

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

NOVEMBER 8 AND 9, 1944

DESPITE the prospect of limited attendance, the Council voted to hold the annual meeting as originally scheduled. Unexpectedly the attendance was good, there being sixty-two registrations of Society members. As the American Association for State and Local History and the Pennsylvania Historical Association were meeting the following two days, several members of those groups attended our sessions as well. All meetings were held at the Penn-Harris Hotel under arrangements made by S. K. Stevens and his committee on local arrangements.

The opening session on "State Archives and Historical Manuscripts" was presided over by Henry W. Shoemaker, state archivist of Pennsylvania. Christopher Crittenden, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, read a paper on "The State Archivist Looks to the Future." Taking stock of progress made in state archival work, he raised several questions: Have archivists broken sufficiently with the past? Do they spend too much time on non-archival activities? How much time should be given to rearranging disorganized archives and in preparing catalogues, finding lists, and other guides? Mr. Crittenden asserted that the primary function of the archivist is to serve as a state agency, helping other departments in archival matters first of all. He emphasized that the archivist must earn the good-will and support of other departments by advising them on the disposal of useless records, by quickly taking noncurrent valuable records off their hands, and by giving assistance on current records problems. The enormity of this service bars the antiquarian attitude, or any special service for genealogists, and puts historical activities in second place. Although disorganized files must be put in order, he thought that the amount of detailed cataloguing must be conditioned by the necessity of keeping up with the incoming mass of records.

The director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, William G. Roelker, spoke secondly on "How Should an Historical Society Make a Disorganized Body of Manuscripts Available to Research

Workers?" He described the problem faced by his library after accumulating the 400,000 Brown papers of particular interest to scholars of American business. A four-year program is now under way for arranging and cataloguing this collection. After sketching the history of the Brown family and its far-flung business enterprises, Mr. Roelker explained the classification system that had been worked out to fit this collection. The diversity of the material prohibits a straight chronological arrangement. He also exhibited slips showing the style of cataloguing being done and he mentioned the problem of illegible handwriting. Eventually it is hoped that a calendar of the papers can be published.

At the first luncheon, President Margaret C. Norton, Illinois state archivist, presided and introduced S. K. Stevens, state historian of Pennsylvania, who read a paper on "The Public Records Program of Pennsylvania." He warned the audience not to assume that the state had such a program, although it is one of the oldest and richest historically in the country. Its archival program has been haphazard, confused, and insufficient. Administratively, the state archives are a division of the state library, which in turn is part of the Department of Public Instruction. The archives has merely a consultative relationship with the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, and the archivist has no power over county archives. Even in the state departments there is the familiar story of neglect, loss, removal, and fire. Yet the archives division at present has insufficient room to house the records it should receive. Administratively, Mr. Stevens felt that archival and historical work should be joined in a common unit. A statewide committee has been studying archival activities in other states and has recommended as a post-war project a new archives building, modern legislation, and a revision of the administrative organization. Pennsylvania may be on the way to achieving a creditable archival program, he concluded.

The first afternoon session was devoted to "Maps and Graphic Materials." Lloyd A. Brown, librarian of the Peabody Institute of Baltimore, presided. He introduced first Colton Storm, curator of maps at the William L. Clements Library, who spoke on "Maps as Historical Documents." His address was illustrated with slides. Mr. Storm offered a brief historical account of maps, pointing out the valuable information the early maps contained. For one thing they indicate the precise amount of knowledge about a given area

believed at a given time. In this way they explain why various actions were taken, when full and correct information would have dictated a different action. Sometimes the captions and legends of maps in old books contain information not found in the text. Battle maps, with extended captions about the action, were the newsreels of their day, offering a graphic account of what happened in the field. Finally, maps locate places which have disappeared with time and help in the reconstruction of buildings long since destroyed. Mr. Storm's paper was subsequently published with illustrations in *Publishers' Weekly* for November 25.

