

William L. Andersen. "To Rescue the Fair Fame and Good Name of North Carolina": A History of *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April 2010. 66 pages. Advisor: Katherine M. Wisser

Publication of *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* between 1886 and 1890 was significant as the culmination of a long series of nineteenth-century efforts to preserve and make available the source materials of early Tar Heel history, and as the crucial factor in the establishment of a central archival agency, the North Carolina Historical Commission, at the turn of the twentieth century. The result of a strong impulse that combined southern Lost Cause ideology with traditional local pride and the deep-seated patriotic desire to vindicate the reputation of the state, the *Colonial Records* remains, despite its limitations, a signal achievement. This paper traces the origins of the series in antebellum attempts to collect and publish the documentary heritage of the state, and follows the development of the postwar editorial project—including the identification and transcription of relevant state papers in the British Public Record Office in order to fill in gaps in the archives at home—under the guidance of William L. Saunders.

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“TO RESCUE THE FAIR FAME AND GOOD NAME OF NORTH CAROLINA”:
A HISTORY OF *THE COLONIAL RECORDS OF NORTH CAROLINA*

by
William L. Andersen

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
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Approved by

Katherine M. Wisser

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“Till the public papers shall be collected & arranged in a suitable order for inspection, it will be impossible for any writer to do justice to the history of any of the States. They are all negligent in this respect. Men are so much absorbed in the vortex of the present, that they forget the past; and yet it is only from the deeds of those who have gone before us, that we have any character as a nation. Take away the history of a people, and what is left but a name?”

—*Jared Sparks to David L. Swain, 1845*

“I wish . . . to express my obligations as a North Carolinian to you for the great work you have done for the State—a work which will be justly appreciated only after you and I are dead and when the people of North Carolina shall be sufficiently educated to realize the value of it. . . .

“I have always regarded Benton Utley’s remark after reading a page or two of Hamlet, as a pretty fair illustration of North Carolina literary criticism. Of course you remember his profound observation: that ‘the man that wrote Shakespeare was no fool.’ I’m sure you will be entirely satisfied if you shall extort such a tribute from some other one of your countrymen. It would soothe your spirit after you’ve handed in your checks to know that you had at last received justice—”

—*A. M. Waddell to William L. Saunders, 1890, upon completion of the Colonial Records of North Carolina*

Preface

This paper was originally intended to cover the publication of the *State Records of North Carolina* and the *Index to the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, in addition to the *Colonial Records*, as the three parts form a single combined series. Unfortunately, however, the logical scope had to be curtailed out of necessity. An appendix contains suggestions for further research on the *State Records* and *Index*.

New York, N.Y.
April 2010

Abbreviations

<i>CRNC</i>	William L. Saunders, ed., <i>The Colonial Records of North Carolina</i> , 10 vols. (Raleigh: [State of North Carolina], 1886-1890)
NCSA	North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh
SHC	Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

I. Collecting and Publishing the Documentary Record Before the Civil War

Publication of *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (10 vols., 1886-1890) was significant as the culmination of a long series of nineteenth-century efforts to preserve and make available the source materials of early Tar Heel history, and as the crucial factor in the establishment of a central archival agency, the North Carolina Historical Commission, at the turn of the twentieth century. The result of a strong impulse that combined southern Lost Cause ideology with traditional local pride and the deep-seated patriotic desire to vindicate the reputation of the state, the *Colonial Records* series remains, despite its limitations, a signal achievement. This paper traces its origins in antebellum attempts to collect and publish the documentary heritage of the state, and follows the development of the postwar editorial project—including the identification and transcription of relevant state papers in the British Public Record Office in order to fill in gaps in the archives at home—under the guidance of William L. Saunders.

North Carolina was established in 1663 as part of the British proprietary colony of Carolina, which included the present state of South Carolina. In 1729, seventeen years after formally splitting from its southern sister, the province reverted to the crown, and remained a royal colony until gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1776.¹ From the beginning of organized government under the lords proprietors until well into the

¹ For a historical introduction to the era before statehood, see Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina: A History* (New York: Scribner, 1973); Noeleen McIlvenna, *A Very Mutinous People: The Struggle for North Carolina, 1660-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2009); A. Roger Ekirch, *“Poor Carolina”: Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

early republic era, the preservation of public records of enduring value was very poor. Much of the most valuable original documentary heritage of the state was lost, due primarily to negligence on the part of public officials and the lack of a fixed seat of government.² Throughout the early history of the North Carolina, records were regularly kept in private homes and other convenient locations, mostly as a consequence of inadequate public buildings, and were frequently alienated by outgoing office holders. Upon beginning his tenure in 1754, Gov. Arthur Dobbs observed that whenever officials died, “all papers die with them, for the Successors say they have got no papers, or, if any, those very insignificant, from their Predecessors.”³ Before the state capital was established at Raleigh, official papers were constantly carted about from place to place at great peril. The scattered archives (or at least the surviving records that could be located)⁴ were finally collected together and housed in permanent facilities in 1794, when the new capitol building was occupied.⁵

² North Carolina’s experience in the care of its archives and the loss of its early records was similar to that of other states. J. G. de Roullac Hamilton, “Three Centuries of Southern Records, 1607-1907,” *Journal of Southern History* 10 (February 1944): 5-16; Philip M. Hamer, “The Records of Southern History,” *Journal of Southern History* 5 (February 1939): 6-10; G. Philip Bauer, “Public Archives in the United States,” in *In Support of Clío: Essays in Memory of Herbert A. Kellar*, ed. William B. Hesseltine and Donald R. McNeil (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958), 51-57; Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 7-10; Richard J. Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000), 32-36; Cox, “Public Records in Colonial Maryland,” *American Archivist* 37 (April 1974): 263-275. While fire wreaked havoc on local records, however, it did little damage to the archives of the state. H. G. Jones, *For History’s Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History, 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 81, 118-125.

³ Dobbs to the Board of Trade, December 19, 1754, quoted in Hamilton, “Three Centuries of Southern Records,” 9. Not until 1787 did the General Assembly direct retiring governors to deposit their papers in the archives of the state. The legislature was required to do the same after every session. However, the law regarding the chief executives was not enforced. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 70-71, 117.

⁴ Some legislative records were in New Bern as late as 1826. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 77-78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-78; Alan D. Watson, “County Buildings and Other Public Structures in Colonial North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 82 (October 2005): 427-445. Records were moved from various points in the state to New Bern in 1771, when the governor’s palace there was finished, but no provision was made in that edifice for holding the complete archives, and the Revolutionary War soon set them on the move again. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 51-54. Very few records survived from the period 1781-1782, due to their

The four main record groups by the time the capitol was established at Raleigh through the turn of the twentieth century⁶ were the papers of the governor, legislature, treasurer and comptroller, and colonial and state land offices. Originally maintained by their respective departments, the bulk of the most important non-current records were eventually placed under the custody the secretary of state.⁷ All branches of state government (except the governor) initially had their offices in the statehouse, but outbuildings for the secretary of state, governor, and treasurer were built by 1830. Already run-down and short of space, the capitol was enlarged and renovated between 1820 and 1824. When historian and seminal documentary editor Jared Sparks visited Raleigh in 1826 as part of his tour of repositories in the United States, he found North Carolina's archives generally "abundant" and "safely preserved, though not well arranged."⁸ The statehouse burned in 1831, but while most of the records—by then stored

removal to prevent depredation by British troops after the state was invaded. *Ibid.*, 61-64. For a comparative experience, see Morris L. Radoff, "The Maryland Records in the Revolutionary War," *American Archivist* 37 (April 1974): 267-285. Records in North Carolina were also lost earlier as a result of political unrest. Adelaide R. Hasse, "Materials for a Bibliography of Public Archives of the Thirteen Original States, Covering the Colonial Period and the State Period Until 1789," in "Seventh Report of the Public Archives Commission," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1906*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1908), 509 (hereinafter cited as "Bibliography of Public Archives").

⁶ Classification of the public records circa 1900 was basically the same as it had been one hundred years before. [John Spencer Bassett], "Report on the Public Archives of North Carolina," in "First Report of the Public Archives Commission," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1900*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., 1901), 261-266.

⁷ Maintaining some of the most valuable archives had been part of the secretary's duties since colonial times. *Guide to Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives: State Agency Records* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, Archives and Records Section, 1995), 619-620 (hereinafter cited as *Guide to the N.C. Archives*). This practice was typical in the states before the establishment of central archival agencies in the early twentieth century. Posner, *American State Archives*, 8; Bauer, "Public Archives," 51-52.

⁸ Sparks, "Journal of a Southern Tour, 1826," entries of May 5 (first quotation) and 6 (second quotation), quoted in John H. Moore, "Jared Sparks in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 40 (July 1963): 289, 290. Sparks was permitted to remove original documents for his researches. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 84. The alienation of records by zealous historians and antiquarians was another common problem in the nineteenth century. Bauer, "Public Archives," 52; Cox, "Other Atlantic States," 115; Worthington C. Ford, "Manuscripts and Historical Archives," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1913*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1915), 77-78.

in the outbuilding offices—were saved, they were thrown into further disarray. All of the archives were moved into the new capitol building when it was completed in 1840.

