

## THE STATE ARCHIVES AT OLYMPIA.

In a report on the State archives of Washington, made a few weeks ago to the Public Archives Commission of the American Historical Association, I gave a detailed account of the condition and contents of the archives at Olympia, Tacoma and Seattle. In some instances, especially in the Governor's office, many papers were calendared. The contents of the papers, books and documents generally in some of the offices made it seem wise that the report should not alone be a report in the narrower meaning of that word, but should also be made to act as a guide to the vaults. The notes taken in the examination of the vaults and offices during the vacations of 1906 and 1907 reveal many interesting facts that are rather beyond the scope and purpose of the report—facts of State rather than of national import—and which may serve in a way to make known the conditions of the earlier records and the urgent need of better and of organized care of them.

Official records are preserved for one primary reason—to give constant and ordered direction to the business of the State, to guarantee stated rights and decisions, and to be witnesses in disputed questions. The importance of this reason is the order it gives to the immediate present; as the present proceeds into the future it leaves the records less and less appealed to, when finally official appeal is seldom if ever made to them. Yet the State is compelled to preserve them. When this point is reached and the original importance and usefulness has disappeared they pass into the realm of archives in the historical sense. The State officials, as business men of the present, lose their interest in them; a land question or a trade-mark similarity may cause them to brush away the accumulated dust from some volume or some bundle only to replace it again in the contented disorder. The interest of the many has given place to the interest of the few; the business and official world leave the records to the isolated history student. But the law, and official pride in completeness, compels their preservation—yet both permit them to be stored in old boxes, thrown into shelves, hung from the rafters, piled in lockers and dumped into wastebaskets and corners. Attempts have twice been made within the last decade to correct this, but in both instances the Legislature, for different

reasons, failed to pass or to provide for the measures introduced. Where the offices are of late creation and the records have not yet become numerous the official pride blends with the order demanded by the important present; but when the offices reach back to the middle of the century and the records have greatly multiplied the pride has flickered and gone out. Bundled and mixed lie the books and papers of the Territory and State governors on the upper shelves of the Auditor's vault; while the war correspondence of Governor Stevens is jumbled in two unlocked cases beneath an open window in the basement; and some of the Journals of the Council, House and Senate bear misleading labels. Yet the flickering pride of Secretary Brown, in the Governor's office, has ordered some of the early Governors' papers; and Mr. Percival, of the Secretary of State's office, has replaced the time-worn and illegible labels of the Legislature records; and the State Librarian has evinced his interest in preparing a bill for the last Legislature creating a Historical Archives Commission on the Mississippi plan.

The year 1889 seems to be as much a year of transition in the care of the records, as it was a transition in the government from Territory to State. It seems to mark the boundary between order and disorder; between official records and historical documents; between the State official and the State historian. Each office varies as to its borderland, yet Territory and State, some way and in some way or other, designate two conditions of records. In the Governor's office the border is in the administration of Governor Ferry. Yet some of the papers and books scattered back as far as 1853 are found in the well-ordered office of the Secretary and in the Governor's vault; while on the other hand, some of Governor Ferry's papers are to be found among the Territorial bundles on the shelves in the Auditor's vault. In the Governor's office, as well as in other offices, the Territorial confusion is rapidly encroaching upon the order of the State documents. In the Secretary of State's office the Territorial material is divided between the vaults in this office and in the insurance department. The domestic and foreign corporations, the Legislature Journals and the trade-mark records are ordered to the beginning. Here the border line is pushed far back beyond 1889. This year makes a sharp division in the Supreme Court records; the Territorial books and documents are thrown into lockers in the vault or stowed in confusion in a basement room. The books in the Auditor's office are ordered beyond 1889, but this can not be said of the papers. Beyond

the register, reaching back to 1888, the current docket book, and the file of opinions since November, 1896, confusion reigns supreme among the documents in the Attorney General's vault. The current records mark the division for the State library.

