indicated needs. We would grow into it. There would be less risk of mistakes, of building depositories where they are not needed, of building them too large or too small, and of placing in them the wrong type of equipment. Under conditions as unstable as the present, this might be the course of wisdom.

OLIVER W. HOLMES

The National Archives

THE INTERESTS OF THE STATES IN FEDERAL FIELD OFFICE RECORDS

IN HIS paper, "Planning a Permanent Program for Federal Records in the States," Mr. Holmes suggested three different solutions to the problem of handling the field records of the federal government. He first discussed the feasibility of a system of regional depositories, then a system of federal-state co-operation for maintaining depositories for federal and state records in each of the forty-eight states, and finally the centralization of all federal records in Washington.

I am not disposed to favor the suggested system of regional depositories. A survey in 1935 showed that more than seventy federal agencies had established regional schemes of administration. Not only were the regions or areas of the various agencies different in geographical scope, but the regional organization schemes of the various offices within a single agency covered different territories.

Three advantages of the regional depository system suggested in the first paper were that such depositories would be located in larger cities; that such depositories would be of some size and dignity; and that they might be located in federal office buildings rather than separate archival buildings.

I am somewhat doubtful of the further concentration of business, government or otherwise, in overcrowded cities. For instance, the recent removal of the National Park Service from Washington to Chicago merely helped to solve a Washington space problem. A better solution might have been its permanent removal, along with the Department of the Interior, to some small town in Kentucky or Oklahoma.

The argument that regional depositories would be of size and dignity is not necessarily valid. The recent and present rate of record production by the federal government seems sufficient to fill the National Archives building, any and all annexes it might acquire, and forty-eight or more state depositories of immense size and considerable dignity. The military and naval forces of the United States for the year 1942 alone requisitioned 289,712 typewriters. The entire government, I believe, finally called for 600,000. These produce more and more records and innumerable useless and file-filling carbon copies, most of which will cause no eye strain from the time they leave the hands of the typist until the dim and distant day when they fall into the hands of the archivist.

The location of the regional depository in a federal office building probably would mean that the archivist would become more or less of a filing clerk. That might be a legitimate function of the archivist, and the Civil Service examinations for the position of junior archivist would lead one to believe that he need have little more ability or training than a file clerk.

The centralization of federal records in Washington naturally has its advantages, but did the President of the United States think these advantages sufficient for him to deposit his papers in Washington? The argument that centralization would save money and promote efficiency ill befits an official of the government in the era of the New Deal. The cost of the difference in centralization and non-centralization would be far less than the proverbial widow's mite when compared to the enormous and appalling waste of tax money since 1933. The fear that regional or state depositories might become almost autonomous archival establishments should bother no one. Anyway, I am constitutionally, fundamentally, and otherwise opposed to the general proposition of centralization.

A system of federal-state depositories in each of the forty-eight states probably would be impractical, but I like the idea. This system might be extended down to state-county co-operation, with one of the main functions of the archivists in the county being that of a file clerk. The fact that federal and state governments have co-operated successfully in matters pertaining to public health, agricultural extension work, social security, social welfare, and many other fields would seem to insure success in co-operative records preservation and administration.

A general policy of placing federal records in the custody of state libraries, state archives, or state historical societies is not practical, for the simple reason that practically no state could supply adequate buildings or financial support. This does not mean that I would not like to see the Mississippi state records that were carried off to Washington during the War between the States or the Mississippi files of the United States Food Administration returned to Mississippi. I would like to have the records of the Office of Price Administration and of the Selective Service left in Mississippi when this war is ended. I believe that serious consideration should be given to depositories built and administered jointly by the federal and state governments, under the general supervision of the archivist of the United States. Mr. William J. Van Schreeven of Virginia and Miss Margaret C. Norton of Illinois probably would not agree with me, for they have new and spacious buildings. This suggestion might be challenged as a further invasion of states' rights, but only a few misguided Southern Democrats and the Republicans seem to worry nowadays about states' rights.