Despite periodic efforts to put the records in order, over the years they began to suffer from neglect.⁹

While most original colonial records were lost in North Carolina, under royal administration copies of important papers were regularly sent to the home government and subsequently preserved in the public archives in London. Beginning with the proprietary, Britain's possessions in America were governed locally by appointed and elected officials, while the crown's authority was exercised by a colonial secretary of state (the predecessor to the Colonial Office) and the Board of Trade and Plantations (which was permanently established in place of a series of other Privy Council committees in 1696). Thus a large part of the early historical record of the state—like that of other former provinces—was preserved in England, primarily among the papers of the Board of Trade and Colonial Office.¹⁰ Under the lords proprietors, however, who enjoyed

⁹ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 78-93; Cecil J. Hill, "When the North Carolina Supreme Court Sat in the Capitol," 66 N.C. App. 731 (1984), 737 (hereinafter cited as "North Carolina Supreme Court"); W. Dale Talbert and Karen Blum, "The Odyssey of North Carolina's Original Copy of the Bill of Rights and the State's Case for Its Ownership," in *Liberty and Freedom: North Carolina's Tour of the Bill of Rights*, ed. Kenrick N. Simpson (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2009), 48 (hereinafter cited as "Bill of Rights"). Despite emerging concern for archives at this time, apathy by state officials toward the records in their custody was still general, with only sporadic attempts to maintain order and good care. Bauer, "Public Archives," 52-56; Cox, "Other Atlantic States," 108-111; Posner, *American State Archives*, 13-16; Lyman H. Butterfield, "Archival and Editorial Enterprise in 1850 and in 1950: Some Comparisons and Contrasts," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 98 (June 1954): 160; Roland M. Baumann, "Samuel Hazard: Editor and Archivist for the Keystone State," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (April 1983): 200.

¹⁰ The records of the Board of Trade were placed in the government's State Paper Office in 1833, while those of the Colonial Office were transferred to the same agency in 1845. The State Paper Office was consolidated with the Public Record Office, the central government archives, in 1854. Charles M. Andrews, *Guide to the Materials for American History, to 1783, in the Public Record Office of Great Britain*, vol. 1, *The State Papers* (1912; reprint, New York: Kraus, 1965), 2-3, 24, 103 (hereinafter cited as *Guide to American History*); *Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office*, vol. 2, *State Papers and Departmental Records* (London: H.M.S.O., 1963), 42 (hereinafter cited as *Guide to the P.R.O.*). Access to

virtual independence in matters of governance, official correspondence, reports, and the like were only intermittently brought to the attention of the crown, making the existing documentary record before 1729 very sparse.¹¹

North Carolina became the first state to obtain records relative to its colonial history from the archives in England, receiving in 1807 transcripts requested the previous year for use in its boundary dispute with South Carolina.¹² While the copies were for purely administrative purposes, shortly after this time a new spirit of nationalism attendant upon the successful conclusion of the War of 1812, the semicentennial of the Declaration of Independence, and like events soon gave rise to great enthusiasm across the United States for collecting and publishing documentary source materials. The various states, reflecting the ancient local pride that was an inheritance from the colonial experience—and which also gave rise to the proliferation of local historical societies from this time—led the way in efforts to uncover and disseminate the past. In so doing the states were motivated primarily by the desire to make known and vindicate, through unadorned fact, their respective roles in the great events in the rise of the new nation. Historical endeavors of the time were marked by filiofetistic veneration of the past, or devotion to figures and events sacred to national memory. Concern for public records

the records was greatly restricted until 1862, when the state papers were transferred to the new public archives building. Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 4, 24-25.

¹¹ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 15, 22, 33, 36, 57, 93; Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 18-22, 82-83, 96-100; *Guide to the Contents of the P.R.O.*, 3-6.

¹² Jones, *For History's Sake*, 130-132. Georgia recovered some of its original records from London in 1802, under authority of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War. A request made through diplomatic channels in 1799 for the return of certain out-of-custody documents in British archives resulted in their return three years later. Robert Scott Davis Jr., "Two Hundred Years of Acquiring the Fifty Years of the Colonial Records of Georgia: A Chapter in Failure in Historical Publication," *Documentary Editing* 23 (March 2001): 14 (hereinafter cited as "Colonial Records of Georgia"); Lilla Mills Hawes and Albert S. Britt Jr., eds., *The Search for Georgia's Colonial Records* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1976), 3.

grew along with this rise of historical consciousness. Multiplying the copies through publication was viewed as the best means of preserving manuscript originals, and the most effective way to make historical sources available for general patriotic cultural benefit.¹³

For many of the thirteen original states, securing a complete record of the past meant obtaining copies of relevant documents in the British public archives. Georgia pioneered the way for other states seeking to document their early history, when in 1824 it authorized the location and transcription of colonial records in London. Events proved unfavorable, however, and no copying was accomplished until the state appointed an agent for the purpose thirteen years later. The transcripts (totaling twenty-two volumes of manuscripts) were completed in a second round of copying after 1844 but were never published.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the positive response of the British government to Georgia's request—allowing extracts from pertinent volumes of papers to be made by an authorized agent—sparked efforts by other states to collect their records and produce documentary editions.¹⁵

¹³ Baumann, "Samuel Hazard," 199; Butterfield, "Archival and Editorial Enterprise," 159-160, 164-166; David D. Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America, 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 55-76, 103-105; Posner, *American State Archives*, 10-16; Richard J. Cox, "Other Atlantic States: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina," in *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic: The Origins of State Historical Societies, Museums, and Collections, 1791-1861*, ed. H. G. Jones (Chapel Hill: North Caroliniana Society and North Carolina Collection, 1995), 111-113; Cox, *Closing an Era*, 36-39; Lester J. Cappon, "American Historical Editors Before Jared Sparks: 'They Will Plant a Forest . . .,'" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (July 1973): 382. For the antecedents of documentary editing in the United States, see Cappon, "American Historical Editors," 376-400; Fred Shelley, "Ebenezer Hazard: America's First Historical Editor," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 12 (January 1955): 44-73.

¹⁴ Most of the transcripts were ultimately lost in a fire in 1891, when out on loan to a college professor. Theodore H. Jack, "The Preservation of Georgia History," *North Carolina Historical Review* 4 (July 1927): 242-243.

¹⁵ Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 105-107; John Beverley Riggs, "The Acquisition of Foreign Archival Sources for American History to the Year 1940" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1955), 9-12

South Carolina investigated British colonial records with an eye to publication in 1829, and twenty years later authorized an agent to obtain transcripts to fill in the gaps in its archives at home. Beginning in 1856, after no action was taken, the state's historical society (with the assistance of some public funds) had a calendar of relevant material in London prepared and printed in the first three volumes of its *Collections* as "A List and Abstract of Documents Relating to South-Carolina, Now Existing in the State Paper Office, London" (1857-1859). A full-fledged copying program, however, was prevented by the Civil War.¹⁶

In 1839, as a result of action by the New-York Historical Society, the Empire State authorized an agent to obtain copies of colonial records in the British archives, as well as those in France and Holland. John Romeyn Brodhead was appointed to the position two years later, and after long periods of delay, occasioned by diplomatic tensions between the U.S. and Great Britain, completed the work between 1842 and 1844. The resulting transcripts (forty-seven manuscript volumes) were published in *The Documentary History of the State of New-York* (4 vols., 1849-1851) and as volumes 3-8 of the superior *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* (15 vols., 1853-1887).¹⁷

(hereinafter cited as "Foreign Archival Sources"); Jack, "Preservation of Georgia History," 241-242; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 550-551.

¹⁶ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 15-16, 73-74; Robert Reynolds Simpson, "The Origin of State Departments of Archives and History in the South" (Ph.D. diss., University of Mississippi, 1971), 169-172 (hereinafter cited as "Origin of State Archives").

¹⁷ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 50-60; Nicholas Falco, "The Empire State's Search in European Archives," *American Archivist* 32 (April 1969): 109-123; Francis Shaw Guy, *Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan: A Study in American Historiography (1797-1880)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1934), 47-51, 56-65; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 355-358, 359-363; Milton W. Hamilton, *The Historical Publication Program of the State of New York* (Albany: University of the State of New York, Division of Archives and History, 1965), 3-4. Calendared in *The Final Report of John Romeyn Brodhead, Agent of the State of New-York, To Procure and Transcribe Documents in Europe, Relative to*

Encouraged by New York's example, the New Jersey Historical Society sought beginning in 1843 to secure public support for a project to locate British records relative to its state. After five failures in the legislature, the organization contracted privately to have the work done in 1849. The results of the survey, finished two years later, were published in 1858 (with a state appropriation at last) in calendar form as volume 5 of its *Collections*.¹⁸ The Historical Society of Pennsylvania obtained a list of British state papers relating to the Keystone State and Delaware in 1847,¹⁹ while Maryland compiled a calendar between 1851 and 1852.²⁰

Other states had much more complete archives at home, and so could produce documentary editions without the necessity of going overseas. Pennsylvania published the *Colonial Records* (16 vols., 1838-1853) and the first series of the *Pennsylvania Archives* (12 vols., 1852-1856)—the latter again a great improvement over its predecessor.²¹ The *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* and *Pennsylvania Archives* set the antebellum benchmark for comprehensiveness and accuracy in historical editing.²² Other contemporary series were *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* (15 vols., 1850-1890),²³ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (5 vols. in 6, 1853-1854) and

the Colonial History of Said State (1845), as well as *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y.* (2 vols., 1865-1866), Broadhead's transcripts perished in a fire in 1911. Falco, "Empire State's Search," 123; Guy, *Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan*, 74.

¹⁸ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 75-77; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 391; Falco, "Empire State's Search," 123.

¹⁹ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

²¹ Baumann, "Samuel Hazard," 195-215; Henry Howard Eddy, *Guide to the Published Archives of Pennsylvania, Covering the 138 Volumes of "Colonial Records" and "Pennsylvania Archives," Series I-IX* (Harrisburg: Division of Public Records, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1949), 1-3, 49-61; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 413-414, 417-418.

²² Butterfield, "Archival and Editorial Enterprise," 161; Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 124.

²³ Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 344-346.

Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England (12 vols. in 10, 1855-1861),²⁴ and *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England* (10 vols., 1856-1865).²⁵

By contrast, the federal government never developed a full-fledged historical collecting and publishing program in the nineteenth century. After rejecting a measure to authorize copying of early records in London in 1827, Congress passed a similar act five years later. However, while the British government was favorable to requests for access to its archives by individual states, such action by the U.S. itself presented a different diplomatic picture. Relations between the two countries were tense (as was periodically the case in the decades before the Civil War), while the Revolutionary-era papers sought along with those from the colonial era were too recent—and, in the view of His Majesty’s Government, too liable to excite heated feelings—to admit of unrestricted use. In 1833, shortly before Britain reached its decision regarding the earlier inquiry, Congress approved the publication of a “Documentary History of the American Revolution” by historical editor and collector Peter Force. Intended to chronicle American independence from its colonial origins through the ratification of the constitution, Force’s project was fatally impaired when request again made in London for documents relating to the Revolution met with the same unhappy result as before. Appearing as *American Archives* (9 vols., 1837-1853), and covering the years 1774-1776, only two of the projected six

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 293-294, 295-296; Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 124. The Massachusetts records were supplemented by colonial state papers from London. Denied permission to obtain transcripts by the British government in 1839, the state was successful in 1845-1846. Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 60-62.

²⁵ Hasse, “Bibliography of Public Archives,” 328-329.

series were issued (the second of which was incomplete), before the work was cut short because of excessive cost.²⁶

Americans acting in an individual capacity also drew on British public records for historical purposes in the antebellum period. In 1828 and 1829, Jared Sparks searched for materials in London he knew to be missing from the archives of the several states but after much difficulty was permitted to make extracts only instead of full transcripts. Sparks was subsequently suspected of bad faith by British officials, as being the source of the extensive list of documents Force had tried to obtain for his *American Archives*. This mistrust—stemming in large measure from confusion about whether his research had actually been for private purposes (as was in fact the case) or instead on behalf of the U.S. government, for which he edited the official *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution* (12 vols., 1829-1830)—complicated matters for others coming after him, including New York’s agent, Brodhead, in the early 1840s. Later, however, in 1840, after achieving renown with *The Life and Writings of George Washington* (12 vols., 1834-1837) and other works, Sparks was allowed to make full copies of British records.²⁷ In contrast to the difficulties experienced by Sparks, historian George Bancroft, while serving as American minister in London from 1846 to 1849, was given free access to the public archives for sources for his immensely popular *History of the United States* (10 vols., 1834-1875). Transcripts thereby gained formed part of his vast personal collection

²⁶ Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 17-34; Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 106-108; Butterfield, “Archival and Editorial Enterprise,” 159-160; Louis Kaplan, “Peter Force, Collector,” *Library Quarterly* 14 (July 1944): 235-236; Clarence E. Carter, “The United States and Documentary Historical Publication,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 25 (June 1938): 3-13.

²⁷ Galen Broeker, “Jared Sparks, Robert Peel and the State Paper Office,” *American Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1961): 140-152; Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 34-47, 54; Lester J. Cappon, “Jared Sparks: The Preparation of an Editor,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd ser., 90 (1978): 20-21.

of historical material, at the time the nation's largest, and by his reputation Bancroft helped paved the way for future access to British records by American chroniclers and state historical agents.²⁸

North Carolina initially was at the forefront of efforts in the United States to collect and publish documentary history, due to the impetus of erstwhile jurist Archibald D. Murphey. A visionary champion of internal and educational improvements in the state's early nineteenth-century "Rip Van Winkle" period, Murphey spent a number of years collecting source material for a proposed chronicle of the Old North State, a cultural achievement he hoped would help play a significant part in its general upbuilding. At the beginning of his endeavor, he wrote that such a history would be

one of the most interesting works that has been published in this country.

We want such a work. We neither know ourselves, nor are we known to others. Such a work well executed, would add very much to our standing in the Union, and make our State respectable in our own eyes. . . . I love North Carolina, and love her the more, because so much injustice has been done to her. We want pride. We want independence. We want magnanimity. Knowing nothing of ourselves, we have nothing in our history to which we can turn with feelings of conscious pride. We know nothing of our State, and care nothing about it.²⁹

²⁸ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 88-92; Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 107; Butterfield, "Archival and Editorial Enterprise," 162-164; Michael Kraus, "George Bancroft, 1834-1934," *New England Quarterly* 7 (December 1934): 682-683.

²⁹ Murphey to Joseph Graham, July 20, 1821, quoted in Stephen B. Weeks, "Historical Review of the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina," in *Index to the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Covering Volumes I-XXV*, ed. Weeks, vol. 4 (Raleigh: [State of North Carolina], 1909-1914), 16 (second pagination).

In 1826, the General Assembly approved a \$15,000 lottery (in lieu of a direct appropriation) for the support of Murphey's historical project, and granted him access to the state's archives. The next year, after Murphey called attention to the lack of colonial-era papers in Raleigh, the legislature authorized the governor to apply to the British government for permission to copy pertinent records in London through the good offices of the American minister there, as well as to engage an agent for the purpose. With the assistance of the U.S. diplomatic representative, Albert Gallatin, the request was met with warm approval by British officials, who in preparation for transcription promptly drew up a list of documents held by the Board of Trade and the State Paper Office. No action was taken, however, as the legislature was reluctant to supply the requisite funds. Murphey, now bankrupt, tried to renew the project in 1831, proposing a new lottery in place of the previous one, which had been a failure, and offering at the same time to deposit with the state his considerable collection of manuscript material, then the most extensive in existence. Nevertheless, despite these generous terms, the legislature again balked at the scheme. Murphey's history of North Carolina was never completed.³⁰

³⁰ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 145-157; Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 103-104; *Indexes to Documents Relative to North Carolina During the Colonial Existence of Said State, Now on File in the Offices of the Board of Trade and State Paper Offices in London, Transmitted in 1827 by Mr. Gallatin . . .* (Raleigh: T. Loring, 1843), 1-6. According to William L. Saunders, editor of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, the General Assembly subsequently failed to underwrite a copying project in London based on the 1827 list furnished by Gallatin because it anticipated that this material would be printed by Peter Force in his *American Archives*. "Report of the Trustees of the Library," February 3, 1883, in "Message from the Governor," February 16, 1883, Doc. 21, *Executive and Legislative Documents of the State of North Carolina, Session 1883*, 15. Saunders' successor Walter Clark, editor of the *State Records of North Carolina*, stated, "It must always be a source of lasting regret that the Legislature . . . did not accept the offer of Judge Murphey, to collect and publish such of the early archives of the State, as at that date still remained. We possess a bare fragment of the stores accessible to him." Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, 16 vols., numbered 11-26 (Winston and Goldsboro: [State of North Carolina], 1895-1907), 11:iv-v. Part of Murphey's collection was obtained by the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina in 1848 and subsequently joined the odyssey of the papers belonging to David L. Swain (see below, p. 19 n37). Jones, *For History's Sake*, 155-156.

An attempt to revive Murphey's plan for copying British records was made the next decade by North Carolina historian John H. Wheeler. Acting as state treasurer but with an eye to the preparation of his own chronicle of the state, Wheeler had the Gallatin list of colonial papers printed in 1843 as *Indexes to Documents Relative to North Carolina*, and investigated the possibility of obtaining transcripts in London. However, this approach was rejected by the General Assembly two years later in favor of a measure (supported by an appropriation of \$500) to locate at home originals or copies of governors' letter books, 1776-1784, and other records dating from the Revolutionary era missing from the archives in Raleigh. Former governor David L. Swain, president of the University of North Carolina, gathered many valuable documents under this resolution, mainly locating public records in private hands in the state,³¹ but also uncovering papers in the archives in Raleigh.

In 1847, as part of an effort to bolster the state's patriotic claim to the fabled 1775 Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence,³² the legislature approved \$600 for the publication of journals of the provincial congresses and other like material, but this enactment came to naught. Wheeler in the meantime, having resumed life as a private citizen, persevered in his work of assembling source material for a history of North Carolina, and with the assistance of George Bancroft, then serving as U.S. minister in London, secured transcripts of a small portion of the papers listed in the *Indexes* through

³¹ Other states also made efforts to retrieve such out-of-custody colonial records. Herbert Putnam, "The Manuscript Sources for American History," *North American Review* 178 (April 1904): 529-530; Baumann, "Samuel Hazard," 211.

³² For the historiography of this controversy, see Richard Nelson Current, "An Imaginary Declaration of Independence, 1775-1975," in *Arguing with Historians: Essays on the Historical and the Unhistorical* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 9-30.

his own means.³³ In 1848, with Bancroft's support, he petitioned the state to renew efforts to procure remaining British records. The legislature obliged the next year with a resolution authorizing the copying in England of "such documents relating to the colonial and Revolutionary history of North Carolina, as may be found worthy of preservation and being placed among the archives of the state."³⁴ One thousand dollars was allocated for the purpose.

The man appointed as agent under the terms of the 1849 resolution was Swain, guiding light behind the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, which he had established five years previously for the twin purpose of documentary collecting (primarily with respect to Revolutionary history) and encouraging the state to transcribe records in London.³⁵ Nevertheless, despite making a series of overtures toward

³³ Wheeler obtained one volume of transcripts of British state papers at this time. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 169. Some of these documents were included in the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*. Weeks, "Historical Review," 36-37; "Report of the Trustees of the Library," 11, 18. He also did research in the archives in Raleigh in 1850. John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina, from 1584 to 1851* . . . , 2 vols. in 1 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1851), xvii-xix. His *Historical Sketches*—derisively referred to by political foes as "The Democratic Stud-Book" because of its unrelenting partisanship—was subpar but enormously popular. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 170-174; William S. Powell, "Colonial North Carolina, 1585-1764," in *Writing North Carolina History*, ed. Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 24-25; Alan D. Watson, "Revolutionary North Carolina, 1765-1789," in *ibid.*, 38-39. Wheeler's intent in publishing this work was, by bringing the Old North State's past to light, to burnish its reputation, which, he held, had suffered particularly in comparison with Virginia and South Carolina for want of a distinguished chronicler. "There is no State in our Union whose early history is marked by purer patriotism, more unsullied devotion to liberty, or more indomitable opposition to every form of tyranny than North Carolina," he declared. "Yet how little of that early history has been given to the world!" Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*, xvii.

