

# STARS

## Florida Historical Quarterly

---

Volume 17  
Number 1 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 17,*  
*Issue 1*

Article 7

---

1938

## The Historical Records Survey and State Archives Survey of Florida

Florida Historical Society  
[membership@myfloridahistory.org](mailto:membership@myfloridahistory.org)

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Society, Florida Historical (1938) "The Historical Records Survey and State Archives Survey of Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol17/iss1/7>

## THE HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY AND STATE ARCHIVES SURVEY OF FLORIDA\*

The Historical Records Survey and the State Archives Survey, WPA projects administered in Florida by a single director under the general supervision of Dr. Luther H. Evans, National Director, Historical Records Survey, have for the past two years been engaged in a program of interest to those concerned with the location and preservation of historical materials. This includes the locating and inventorying of early American imprints, newspapers, church records, public records—that is, records of the state, counties, and incorporated towns—and manuscripts in private hands and institutions.

Up to the present time the Surveys have inventoried approximately 1,000 privately-owned manuscripts, and have prepared descriptions of 91 groups of items, owned by a single person or institution, which seemed of sufficient size and importance to be considered. manuscript collections.

These private records fall into several well defined groups, perhaps the most interesting of which is diaries. The dairy of William D. Moseley, first governor of the state of Florida, which covers the period from March 1845 to February 1848, is included in the loan exhibit here today. Other important diaries that have been located by the Surveys are those of J. C. Richard, Sr., 1830, and J. C. Richard, Jr., 1847-1848, describing journeys through the Everglades in those years; of D. L. White, 1835-1846, which is a journal of a plantation near Quincy ; of G. F. Hathaway, 1845-1848, written at Tallahassee and including comments on state and

---

\* This report on the work of the surveys in Florida was submitted to the Manuscripts Committee of the Florida Historical Society and read at the annual meeting on January 25, 1938. Both surveys, in Florida, are directed by Mrs. Sue A. Mahorner.

local polities; of Warren Q. Dow, 1849-1869 (in 4 volumes), relating to affairs in Pensacola and Escambia county; of A. M. Reed, 1848-1899 (in 27 volumes), relating to plantation and social life and current events in Duval county; of Roby Hull McFarlan, January 1, 1887-April 11, 1888, kept during the yellow fever epidemic of those years in Tampa; and of Augustine Mira, 1898, kept in Tampa during the Spanish-American War. A number of Civil War diaries, kept by both Confederate and Union soldiers, have also been located.

Collections of letters, legal and commercial papers, and newspaper clippings, constitute another important group of records. The James J. O'Neill MSS; consisting of approximately 600 items dated from 1800 to 1889, include claims arising from the East Florida disturbances of 1812-1813, bills of sale of slaves, invoices, bills of lading, and personal letters. O'Neill resided at New Hope, Nassau county, Florida. The Finley MSS, consisting of 131 items dated from 1837 to 1887 and including letters, newspaper clippings and reminiscences, are the papers of J. J. Finley, Confederate brigadier general and United States Congressman and Senator from Florida after the Civil War. Other collections are: seven letters written between 1821 and 1884 by such prominent Floridians as Stephen R. Mallory, William P. Duval; Richard K. Call, James E. Broome and Marcellus L. Stearns; the Thomas J. Hodson MSS, 50 letters written from Florida between 1845 and 1853; the Gates MSS, 19 letters written from Georgia and Florida between 1854 and 1872; and numerous Civil War letters, one of the largest collections of which is the Bannerman MSS, 50 letters written by Sergeant Charles W. Bannerman, Company G, 5th Florida Regiment, between October 1861 and January 1865.

A third group of records consists of muster rolls of companies that served in the Seminole Indian War and Civil War. Among the former are rolls for 1839 and 1856, while the latter include rolls for both Union and Confederate companies. In view of the incompleteness of the rolls published by the Board of State Institutions in *Soldiers of Florida*, some of these muster rolls may be of special importance.

Literally hundreds of single items have been located, which, in general, fall into one of the following classifications: bills of sale of slaves, land grants, letters, and maps.

The inventory of public records, as well as that of private records, has also disclosed the location of certain records of autographic significance. Among these are the wills of Dr. John Gorrie, Achille Murat, and Richard K. Call, and Murat's application for American citizenship, endorsed by Call. Also located in a public depository, the library of the Supreme Court of Florida, is a volume containing copies of military dispatches sent from Headquarters, District of Middle Florida, in August and September 1865, by the Union general who occupied Tallahassee at the close of the Civil War. In the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, St. Johns County, are eight certified copies of Spanish papers relating to the Patriots' War of 1812-1813.

The Surveys have attempted, in every way at their command, to encourage the proper care of public records and to facilitate the use of both public and private records. To the former end workers have constructed shelving for the storage of public records not in current use and have cleaned, sorted, and filed records that have hitherto been dumped in courthouse basements and attics. Among records so filed are those relating to the Disston

Land Company in the Osceola County courthouse. To the latter end, certain manuscripts of particular interest have been copied and typed, and these copies, securely bound, have been placed in public libraries in different sections of the state. The Surveys have also catalogued several important historical collections, including those of Julien C. Yonge, of Pensacola, and of St. Leo's Academy, the latter of which consists of more than 6,000 titles in approximately 30,000 volumes. A Catalogue of the collection of Mark F. Boyd, of Tallahassee, is now in preparation.

Although we feel that the Surveys have been instrumental in creating and stimulating interest in the care and preservation of both public and private records, there is much yet to be done that does not properly fall within their province and that can only be accomplished through the co-operation of persons and organizations interested in the preservation of historical materials. So far as public records are concerned, the chief problem is one of proper housing and care. As for private records, we feel that steps should be taken to collect as many of them as can be secured and to house them in some Florida public depository. There is always the possibility of their destruction by fire or other means so long as they remain in private hands. There is also the likelihood that they will be secured by collectors from outside of the state. The Surveys have been instrumental in recovering the Moseley diary after it was deposited with an out-of-state institution, and in depositing the diary and letters of Judge W. M. Ives, of Lake City, in the State Library ; but at least one considerable collection of letters has been removed from the state since it was inventoried. Because we believe that immediate action on the part of some interested

organization, such as the Florida Historical Society, is advisable, we submit this report to the Manuscripts Committee with the assurance that the Surveys will cooperate with the Society to the fullest extent in any program which it may adopt for the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts.