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A REPORT
ON
THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

BY
BENJAMIN F. SHAMBAUGH

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PUBLIC ARCHIVES

IOWA





PUBLIC ARCHIVES FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The Public Archives

Executive Department Iowa Territory
Courtsville October 2^d 1839

Sir,

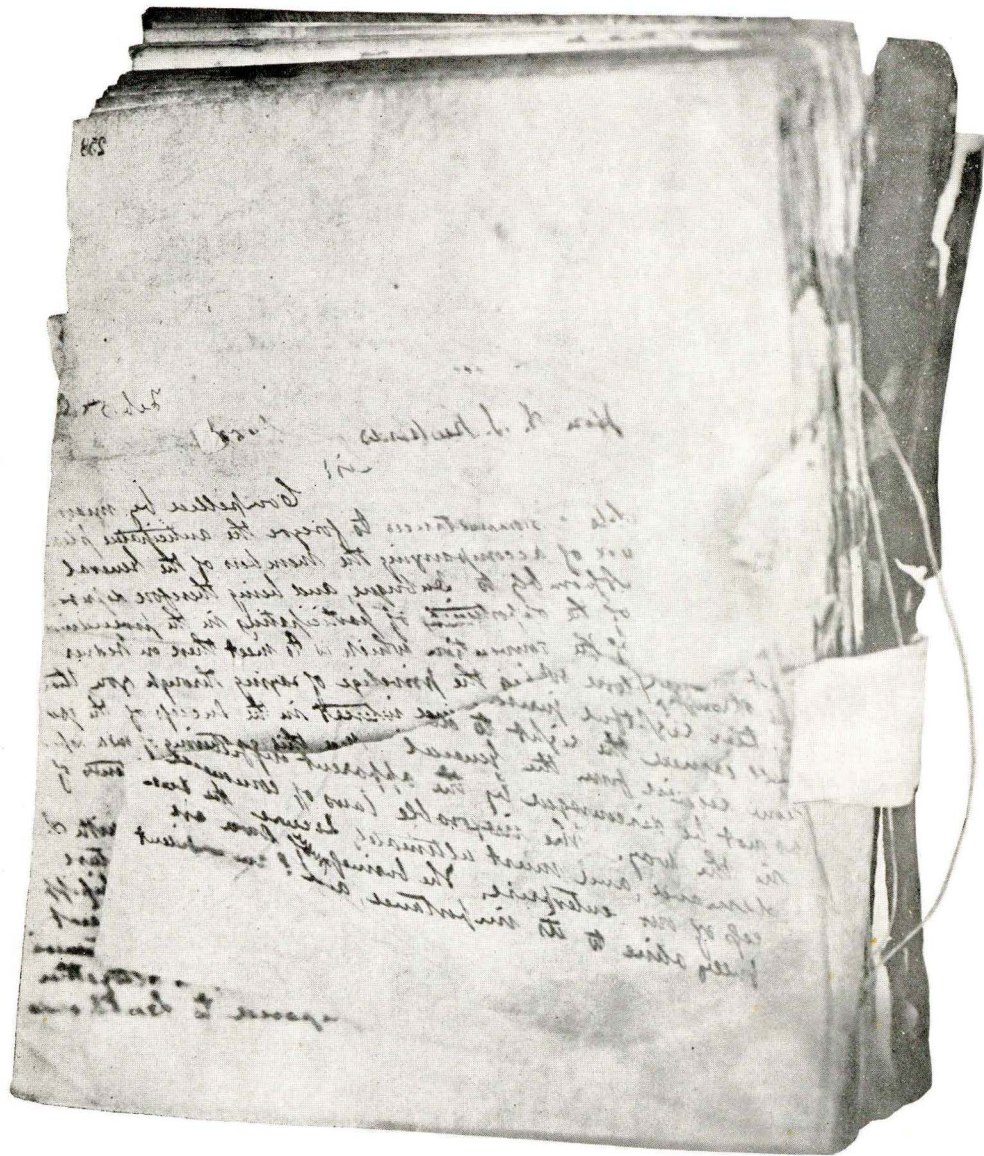
I herewith enclose a Certificate
of your election, as delegate to Congress
from the Territory of Iowa - issued in pursuance
of the 14th Section of the Election Law of this
Territory - The Proclamation as required
by said Section, prepared by a correct copy
of the first, and Seventh, Sections of the
Election Law - approved the 25th of January
AD 1839, will appear in the weekly
Gazette to which I solicit your
particular attention -

My respects

I am Dear

you all Sir

Wm. Wells



A RECORD BOOK THAT NEEDS RESTORING AND BINDING

IOWA CITY, IOWA, September 18, 1906.

To the Trustees of the State Library and Historical Department of Iowa.

GENTLEMEN: Complying with your request for information and suggestions relative to the care and preservation of Public Archives and, more especially, for recommendations relative to the installation of a Hall of Public Archives in Iowa under the provisions of "An Act providing for the care and permanent preservation of the public archives, and making an appropriation therefor," enacted by the Thirty-first General Assembly and approved April 10, 1906, I have the honor to submit herewith a report with recommendations.

Very Respectfully,

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH.

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A REPORT ON THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES.

I.

GENERAL INFORMATION.

It is a notorious fact that England and the European governments have given far more attention to the care and preservation of Public Archives and expended much larger sums for this and other historical purposes than have the National and State governments of the United States.¹ Indeed, the condition of the Public Archives of the National and State governments of the United States has been (with some few exceptions) one of neglect rather than of care, of disorder rather than of systematic arrangement. Even Canada has taken steps in advance of the United States. Fortunately, however, within the last decade there has been evidenced a larger interest in American Public Archives, which in considerable measure has been inspired by and through the American Historical Association.

It was at the Washington meeting of the American Historical Association (in 1891) that Prof. J. Franklin Jameson read a paper on *The Expenditures of Foreign Governments in Behalf of History* in which the attention of students and the government was called to what was not being done in the United States by a discussion of what was being accomplished

¹ *The Expenditures of Foreign Governments in Behalf of History*, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1891, p. 33.

elsewhere. At a meeting of this same Association, which was held at Chicago in December, 1893, Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth's paper on *The Value of National Archives* (which, after referring to the attitude of other Nations, deplored the neglect of Archives in America) provoked a general discussion which led to the appointment of a committee of nine to memorialize Congress on the establishment of a Department of Archives.¹

In reporting the discussion of Mrs. Walworth's paper, Dr. W. F. Poole said in *The Independent*: "The historical papers in the State Department are not accessible to the historical student except as a special favor, and they are not arranged, classified, and calendared. The State Department has no space for historical archives and no archivist who understands their management or has time to give to the needs of historical investigators. Indeed, these are not the functions of the State Department. At Ottawa, however, Canada has a department of archives; it is an excellent one, and under the charge of a most competent archivist. American historians, when they need to consult the original documents relating to our own history, often go to Ottawa to see papers which should be in Washington."