Mr. Holmes has pointed out the possibility that the federal-state system would contribute toward the raising of the standards of archival work and the stimulation of serious and productive research. This would also greatly contribute toward the preservation of state and local records.

The argument has been presented that the depositories would probably be located in state capitals and in many instances distant from the federal offices in the state. These distances would not be as great as the distance to a central depository in Washington. Each depository should have a staff sufficient to supply information to federal offices from noncurrent records in its custody. I do not believe that any citizen who has attempted to deal with the federal government believes that its agencies ever get in such haste as to warrant more expeditious service than can be supplied by mail.

The argument has been advanced that the historian would be hampered by decentralization. That is probably true, but I am wondering if local and state history has not been neglected long enough in this country. We might all be better citizens if we gave more attention to local and state history in preparation for an understanding of national history. Could the records in Washington, in many instances, already be too voluminous for the historian?

Now, let us suppose that federal-state co-operation could be achieved so far as buildings and personnel are concerned. What about the federal records to be housed and administered? Let us, for the sake of discussion, set down a general rule that records produced in regional offices be placed in depositories in states where such regional offices are located, and that records produced in local offices administered by the regional office be placed in depositories in states where such local offices are located. That rule appears to be rather simple.

One of the district banks of the Federal Reserve System is located in Atlanta. Its records would be placed in the federal-state depository in Georgia. The district Federal Reserve bank at Atlanta has a branch in New Orleans. The records of this branch would be placed in the federal-state depository in Louisiana. This might not cause any serious complications.

We might then consider the records of the regional and local offices of the Department of Agriculture. The administrative office of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for Mississippi is located in Jackson and its records would remain in Mississippi. The regional office concerned with cotton of the Division of Agricultural Statistics of the Agricultural Marketing Service of the Department of Agriculture covers the eleven Confederate States and Missouri and Kentucky. This office is located in Gulfport and its records would remain in Mississippi. The office of the Food Products Inspection Service of the Division of Fruits and Vegetables of the Agricultural Marketing Service responsible for the territory of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi is located in New Orleans. Its records would remain in Louisiana. The office of the Market News Service of the Division of Fruits and Vegetables of the Agricultural Marketing Service responsible for Louisiana and Mississippi is located in New Orleans. Its records would remain in Louisiana. One office of Federal Grain Inspection of the Grain Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service covers Louisiana, south Mississippi, and southwest Alabama. This office is located in New Orleans and its records would remain in Louisiana. Another office of Federal Grain Inspection is located in Memphis, but is responsible only for north Mississippi. Under my rules, these records would be sent to Nashville but would pertain in no way to Tennessee.

The farther we go, the more confused we might become. In fact,

I have just about met myself coming back. Perhaps we should at this point accept Mr. Holmes' fine suggestion that we put these field records of federal agencies in temporary warehouses until we make up our minds—until we can give further study to the three suggested solutions, to decreasing the number of typewriters in federal service, to the destruction of useless federal records, and to microphotography.

WILLIAM D. MCCAIN

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

ARMY FIELD RECORDS

EVERY individual, it is commonly said, has certain idiosyncrasies. One of mine is that I started out to become a historian and have never been able to get over it. In spite of having been employed for some time as an archivist, in spite of my present duties, I cannot help thinking of myself primarily as a historian. It is as such that I contribute to this discussion of regional depositories for federal records. My interests and the fortunes of employment have directed my thinking on the subject into two main streams, local history on the one hand and military history on the other. Where these two flow together to become western military history is formed the beginning of a turbulent whitewater course of great promise, which has been explored but little. It is the rocks and mud and roots underlying this particular stream—in short, the records that hold it within its banks—that are my concern.

It may not be a pleasant fact, but fact it is that most—and I mean most—of the historians of this country have only the faintest conception of the source materials available among the records of the federal government. This is particularly noticeable in the case of War Department and army records, but it is scarcely less so for those of most other agencies as well. In fact, scholars are so innocent of the true possibilities that they frequently mistake relatively unimportant collections or parts of collections for something much larger and consequently bring out articles and books based on a very small part of the sources available. This is especially, although by no means exclusively, true of the local historians.