Lack of room is usually given as the cause of this disorder which is acknowledged to exist among the early State and Territory, or both, records. But this can not be the reason in the Attorney General's vault with its ample space, nor in the Governor's vault with its available shelf room; nor the reason why Governor Stevens' papers should be left in their unprotected condition. With acknowledged disorder in plenty of room, lack of official pride would then seem to be cause of all this. But lack of pride, also, is not sufficient reason, for the fact that interest is shown in the work done in the Governor's and Secretary of State's records; and the Attorney General contemplates the assortment and arrangement of his documents. The interest and the will, to a greater or less degree, are there, but official time and duties demand concentration on the present records, while neither official duties, time or law demands order among those of the past. Order is found among the records just so long as they are of immediate use; when they pass beyond this stage of usefulness they, like their purpose, are forgotten. The official has no time to battle with this forgetfulness. If he had the time it is not probable that he would know what to do with the documents, how to order, catalogue and calendar them to make them of use to the student. The official uses his documents for official purposes; the student uses them for quite another purpose. The official orders them for his ends, the student for his; it is not at all likely that the State official can do this work for the historical student. Again supposing that the official could do something toward this end, would the student be forthcoming to use them? Up to the present the investigator has indeed been rare; the interest in the past of the State, our receding from it, the general interest in the Indian wars will, no doubt, bring students to the records in time—but, unfortunately, in these days State history is sacrificed for national, colonial and European research. So the student as yet is but a rare stimulus to the officials regarding the care of their ancient records.

The Governor's papers: The records are divided between this office, the circulating library basement and the vaults of the Auditor and the Secretary of State. In the Governor's vault some of the books on the top shelf go back to 1853. Governor Stevens' letter book, however, contains besides letters other pa-

pers relative to Indian matters; also proclamations of 1861, commissions of 1855, appointments of notaries public, commissioners of deeds, etc. It extends from 1853 to 1870. There are also small books of Governors Squire, Saloman, Semple and Moore, while the bulk of their papers are in the Auditor's vault. On the top shelves are mixed together: Three Surveyor's reports of 1897; "Chart of Bureau of Labor, Showing R. R. Business in Washington for Years 1897-98," etc.; MSS. "1894 Court of Inquiry, N. G. W.," county examination papers, 1891, the minutes of the "W. S. Bd. of Ed., June, '91," bound together with a "Statement of Facts, S. of W. vs. H. Craemer;" the eleventh biennial report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1892; a package containing examination questions, reading circle matters, data regarding denominational schools; matters relative to the University, Agricultural College and the Normal Schools, etc., mostly of 1894-96; another "Manuscript of Report of Supt. Pub. Instruction, 1890," and several bundles of pardon papers. This, no doubt, is sufficient to indicate the condition of the upper shelves.

In the Auditor's vault many papers are loose and quite mixed. In "Misc. Papers, Gov. Semple," 1887-89, will be found tide land papers of Snohomish City and county, 1884. Pardons, educational reports, centennial proclamations, and letters, are mixed with applications for offices at Steilacoom. Dates are sometimes incorrectly written or are misleading. Territorial Treasurers' papers are to be found among the papers of the Governors. With "Notaries Public, 1886-89," will be found Thanksgiving proclamations from the different States for 1880. With "Prosecuting Attorney, Territory," is found Indian enumeration for 1891. Election returns are among "State, U. S. Officers." In a bundle marked "Insane Asylum, Western Washington, 1890," all papers relate to the recommendation or appointment of tide land appraisers. Thanksgiving and Arbor Day proclamations are among "U. S. Land Office Report, 1884." Bundles and boxes are labeled differently on different ends or sides. "Territorial Pardon, Miscellaneous Applications," holds also Geologist's reports, and proclamations. The shelf room alone has dictated the arrangement of the books, boxes, papers and bundles.