It was to correct such popular misapprehensions as those entertained by Dr. Poole that Mr. Andrew Hussey Allen, Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library (Department of State, Washington, D. C.), presented, at the meeting of the American Historical Association in 1894, a paper on *The Historical Archives of the Department of State*.²

These papers and the discussions which they provoked bore fruit when on December 27, 1895, the American Historical Association established an Historical Manuscripts Commission "charged to collect information regarding manuscript materials relating to American history, especially those which are in the hands of private persons or institutions, to report . . . to the Association respecting the same, and in

¹ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1893, pp. 4, 27.

² Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1894, p. 281.

general to perform, *mutatis mutandis*, such services with respect to American history as have been performed with respect to British history by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts first appointed by the Queen of Great Britain in 1869."¹

The plans and the accomplishments, as well as the valuable and useful data collected by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, are found in its *Reports* as published in the *Annual Reports of the American Historical Association*. These reports, which contain many valuable side lights on Public Archives, or on materials closely related thereto, are as follows:

First Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association: Contains "A list of printed guides to and descriptions of Archives and other repositories of historical manuscripts."²

Second Annual Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association: Contains a calendar of "The Colonial Assemblies and their legislative journals."³

Third Annual Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission: Contains "Items respecting historical manuscripts in libraries and archives"; also a "Guide to the items relating to American history in the reports of the English Historical Manuscripts Commission and their appendixes."⁴

Fourth Annual Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission: Contains the "Correspondence of John C. Calhoun."⁵

Fifth Annual Report of the Historical Manuscripts Com-

¹ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1896, Vol. I, p. 467.

² Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1896, Vol. I, p. 467.

³ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1897, p. 399.

⁴ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1898, p. 567.

⁵ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1899, Vol. II, p. 3.

mission: Contains "Additional items respecting historical manuscripts."¹

Sixth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission: Contains the "Diary and correspondence of Salmon P. Chase."²

But of more importance than the establishment of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and bearing more directly on the problems of the care, preservation, and publication of Public Archives, was the provision made in December, 1899, at the Boston meeting of the American Historical Association, for a Public Archives Commission which was "charged to investigate and report, from the point of view of historical study, upon the character, contents and functions of our public repositories of manuscript records, and having power to appoint local agents in each State, through whom their inquiries may be in part conducted." It was further understood at the outset that, in view of the existence of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, "the Public Archives Commission was to limit itself to an examination of documentary material of a public or governmental nature, such as is usually classed under the head of archives, public records, or state papers."³

Soon after its establishment agents or representatives of the Public Archives Commission were appointed in a number of the states as "Adjunct Members of the Commission." The undersigned has served as the Adjunct Member from Iowa since the first appointments were made in 1900.

The first work of this Public Archives Commission was a preliminary investigation of State records, the nature of which is best set forth in the following circular which was addressed to Adjunct Members as a general guide:

The Public Archives Commission was appointed at the meeting of the American Historical Association at Boston, December 27-29, 1899. The purpose of the commission is to examine into the condition and

¹ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. I, p. 587.

² Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1902, Vol. II, p. 5.

³ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 5.

character of the public records of the United States, of the several States, and of important local communities, with a view to obtaining and publishing such information concerning them as will make the records more generally known and more easily available for students. The commission is not intended to be a medium for the publication of archives, nor does it aim to supplant the various State record commissions, and other similar agencies, already existing. Its objects are, rather, the compilation of information, as full and detailed as possible, regarding the particular class of American historical material generally known as archives or public records, the preparation of such catalogues or finding lists as may be deemed useful, and the unification and improvement, so far as its influence as an advisory body can be made effective, of methods of publishing, arranging, and preserving official documentary material.

It is proposed to begin the work of the commission with a preliminary examination of State records and of the records of a few local communities of especial importance. The substance of the information gathered by means of this preliminary survey will be laid before the association in the form of a printed report. It is the intention to carry on this work in such a way as to make it harmonize with such future work, of a more extended character, as the commission expects to do.

It has seemed best, in organizing so large an undertaking, to appoint in each State and Territory an adjunct member. The adjunct member is the accredited representative of the commission, and the person primarily responsible for the conduct of the preliminary investigation referred to above, and for other related work of the commission within the jurisdiction assigned to him. The appointment of adjunct members is for one year, subject to renewal where mutually satisfactory.

In States whose archives are of great extent or especial importance, or in which the records of local communities have marked general interest, it is desirable to designate one or more associate members to cooperate with the adjunct member. Such associate members will be appointed by the commission, in general upon the advice of the adjunct member for the State concerned, and will be primarily responsible to the adjunct member in the prosecution of their work. Adjunct members are urged to inform themselves as early as possible of the need of such additional assistance, and of the work of associate members as it proceeds.

In order that the work of investigation and report may be systematically carried on and the time and effort of those engaged in it utilized to the best advantage, the following suggestions have been drawn up as indicating the method of procedure which it is deemed best to follow. These suggestions are, of course, subject to modification to meet special conditions in particular States; and the commission will welcome suggestions from adjunct members regarding such modification. It is

very desirable, however, that the suggestions be followed as closely as possible, and that no radical change of procedure be made without previous consultation with the commission.

The following points will indicate the general nature of the work contemplated:

1. As an indispensable preliminary to their work, adjunct members should make themselves acquainted at the outset with the statutory provisions in their respective States regarding the reports required to be submitted by public officers, the documents required to be printed, and the preservation, custody, and examination of records. Where record commissions or archivists have been appointed, or special provision has been made for the publication of any particular portion of the records, the powers and duties of the various officials concerned should be carefully ascertained. A summary of the information gathered under this head should be included in the formal report.

2. By the term "public archives" is to be understood all documentary material of a governmental or official character, excluding all matter of a strictly personal or private sort. Under the head of archives come the journals and proceedings of legislative assemblies, all papers known in general as "public documents," reports of State officials, reports of legislative committees, reports of State commissions, statutes or session laws, and occasional publications such as census reports, topographical surveys, etc., published by State authority. Reports and publications emanating from or relating to the executive and judicial departments, as well as those primarily legislative in their origin, are included in this classification. Personal journals and private correspondence do not fall within the scope of the commission's work, but official correspondence and letter books are included in it.

3. As the present examination is a preliminary one, it is not expected that anything like a complete catalogue of these archives will be attempted. The report of the adjunct member, however, should give, with as much precision as possible—

(1) The number of volumes or parcels of each of the various classes of records found, with the dates which each includes. The classification must depend upon the practice of each State, and no rule of uniformity can be laid down; but such indications as session laws, senate journals, house journals, committee reports, treasurers' reports, land-office papers, school reports, letter books, miscellaneous documents, etc., will indicate the kind of subdivision to be followed.

(2) An indication of what parts of the records in each of these divisions are in print and what parts are in manuscript.

(3) A general statement of the chief contents of miscellaneous collections.

