

In Memoriam

HELEN LOUISE CHATFIELD
(1893-1970)

A grand lady was lost to the fields of archival administration and records management when Helen Louise Chatfield died at the age of 77 at Suburban Hospital, Bethesda, Md., on August 15, 1970. Between her natal day in Brooklyn, N.Y., and her death near Washington, D.C., Helen achieved an enviable record of competence and achievement in her chosen profession. Through it all she remained the smiling, friendly, sympathetic woman her many friends treasured.

Helen Chatfield was one of the army of young female typists, clerks, and secretaries who flocked to the National Capital to aid the Government during World War I. Unlike most of the girls who returned to their home States after the war to meet their destinies as sweethearts, wives, and mothers, Helen remained in Washington and found employment with the Treasury Department. She became an expert in Treasury records and, in time, devised a system of case files on Treasury policies and problems. Her system proved so helpful that she came to the favorable attention of top echelon Treasury officials including the Secretary himself. In the mid-1930's, when the National Archives became a reality, the Secretary of the Treasury designated Helen as his representative on the National Archives Council. She was Archivist of the Treasury Department until the end of World War II. In 1945 at the urging of the late Fritz Morstein Marx, an official of the U.S. Bureau of the Budget who had cognizance of records management affairs in the Federal Government, Miss Chatfield transferred to the Bureau where she remained as Archivist until her retirement in 1958.

Her "retirement" proved to be a very active one. She became the first to hold a part-time post as Archivist of The American University, and she also lectured on archival techniques and administering Government records as adjunct professor in the university's School of Government and Public Administration. For many years she had held evening classes on those topics for the university. In addition, Miss Chatfield was a consultant on a number of special projects. She helped organize the private and public documents of Harry S. Truman's Presidency for the Truman Library in Independence, Mo., and performed similar services for the Robert E. Lee Foundation of Virginia and the American Association of University Women's headquarters in the National Capital. During the last 2 years of her busy life she had been processing the

papers of former Congresswoman Frances Bolton, Republican, of Ohio.

An omnivorous reader, intellectually alert and inquisitive, Helen collected a fine personal library, not only on all aspects of records management and archival administration and history, but also on governmental organization, English literature, philosophy, and the arts. Her well arranged vertical files (in archives-type boxes) contain a significant collection of articles and excerpts and her personal correspondence and memoranda. After her death the files were transferred from her Bethesda home to the National Archives, and her personal library was accepted by the American University Library. These actions amply indicate the high value placed on Miss Chatfield's collections.

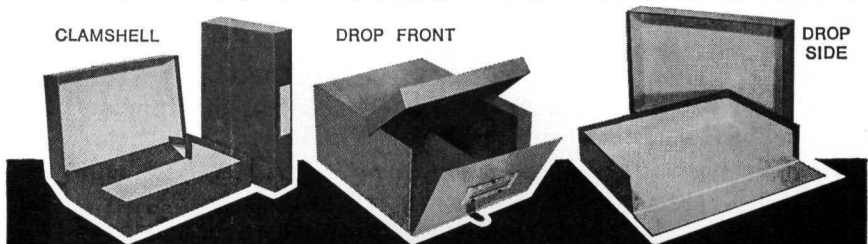
Helen Chatfield was blessed with the refined upbringing of a good family. In every sense of the word she was a gentlewoman—in carriage, address, and demeanor—always impeccably groomed; always modest, friendly, and courteous, with a ready smile and sense of humor; and always eager to help others. She was one of the pioneers who helped establish in the United States the infant profession of archivist and provide it with a sound technical foundation, suited to American conditions. She was a founding member and a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists in which she held a number of offices; she belonged to the American University Faculty Women's Club, American Historical Association, and American Documentation Institute.

Washington, D.C.

VICTOR GONDOS, JR.

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