³⁴ Resolution of January 27, 1849, quoted in Weeks, "Historical Review," 42.

³⁵ The society—that is, Swain—was particularly animated by the desire to vindicate the historical reputation of the state. Its emphasis on the Revolution was in keeping with the uncritical, romantic historiography of the time, which sought "to present North Carolina as a repository of republican virtue." Watson, "Revolutionary North Carolina," 36-39 (quotation, pp. 36-37). A year after its formation, the society averred: "North Carolinian modesty has for so long a time been made the butt of ridicule by the forward sons of other States, that at last, the heretofore silent pride of her citizens, in her ancient sobriety and time-hallowed character for honor, begins to present an appearance which is better defined, and more tangible. After our Revolutionary conduct had, for years together, formed the subject of railery [*sic*] and derision on every hand; and again and again been thrown in our teeth as a matter of never dying reproach and disgrace: after we had, repeatedly, but in vain, endeavored to defend our reputation by the argument that it was no part of human justice to visit the transgressions of the parents on the heads of the children: we

commencing efforts abroad, he determined not to proceed to British sources until he had first examined all that was available at home, which continued to occupy him for the next several years. Prompted by Swain's efforts, an 1851 legislative report called attention to the alarming deterioration of early records in official custody in Raleigh, and identified the most valuable among them—the manuscript journals of the assembly, 1754-1775 (with a fragment from 1715), council, 1734-1740 and 1764-1776, and provincial congresses, 1774-1776.³⁶ In response, the legislature approved the printing of these papers at a cost of up to \$1,000, but this work, like that authorized in 1847, was not carried into effect.

Meanwhile, Swain, continuing to vacillate about fulfilling his commission with respect to British records under the terms of the 1849 resolution, remained intent on his historical collecting activities within North Carolina.³⁷ In 1855, the General Assembly provided its handsomest inducement yet toward procuring transcripts in London, authorizing him all necessary expenses for travel and copying. Swain was duly reappointed as agent under this new resolution, but nevertheless, despite the

have at length, every other refuge proving insufficient, taken courage to examine the authentic records of our Revolutionary days, and, to our unspeakable surprise, have discovered that, so far from their exhibiting the smallest ground for the accusations so recklessly made on our patriotism, every thing contributes to produce the belief, that there was no State engaged in that great struggle, which was 'more fixed or more forward' than that of North Carolina. It is for the vouchers of this fact, long suspected, and which every day's experience goes to render more undoubted, that the Historical Society is now engaged in making assiduous search. So far as it has yet gone, fresh light has been found to break upon the eye at every step; the confirmation grows more and more irrefragable." *First Report of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1845* (Hillsborough, N.C.: Dennis Heartt, 1845), 8.

³⁶ There was only one colonial governor's letter book available at this time—that of William Tryon, 1764-1771, which Swain obtained in 1855 (with the assistance of George Bancroft) from the original in the Harvard College Library. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 197-198; Justin Winsor, "The Manuscript Sources of the History of the United States of America, with Particular Reference to the American Revolution," in *Narrative and Critical History of America*, ed. Winsor, vol. 8 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1889), 457.

³⁷ Swain's collecting activities on behalf of the state and his historical society became indistinct, and a great deal of the material that he amassed as part of his official agency (like that obtained ostensibly on behalf of the university) remained in his personal possession. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 258-269. Still, many of these papers were eventually printed in the *Colonial and State Records*. Weeks, "Historical Review," 61.

encouragement of Peter Force and others, was never able to overcome his hesitation about accomplishing the work overseas. Nor was another agent named in his stead, due paradoxically to Swain's longstanding desire to perform the job in England himself.

Swain did make inquiry with U.S. officials about copying records in London at the end of 1855, but was, as he put it in a report to the legislature the next year, "subjected to unavoidable embarrassment and delay in the prosecution of my designs" by another round of Anglo-American diplomatic tensions.³⁸ In his report, Swain repeated his determination to first survey all available materials at home "in order to satisfy myself whether it is necessary to extend researches to the mother country, and to prepare myself in this event for the intelligent performance of the trust committed to me."³⁹ He also advised that his searches be expanded to neighboring states, an authority the General Assembly granted him when it continued him in his agency again the next year.⁴⁰ Although he had informed the U.S. minister that he planned to visit London by mid-1857, at the beginning of that year Swain told the governor that he would probably be occupied in "further researches in this State" for the next twelve months, after which time he would be "much better prepared than at present to determine the precise point to which my enquiries abroad should be directed, and whether it will be indispensably necessary, that I shall make them in person, or rely upon agents for the performance of the duty."⁴¹

³⁸ *Report of Hon. David L. Swain, LL.D., on the Historical Agency for Procuring Documentary Evidence of the History of North-Carolina* (Raleigh: Holden & Wilson, 1857), 7-8 (hereinafter cited as *Swain Report*).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ Swain wanted to survey the public archives and historical societies in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia in order to obtain documents from the Revolutionary era in particular. *Ibid.*, 7; Swain to Thomas Bragg, January 1, 1857, in Weeks, "Historical Review," 59; Jones, *For History's Sake*, 194, 196 n132.

⁴¹ Swain to Thomas Bragg, January 1, 1857, in Weeks, "Historical Review," 59 (quotation); Jones, *For History's Sake*, 166-173, 182-198; Weeks, "Historical Review," 45; Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 71; *Swain Report*. At the same time, Swain advised that the records in Raleigh be arranged, along with the preparation of "such descriptive catalogues and indexes as will render them accessible, and susceptible of

And so it went with Swain and British records. In 1858, however, he joined with Episcopal clergyman and historian Francis L. Hawks, a Tar Heel native then living in New York, in an effort to publish a multivolume “Documentary History of North Carolina.” Hawks had gone to England in 1836 as church historiographer to obtain transcripts of papers in Anglican and public archives, which he drew on for his *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States* (2 vols., 1836-1839). He had also put together a collection of North Carolina manuscripts (including copies made in the archives in Raleigh), which, along with material in Swain’s custody and transcripts of British state papers supplied courtesy of George Bancroft, he used in his *History of North Carolina* (2 vols., 1857-1858).⁴² Due to dire financial straits, Hawks was forced to suspend this work after the second volume, covering the proprietary period.⁴³ For his part, Swain thought access to Bancroft’s collection of transcripts, already promised for he and Hawks’ use, might again obviate the need to obtain copies of colonial documents in England.⁴⁴

ready examination.” Only some minor arranging work was done as a result. Swain to Thomas Bragg, January 1, 1857, in Weeks, “Historical Review,” 60; Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 198.

⁴² Hawks discovered the original proclamation book of the last royal governor, Josiah Martin, among the papers of his grandfather in 1833, and deposited it in the archives of the state. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 200 n158; Swain, “British Invasion of North Carolina, in 1776: A Lecture, by Hon. David L. Swain, LL.D., Delivered Before the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, April 1, 1853,” in *Revolutionary History of North Carolina, in Three Lectures . . .*, comp. William D. Cooke (Raleigh: William D. Cooke; New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1853), 104. Some of Hawks’ London church transcripts were also published in his *History* and the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 207 n190.

⁴³ Hawks’ history stood above previous chronicles of the state, free of much of their romantic veneration of the past. Watson, “Revolutionary North Carolina,” 37; Powell, “Colonial North Carolina,” 25-26. Although only two numbers appeared, the work was intended to be four volumes altogether. Hawks, *History of North Carolina, with Maps and Illustrations*, vol. 2 (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale & Son, 1857-1858), 7. A third volume was purportedly completed and printed but no copy has survived. Powell, “Colonial North Carolina,” 26.

⁴⁴ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 196, 198-202; Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 48; Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2:7-10.

In their proposal to the legislature, Swain and Hawks deplored the condition of the early records in North Carolina, declaring that many “have been so injured by time, that portions of them are already illegible; and that unless means be speedily taken to preserve the contents of those that can yet be decyphered, there is reason to fear that ere long, the historic evidence they afford will be completely lost.” Asserting their local pride, the pair noted that no other southern state as yet had produced a documentary history. “[W]e confess we would fain see our own the first to engage in such a purpose,” they continued, “with the determination to hand down to posterity the story of our ancestors. Of that story, with all becoming modesty, we venture to say, it will be found a record so honorable, that the descendants of those ancestors can point to it, not boastfully, but gratefully, as evidence that their fathers were true men, of whom their posterity may speak proudly, and without a blush.”⁴⁵

Swain and Hawks’ proposed work was to consist of documents taken from the archives in Raleigh and in private hands in the state, as well as British colonial records. “[N]early all” of the latter, they believed, were to be found in Bancroft’s volumes of transcripts—or, should it be discovered that “any paper which the state might desire to have, was accidentally omitted in his collection,” easily obtained in London with his aid, using the Gallatin-Wheeler *Indexes* as a guide.⁴⁶ “In short,” they were confident that “the whole expense of a special agency to England to procure the documents illustrative of North-Carolina history might be saved.” Thus Swain and Hawks greatly overestimated

⁴⁵ Memorial of Swain and Hawks to the North Carolina General Assembly, November 1858, Doc. 49, *Documents: Executive and Legislative, Session 1858-1859*, 1-2 (hereinafter cited as Swain-Hawks Memorial).