(4) An indication of such records, other than purely formal ones, as appear to have especial historical value.

THE ROBERT LUCAS JOURNAL OF THE WAR OF 1812--AN EXAMPLE OF PRIVATE RECORDS AS DISTINGUISHED FROM PUBLIC ARCHIVES



(5) An indication of such records as are wanting in the official collection, together with information as to whether such records have been lost or destroyed or are to be found elsewhere.

4. A general statement, as detailed as circumstances may dictate, should be made with regard to the condition of the records; in particular, whether they are securely housed and protected, whether bound or unbound, whether conveniently arranged for consultation, or the contrary.

5. In the case of States which have been either colonies or Territories, the examination should extend to the earlier as well as the later period. In case it is found impracticable, for any reason, to carry the examination at present over the whole period, the commission will be glad to have the advice of the adjunct member as to the period to which attention should first be paid.

6. In case catalogues or finding lists for any portion of the State or local archives are available, every advantage should be taken of their assistance. It is especially requested that copies of such printed guides, or of any other similar matter relating to the records, be transmitted to the commission with the formal report.

7. It will be a convenience if reports can be made on paper not exceeding 8 by 10 inches in measurement, and written upon one side of the sheet only.

8. The association has been able to place at the disposal of the commission, as yet, only a small sum of money, barely sufficient to cover the necessary expenses of printing, postage, and clerical service; and the work must be, for all connected with it, mainly a labor of love. Adjunct members, therefore, should not incur expenses on behalf of the commission without previous authorization. It is hoped that the necessary expenses of postage and stationery may be reimbursed. In case it is deemed advisable to incorporate with the report catalogues or documents only to be obtained by purchase, the commission should first be consulted before the purchase is made.

9. It is hardly necessary to say that, in approaching public officials and custodians of archives, the utmost care should be taken to secure at the outset their cordial cooperation. The commission is entirely dependent upon the good will of such persons in carrying on its work, and it hopes to place at their disposal the information at its command, and the published results of its investigations, as rapidly as the same can be made available. In case the custodian of the records to be examined is not personally known to the adjunct or associate member, it is suggested that a letter of introduction be obtained, where practicable. In any case, there is usually much to be gained by a frank statement of the purposes of the commission, and of the intention to make its work generally useful.¹

¹ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 9.

In accordance with the spirit and general principles of this circular separate reports were made in 1900 on the Public Archives of the following States: Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In 1901 similar reports were made for the City and County of Philadelphia, North Carolina, and Texas. In 1902 a report was submitted from Oregon, and also a description of the Bexar Archives (in Texas). The next year the report of the Commission contained special reports on the Public Archives of Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Virginia. While in 1904 there were added to the list reports from Alabama, Georgia, Kansas, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

These reports on State Archives vary in thoroughness. Some are simply brief preliminary outlines, while others are quite exhaustive statements. Among the more complete are the reports on New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, City and County of Philadelphia, Alabama, and Georgia.

Moreover the activities of the Public Archives Commission have not been limited merely to investigations and reports. Encouragement has been given to efforts to secure legislation providing for the better care and preservation of the Public Archives of both the National and the State governments. Bearing upon this problem and throwing some light upon conditions as they exist is the following House Report No. 1767 (Fifty-sixth Congress, 1st Session) on the *Perpetuation and Preservation of the Archives and Public Records of the Several States and Territories, and of the United States* which was based upon memoranda furnished by the Commission:

The Committee on the Library, to whom was referred House bill 11429, respectfully report:

This bill (H. R. 11429) calls upon the American Historical Association to investigate the character and condition of the archives and public records of the several States and Territories, and of the United States, and to report to Congress the results of such investigation, together with the recommendation of such legislation as may seem appropriate in the premises. For defraying the necessary expenses involved in such investigation the bill appropriates the sum of \$5,000. It is

further provided that no member of the American Historical Association shall receive any compensation for his services in connection with the said investigation and report other than the reimbursement of necessary expenses, including clerical assistance, actually incurred.

The subject to which the bill before the committee relates is not now for the first time brought to the attention of Congress. The necessity of making adequate provision for the preservation of the public records, not only of the United States, but also of the several States, has been more than once emphasized and the action of Congress solicited in that behalf. Thus far, however, Congress has not taken the affirmative action necessary to bring about the result desired.

In 1887 a commission, composed of the Secretary of State, the Librarian of Congress, and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and their successors in office, was appointed (sundry civil act, approved March 3, 1887) and directed to report to Congress the character of the historical and other manuscripts belonging to the National Government, and the method and policy to be pursued in editing and publishing the same, or any of them. It does not appear, however, that this commission ever met, and the report contemplated by Congress was, in consequence, never submitted.

In 1894 the military records in the various Executive Departments relating to the field operations during the Revolutionary war and the war of 1812 were ordered to be transferred to the custody of the Secretary of War, and the indexing of these invaluable papers has since been successfully carried through. By the same act the Secretary of State was directed (sundry civil act, approved August 18, 1894), to cause the Revolutionary archives in his department to be examined, and to report to Congress what portions of them were worthy of publication, the number of printed volumes they would make, and the estimated cost of editing and publishing the same. In response to this direction the Secretary of State recommended that the documents in question be printed in 50 volumes and estimated the cost at \$100,750. This important work has not yet received the favorable consideration of Congress.

A cursory examination of the condition of the national archives at Washington, the investigation of which is contemplated by the bill before us, has convinced your committee that the improvement of the conditions which have for a long time prevailed ought no longer to be delayed. Documents of the utmost legal importance affecting personal and governmental interests of great magnitude, are scattered about among the different Executive Departments and bureaus, and are often stored under conditions which not only make access to them difficult, but also open the way to the mutilation or loss of the documents themselves. With the exception of military and naval records, no sufficient provision has yet been made by law for preserving this material or

for making it available to those having a right to use it. Moreover, records relating to the same general subject are in some cases divided between two or more custodians, while important portions of valuable papers are not infrequently found to have disappeared altogether or to be in the possession of some individual or society in another part of the country. Where one would naturally expect system and unity there too often prevails, as there has long prevailed, much diversity.

Your committee feel that they do not state the case too strongly in saying that at present no lawyer or historical student desiring to consult the archives of the National Government can feel in advance any assurance that the papers to which he wishes access are to be found in the place in Washington where they would naturally be supposed to be, or even that they are actually in the possession of the United States at all. Only by long and detailed correspondence, or by coming to the national capital and making the rounds of the different departments and depositories, can the material in question commonly be got at; and even after this expenditure of time and money and labor the documents sought may turn out to have been lost or the custody of them have become vested in somebody else.

There are not lacking illustrations of the impairment, loss, or dispersion of national records which have resulted from the lack of suitable provision for their arrangement and safe-keeping. Until very lately great quantities of manuscripts have been stored in various parts of the Capitol building without order or system, exposed to the ravages of mice, dirt, and dampness, and subject to mutilation or even theft by interested persons. Fortunately for the interests of the Government, these important papers have now been committed to the custody of the Library of Congress, where they will in the course of time be cleaned, catalogued, and suitably preserved; but there appears to be good reason for thinking that an examination of the papers will show that the files are now far from complete.

