

## Shorter Features

MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN, *Editor*

The Shorter Features department serves as a forum for sharply focused archival topics which may not require a full-length article. Members of the Society and others knowledgeable in areas of archival interest are encouraged to submit papers for consideration. Shorter Features should range from 500 to 1,000 words in length and contain no annotation. Papers should be sent to: Michael J. Sullivan, Department Editor, the *American Archivist*, National Archives Building, Washington, DC 20408.

### Before Hyde Park: The Rutherford B. Hayes Library

THOMAS A. SMITH

MANY WOULD BE SURPRISED to learn that the nation's first presidential library was established to house the papers of Rutherford B. Hayes, and not those of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although affiliated with the Ohio Historical Society, the Hayes Library has maintained an independent existence through the governance of its own board of trustees since its beginnings in the early twentieth century. It remains the only major presidential library outside the jurisdiction of the National Archives and Records Service.

The origins of the Rutherford B. Hayes Library can be traced back to March 1910, when the President's family deeded Spiegel Grove, their father's estate, to the State of Ohio. The gift, transacted through Webb

C. Hayes, the President's second son, specified that a fireproof building be erected by the state as a library and museum to house the family's gift of the nineteenth President's personal library, papers, and personal effects.

In 1912, ground was broken in Fremont, Ohio, for the Hayes Commemorative Library and Museum. Nearly four years later, on Memorial Day, 1916, the building was completed and dedicated to the public. A library annex was dedicated on 4 October 1922, the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Rutherford B. Hayes, doubling the size of the original structure. Subsequent additions of east and west wings in 1967 further increased the dimensions of the library to its present size.

The research center occupies the entire second floor and four stack levels in the



The Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio. *Photograph courtesy of the Library.*

library building. The main reference area is conveniently situated in the original building between the east and west wings and can accommodate up to twenty-five researchers at a time. The professional staff of director, manuscripts librarian, books librarian, and librarian in charge of special collections, oversee holdings of more than 1 million manuscripts, ranging in date from 1676 to the present, and over 100,000 bound volumes, excluding pamphlet material. The collections of the library contain a diverse range of information primarily focusing on the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth. Some of the areas in which collections are especially strong are: Civil War and Reconstruction; the Spanish-American War; local history; civil service, monetary, and prison reforms; social history; education; and the American Indian. The library also contains President Hayes's personal library of more than 10,000 volumes. The President's fine assemblage of early Americana has been cataloged and is available for use by qualified researchers.

The personal papers of Rutherford B. Hayes constitute, by far, the library's

greatest resource. Although small by today's standards of presidential papers, the Hayes papers contain over 164 linear feet of material and document the career of a man whose life spanned nearly three-quarters of the nineteenth century. In addition to serving as President of the United States, 1877–81, Rutherford B. Hayes (1822–93) ably served in the capacities of criminal lawyer, city solicitor of Cincinnati, U.S. congressman, Ohio's first three-term governor, and philanthropist. One of the features setting this library apart from other presidential libraries is the alphabetical index to the President's personal correspondence. This extensive card index lists each manuscript by author(s) and contains cross-reference cards for every individual mentioned in the text. Item-by-item indexes are also available for the more than 77,000 manuscripts which make up the papers of Lucy Webb Hayes, the Hayes children, and other family members.

Also, the Hayes Library actively collects manuscripts of individuals associated with the federal government during Hayes's four years as President, as well as material relating to contemporaries of the Presi-

dent. In addition, the library maintains several special collections, one of the most prominent of which is the William Dean Howells collection embodying nearly 400 pieces of correspondence, both personal and family; several book manuscripts; and numerous first editions of the noted American author and former editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The remainder of the library's holdings consist of local history materials, photographs (over 20,000), microfilm, and newspapers.

Since 1916, the Rutherford B. Hayes Library has evolved into a research center for the study of America during the last half of the nineteenth century. Since the institution's inception, its rich resources have contributed generously to scholarly research, including the publication of assorted historical monographs on President Hayes and on the period. Today, the nation's oldest presidential library is involved in such enterprises as the microfilm edition of the Rutherford B. Hayes Papers and the production of the *Hayes Historical Journal*, a semi-annual publication of the Hayes Historical Society.