The second speaker was Paul Vanderbilt of the Library of Congress who has charge of the 200,000 pictures taken around the United States for the Farm Security Administration from 1935 to 1944. Mr. Vanderbilt brought one hundred colored slides of selected views which were shown during his stimulating talk on the significance of photographs in portraying the life of the times. He emphasized the special values of the informal and documentary picture that preserved the appearance of certain common buildings, traffic intersections, mountain roads, shopping districts, cultivated fields, home interiors, handicrafts, community picnics, local carnivals, and fairs. All these make clear a way of life at a given time which future historians will find immensely useful and revealing as no other medium can provide.

At the annual dinner Herbert A. Kellar, director of the McCormick Historical Association, introduced Margaret C. Norton for her presidential address. After some preliminary remarks on the growth of an archival consciousness in the country and opportunities for the Society, Miss Norton turned to her topic of "Some Legal Aspects of Archives." What she offered were judicious comments on present archival legislation and practices. She pointed out first that the records most important to the individual were left to the lowest officers—the county clerks. Consequently, they are subject usually to the most casual care. Yet that arrangement derives from our federal system. Although our laws say that valuable records are not to be destroyed, they are because we have not adequately defined "records." We cannot hope to preserve everything, but local officers have no guides for disposal. Our laws also open all public records to the public, a right that causes embarrassment to the archivist and needless wear on the records. Regulations are needed,

especially governing the use of certified copies. The law of replevin covers deliberate thefts, but is seldom applied to outgoing officials who decide which of their papers are private and public. The use of archives as court evidence is another subject largely ignored in our literature. All in all, Miss Norton demonstrated that there was still much room for study of the legal status of archives.

The second day's sessions opened with a morning meeting on "The Publication of Manuscripts," presided over by Roger Thomas, assistant archivist, Maryland Hall of Records. Julian P. Boyd, librarian of Princeton University, presented the first paper on "The Thomas Jefferson Project." The publication of the writings of Jefferson, first proposed by the Jefferson Bicentennial Commission of Congress, is now being sponsored by the New York Times Company in memory of Adolph Ochs, late publisher. The Princeton University Press will print the fifty-odd volumes, and Mr. Boyd is serving as editor. He explained certain new techniques in preparing the vast amount of material for publication. The Jefferson papers are scattered, and the Princeton office is obtaining microfilm copies of all of them. Enlarged prints are made, filed in envelopes, and catalogued chronologically, numerically, and alphabetically by writer's name. It is expected that the compositors will set the type directly from the photographic prints. Unimportant items will be summarized, as well as replies to Jefferson. Footnote citations will deal with the source of the document, the nature of the draft, and the character of the allusions therein. Mr. Boyd made a particular appeal to all historical institutions and private collectors to inform him of any Jefferson material they may have, as it is hoped to make this edition comprehensive. Mr. Boyd's paper was scheduled for publication in *The New York Times*.

The second paper was given by Clarence E. Carter, editor for the Department of State, on "The Territorial Papers." Mr. Carter has been editor of this series since its inception in 1931. After reviewing the work of Hazard, Wait, Force, and Gales and Seaton in publishing archival records, he led up to the authorization by Congress of the publication of territorial papers. Since selection had to be exercised, certain controls were devised. The first was financial: economy of space and time must be continually exercised. Only those federal records found in the District of Columbia have been published. Moreover, records previously published have not been re-

printed if they were accurately done. Administrative papers are accorded priority for inclusion, and effort has been made to include certain other records completely: the letterbooks of the postmaster general and the memorials to Congress from territorial legislatures and from the people. Enough land records are included to enable the reader to see the general pattern of land policy. Indian affairs have received less emphasis because they transcended territorial boundaries. Mr. Carter then gave specific instances of editorial problems concerning the selection of copies to be used, the correct reading of texts, and the use of footnotes. The transfer of most of the records consulted to the National Archives has greatly facilitated his work, Mr. Carter mentioned.