It is a matter of common observation, also, that manuscripts of official documents, especially those of the years prior to 1861, are constantly appearing at auction sales in the large cities, and are being bought by libraries, historical societies, and individuals, and scattered in this way about the country. The United States has itself bought, at a cost of many thousands of dollars, various collections of papers, many of which were of an official and public character.

The committee are clear that such conditions are discreditable, and ought no longer to exist. No country in the world has, relatively, such extensive documentary material for its history as is possessed by the United States. In no country can the lawyer or the historian feel so sure that the data which he desires is actually in existence, if only he can find where it is now kept.

There can be no need of argument to show that the legal and his-

torical papers of the United States should no longer be scattered about among a number of bureaus which, for the time being, happen to have the custody of them, or held under conditions which made possible impairment or loss, and made available for use only to such extent as the courtesy and devotion of the custodians, unaided by suitable appropriations, succeed in achieving. There should certainly be some place at the national capital where the records of the National Government can assuredly be found, where they can be dealt with in a manner befitting their inestimable importance, and where those persons who have occasion to consult them can be provided with suitable facilities and be assured that they have before them all the material that there is on the particular subject in hand.

The conditions which prevail in the several States are, as a whole, even more unsatisfactory than those which characterize the archives of the United States. With a few exceptions the disadvantages which exist in the one field exist also in the other. Hardly any State possesses at present complete files, either in manuscript or in print, of its own records. Some of the records appear never to have been systematically preserved. Some have been lost. Some are in the possession of other States or of the National Government. Large portions still exist in manuscript only, while others, the originals of which have disappeared, are in printed volumes now scarce and virtually impossible of replacement.

Many New Hampshire documents, noted as lacking in the official edition of the State Papers, are in the Library of Congress, having been acquired when the library of Peter Force was purchased, in 1867.

Many early Maryland documents seem to have disappeared in connection with the researches of Scharf, the historian of the State. The notable collections of Peter Force and Joseph Sparks appear, however, to have been enriched in the same way. Many of the Maryland papers are now in the Library of Congress.

The vicissitudes which the archives of Virginia have undergone illustrate the way in which State archives disappear, afterwards coming to light in another jurisdiction. Jefferson, appreciating their value to the State and to the United States, collected all the early legal and other documents that he could find. These formed the basis of the first and part of the second volume of Hening's Statutes at Large. When Jefferson sold his library to Congress, in 1815, many of his manuscripts came along with the other books; but he retained some of them, and when, in 1829, his second library was sold at auction in Washington, these invaluable manuscripts were also disposed of. By good fortune they eventually found their way to the Library of Congress. Among these papers were the records of the Virginia Company of London, 1619-1624, and the minutes of the proceedings of the Virginia council from 1622 to 1627.

Many of the early official records of North Carolina, South Carolina,

and Georgia are in the English Public Records Office, London. Those of Georgia have not yet been transcribed or calendared.

The archives of Ohio are in a very confused condition, with many gaps in the files, due in part to the burning of the old statehouse in the early part of the century.

A typical case of the loss of important records through ignorance and carelessness is found in Nebraska. Some time since the janitors at the capitol, in the course of their cleaning, found a box of manuscripts, and concluding that they were of no value, burned them. As near as can be made out, the entire records of the constitutional convention of 1875 went up in smoke.

The Spanish records of the Southwest, while largely collected at Santa Fe, are still, in many cases, scattered among the towns of New Mexico and Arizona, while many have passed into private hands. The importance of these papers will readily occur to anyone who remembers the millions of dollars involved in land-grant suits before the United States courts, the decision of which has turned upon the possession of documentary evidence of the kind we are considering.

The archives of California are scattered throughout the State, important portions of them being in the charge of local custodians.

The commissioners' court of Bexar County, Tex., recently acquired a great mass of records, many of them in French and Spanish, and aggregating between 300,000 and 400,000 pages. These papers, which are now in the custody of the University of Texas, are of great importance for the early history of the State, and its relations to Louisiana while that region was under French control, and later to the United States.

The public records in the possession of the State of Louisiana are very defective, fire having destroyed the State capitol building at least once since 1847. Many of the most important printed papers are now to be found in the State and Howard libraries at New Orleans.

The records of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas contain large quantities of French and Spanish papers, few of which have yet been translated, and most of which exist only in manuscript. These papers are of special importance in cases involving title to land.

Taking the States as a whole, the original thirteen States have been most active in collecting and preserving their early records; but, as has been shown, the results are still very far from complete. The Southern States have done relatively much less than the others in this direction, while the Central and Western States, with some exceptions, seem not always to have realized the importance of their documentary material, and, in consequence, not to have taken sufficient pains to preserve it and make it available for future needs.

In the matter of publishing State records, particularly those of earlier date, the committee find that, while praiseworthy efforts have been made in this direction and considerable sums of money have been expended,

the results have not always been all that could be desired. A cursory examination is sufficient to show that the work has been carried on under the most diverse theories as to the way in which legal and historical papers ought to be edited. Some important early records, for example, have been published in summary or extract only, although it is obvious that no editor, however learned, can forecast the future sufficiently to tell what documents or parts of documents later investigators will need to use. The records of North Carolina, now in course of publication, and likely to extend to nearly 20 volumes, are thus far without either table of contents or index, and, although a comprehensive index to the series is promised, the volumes thus far published are practically useless until the index volume shall appear.

Some editors have assumed to modernize the older documents, or to correct what they assumed to be errors in the text; others have printed the documents verbatim, even to the extent of reproducing the archaic typography. Some have equipped their editions with valuable notes, thus greatly facilitating their use; others have provided no helps of any kind, but have left the reader to work his way through the difficulties as best he could. Records in languages other than English have sometimes been reprinted in translation, unaccompanied by a reprint of the original by which the accuracy of the translation could be tested. In numerous cases reprints, otherwise of the utmost usefulness, have been issued without the seal of official authentication, and, consequently, are not free from question when introduced in court proceedings.

What has been said regarding the desirability of access to the records of the National Government in Washington seems to your committee to apply with almost equal force to the records of the States. It does not appear that sets of the published records of the several States are now available in Washington or can be consulted here by members of Congress and others having occasion to make use of them. While partial sets of more recent State documents are to be found in the Library of Congress, and statutes and judicial decisions commonly find place in various law libraries, anything like a file of printed State or Territorial archives is not, so far as we know, to be had. Hardly a day passes in which some member of Congress has not need of examining material of this character, but he can not be sure of finding it in Washington, and must spend time and money in obtaining it from a distance, if, indeed, he is so fortunate as to be able to obtain it at all.

