The provision made by the General Convention of 1841 for a Register was the beginning of a new concern for the archives of the Church. The appointment of a Joint Commission on Archives in 1868 and again in 1892 increased the interest in preserving the Church's historical records, even though neither of these commissions lived up to its expectations. When the Church Missions House opened in New York in 1894 the Church at last had a more or less permanent, if inadequate, depository for its historical treasures. It is impossible to estimate how much material was

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194-197.

<sup>32</sup> *Journal*, 1955, p. 354-355, 360-361. The agreement is given in full on p. 354-355.

<sup>33</sup> *Journal*, 1961, p. 331; "Proceedings of the Church Historical Society, Annual Report of the Archivist, May, 1962," in *Historical Magazine*, 31:280 (Sept. 1962). For full coverage of the establishment of the Archives and Library of the Church Historical Society in Austin see *Journal*, 1958, p. 366-375, and 1961, p. 472-475; see also Dorman H. Winfrey, "Protestant Episcopal Church Archives," in *American Archivist*, 24:431-433 (Oct. 1961).

lost and mutilated in shuffling the archives from Philadelphia to New York, to Baltimore, to Summit, N.J., to Buffalo, to Geneva, to Fishkill, and to New York again.

The action of the 1919 General Convention forcing the Joint Commission on Archives to act ushered in a new era. The first official Custodian of Archives was appointed, a complete list was made of the collections, and order—even though of a very rudimentary kind in very limited quarters—was brought to the material. Though it took a number of years, another direct result was authorizing the Church Historical Society to care for the Church's archives. The society's relocation in a modern fireproof library in Austin was the final accomplishment in the chain of events initiated by a concerned and exasperated General Convention in 1919.

It is easy to speak of the actions of General Conventions and of commissions but it should not be forgotten that the motivating force behind the Conventions and commissions were churchmen vitally concerned with the preservation of the written record of the Church's heritage in America. In the final analysis thanks are due not to this Convention and that commission but to historians and bookmen like Samuel Sitgreaves, Francis Hawks, William Stevens Perry, John Henry Hobart, Jr., Samuel Hart, J. Pierpont Morgan, Edwin Rice, E. Clowes Chorley, Walter H. Stowe, George Woodward Lamb, and their fellow-churchmen in the Church Historical Society. These were the men concerned not only with history but with the records of history, men who over the years exhorted the Church to care for its historical treasures.

In 1838 Francis Hawks stated: "The Convention has now a very valuable library of materials for our Ecclesiastical history. A little care taken in adding to it from time to time will make it a treasure to our posterity. The foundation is well laid; may we not hope that the Church will feel some interest in furnishing materials for the superstruction? [*sic*]"<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Journal*, 1838, p. 134.