⁴⁶ As it happened, Swain and Hawks ended up inquiring into copying records in London, through Bancroft. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 220-221.

the completeness not only of Bancroft's copies but the three-decades-old list as well.⁴⁷

The whole documentary series was to be arranged chronologically and indexed. A second series of volumes would contain the statutes at large. The legislature approved Swain and Hawks' plan in 1859, but in a severely attenuated form, authorizing just two volumes to be completed in the next two years. Although the nation was soon consumed in bloody sectional conflict, the ambitious scheme failed chiefly due to inactivity on the part of Hawks.⁴⁸

In 1861, on the eve of the Civil War, the General Assembly directed the secretary of state and the state librarian to print the legislative, council, and provincial congress journals to 1776—the same documents that had been identified for publication a decade before. These papers represented the “principal records” in the archives—“as if in view of the coming war and its possibilities” the state was “determined to make sure” that its fundamental documentary heritage would remain safe. Some minor preliminary action was taken toward printing before the effort was suspended at the end of the year.⁴⁹

Remarkably, in 1863, his enthusiasm undiminished by the years, Wheeler ran the Union naval blockade and proceeded to London in order to copy records in the public archives. Although acting in official capacity, under authority of the various legislative

⁴⁷ Jared Sparks had warned Swain previously of the incompleteness of the *Indexes*. Sparks to Swain, February 1, 1856, in *Swain Report*, 16-17. Swain had similarly estimated his control over the relevant source materials too highly when he averred in his 1856 report to the legislature that there were “few important papers in North-Carolina which reflect light upon the colonial era, which are not in my possession, or at my command.” *Swain Report*, 5. At the same time, Hawks strongly urged Swain that obtaining copies of records in London was vital for a true relation of the early history of the state. Hawks to Swain, October 25, 1856, in *ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴⁸ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 196, 198-207; Swain-Hawks Memorial, 2-3 (quotations). In 1868, shortly before his death, Swain made an attempt to revive his historical agency for the purpose of resuming work on the proposed documentary history. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 209.

⁴⁹ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 208; Weeks, “Historical Review,” 66; “Report of the Trustees of the Library,” 16 (quotations).

resolutions providing for the collection of historical materials, he financed the trip himself (the state being quite unable at the time to oblige his request that it bear the cost of the venture). After finally obtaining the permission of the British government (initially he had been directed to apply through the U.S. minister), during next year—“far from the desolating and sanguinary events of the war”⁵⁰—Wheeler transcribed one manuscript volume’s worth of colonial papers listed in the *Indexes*.⁵¹ The course of the war, however, prevented efforts to collect and publish the documentary record of North Carolina for close to two decades.⁵²

⁵⁰ John H. Wheeler, *Reminiscences and Memoirs of North Carolina and Eminent North Carolinians* (Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Printing Works, 1884), vii.

⁵¹ Although Wheeler used these transcripts in writing his second history of North Carolina, they were not published in the *Colonial Records*. Weeks, “Historical Review,” 37. Wheeler’s purpose in his *Reminiscences* was again to elucidate the record of a liberty-loving people whose patriotic story had been eclipsed by those of its more renowned neighbors, Virginia and South Carolina. Wheeler, *Reminiscences and Memoirs*, 5-6 (first pagination).

⁵² Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 174-181, 208; Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 73.

II. *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*

State historical collecting and publishing projects resumed after the Civil War and grew steadily thereafter.⁵³ Publication of the *Pennsylvania Archives* was revived in 1874 after the discovery of more documents the previous year; nineteen more volumes were issued to 1890.⁵⁴ Four volumes of a new series of *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, containing more Brodhead transcripts, were issued from 1881 to 1887.⁵⁵ British records of the Garden State acquired before the war were published in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey* (33 vols., 1880-1928).⁵⁶ In 1882, the Old Line State embarked on its mammoth *Archives of Maryland* (72 vols., 1883-1972).⁵⁷ Other significant documentary editions of the period included the *Provincial Papers: Documents and Records Relating to the Province of New-Hampshire* (7 vols., 1867-1873);⁵⁸ the *Records of the Governor and Council of the*

⁵³ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 123.

⁵⁴ Eddy, *Guide to the Published Archives*, 3-4, 62-90. When finished in 1935, this work consisted on nine series in 138 volumes.

⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Historical Publication Program*, 4.

⁵⁶ Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 392-393. This series was part of the *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, which ceased publication with forty-two volumes in 1949.

⁵⁷ Jack P. Greene, "The Publication of the Official Records of the Southern Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 14 (April 1957): 271-272; Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 124-125; Richard J. Cox, "A Century of Frustration: The Movement for the Founding of the State Archives in Maryland, 1811-1935," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 78 (Summer 1983): 110-111; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 449-451; Fred Shelley, "The Publication Program of the Maryland Historical Society," *American Archivist* 15 (October 1952): 316-318.

⁵⁸ The *Provincial Papers* were the first series of the forty-volume *State and Provincial Papers of New Hampshire*, concluded in 1943. Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 259-261; R. Stuart Wallace, "The *State Papers*? A Descriptive Guide," *Historical New Hampshire* 31 (Fall 1976): 119-128. Copies of British records obtained by the New Hampshire Historical Society in 1874 were published as *Transcripts of Original Documents in the English Archives Relating to the Early History of the State of New Hampshire* (1876), then in volume 17 of the *State and Provincial Papers* (1889). A later calendar was issued in 1893 as volume 23 of the *State and Provincial Papers* and volume 10 of the society's *Collections*. Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 123-124; Wallace, "State Papers," 123-125.

State of Vermont (8 vols., 1873-1880);⁵⁹ and *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut* (19 vols. to date, 1894-), a continuation of the *Colony of Connecticut* series.⁶⁰

Transcription of British colonial records also continued after the war.⁶¹ Virginia obtained twenty volumes' worth beginning in 1873, and published an inventory in its *Calendar of Transcripts* (1905). The Old Dominion also abstracted material available in its own archives in the *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts* (11 vols., 1875-1893).⁶² A British copying program by South Carolina, which had been interrupted by the hostilities, was finally revived in 1891, resulting in thirty-nine manuscript volumes of state papers by 1895,⁶³ while a five-year effort in London by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania begun in 1893 netted 146 volumes.⁶⁴ Georgia

⁵⁹ Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 290.

⁶⁰ Merrill Jensen, review of *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1785, Through January, 1789*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 3 (July 1946): 426; Jensen, review of *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May 1797 Through October 1799*, comp. Albert E. Van Dusen, *Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia (December 1, 1781-November 29, 1786)*, ed. Wilmer L. Hall, and *State Papers of Vermont: General Petitions, 1778-1787*, ed. Edward A. Hoyt, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 12 (January 1955): 144.

⁶¹ Restrictions on access to British archives eased considerably in 1862, when the State Paper Office ceased to be a separate branch of the Public Record Office. Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 3, 24-25; *Guide to the P.R.O.*, 53.

⁶² Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 123; Greene, "Publication of the Official Records," 277-278.

⁶³ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 125; Simpson, "Origin of State Archives," 176-178; "Records from the Public Record Office, London, at the South Carolina Archives," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 85 (October 1984): 330-331; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 532-534. A Virginia agent, sent to England in 1860 to obtain papers regarding the state's boundary line with Maryland, brought back nine manuscript volumes of transcripts the next year relating to the Old Dominion's colonial history. Four of these were lost in 1865. Another agent collected two more volumes in London for the same purpose in 1870. Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 123; *Colonial Records of Virginia* (1874; reprint, Baltimore: Clearfield, 1992), iii; John P. Kennedy, *Calendar of Transcripts, Including the Annual Report of the Department of Archives and History* (Richmond, Va.: Davis Bottom, 1905), 114, 118-119.

⁶⁴ Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 126.

published new transcripts of British state papers and records at home as *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (25 vols. in 27, 1904-1916).⁶⁵

In the years following the Civil War, North Carolina's archives were in very poor condition. The records had been completely disarranged when they had been removed from Raleigh ahead of the advancing Union army in 1865, and despite further attempts to put the archives in order, many records were deteriorating badly due to carelessness and lack of space.⁶⁶ The secretary of state was charged by statute with custody of the public records, and served in effect as the archivist of the state.⁶⁷ His office had been housed in the same two rooms in the capitol since it was rebuilt in 1840, but one had been taken away in 1869. In addition to not having the enough space, the secretary's office was also very much understaffed.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the sheer bulk of papers under his supervision increased constantly.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Greene, "Publication of the Official Records," 275-277; Jack, "Preservation of Georgia History," 245-248. Another fourteen volumes of this series, ready for press, did not appear due to lack of funds; seven of these were issued from 1977 to 1989. Davis, "Colonial Records of Georgia," 15.

⁶⁶ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 109-114. For the fate of the archives at the end of the war and the recovery of records alienated during that time, see *ibid.*, 93-109. Other papers presumably taken from Raleigh by Union troops in 1865—mostly from the Revolutionary and early republic eras, but also including some colonial records—were recovered from the U.S. State Department in 1906. 34 Stat. 822; *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906, 40, pt. 2:1740-1741, 3:2606; "Notes and News," *American Historical Review* 11 (April 1906): 753; Hasse, "Bibliography of Public Archives," 531; Waldo Gifford Leland, "Some Early Recollections of an Itinerant Historian," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., 61, pt. 2 (1952): 284-285; Leland to Clark, January 25, 1906, Walter Clark Papers, NCSA; F. M. Simmons to Clark, January 24, 1906, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 111.

⁶⁸ "Report of Secretary of State," November 7, 1868, Doc. 9, *Executive and Legislative Documents Laid Before the General Assembly of North Carolina, Session 1868-1869*, 2, 4-5; "Report of Secretary of State," November 4, 1873, Doc. 2, *Executive and Legislative Documents Laid Before the General Assembly of North Carolina, Session 1873-1874*, 2; "Report of Secretary of State," December 31, 1880, Doc. 2, *North Carolina Executive and Legislative Documents, Session 1881*, 2-3.

⁶⁹ "Report of Secretary of State," November 4, 1874, Doc. 2, *Executive and Legislative Documents Laid Before the General Assembly of North Carolina, Session 1874-1875*, 3; "Report of Secretary of State," *Session 1881*, 2-3; Thomas J. Jarvis, "North Carolina Must Preserve Its Historical Records," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh and Twelfth Annual Meetings of the State Literary and Historical Association, Raleigh, N.C. . . .*, comp. Clarence Poe (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1912), 21 (hereinafter cited as "North Carolina Historical Records").