Your committee think that there should be at the capital of the United States, either in the Library of Congress or in some other depository, copies of the official publications of the States and Territories as well as of the United States. Every member of Congress, every head of a department or bureau, every lawyer, and every historical investigator ought to be assured that at the capital of the nation he can find either the originals or authenticated copies of such documentary ma-

terial relating to the history of the United States as he may wish to use, and that it is no longer necessary for him to write to official after official, and take long and expensive journeys from State to State, in an uncertain search for the particular archives he may need to consult.

The committee do not, of course, assume that the United States can exercise any direct authority over the custody or publication of State records, nor do they feel that any wholesale publication of State records by the United States would be advisable. Neither of these points is contemplated in the bill before us. The committee are confident, however, that to give national sanction to such an undertaking as is here proposed would be the surest way to secure the cooperation of custodians and archivists in every State, and that it would contribute powerfully to substitute order and system for the confusion and lack of unity which now prevail.

The committee feel, further, that while the importance of having both State and national records easily accessible in Washington is very great, and the matter one to which Congress should give immediate attention, definite action in that direction would be inadvisable without a preliminary examination of the material to be dealt with, and an indication, based upon the results of such examination, of the course of procedure proper to be taken. What the situation needs is not spasmodic or irregular treatment, but adherence to a comprehensive and well-ordered plan based upon a detailed exhibit of the conditions to be dealt with. The committee think, therefore, that a preliminary investigation such as is here contemplated is the proper step first to be taken.

The bill designates the American Historical Association as the agency through which this preliminary investigation shall be conducted. The American Historical Association was incorporated by an act of Congress approved January 4, 1889, has its principal office at Washington, and transmits an annual report to Congress, through the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. It seems to your committee appropriate that an undertaking of this character, demanding as it does expert legal and historical knowledge and familiarity with the use of manuscripts and documents, should be intrusted to such a body. While, however, the committee have official assurance that the American Historical Association is prepared to undertake the work in case Congress sees fit to devolve the work upon it, they think it proper to state that the bill now in question did not originate with the association.

The association is not approaching Congress with a request for a grant of public money to aid in carrying on some work of its own more or less closely related to the public welfare. On the contrary, the only connection of the association with the measure is that of a great national learned society which is willing to place its resources at the disposal of the National Government for the performance of an important service, if Congress will reimburse its necessary expenses to the small amount stated in the bill.

For the various reasons herein stated your committee are of the opinion that the work contemplated by this bill is one which it is the duty of Congress to take up; and they accordingly report the bill with the recommendation that it do pass.¹

The bill referred to in this report did not become a law; but steps have been taken in the direction of the establishment of a department, bureau, or division of Public Archives at Washington and a site for a depository of public records has already been secured.

It would, of course, be difficult to measure the influence or trace the results of the work of the Public Archives Commission of the American Historical Association since its establishment in December, 1899. Through its Reports the Commission has certainly revealed the almost universal neglect of archives in the United States, made plain the "imperative necessity of a more rational and scientific treatment of documentary material," and aroused an intelligent interest in the care and use of Public Archives. As published in the *Annual Reports* of the American Historical Association the printed *Reports* of the Commission are as follows:

[*First*] *Report of the Public Archives Commission.*²

[*Second*] *Report of the Public Archives Commission.*³

[*Third*] *Report of the Public Archives Commission.*⁴

[*Fourth*] *Report of the Public Archives Commission.*⁵

[*Fifth*] *Report of the Public Archives Commission.*⁶

As a natural result of a more general appreciation of the real value and vital historical importance of the Public Archives a number of the States have in recent years taken steps looking toward the better care and preservation of their public records. But this number is still small; and in most cases the records and official documents still simply accumu-

¹ Taken from Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 16.

² Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 5.

³ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1901, Vol. II, p. 227.

⁴ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1902, Vol. I, p. 331.

⁵ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903, Vol. I, p. 409.

⁶ Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1904, p. 481.

late in the offices to which they pertain. Here they are too often regarded as so much useless material to be stored or dumped into dark rooms or corners where they are left to the destructive agencies of dust and mould. A comparative view of the States in which special provision has been made for the care and preservation of the Public Archives reveals three general plans or methods of solving the problem.

First. The plan of making the office of the Secretary of State the principal repository of the important state papers and records. Massachusetts, perhaps, affords the best illustration of this plan. Here a Division of Archives has been established in the office of the Secretary of State where the records are systematically arranged and carefully preserved in steel cases specially constructed for the purpose.¹ Furthermore, Massachusetts has taken up the problem of the care and preservation of the local archives, and to that end has provided for a Commission of Public Records.²

Second. The plan of giving the State Library the custody of important collections of state papers and manuscripts. Pennsylvania and Virginia are illustrative of this method of handling the problem.³

Third. The plan of establishing a separate and independent Department of Archives and History. In the adoption of this plan Alabama was the pioneer. Mississippi, however, soon followed in the steps of Alabama.⁴

¹ Report on the Public Archives of Massachusetts in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 47.

² Eighteen Reports on the Custody and Condition of the Public Records of the Parishes, Towns, and Counties; also The Massachusetts Public Record Commission and its work, by Robert T. Swan, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1901, Vol. I, p. 97.

³ Report of State Librarian of Pennsylvania for 1903, pp. 14, 18, 91; Report of the State Librarian of Pennsylvania for 1904, p. 10; Report on the Public Archives of Pennsylvania in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 280, 1903, Vol. I, p. 411; The Virginia Archives in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903, Vol. I, p. 645; also Calendar of Transcripts and the Annual Report of the Department of Archives and History of Virginia for 1905.

⁴ The Establishment, Organization, Activities, and Aspiration of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Alabama; State Departments of Archives and History in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1904, p. 237; The Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903, Vol. I, p. 475.