The Hayes Library was built within the confines of the Hayeses' beautiful twenty-five acre wooded estate. Named after the German word for *mirror*, for the reflective pools of water which collect on the ground after a rain shower, Spiegel Grove for

more than a hundred years has played host to a bevy of distinguished visitors. Many of the more-than-a-century-old trees on the grounds bear small plaques honoring the visits of U.S. Presidents, Supreme Court justices, generals, admirals, and other prominent guests. The iron gates which ringed the White House during the Hayes administration can be found at the six entrances to the grove. The grounds also contain a portion of the old Sandusky-Scioto Indian Trail over which numerous captives were transported to Detroit and to Junqueindundeh, the principal Wyandot war village located along the Sandusky River in Fremont.

The Rutherford B. Hayes Library and the other component parts of the Hayes State Memorial are jointly administered by the Hayes Foundation and the Ohio Historical Society. In addition to the library, the site also includes the Hayes residence, a museum located in the library building, and the tomb of Rutherford and his wife Lucy. The newest addition to the complex is the restored nineteenth-century home of Charles M. Dillon, a neighbor. Situated adjacent to Spiegel Grove, the Dillon House serves as a museum annex and as a guest house for visiting scholars doing research at the library.

Both the Hayes home and the museum offer the visitor a unique view of America



The Hayes residence. Photograph courtesy of the Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

of more than a century ago. Built in 1863 by Sardis Birchard, Rutherford's bachelor uncle, and enlarged in 1873, 1880, and 1889, the spacious Victorian residence of the Hayes family contains original furnishings that belonged to the former President and First Lady and their five children. The museum, located on the first floor and ground level of the Hayes Library, features an assortment of memorabilia depicting

the life and times of Rutherford B. Hayes and his family. Exhibits include specimens of the famous White House china, complete with sideboard used at the executive mansion while Hayes was President; the presidential carriage; daughter Fanny's two doll houses; Civil War military equipment; and numerous American Indian and oriental artifacts.

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## Collecting Archives in Thailand

HERBERT R. SWANSON

DURING THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, I have had the unusual fortune and rare opportunity to work in a unique collecting field at a small college in Southeast Asia. Though not without trials and frustrations, this experience has been a positive and deeply rewarding one. The Asian mind in its Thai expression has not proven to be particularly mysterious, but it constantly requires that I reexamine my own thinking. A Westerner working in an Asian setting must become particularly sensitive to the cultural and historical environment. An archivist must know the people in his collecting field and understand their cultural heritage.

In 1978, Payap College in Chiang Mai, Thailand, established a Manuscript Division and gave it a two-fold task: to serve as the archives of the Church of Christ in Thailand; and to search actively for, and when possible acquire, historical records related to Protestant Christianity in Thailand. This collecting field encompassed the history of Protestant missionary and church work from the beginning of Protestantism in Thailand in 1828 to the present. The field is a complex one. It includes two cultures, one Asian and one Western, and involves the interplay of two religious mindsets, one Christian and one Buddhist. The field has posed both challenges and limi-

tations which make it an always fascinating and sometimes frustrating area in which to work. Two factors are especially important: the influence of Buddhism on Thai culture, and the Thai attitude toward social classes and the past.

Buddhism continues to exert a strong social and cultural influence. It shapes the attitudes of all Thais, whatever religious label they may wear. Buddhism is a religion of detachment and reflection wherein the everyday is considered superficial and unreal. The real world is the inner world. The best life is the contemplative life. The supreme attitude is that of non-involvement.

Papers, records, files, memos, and other such things have less significance in Buddhist society than in ours. There is less inclination to be concerned with the trivia of record keeping. Therefore, it is the rule rather than the exception to find institutions, including Protestant institutions, functioning with what seem to be partial and poorly organized files. Older records of historical significance are often not kept at all or are destroyed periodically. For example, one leading Protestant primary-secondary school regularly burns its files every two or three years because of "a lack of space." Another leading school dispersed its pre-World War II files at the beginning

of that war in order to keep them from falling into the hands of the invading Japanese. Until an archivist inquired, the school had never bothered to try to retrieve those records. In fact, the school was not sure who had received them. Recently, one department of the Church of Christ in Thailand burned some twenty years of files that had become insect infested through neglect. "There was nothing important in them anyway." This is a prevailing attitude, although there are exceptions.

Western archivists have their funds of sad and gruesome stories about destroyed records, and the stories seem little different from the ones I have just related. However, there is a fundamental difference. In Thailand, large numbers of records are "lost" simply because they never existed to begin with. Files are organized only in the most leisurely fashion. Disposal of records is almost always by whim and is seldom considered a major decision.