In 1879, the secretary of state reported that lack of room permitted only the heavily-used land grant papers to be “arranged in order, and they are so crowded and insufficiently protected, that the wear and tear will, at no remote period, render them of little value.” The “most valuable papers connected with the early history of the State” were “stuck about in neglected pigeon holes and drawers, without labels and without order,” in his office and those of the legislature. “Some of these I have located, and would have collected and had bound and arranged on shelves,” the secretary continued, “but the over-crowded condition of this office has left me no place to deposit them.”⁷⁰ Two years later, his successor stated that the deficiency of space—some documents had been relegated to a closet in the capitol—made it “impossible to guard the records with the care essential to their continued preservation”; as it was, the archives “have not been kept together as contemplated by law.”⁷¹

The publication of the early records, so often attempted in previous decades, finally came to pass beginning in 1879 through the action of Secretary of State William L. Saunders (1835-1891). An 1854 graduate of the University of North Carolina, Saunders practiced law and edited a newspaper in Salisbury, N.C., before commanding a Tar Heel regiment during the Civil War. Twice wounded in the conflict, his throat was left partially paralyzed when he was shot through the neck near-fatally at the Battle of the Wilderness.⁷² He also suffered from crippling rheumatism as a result of his war

⁷⁰ “Report of Secretary of State,” January 1, 1879, Doc. 2, *Public Documents of the General Assembly of North Carolina, Session 1879*, 1-2. As well as space, the secretary lacked the authority to remove that part of the archives remaining in the offices of the General Assembly into his custody. *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷¹ “Report of Secretary of State,” *Session 1881*, 2-3.

⁷² At Fredericksburg, Saunders was shot the moment he was “enjoying a hearty laugh at some remark” during a “lull in the firing.” Miraculously entering his wide-open mouth and passing through the side, the “Yankee ball” did “no [more] damage,” he wrote afterwards, “than to make a hole in my cheek and to break off a favorite jaw tooth.” Saunders’ “was said to have been the most abruptly ended laugh heard

experiences. Kind and good-humored,⁷³ Saunders nevertheless had a “violent temper,” and, according to a contemporary, “[w]hen he was suppressing his pent-up fire he had a habit of inhaling the surrounding air to cool his temper, displaying when he did so the cruel bullet furrows.”⁷⁴

Subsequently editor of the *Wilmington Journal* and *Raleigh Observer*, Saunders was chief clerk of the state Senate, 1870-1874, and a trustee of the University of North Carolina, 1874-1891. Widely purported to be the leader of the Invisible Empire (one of the names by which the Ku Klux Klan was known) in the state during Reconstruction, he refused to divulge information when called in 1871 before the congressional committee investigating Klan violence in the South.⁷⁵ This resoluteness brought him the great

during the war.” Walter Clark, ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-'65*, vol. 3 (Raleigh and Goldsboro: [State of North Carolina], 1901), 70 (first and third quotations); Saunders to Florida [Cotton], December 30, 1862, Saunders Papers, SHC (second quotation).

⁷³ Alfred Moore Waddell, *The Life and Character of William L. Saunders, LL.D.: An Oration Delivered Before the Alumni Association of the University of North Carolina, Tuesday, May 31st, 1892* (Wilmington, N.C.: Jackson & Bell, 1892), 8-9.

⁷⁴ Peter Mitchel Wilson, *Southern Exposure* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1927), 128.

⁷⁵ For the text of Saunders’ congressional appearance, see *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States: North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1872), 354-361. Although never a formal member of the Klan, he was said nevertheless to have directed its activity in the state. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (1914; reprint; Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1964), 461. According to the historian of the Klan during Reconstruction, there is “little evidence” that the terror organization (or its various analogs) had any leadership above the county level. Still, Saunders was the only of hundreds of witness before Congress to plead the Fifth Amendment. Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (1971; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1979), 69. Before he went to testify, he was told that “a large sum of money was being quietly raised for him, to enable him to slip away from this country and spend the rest of his life in England or in Europe, beyond the reach of the authorities in Washington.” Collier Cobb, “William Laurence Saunders,” in *Biographical History of North Carolina from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Samuel A. Ashe, vol. 4 (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1906), 385. A former Klansman later characterized Saunders’ role as a sort of moral leader and legal counsel to the night-riding organization. Joseph C. Webb to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, January 1, 1902, Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, SHC. A letter accusing an Orange County Klan leader (and state representative) of the killing of four local blacks in 1871 threatened, “you and that bulfice [*sic*] bill sanders will swing you will pull hemp,” and added, “[it is a] nice thing when murderer[s] make up members of the legislature.” “[T]he brotheren [*sic*]” to Frederick N. Strudwick, November 27, 1871, Saunders Papers, SHC. Decades later, another source stated that all record of the editor’s “Invisible Empire activity,” amounting to “a trunk of old papers,” was destroyed the day he died by “a Negro body servant”

admiration of his fellow Conservatives in North Carolina, and his refrain before the committee, “I decline to answer,” became his epitaph. A leader of the Democratic party, Saunders served as secretary of state from 1879 until his death at age of fifty-five.⁷⁶

Shortly after Saunders took office, Gov. Thomas J. Jarvis sent him to investigate a mass of old papers that had been found in the arsenal building near the capitol and were slated for disposal. Saunders was astonished to discover among the moldering documents, stored along with piles of disused military equipment in the damp, insect-ridden environment, some of the most valuable records of the state, dating from the colonial and Revolutionary eras. Most of the papers—which amounted to several “wagon loads”—had been put in the arsenal in 1868, when the offices in the capitol (including those of the secretary of state) were reshuffled at the behest of the incoming Republican regime. When this controversy had subsided, the papers had not been returned to the capitol for lack of room.⁷⁷ Owing to the constantly worsening press for space in the

on previous order by Saunders. “Under the Dome,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 30, 1938, in *North Carolina Collection Clipping File Through 1975: Biography*, 33:54.

⁷⁶ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 212-213; *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. “Saunders, William Laurence” (by Jones); Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 605-606.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110, 113-114, 214; Jarvis, “North Carolina Historical Records,” 20-21 (quotation, p. 21); Hill, “North Carolina Supreme Court,” 746-747. Also stored in the arsenal—one of the capitol outbuildings that had built in the late 1820s—were ballots and other residue of elections held under federal authority in North Carolina during Reconstruction, which had been received from the U.S. army shortly after the restoration of civil government in the state in 1868. This material had been turned over to the secretary of state, along with “a large number of books, records . . . and other papers.” Documents “of permanent value and historical interest” were placed in the archives in Raleigh, while the remainder, consisting of “several tons” of “ballots, poll lists and registration books,” was “kept in boxes awaiting disposition by act of the General Assembly.” Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 83; “Report of Secretary of State,” *Session 1868-1869*, 4 (quotations); *Guide to the N.C. Archives*, 620; Jarvis, “North Carolina Historical Records,” 20. Again, for want of any better place, the papers were put in the arsenal.

secretary of state's office, other records had been placed in the arsenal as an expediency several years later.⁷⁸

Having saved the papers in the arsenal from destruction, Saunders set about taking steps to provide for the safety of the state's public records—first by providing adequate facilities for their care, but primarily by means of publication, which he termed “the only sure guarantee of their permanent preservation.” In his report to the legislature at the end of 1880, he emphasized that the records in his custody were in a “precarious condition” that was “painful” to behold. Referring to the lack of space and the use of the arsenal as a storage annex, he admonished, “It may be said that under any circumstances it is a duty a State owes to itself to preserve its records, but when those records reflect as much honor upon a people as do the records of North Carolina, their preservation would seem to be a matter of pride and boast as well as a suggestion of duty.” Saunders then brought to mind the failed antebellum attempts by public men to collect and publish the documentary history of the state—or, as he put it, “to rescue from oblivion for all time, the patriotic deeds of our Revolutionary forefathers, by securing to the evidences thereof the perpetuity of print.” Recalling the 1858 warning by Swain⁷⁹ and Hawks about the need to act before many records were lost to deterioration altogether, he declared that “what was important then is now absolutely imperative.” For that purpose, Saunders urged that the trustees of the North Carolina State Library be authorized to select such

⁷⁸ “Report of Secretary of State,” *Session 1874-1875*, 3. Presumably such valuable records as Saunders discovered would not have been consigned to the arsenal if proper physical and intellectual control had been maintained over the archives.

⁷⁹ Swain was Saunders' former “preceptor,” and helped to inspire the secretary's purpose to collect and preserve the records of the state. *CRNC*, 1:viii.

records “as may be worthy of such preservation,” so that the originals might be protected from additional harm.⁸⁰

Governor Jarvis gave his full support to Saunders’ recommendations. Calling the legislature’s attention to the distressing conditions of the secretary’s office, he advocated the construction of a new building to house the Supreme Court and State Library, in order to free space in the capitol for use as a dedicated repository for “old and valuable records,” and to allow for the return of that part of the secretary’s offices which had been taken twelve years previously.⁸¹ After some delay, the plan was carried into effect.⁸² When the Supreme Court Building (now the Old Labor Building) was completed in 1888, the state, under Saunders’ guidance, had adequate facilities for its records for the first time since the new capitol was built in 1840.⁸³

As to publication of the records, Jarvis seconded Saunders’ scheme of action by the library board, impressing upon the General Assembly the need to act before many of the documents fell apart completely or faded into illegibility. At the governor’s suggestion, Saunders drafted a resolution that simply empowered the trustees (two-thirds of whom were the he and Jarvis themselves, *ex officio*) to publish documents in the state archives up to the year 1781. Significantly, no extra appropriation was laid out for the

⁸⁰ “Report of Secretary of State,” *Session 1881*, 3-5.