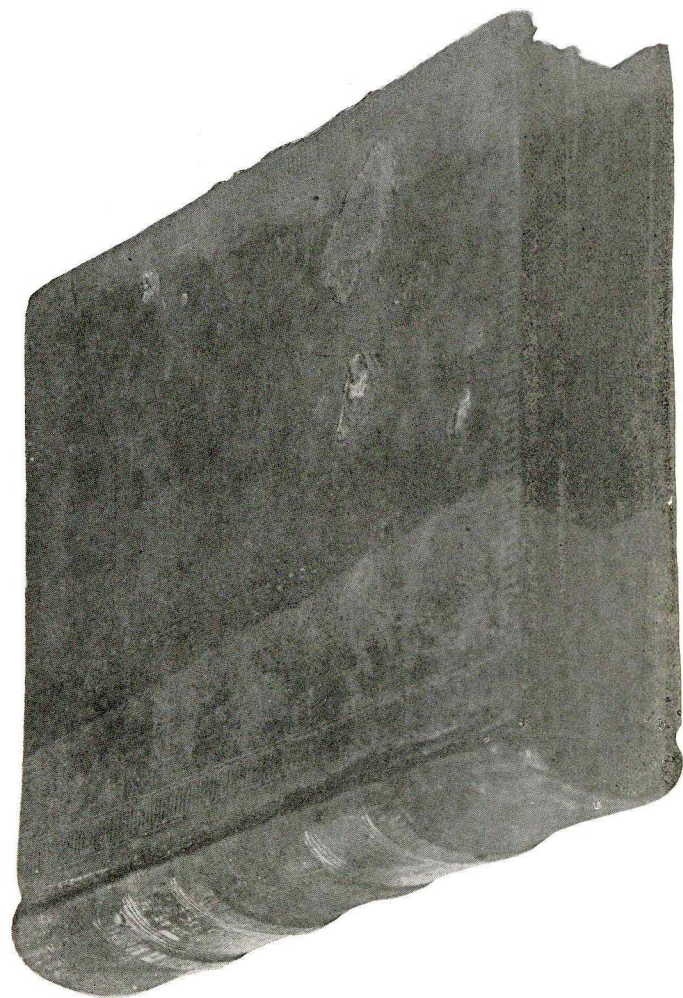
Of these three plans or methods of caring for the Public Archives it is the opinion of the undersigned that the special department plan is the one to be preferred.

II.

THE SITUATION IN IOWA.

When the original Territory of Wisconsin was divided and the new Territory of Iowa established in 1838, the Public Archives for the period from 1836 to 1838 were taken from Burlington and retained in the possession of the government of the Territory of Wisconsin. To-day these records are preserved in a vault in the basement of the Capitol at Madison, Wisconsin. The Public Archives as preserved in this State are, therefore, found to begin with the establishment of the Territory of Iowa in July, 1838.

In a preliminary *Report on the Public Archives of Iowa*, made by the undersigned and published as a part of the first *Report of the Public Archives Commission* in the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* for the year 1900, it was pointed out that "the public archives of Iowa are not complete for any period of the history of the State. While in some cases the papers or files have been lost or destroyed, in other cases no attempt seems to have been made to keep satisfactory records. The neglect, loss, and destruction of documentary material may be accounted for (in part at least) by the frequent transfers of the Archives from place to place. The seat of government was first temporarily located at Burlington in 1838. It was removed to Iowa City in 1841. Iowa City remained the seat of government until 1857, when the Public Archives were removed to the new capital, Des Moines. But changes in the seat of government were not the only occasions for transferring the Archives from place to place. Twice only were the papers removed from capital to capital—from Burlington to Iowa City, and from Iowa City to Des Moines. Four times, however, were they carried from capitol to capitol—from Old Zion Church, Burlington, to Butler's Capitol, Iowa City; from Butler's Capitol, Iowa City, to



THE EXECUTIVE JOURNAL OF IOWA, 1838-1841
THE FIRST OF THE SERIES OF EXECUTIVE JOURNALS CONTAINING
OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE GOVERNORS OF IOWA

the Old Stone Capitol, Iowa City (1842); from the Old Stone Capitol, Iowa City, to the Old Capitol, Des Moines; and from the Old Capitol, Des Moines, to the present New Capitol, Des Moines (1883-1885). It is hardly surprising that, with such frequent removals, much valuable historical material should have disappeared."¹

Public attention seems to have been first consciously directed to the problem of the better care and preservation of the Public Archives of Iowa in a *Report* made by the Commissioners who had been appointed to investigate the several State offices in 1858. The act under which the three Commissioners were appointed provided "that the Governor of said State [Iowa] be and he is hereby authorized and empowered and it is hereby made his duty to appoint a commission of three competent and safe accountants who shall examine the books, papers, vouchers, moneys, securities and other documents in the hands or possession or under the control of each and every executive officer of said State, to make out a full, complete and specific statement of the transactions of each of said officers with, for, or on behalf of the State showing the true balance or balances in each and every case and report the same to the Governor with such suggestions as they may deem proper on or before the first day of June, 1858."²

Although the act of the General Assembly contemplated a report of the Commissioners by June 1, 1858, they found that "the work was much more extended and laborious than had been anticipated" and so did not complete their investigations until later, when they submitted a report "for the years 1858 and 1859."³ This document, which fills 147 pages, contains reports on the following State offices:

Office of the Governor.
Office of the Secretary of State.

¹ Report on the Public Archives of Iowa, by Benjamin F. Shambaugh, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900, Vol. II, p. 39.

² Laws of Iowa, 1858, p. 410.

³ Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Investigate the Several State Offices for the years 1858 and 1859 in the Legislative Documents for 1859-1860.

Office of the Auditor of State.
Office of the Treasurer of State.
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
Office of the Register of State Lands.

The reports on these offices show that the Commissioners paid considerable attention to the scope and condition of the public records which had been and were being preserved. Lists are given of the principal records, and mention is made of missing documents. To be sure the lists as given in the reports are not exhaustive enumerations of the papers and documents constituting the Public Archives, but they are, nevertheless, helpful to any one desiring information concerning the extent and condition of the early records.

On February 9, 1860, a resolution was passed by the House of Representatives instructing the Committee on Public Buildings "to enquire whether the papers, books, and records in the different offices in the Capitol building are safe from destruction by means of fire; and if not secure, to report to this House the best means of securing the same."¹ The resolution was introduced by Representative D. D. Sabin; but the author and prime mover was none other than Mr. Charles Aldrich (at that time Chief Clerk of the House), who thus became the father of a movement which has eventually resulted in the establishment of a Hall of Public Archives.

The Committee on Public Buildings reported through its Chairman, Mr. S. B. Rosenkrans, the following resolution on February 18, 1860:

Resolved, That the committee on public buildings instructed to inquire whether the papers, books and records in the different offices in the Capitol Building are secure from destruction from fire; and if not secure, to report to this House the best means of securing the same;

Beg leave to make the following report: That they have examined the various offices in the Capitol Building, and that most of the papers, books and records are not secure from destruction by means of fire.

That in the office of Secretary of State, the original laws of the State, and the records, both State and Territorial, (all of which are of the greatest importance,) are entirely unprotected in case of fire.

In the State Land Office, the large number of books, papers and

¹ House Journal, 1860, p. 221.

records, which are entirely unprotected from fire, imperatively demand some other safety than is now afforded.

In all of the offices, there are many books, papers and records which cannot be put into the iron safes now in those offices. These affording but a limited protection, the present means are, therefore, entirely inadequate to protect them properly.

Your committee, therefore, have come to the conclusion that some further protection is imperatively demanded; and they are unable to devise any suitable way or means of protecting said property in the present building used as a Capitol building; and would recommend the erection of a suitable building, in Capitol Square, to cost..... dollars; said building to be built of brick or stone, and two stories in height; one room, or rooms, to be made fire-proof, for the reception of such books, papers and records as shall be deemed necessary to place there for security.