Governor Stevens' war correspondence covers the Indian War of 1855-57. Some of the papers are of 1853; some interpolated documents, printed matter, etc., bring the date down to 1872; but most of the papers are of 1856. They are in two pigeon-holed field cabinets, each containing about an equal amount of

matter. The documents are of very unequal value, and the contents of the first case is of much greater value than the contents of the second. The double doors are without lock; a narrow slat was once nailed across the front to hold them closed. They stood in the packing room of the circulating library in the basement; and the window just above them was open day and night during my examination of their contents in 1906. The cases were still standing in this position during my second examination in May, 1907. The capitol legend has it that the papers were once upon a time considered junk and rubbish, were dumped into an ash-barrel in an alley and mingled with the manure from the neighboring stable. To this treatment the papers bore evidence when they were later rescued by an interested hand. But former State Librarian J. A. Gabel writes in a letter to me that this story "of the rescue of the cabinets was slightly exaggerated. The old correspondence was contained in an old cabinet and some boxes which were stored in an old building, the lower floor of which was used for a barn. The papers were brought to my attention by Adjutant-General Drain, and I unearthed them from the rubbish and placed them in the State Library. The soiled appearance of the material is due largely, I presume, to the rough field usage and to the fact also that since stored it has become wet and mouldy."

On the inside of the door of the first case is a card, reading: "1st 2 rows & pigeon holes 2, 3 & four of 3rd row are letters fully separated from vouchers. Do not destroy this order. J. H." This was Miss Josephine Holgate, of the State Library, who did this work about 1905. In the same year Mr. Hazard Stevens, so he related to me during his visit to Olympia in 1906, made an examination of the papers for data to controvert certain statements which Mr. Ezra Meeker made in his "Tragedy of Leschi" regarding the dealings of his father, Governor Stevens, with the Indians in the Treaties of 1854. Aside from these two handlings the papers seem not to have been touched since they were placed in the cabinets.

Vouchers, bills, invoices, muster rolls into and out of the service, and routine papers, form for the most part the bulk of the material in the second case. The most valuable letters and papers are in the first cabinet, but mixed with a mass of material like the contents of the second. Here is the correspondence with the Federal vessels in the Sound waters during the war; the letters relating to their troubles with the Northern Indians, the fighting with them at Port Gamble and Steilacoom, their trans-



portation to Victoria, and their patrol of the Sound. The papers recounting the campaigns east and west of the mountains, the fights at Connell's Prairie and in the Yakima Valley; the trouble on the Columbia and on the Snohomish; the siege of Seattle and the White River massacre; the Walla Walla campaign of Governor Stevens; material dealing with the enlistment of Indians in the militia and the provisions made for them; the trials of Leschi and of other Indians, and the Chenowith controversy. Documents regarding the declaration and enforcement of martial law in Pierce County; the treatment of the foreigners and of the foreign-born; the organization of a company at Whatcom, and the demands made by the Northern Indians for the return of an Indian woman who was sold in 1854 to a man later a volunteer in Peabody's company. The papers in the controversy between the regular army and the volunteers; the correspondence to and from the various companies and the Territorial officers, and with the Federal arsenal at Benicia and the officers at San Francisco. Letters, petitions, news articles, poetry, protests, reports of engagements on the field—all, in other words, forming practically the whole background of the Washington of that day.

The most congested of all are the records in the Secretary of State's vault. Material for which there is little call or use is in general confusion. Boxes have changed lids and the labels are thus misleading. Of the Legislature Journals, Vol. I., is labeled "Memorials and Joint Resolutions, 1853-54, 1854-55," yet really runs to 1862, and contains an index for the first seven sessions. Vol. 7, "Journal, 1860, continued," runs to 1865; Vol. 8, "Journal, 1864," runs to 1868; Vol. 9, "Journal, 1864-65," also runs to 1868, Vol. 8 being of the House and Vol. 9 of the Council. Vol. 10, "Journal, 1867-68," runs to 1869-71, and is of the Council. In the filing on the shelves, Vol. 19 should be Vol. 21. A volume marked "Indian Affairs" is, no doubt, Governor Stevens' first book of record bearing as its first date March 21, 1853. It contains letters directed from Washington, D. C., to Fort Benton; accounts of weights and premiums to the Indians on the upper Mississippi; United States accounts of 1869; and a record of the script issued by the Quartermaster and Commissary General. Bills, resolutions, vetoed bills, letters, boom plats, election returns, notarial appointments, memorials, accounts, printed books, etc.—all of no immediate use if ever at all, except to the student, are piled in lockers and on shelves.

On the top shelves in the vault of the Insurance Department are many bundles mostly of the Territorial Secretary of State.