⁸¹ “Governor’s Message,” January 5, 1881, Doc. 1, *North Carolina Executive and Legislative Documents, Session 1881*, 3-5 (quotation, p. 4). Jarvis also called for a public records law, requiring the deposit of records in the archives and prohibiting their removal.

⁸² Before that time, Saunders reported that he was obliged to store records in the halls of the capitol, and declared that unless he had more space it would be “impossible to take proper care of them,” or even “know what there is in the office to take care of.” “Report of Secretary of State,” December 1, 1884, Doc. 3, *Executive and Legislative Documents of the State of North Carolina, Session 1885*, 1.

⁸³ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 114-116; Hill, “North Carolina Supreme Court,” 750-751; “Biennial Report of the Secretary of State for the Two Fiscal Years Ending November 30, 1902,” December 1, 1902, Doc. 2, *Public Documents of the State of North Carolina, Session 1903*, 12. Saunders also began systematically arranging and housing the land grant papers, a project that was completed by 1896. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 116.

project; rather, funds were to come from the regular library budget. Such a deliberately innocuous resolution was used as the statutory basis for the documentary project in order to get the measure through a tight-fisted legislature. That body, as Jarvis recalled, “did not inquire into the magnitude of the work or the probable cost,” and passed the measure in 1881.⁸⁴

Although a disarming approach succeeded in winning the approval of the legislature, other factors contributed to the success of the documentary publication project at this time while so many previous efforts had failed. After long years of bloody intersectional war and its turbulent aftermath, so painfully recent in public and private memory, a common heritage helped to form the basis of national reconciliation.⁸⁵ Intense interest in the past was pervasive in America in the 1880s and 1890s, resulting in great popular demand for historical materials. For white southerners, filiopietistic veneration of

⁸⁴ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 215-216; Jarvis, “North Carolina Historical Records,” 22 (quotation). Similarly, the appropriations for Pennsylvania’s *Colonial Records* between 1837 and 1840 had been hidden away in various omnibus enactments. Eddy, *Guide to the Published Archives*, 53-54. According to R. D. W. Connor, who as secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission led the development of a state archival agency in the early twentieth century, and later became the first archivist of the United States, the full price of publishing the complete thirty-volume *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, with index—finally completed more than three decades later—“would have caused heart failure to the average legislator of the eighties.” Connor, “How Can the States Be Persuaded to Take Care of Their Historical Archives? Lessons from North Carolina,” in “Nineteenth Report of the Public Archives Commission: 1918-1922,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1922*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1926), 122 (hereinafter cited as “Lessons from North Carolina”). The final price of the combined price is unknown. The cost of the series to date at the end of 1899 (by which time just five of the sixteen volumes of the *State Records* had been published) was put at \$27,642.09—\$4,976.49 for copying and an estimated \$22,665.00 for printing and binding. Hal W. Ayer to Walter Clark, December 26, 1899, Clark Papers. Seven years later, however, the price through 1905 was figured at \$13,339.94—\$6,236.44 for copying and \$5,528.50 for printing. Hasse, “Bibliography of Public Archives,” 507-508. The total cost of copying alone was figured at \$6,340.50 in 1907. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 226 n52. Finally, in 1913, the cost of compiling the index, irrespective of publishing, was put at \$3,382.50. Statement of accounts in Stephen B. Weeks to Walter Clark, November 11, 1913, Clark Papers.

⁸⁵ According to an associate, Saunders “was fond of illustrating the meaninglessness of all the ‘logomachy’ . . . and the gush about reconciliation” between North and South by telling a story about a Union officer and an ex-Confederate, former college mates who were affectionately reunited in Charleston after the war. “After all the speech-making was through,” so the yarn went, “the Boston man asked his Charleston friend to tell him in very truth if the fire-eating South Carolinians were in earnest in all their professions of good will. ‘Hush,’ the Charlestonian cautioned him. ‘We are just as much in earnest as you Boston Yankees are.’” Wilson, *Southern Exposure*, 129.

the glories of the Revolution and the founding fathers, heightened by the centennial years of 1876 and 1889, served as a bulwark against the social, economic, and political pressures of the era.

But despite this strong nationalism, however, local pride and the constant urge to defend North Carolina's historical reputation, which had inspired antebellum efforts to collect and publish the early records of the state, remained paramount. The Revolutionary tradition of constitutional liberty and self-government was especially strong in the South, and integral to Lost Cause ideology. Just as, in the widely-held belief, disunion had been necessary to prevent subjugation by foreign tyranny, and the conflict of 1861-1865 a second war for independence, Conservative-Democrat "redeemers" viewed the move to restore "home rule" during Reconstruction as a continuation of the same struggle to preserve republicanism from a coercive, alien power. Dedicated to white supremacy, men such as Saunders also looked to Revolutionary heroes as models of Anglo-Saxon virtue.⁸⁶

Thus, in his Whig interpretation of North Carolina history, given in the introductions to the volumes of published *Colonial Records*, Saunders vindicated the Regulators, for example, by dispelling the notion that they were lawless rebels and holding them up instead as patriots every bit as worthy as their Revolutionary inheritors. In tracing the state's political heritage in these pages, the editor made a tacit but clear

⁸⁶ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 113-114, 145-159; Otto H. Olsen, "North Carolina: An Incongruous Presence," in *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*, ed. Olsen (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1980), 156-201; Benjamin L. Carp, "Nations of American Rebels: Understanding Nationalism in Revolutionary North America and the Civil War South," *Civil War History* 48 (March 2002): 5-33; Anne Sarah Rubin, "Seventy-Six and Sixty-One: Confederates Remember the American Revolution," in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 85-105; Michael Les Benedict, "The Problem of Constitutionalism and Constitutional Liberty in the Reconstruction South," in *Preserving the Constitution: Essays on Politics and the Constitution in the Reconstruction Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 152-167.

comparison between the movement for independence from Britain, secession from the Union, and violent resistance to Republican government in the state after the Civil War. According to Saunders, the colonial experience ably inculcated Tar Heels in the virtues of self-rule and constitutional guarantees against the abuses of arbitrary government. In their jealous defense of liberty, however, the people resorted to extra-legal measures only after peaceable means of redress had been exhausted.⁸⁷

Saunders assumed the editorship of the North Carolina publication project when it was approved in 1881. Taking the year 1776 (when the state's first constitution was adopted) as his terminal point, instead of 1781, as originally authorized, he inventoried the records under his care and found the deficiencies so great as to be "scarcely credible."⁸⁸ Writing for the State Library board in February 1883, Saunders again reported that, as had been discovered before the Civil War, the colonial-era journals of the lower house of assembly were available only beginning in 1754 and those of the upper house from 1765. While the journals of the council were complete beginning in 1712, Tryon's was still the only colonial governor's letter book that had been located.⁸⁹ Although the trustees were prepared to print the meager accumulation of documents on hand in Raleigh, they wanted to make the published colonial records series (which was

⁸⁷ *CRNC*, 7:xxxiii-xxxiv, 8:xx, 9:vii, x-xii, 10:xxv-xxvi. Saunders also summarized his patriotic, Lost Cause theme in *Lessons from Our North Carolina Records: An Address Read Before the Faculty and Students of Trinity College, November 27, 1888* ([Trinity, N.C.?]: Trinity College, 1889).

⁸⁸ *CRNC*, 1:iii.

⁸⁹ In his first biennial report as secretary of state, Saunders had repeated the list of the central records that had been directed to be published in 1861—the same body of papers that been identified in 1851 as the state's most valuable (see above, pp. 18-19, 23). "Report of Secretary of State," *Session 1881*, 3-4. Then, however, only the council journals for the periods 1734-1740 and 1764-1776 had been identified; evidently the missing minutes dating back to 1712 were located the interim. The Tryon letter book, which Swain had located in the 1850s (see above, p. 19 n36), had been rediscovered in the capitol in 1868, when attempt was made to put the state's archives in order. Jones, *For History's Sake*, 100 n86, 112 n125. Legislative journals for the period 1751-1761—which had been present in Jared Sparks' time—were unearthed in the archives by 1900. [Bassett], "Report on the Public Archives," 262; Moore, "Jared Sparks in North Carolina," 288.

projected at four volumes) complete by filling in the “gaps and chasms” with relevant material in England. More fully recounting the antebellum efforts of the state to collect and publish its history, Saunders appealed to the legislature to approve copying in London. “For over fifty years the General Assembly has been authorizing this thing to be done,” he urged. “Let it now be done, done well and done for all time.”⁹⁰

The General Assembly responded the next month by giving Saunders virtually unlimited discretionary power to collect and print all colonial records “as may be missing from the archives of the state,” while authorizing any expenditure approved by the library board as necessary for the completion of the work. Extant material in Raleigh was transcribed by government clerks and part-time assistants (including two of Saunders’ nieces), while, with the assistance of a number of prominent citizens, papers were located in various repositories and private collections in the state, elsewhere in the nation, and several locations in Europe.⁹¹

By far the greatest work of the project, though, was obtaining copies from the Public Record Office (P.R.O.) in London.⁹² Originally, the primary classes of material in the P.R.O. respecting the American colonies were contained in two series: Board of Trade (B.T.) and America and West Indies (A.W.I.), the latter composed of the papers of the colonial secretaries of state. Each of these series contained original correspondence (with enclosures) and entry books (including letter books, copies of commissions and instructions, and journals of the colonial legislatures). As correspondence and other

⁹⁰ “Report of the Trustees of the Library” (quotations, pp. 14, 17); Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 197-198.

⁹¹ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 217-220 (quotation, from resolution of February 17, 1881, p. 218). Also included were early court records uncovered in a number of courthouses around the state. *Ibid.*, 218-219; Hasse, “Bibliography of Public Archives,” 516-517.