This thoroughly Buddhist attitude about paper can easily lead the Western or Western-trained archivist into the pitfall of bemoaning such "backwardness" while he or she feels slightly condescending about the culture which allows such "carelessness." These are dangerous attitudes that cut the archivist off from the very roots and heart of the collecting field and preclude a creative response to supposed limitations in that field.

If the Buddhist attitude of detachment limits manuscript collecting in one sense, it affords unusual opportunities to the archivist-collector in another. The Buddhist attitude about records lessens the attachment of most Thais to the files and records in their possession. They will hand over rare books of considerable historical value, or cartons of old files, with a toss of the hand and a smile. Talk of restrictions, terms-of-deposit, and deeds of gift is looked upon as a rather silly inconvenience. Politeness and mutual respect are more valued than the possession of things.

Generalizations about the ways in which "most Thais" act must be taken with a grain of salt. Not every person we encounter is ready and willing to hand over valuable historical records. And yet it is with an

impressive regularity that we find people being truly generous in a pleasantly off-handed manner. The lesson is this: limitations are often a state of mind, and the archivist can be blinded by his or her own prejudices, and fail to see the opportunities inherent in the situation.

A second cultural factor, the Thai attitude toward the past and the role of social classes in that past, further challenges the archivist. Traditionally, Thais have perceived the past in the form of chronicles that focus quite narrowly on the activities of the king and the royal family. As a result, political history continues to play a significant role in the emergence of Thai historiography. Social history is not seen as especially important. This attitude influences the archivist in two ways: it determines the kinds of historical records most apt to survive; and it influences the archivist's judgment as to the relative value of particular types of documents.

In a cultural setting where record-keeping has not been considered particularly important, two types of Protestant historical records have tended to survive: those relating to the royal family and those relating to missionaries. These documents have survived in greater quantities for several reasons: one of the most important is social status. Christians have always been a very small minority group in Thailand. Thus, when the royal family paid them some attention, they cherished and preserved the documentary evidence of it. Royal correspondence has a special significance, and it is no accident that the oldest manuscript in the Payap College Manuscript Division is a holograph letter written by King Mongkut, one of the most famous of Thai kings.

Similarly, from the beginning the missionaries held high status and received much respect in Thai society. The missionaries were given titles such as *paw kru* (father teacher) and *paw liang* (father benefactor), terms of respect generally given only to the aged or wealthy. The Western archivist can too easily accept the particular cultural attitude of emphasizing leaders over followers and missionaries over Thais. The archivist must learn to accept cultural

values without succumbing to them. One must anticipate what will be important to future historians as well as recognize current popular and academic interests.

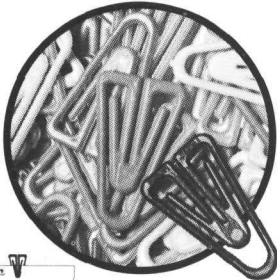
Yet another complication facing the archivist in this collecting field is the role of the missionaries. Their central role was establishing and maintaining Protestantism in Thailand. However, no matter how many years these men and women lived in Thailand, no matter how well they spoke Thai, and no matter how closely they identified themselves with Thailand, the missionaries remained essentially an alien presence. Their families and roots were abroad. The central offices of their supporting agencies likewise were abroad. When they retired it was, with few exceptions, to their native countries. When they went home they took their possessions with them, including personal papers and his-

torical records. Or, as is the case with some denominations even in the present, they made a policy of shipping older files home to either the denomination's home offices or to its historical society. There always remains the orientation to *home* that has drained large quantities of precious records away from Thailand. In the process, Thai historians have been deprived of or handicapped in their access to historical records relating to the historical experience.

The essence of working within any collecting field is sensitivity to its peculiarities. Where one is involved in an intercultural field, it becomes even more important for the archivist to be aware of both the limitations and the opportunities of that field, and not to confuse limitations with opportunities.

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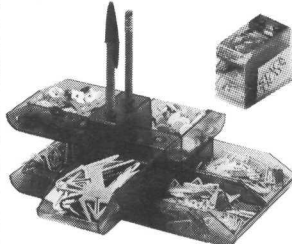
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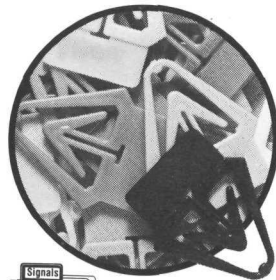
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