"Jail Reports prior to 1901;" session laws of 1881 to 1888; pardon papers, 1855-76; blue prints; abstracts; extradition papers, 1862 to 1887; Treasurer's receipts; Council acts of 1869 unsigned by the Governor; civil practice code, 1881. A package marked "Miscellaneous Papers, Prior to Statehood" dates from 1854. It contains the "Original of Seal of W. T." and was "Recorded May 1st, 1854. C. H. Mason, Secy. Wash. Ter." It is the original sketch from which was made the Territorial seal now standing in the Secretary of State's vault. This sketch evidently had a romantic existence before it came into the hands of the Territorial Secretary and years later was stowed away in its present oblivion, as may be seen from the following note attached to it: "O. March 28, 1889. My Dear Ed. The enclosed original of the seal of the territory should probably be on the files in your office. Resp. Eugene Semple." In this package also is the original plat of the capitol grounds, Olympia, dated May, 1857; together with papers pertaining to these grounds and abstracts of the lots transferred. Just prior to 1906 a legal attempt was made by the heirs of the original donors to recover these grounds no longer used for capitol purposes. Whether these papers, plat and abstracts would have been of value in this litigation I am unable to say, but certain it is that they were not consulted, as is evidenced by their present condition, as well as by a statement from the Attorney General's office.

Beyond MSS. copies of the reports for 1901-02 and 1902-03, and returns from mills and factories, 1901-04, there are no records in the office of the Labor Commissioner beyond the present administration. Mr. Hubbard made diligent search in all likely places and offices, but no documents of his predecessors could be found.

In a basement room is a mass of material belonging to the Supreme Court. Nothing more seems known of it than that it belonged to the Territorial Court and some day it is intended to put it in order. Neither the window nor the door was secure. Here are bundles of testimony, docket sheets, great quantities of exhibits, transcripts, opinions, Pierce County census for 1883, etc. The oldest paper that came to hand was dated September, 1858, and nothing was found beyond 1890.

The question may readily be asked: Of what use or value are these old papers and why not leave them gather dust in peace? First, they are of no use; their usefulness passed away long ago, and it is very improbable that any official in his regular duties will find it necessary to disturb them. As the years

roll on their mass will proportionately increase. Second, their value increases with their age—when the words, use and value are thus thrown into juxtaposition; their value increases inversely with their usefulness. They were useful to the many; they are valuable to the few and only indirectly to the many. The history student is now interested in them as was formerly the official, but in a different way. The official carried on the life of the State and Territory in accordance with law or policy, or, as legislators, made laws and policies in applying traditions to current problems—his letters, papers, books and journals were the evidence to all that his duties had been performed. The life of 1855-57 marched on and left the documents behind; the historian now uses them to reconstruct the Territory of the Indian wars, and by his art and his personality resurrects the life of those days. The Constitution, the acts of the Legislature and the decisions of the courts of record are documents now used by the lawyer and statesman in directing the present in accordance with the past. These documents and others the historian uses in like manner—to direct the present directly or through his presentation of the facts influences others to do it. The Indian wars are over and there is no probability of their return; but the spirit aroused there had its effect on the white men in relation to the Indians and to each other, and these effects can never be eradicated. The Territorial east and west were thrown together as never before; the people of the Sound came into new relations with each other; a kindred feeling arose between both sides of the Cascades via the passes and the Columbia; as a unit they fought their foe and as an entity they presented themselves before the other States and Territories. Their material gains are ours, and their spiritual life is our inheritance unconsciously through ourselves and consciously through the historian. Third, the law requires the preservation of the records irrespective of their age or immediate usefulness. The law provides for their care in files, racks, cases, vaults and clerks while the records are in making and in constant reference use, but fails to provide vault space and clerical care when their usefulness is passed. The many make and use them; the few—as students—work with them. The State provides for the many but not for the few. The majority rules, it is true, but it rules all and for all. Fourth, let them gather dust in peace, but in some protected and ordered way. If these old books and papers are in the way numerous libraries would gladly relieve the State of their care and expense. The officials, however, feel that they must be preserved and



hope for a systematic care of them—yet beneath a basement window, amid waste paper and rubbish, stands—or stood in May, 1907—Governor Stevens' war correspondence, the State's most valuable documentary asset.

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