They would further recommend that a room in said building be fitted up for the use of the State Land Office, for the reason that a great share of the books and papers of the Land Office have to be in daily use; therefore requiring them to be near at hand; and by vacating the present room, it will give additional committee room.

Your committee would recommend the using the upper story of said building as a paper and book warehouse, as the State has no place now for the storage of paper and books, except a small room in this building, and are now renting a warehouse, at a rent of fifteen dollars per month, besides the extra expense of drayage.

Your committee would therefore recommend the building of such a building as would answer the purposes above enumerated, and that a suitable amount of money be appropriated for the purpose. All of which is respectfully submitted.

S. B. ROSENKRANS,
Chairman.¹

This resolution was immediately recommitted to the same committee with instructions to report a bill. As a result the following act "providing greater safety for books, papers and records belonging to the State" was approved April 3, 1860:

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa,* That the sum of three thousand five hundred dollars be and is hereby appropriated for the purpose of erecting a building on Capitol Square, with fire proof vaults, for the reception of important books, papers and records belonging to the State, for the use of the State Land Office, and also for a paper warehouse, to be built under the direction of the Secretary of State, with the advice and consent of the Census Board.

¹ House Journal, 1860, p. 262.

SEC. 2. In no case shall the cost of said building exceed the sum of three thousand five hundred dollars.

SEC. 3. This act to be in force from and after its publication in the *Iowa State Register*, and *Iowa State Journal*.¹

The building with "fire proof vaults," costing \$3,500, which was erected in accordance with this act can not, of course, be regarded seriously as an adequate or safe repository of public records. On the night of November 7, 1884, it was destroyed by fire. Indeed, it was not until the erection of the present State Capitol (completed about 1884) that the Archives of Iowa were placed in fire proof quarters. In this building vaults were constructed in connection with the principal offices for the accommodation of the manuscript Archives. But these vaults were not well lighted, and were without ventilation. They were soon filled with the rapidly increasing records of the State government. Furthermore, dust and the bad air of the closed vaults wrought destruction among the older state papers. To all cognizant of the conditions the necessity of a more rational system of caring for the Archives had been apparent for some time.

In the April, 1901, number of the ANNALS OF IOWA, Mr. Charles Aldrich wrote the following with reference to "An Iowa Hall of Archives":

It is a most regrettable fact that so little care has been taken of the original copies of Iowa official papers after their use for the immediate purposes which called them into existence. This is an evil which seems to appertain to every administration since the old romantic days of Gen. Robert Lucas, our first Territorial Governor. The habit started in his time and has continued until now. In fact, these documents have been considered "dead papers" and almost worthless. In the majority of cases they have been doomed to immediate destruction. It is difficult for the public official, in the haste with which his duties are performed, to imagine for a moment that the paper which originates in his office can have any real permanent value. They are, therefore, quickly put out of sight, and after that time are generally out of mind. It is true that very limited receptacles exist in connection with our present State offices for the preservation of important papers, but these are wholly inadequate to any general and systematic care of these documents. A document may have become a "dead paper" for any present official

¹ Laws of Iowa, 1860, p. 118.

is inestimable. These, so far as they go, are by far the most valuable sources of our State history, for the facts which they contain are based upon, or are themselves, the records of official transactions. We may therefore place the fullest confidence upon what they set forth. How very important then their careful and conscientious preservation! Instead of the waste of these precious materials, they should have been from the organization of Iowa territory, until the present time the objects of unceasing watchfulness and solicitude. Now that the State Historical Building is nearing completion, it is most earnestly to be hoped that the legislature will take the subject into consideration and pass a law which will initiate this needed reform.

The State of Kansas at the recent session of the legislature created a department of archives. It went even further than the preservation of such "books, records, documents, original papers, or manuscripts, newspaper files and printed books," as accrued about the State House, but wisely provided for extending the same provision to the counties. It applies to these materials "three years after the current use of the same, or sooner in the discretion of the head of the department." It is difficult to imagine how opposition could arise to such a necessary and just law.

Efforts in this direction have made good progress in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Vermont, West Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama, Wisconsin and Kansas. In fact, deep and widespread interest in this subject has been developed to a greater or less extent throughout the country. A movement has also been initiated at the national capitol for the better care of public records. . . .

There is a vast amount of material about the State House which should be carefully preserved, aside from the copies of original documents and papers to which reference has been made. While engaged in writing these lines my attention has been called to the original reports of the census made in 1850, 1856, 1860, 1885, 1895 and 1905. Some of the reports unfortunately were not preserved, but simply wasted or carelessly destroyed. It is estimated that those still in existence will make from 400 to 500 octavo and folio volumes—an addition of great value to our growing collections in biography and genealogy, aside from the light they throw upon the history and marvelous growth of the State.¹

It was in accordance with these suggestions that the Thirty-first General Assembly passed "An Act providing for the care and permanent preservation of the public archives, and making an appropriation therefor," which reads as follows:

¹ Seventh Biennial Report of the Historical Department of Iowa, October 31, 1905, p. 11.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

SECTION 1. That for the care and preservation of the public archives the state library and historical department of Iowa are hereby given the custody of all the original public documents, papers, letters, records and other official manuscripts of the state executive and administrative departments, offices or officers, councils, boards, bureaus and commissions, ten years after the date or current use of such public documents, papers, letters, records or other official manuscripts. Provided, that the executive council shall have the power and authority to order the transfer of such records or any part thereof at any time prior to the expiration of the limit of ten years hereinbefore provided or to retain the same in the respective offices beyond such limit according as in the judgment of the council the public interest or convenience may require.

SEC. 2. That the several state executive and administrative departments, officers or offices, councils, boards, bureaus and commissioners, are hereby authorized and directed to transfer and deliver to the state library and historical department such of the public archives as are designated in section one (1) of this act, except such as in the judgment of the executive council should be longer retained in the respective offices.

SEC. 3. That the state library and historical department is hereby authorized and directed to receive such of the public archives and records as are designated in section one (1) of this act and provide that the same be properly arranged, classified, labeled, filed and calendared.

SEC. 4. That for the care and permanent preservation by the state library and historical department of the public archives hereinbefore designated, the executive council is hereby authorized and directed to provide, furnish and equip such room or rooms in the historical memorial and art building (now in process of erection) as may be deemed necessary for the purposes of this act, and the room or rooms thus provided for shall be known as the hall of public archives.

SEC. 5. That for carrying out the purposes of this act there is hereby appropriated out of any moneys in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated the sum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per annum for three years to be expended under the direction of the board of trustees of the state library and historical department.