At the luncheon meeting the Society was honored by the presence of Halvdan Koht, former minister of foreign affairs for Norway and professor of history at the University of Oslo. Miss Norton presided on this occasion. Mr. Koht addressed the assembly on "Norwegian Archives and the War." He pointed out that Norway's main archives have escaped German destruction by astute forethought. After seeing what happened to Warsaw, the government took precautions against bombing. The records of the *Riksarchiv* were removed to the basement of another building and apparently were not disturbed. The local archives of southeastern Norway were kept in the House of Parliament, which the Germans occupied and made their administrative headquarters. The most desirable records to the Germans, those of the Foreign Office, were prepared for evacuation and removed by truck on the day of invasion. They were first taken to Sweden and later removed to London for the government-in-exile. Outside Oslo are three regional depositories; the one in Bergen has been bombed and burned. Mr. Koht fears that the great test for archives will come during the struggle for liberation, as the Germans may lay waste the country as they retreat.

At the afternoon session on "Local Archives and History" Mrs. Herbert P. Gambrell of the Dallas Historical Society presided. Harold S. Burt, examiner of public records for Connecticut, spoke on "Local Archives," with a consideration of vital, land, and tax records. He pointed out that besides the formal birth records, filed according to law, the state often has to accept semi-official sources when nothing else is available, such as church registers, school reports, census records, and genealogies. Older land records have some-

times confused rather than clarified land titles because of their description of boundaries based on temporary markers and local legends. Tax records are bulky and often disorganized because of the continual changing of tax laws. To enforce some uniformity in the keeping of such records, the state of Connecticut has been sponsoring meetings or "schools" for tax officials.

Albert B. Corey, state historian of New York, in his paper on "The Local Historian," described the extraordinary provision in his state for local historians under the non-political state Board of Regents. Although great encouragement has thus been given the writing of local history and the preservation of original materials, there has been no satisfactory arrangement for selecting the historians or paying them. Some are of professional standing; others are ardent genealogists or simply the oldest inhabitant in the community. Some receive no pay; others may receive expenses or salaries running up to as high as \$3,500, depending on local support. The location of the local history collection likewise varies. The New York plan aroused considerable discussion from the audience.

Society members were invited to inspect the archives division of the Pennsylvania State Library late that afternoon. The staff members showed the care and arrangement given the materials in their custody, as well as the variety of equipment used.

As has become customary, the second evening was a joint dinner meeting of the Society and the American Association for State and Local History. Following the banquet, Walter Hausdorfer of the School of Business Library, Columbia University, opened the discussion on "Internships for Archives, Libraries, and Historical Depositories." Bertha E. Josephson of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society presented a proposal for the co-operation of archives and libraries with university departments of history, whereby graduate students would receive academic credit for spending a term of work in one of the former institutions. A foundation would be approached for funds to pay the student a salary, on the basis of the educational benefit of the work. Under this arrangement, the student would gain experience in actual working with archives and manuscripts; in addition he would receive some pay for the time put in and credit toward his degree. The university concerned would thus be enabled to offer its students some practice

training in addition to academic study. The historical depository would profit by gaining an additional employee free of charge, possibly to undertake work on records heretofore neglected because of a staff shortage.

Harlow Lindley, librarian of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, endorsed the plan from the point of view of historical libraries. He pointed out that almost every such institution has a backlog of work in manuscripts, and an additional free employee would be a great boon. John W. Oliver, professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, presented the academic point of view, similarly endorsing the plan. He believed the nature of the work made it worth graduate credit and he felt that the universities would be glad to co-operate with nearby historical societies and archives.

Lively discussion followed this presentation of the plan. Similarities to medical internships and to the old National Youth Administration program were argued. It was suggested that here was a method of training archivists for vacant positions now hard to fill. But would the student remain in archival work, or was the internship primarily a means to the end of obtaining a graduate degree? This point of view raised the question of whether the plan could be inaugurated without university connections, and whether a foundation would finance an apprentice program thus unrelated to academic degree work. Some state archivists felt that the necessary supervision of the interne would be more bother than the value of the work accomplished by him. It was questioned whether universities would grant credit for work in archives as readily as for work in historical manuscripts, since the latter could be more readily tied in with available history courses. Another question was the advisability of attracting young people into work where the salaries were low and the opportunities limited. In general there appeared a cleavage between the historical societies and the archives over the value of such temporary employees to the institution.

Finally, it was suggested that a joint-committee of the Society and association should be appointed to study the proposal of internships. The Council of the Society afterward voted to authorize the president to appoint such a committee, which is to report its findings to the Council.

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William L. Clements Library