

## St. Albans Archives

By SHERROD EAST

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THE RECORDS of schools of secondary education (whether high school or college preparatory facilities) are usually not processed, arranged, and described for preservation and research use. What follows is a report on the one such project known to the writer, that of St. Albans, the prestigious, 60-year-old National Cathedral School for Boys in Washington, D.C.

In celebration of the 25th commencement of the school Stephen A. Hurlbut, master in classics, told the fascinating story of the school's origin, the name St. Albans, and the association of both with "Mt. Alban," the estate of Joseph Nourse.<sup>1</sup> In 1817 the estate included the land now comprising the Washington Cathedral Close and St. Albans Parish Church. After the Washington Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church was created from the Maryland Diocese in 1895, the first bishop of the new diocese, Henry Yates Satterlee, soon began planning for the Washington Cathedral and its attendant schools. The National Cathedral School for Girls opened in October 1900.<sup>2</sup> The history of the school for boys began with the bequest in 1903 of the niece of President James Buchanan, Harriet Lane Johnston, leaving the National Cathedral Foundation \$300,000 for a school for boys in memory of her sons, James Buchanan and Henry Elliott Johnston, both of whom had died in youth. The influence of English tradition and experience on the boys' school is evident to this day. In addition to surveying church schools in the United States Bishop Satterlee directed a study of English cathedral choir schools in 1905. The Reverend G. C. F. Bratenahl of St. Albans Parish, Washington, made the resulting report, which covered, among other schools, the St. Albans Cathedral and School, Hertfordshire, England.

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<sup>1</sup> Hurlbut, *A Brief History of St. Albans School*, 32 p. (Washington, D.C., The St. Albans Press, 1934).

<sup>2</sup> Works Projects Administration, *Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Diocese of Washington and Washington Cathedral Archives*, vol. 2, p. 60 (Washington, D.C. 1940).

Although the founding of St. Albans School for Boys is considered to have occurred in 1904, the first building, the Lane-Johnston Building, was not completed and dedicated until 1907. The school opened under its first headmaster, Earl L. Gregg, October 7, 1909, and grew slowly but soundly. Its second headmaster, William Howell Church, served from 1915 to 1929. By 1939 the school had some 250 students in 2 units, the Lower School, with 5 forms (grades 4 through 8); and the Upper School, with preparation for college as its primary function, organized into 4 forms (grades 9 through 12). The post-World War II expansion of the school during which its size doubled was initiated by the third headmaster, the reverend Albert H. Lucas. The present headmaster, the Reverend Charles Martin, has served since Dr. Lucas resigned in 1949. Owing to major fund raising efforts in 1958-59 and again in 1967-68, the physical plant of the school now meets modern academic needs.

In 1969, the headmaster and the governing board, prompted by David C. Mearns, an alumnus and retired Assistant Librarian of Congress (Manuscript Division), and Ferdinand E. Ruge, retired assistant headmaster and master of English, decided to do something about the accumulated St. Albans records. Most of the records were extant but were unarranged in relatively inaccessible storage facilities. The two men sought advice from the National Archives, and after an informal survey Albert H. Leisinger, Jr., suggested that this writer appraise, arrange, and inventory the records and advise on establishing an archives as part of the school library. An average of 20 hours of work a week was spent on this project between mid-October and mid-April 1970.

The Table of Contents of the *Inventory of the Records of St. Albans School* completed during the task lists a Preface; an Introduction; Selected Records of the Cathedral Chapter, National Cathedral Foundation Relating to the Boys' School; General Records of Saint Albans; Records of Headmasters; Records of the Registrar; Records of the Bursar; Records of Development; Records of School Activities; Records of Affiliated Organizations; Photographic Records; Special Collections; Manuscript Items, Pictures, Artifacts and Rare Books; and Appendices. This list, together with the following paragraphs from the Inventory Introduction, should best illustrate the scope of, purposes for, and techniques used in the appraisal, arrangement, and description of the St. Albans archives:

This inventory is a guide to the use of extant records. Perhaps also it may indicate to those who are creating the records of today what ought to be preserved for the administrators, teachers and students of tomorrow.

The records are for the most part preserved as they were arranged by

those responsible for their creation, since it is a maxim of the archivist's profession that original arrangement, having served the purposes of administration when current, will also serve best the purposes of history and noncurrent reference use. Records document function and it is this fact which accounts for the grouping of series of records in the body of the inventory. The nature of school work and our educational system is such that each September is a new beginning and every June is, for a particular class at least, an ending. This fact alone has a profound effect on school records—not the records of individual students alone, but of administration in general. In most cases, therefore, it is helpful to know the year in which an event occurred or a particular student attended when initiating a records search. In other cases, of course, as for example in looking for records relating to a former faculty member, one goes to the alphabetically arranged file series among records of the Headmaster that is titled, "Former Masters File."

Another feature of an inventory of this kind is the appendices wherein we have tried to provide some useful information for the searcher that will assist him in understanding the records and the institution from an over-all point of view. For example, the Headmaster's records during the twenty years of Canon Martin's tenure are in two principal series, the "Administrative File" and the "Student File." After 1954, the "Administrative File" is broken into annual segments for each school year, i.e. 1954-55, 1955-56, 1956-57, etc., etc. Among the Appendices one will find a composite list of the subjects and sub-subjects that comprise the file scheme by which the administrative records created or assembled in the Headmaster's Office are arranged. The same is true of the Headmaster's "Student File," except that in this series the file is not broken into annual school year segments.

In most instances the arrangement of particular record series or segments of records in the offices of earlier Headmasters and Registrars is quite simple and obvious and no special explanation of the scheme of arrangement is needed, as in "General File. 1940-41. 14 in." or "Records of the Class of 1957" which happen to comprise 15 inches of correspondence, record cards and other papers on graduates for that year arranged by name of graduate, in file folders for each individual.

In this inventory and arrangement project, unnecessary duplicate records, surplus copies of publications and other printed or processed material, and records of purely transitory value have been eliminated with the concurrence of the Archives Committee. Paper by paper screening of organized files to eliminate duplicate copies of documents or valueless papers has not been attempted because it is too costly and time consuming. If the file series as a whole qualifies, in the judgment of the archivist, for retention, it has been kept intact. Only minimal necessary rearrangement, repair, or preparation of new file folders has been accomplished so that the user will find the records in their original state insofar as practicable. As it may become necessary in the future, repair and preservation work and, perhaps definitive cataloging or indexing can be accomplished on particular file items.

As of the date of preparation of this inventory, the total volume of

records described and in custody of the Library is approximately 275 shelf or linear feet. Each series or record entry is more accurately measured in linear inches.

Headmaster Martin believes the archives should constitute both general research and teaching resources. By the first, he means that they should be used as source material for a written history of the school; along with records of similar institutions, they could also contribute to research on the private church and country day schools in our educational system. By the second, he means that the archives ought to be used to teach older St. Albans students how to use primary sources—unpublished manuscripts, private papers, and other documents—in addition to the usual secondary sources they use in preparing essays, monographs, feature articles, and similar assignments. The example of St. Albans might well be followed by comparable schools as well as by some institutions of higher education that may not yet have recognized that their own archives are worthy of proper preservation and use.