Approved April 10, A. D. 1906.¹

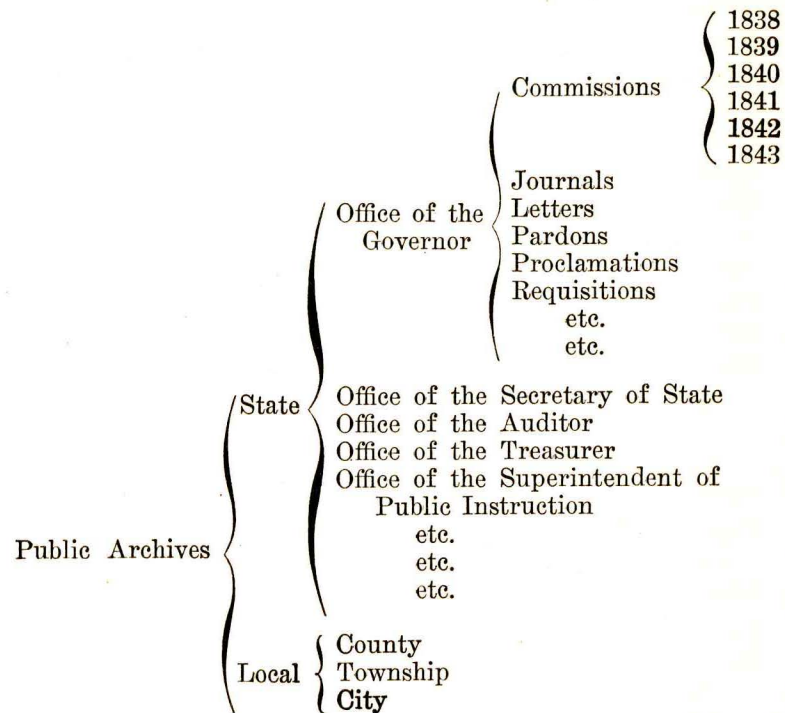
III.

PROBLEMS RELATIVE TO THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES IN IOWA.

The leading problems connected with the care and preservation of the Public Archives in Iowa may be summarized under the following general heads:

¹ Laws of Iowa, 1906, p. 104.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE CLASSIFICATION FOR IOWA:



It is evident that an administrative classification combined with an historical classification as above outlined would meet the needs and convenience of both administrative officials and students of history. This scheme of classifying the Archives of Iowa is, therefore, recommended.

Any thorough and complete classification of the Archives would, of course, imply a system of notation. And so the following tentative notation has been devised for the administrative classification as herein recommended:

- S = State Archives
 - SA = " " Office of Governor
 - SAC = " " " " " Commissions
 - SAC1 = " " " " " " Justice of Peace
 - SAC2 = " " " " " " Notary Public
 - SAJ = " " " " " Journals
 - SAL = " " " " " Letters
 - SAP = " " " " " Pardons
 - SAPr = " " " " " Proclamations
 - SAR = " " " " " Requisitions
 - SB = " " " " Secretary of State
 - SC = " " " " Auditor
 - SD = " " " " Treasurer
 - SE = " " " " Attorney General
 - SF = " " " " Sup't of Public Instruction
 - SG = " " " " Commissioner of Labor
- etc., etc.

The Problem of Arrangement: The arrangement of the Public Archives should, of course, be in accord with their classification. Thus following the outlines above recommended a proper arrangement of the Archives of Iowa would be both historical and administrative. The records should, in the first place, be installed in three grand divisions corresponding to the leading historical periods, namely:

- The Period of the Territory, 1838-1846.
- The Period of the First Constitution, 1846-1857.
- The Period of the Second Constitution, 1857-1896.

Within each of these historical divisions the papers and documents should be arranged according to the scheme of the administrative classification as suggested in the outlines above. Furthermore the papers and documents within the several ultimate classes should be arranged in chronological order.

The Problem of Calendaring: As the papers and documents of an administrative department or office are classified and arranged they should be carefully listed or calendared. Such calendars should show the nature or content of the document, along with its date, size, number of pages, classification,

etc. When printed the calendars of the several departments or offices would serve temporarily as reference lists or indexes.

The Problem of Restoring, Mounting, and Binding: Much of the archive material consists of unbound manuscripts. These are sometimes mutilated, crushed, or torn. The torn and mutilated documents should be carefully restored and mounted; and many of the manuscripts after being restored and mounted should be bound in volumes of convenient size. The binding of the Archives need not necessarily be done at once, but may be postponed until such time as the appropriations will warrant the expenditure.

The Problem of Cataloguing and Indexing: Ultimately a complete card catalogue or index should be made for all the material in the Hall of Public Archives; but this task may very properly be delayed until after the papers and documents have been classified, arranged, calendared, and bound.

The Problem of Completing the Files: There are many gaps in the files of state papers as preserved in the several administrative departments or offices. The calendars when published will show the omissions. Efforts should be made to locate the missing papers and restore them to their proper place in the Hall of Public Archives.

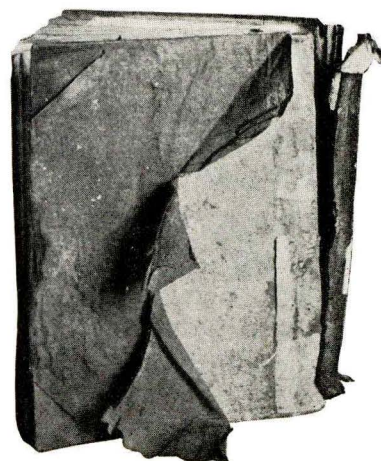
The Problem of Transcribing Documentary Material Located Outside the State: There are many papers and documents located outside of Iowa which either belong to or are closely related to the Public Archives of the State. These form so valuable a part of the documentary history of the State that in due time steps should be taken to have them transcribed for the Hall of Public Archives in Iowa.

IV.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

As a program for immediate action the undersigned submits for consideration the following recommendations:

First. That in accordance with Section 4, Chapter 142, of the Laws of the 31st General Assembly the Executive Council be requested "to provide, furnish, and equip" as soon as



A GOVERNOR'S LETTER BOOK OF 1864

practicable a room or rooms in the Historical Memorial and Art Building to be used *temporarily* as a Hall of Public Archives.

Second. That steps be taken to examine, classify, and remove to the Hall of Public Archives (1) the papers and documents now in the Office of the Governor and (2) the papers and documents now in the Office of the Secretary of State.

Third. That the publication of a guide to the several administrative departments, offices, boards, commissions, etc. of the Territory and State of Iowa from 1838 to 1896 (now in preparation) be authorized.

Fourth. That a report on the Public Archives embodying such information and recommendations as the circumstances may suggest be submitted by the Trustees of the State Library and Historical Department to the Thirty-second General Assembly.

Fifth. That the Thirty-second General Assembly be asked to increase the appropriation for the care and preservation of the Public Archives from \$2,000 annually to \$6,000 annually for the biennial period ending June 31, 1909.

Sixth. That plans for the more permanent organization and administration of the Hall of Public Archives be considered and adopted at such time as in the judgment of the Trustees the financial support of the Hall of Archives will make possible an adequate permanent organization.

Very Respectfully,
Bry. F. Shambaugh

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A REPORT
ON
THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

BY
BENJAMIN F. SHAMBAUGH

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