⁹² Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 220.

documents from America were frequently sent home to both the Board of Trade and the colonial secretaries, there was a deal of duplication in the records. The B.T. series was arranged mainly by colony, with subseries including North Carolina and Carolina (Proprieties). Other B.T. subseries included Plantations General (made up of records pertaining to more than one colony, or to the colonies as a whole), Proprieties (dealing with the proprietary colonies), Acts (provincial session laws), and Journals (minutes of the Board of Trade).⁹³ Beginning in 1859, however, in preparation for calendaring, the contents of the A.W.I. and B.T. series through 1688 were taken from their original administrative sequence and merged to form a single artificial series, Colonial Papers and Entry Books, ordered chronologically (with the entry books arranged geographically, by colony). Properly, the records should have been divided at 1696, when the permanent Board of Trade was established, but the year 1688 was chosen because of its significance to British history.⁹⁴

The American records expert at the P.R.O., and thus the man with whom Saunders worked most closely (though only via correspondence) for upwards of six years, was W. Noel Sainsbury, editor of that department's *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies* (45 vols., 1860-1994). Having begun his career with the State Paper Office in 1848, Sainsbury was made a senior clerk in 1862, when that agency was formally incorporated into the P.R.O. Appointed an assistant keeper in

⁹³ *Subseries* was not a contemporary term; *series* was used in reference to all levels of arrangement. These divisions might be thought of as record groups and subgroups.

⁹⁴ Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 78-81, 103-113; *Guide to the P.R.O.*, 17-20, 54. For a fuller description of these records, see Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 112-267, 279-307. The B.T. and A.W.I. series from 1689 were kept intact until the colonial records were rearranged wholesale between 1907 and 1910. Between this action and the previous formation of the Colonial Papers and Entry Books series, the original order of the records was completely effaced. Andrews, *Guide to American History*, iv; *Guide to the P.R.O.*, 17, 46.

1887, he retired in 1891, but continued to perform essential service in locating and transcribing source materials for the early history of the United States up to his death four years later. Towards the end of his career, he noted that there had been “scarcely a writer of history” in that country “whom, during the past forty years, I have not had the honor of assisting in a greater or less degree.”⁹⁵ An advocate of documentary copying and publishing programs, Sainsbury helped many states obtain transcripts of their colonial records.⁹⁶ Holding up the first series of the *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* as an example of completeness and accuracy, he told Saunders, “How I should like every State of the original Thirteen to possess the same Noble Record of their History.”⁹⁷

In May 1883, shortly after obtaining authorization to copy records missing from the state’s archives, Saunders contacted Sainsbury with a list of “desiderata.”⁹⁸ Chiefly wanted was the missing governors’ correspondence and assembly journals.⁹⁹ Saunders’ intention was that the work be done “so thoroughly and so exhaustively that there would never be need or desire for it to be done over again.”¹⁰⁰ Referring to the fact that Swain

⁹⁵ Andrews, *Guide to American History*, 1:15; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Sainsbury, William Noel,” doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/24474; Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 123, 149; Sainsbury, “The British Public Record Office and the Materials in It for Early American History,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., 8 (April 1893): 388-389 (quotation, p. 389). It was George Bancroft who encouraged Sainsbury at the beginning of his career to specialize in American state papers. Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 92-93, 148.

⁹⁶ Riggs, “Foreign Archival Sources,” 123, 149.

⁹⁷ Sainsbury to Saunders, June 9, 1883, Saunders Papers, SHC; Falco, “Empire State’s Search,” 123.

⁹⁸ Sainsbury to Saunders, April 10, 1885, Saunders Papers, SHC (quotation); Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 220-221.

⁹⁹ Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC; “Report of the Trustees of the Library,” 16. Missing council journals were also wanted, but these were not available in London. Charles M. Andrews, ed., “List of the Journals and Acts of the Councils and Assemblies of the Thirteen Original Colonies, and the Floridas, in America, Preserved in the Public Record Office, London,” in “Ninth Report of the Public Archives Commission,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1908*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1909), 406-412.

¹⁰⁰ *CRNC*, 1:vii.

and Hawks had sought his assistance in acquiring material for their documentary history project shortly before the Civil War, Sainsbury added, “It is somewhat strange that I should have your letter at last. It is quite a quarter of a Century since my friend the Hon. Geo. Bancroft asked me if I would undertake the same work you have now asked me to undertake—for he said he was (then) informed the State of North Carolina were most anxious to have their Records complete. Permit me to congratulate you upon so pleasing a duty devolving upon you—my hearty co-operation is & shall be at your service.”¹⁰¹

Undertaking a preliminary examination with the aid of his department’s *Colonial Office Records: List of Documents in the Public Record Office on 1st July 1876* (1876),¹⁰² Sainsbury drew up by the next month a list of 114 volumes and bundles of papers from the Colonial Entry Books, A.W.I., B.T. Carolina (Proprieties), B.T. North Carolina, B.T. Proprieties, and B.T. Acts, North Carolina series to be searched for relevant material, including governors’ correspondence, minutes of the assembly and council, acts of assembly, and orders in royal council. He suggested Saunders designate from his list “a certain number of volumes or of a certain period of time to be taken in hand at once.”¹⁰³ Thus, at Saunders’ instructions, copying of material began with the proprietary period, selected using the published “List and Abstract of Documents Relating to South-Carolina,” which the British official had compiled in the 1850s and

¹⁰¹ Sainsbury to Saunders, May 21, 1883, Saunders Papers, SHC. At Saunders’ request, Bancroft later wrote an endorsement of Sainsbury that appeared in the preface to the *Colonial Records* series. Graham Daves to Edward G. Daves, November 6, 1884, in Graham Daves to Saunders, November 27, 1884, Saunders Papers, NCSA; Bancroft to Saunders, November 17, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC; *CRNC*, 1:vii.

¹⁰² *List of Colonial Office Records Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London: H.M.S.O., 1911), iii.

¹⁰³ Sainsbury to Saunders, June 9, 1883, with enclosed “List of Volumes relating to Carolina and North Carolina,” Saunders Papers, SHC.

hoped covered most of the available North Carolina records before 1729.¹⁰⁴ In July 1883, Sainsbury sent off the first batch of transcripts of papers contained in this source, and copying of the bulk of the documents from the calendar was complete by the following January.¹⁰⁵

At the outset, the problem of choosing papers from the proprietary period that related to North Carolina as opposed to its southern neighbor was problematic for Sainsbury, and he strongly encouraged Saunders to take the lead in identifying material for inclusion, as he was more familiar with the early history of his state and had the “List and Abstract” as a guide.¹⁰⁶ Later, Sainsbury sought the editor’s direction when, due to the lack of strictly North Carolina records before 1729, he widened his search to include papers that pertained indirectly to the province.¹⁰⁷

Mostly, however, Saunders of necessity gave Sainsbury complete discretion in the choice of records in London, within the very broad parameters he set.¹⁰⁸ Content to defer to the archivist’s expertise, the editor informed Sainsbury a year and a half after work had

¹⁰⁴ Sainsbury to Saunders, July 16 and 27, 1883, *ibid.* Sainsbury’s *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial* covered only the very earliest years of North Carolina’s existence, extending to just 1674 by the time the state’s project was concluded under Saunders’ editorship. E. L. C. Mullins, *Texts and Calendars: An Analytical Guide to Serial Publications* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 27-28; Sainsbury to Saunders, March 13, 1885, Saunders Papers, SHC. Some initial confusion resulted from the fact that the small body of records up to 1688 in the South Carolina “List and Abstract” could no longer be found by their original references. Sainsbury to Saunders, July 16, 1883, *ibid.* The *Indexes to Documents Relative to North Carolina*, which Saunders also used (“no doubt the List Mr. Bancroft has frequently mentioned to me,” remarked Sainsbury), was likewise deficient in the same respect. Sainsbury to Saunders, March 13, 1885, *ibid.*; Sainsbury to Saunders, March 3, 1886, Saunders Papers, NCSA.

¹⁰⁵ Sainsbury to Saunders, January 26, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹⁰⁶ Sainsbury to Saunders, July 16 and 27, 1883, *ibid.* To help Sainsbury differentiate between the northern and southern parts of Carolina in his searches, Saunders sent him a list of North Carolina governors and counties. Sainsbury to Saunders, July 27, 1883, *ibid.* Similarly, Sainsbury later had some trouble distinguishing between the early boundaries of Virginia and North Carolina. Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884 and March 13, 1885, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

begun that the project would continue “until you announce that it is finished.”¹⁰⁹ As a practical matter, Saunders could hardly do otherwise, given the distance and the technical inability at the time to reproduce documents en masse cheaply.¹¹⁰ Sainsbury also had carte blanche to mine new documentary areas as he saw fit, and often, with characteristic tact, would ostensibly propose copying a class of papers in fact when the entirety was already in the course of being transcribed, or nearly completed.¹¹¹ Still, he elicited the editor’s input whenever possible, sometimes giving him lists or extracts of documents to be selected for copying.¹¹²

Occasionally Saunders requested individual documents contained or referred to in other sources.¹¹³ For his knowledge of primary materials, besides the venerable *Indexes to Documents Relative to North Carolina* and the South Carolina “List and Abstract,” neither of which was complete, the editor was familiar with documents cited or printed in *An Introduction to the History of the Revolt of the American Colonies* by George Chalmers (2 vols., 1845), Hugh Williamson’s *The History of North Carolina* (2 vols., 1812), and *The History of North Carolina from the Earliest Period* (2 vols., 1829) by François-Xavier Martin.¹¹⁴ Saunders also drew on the *American Archives* series¹¹⁵ and

¹⁰⁹ Saunders to Sainsbury, February 20, 1885 (pencil draft), Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹¹⁰ Butterfield, “Archival and Editorial Enterprise,” 167; Julian P. Boyd, ““God’s Altar Needs Not Our Polishings,”” *New York History* 39 (January 1958): 5.

¹¹¹ Sainsbury to Saunders, May 23, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹¹² Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884, March 13, 1885, and April 10, 1885, *ibid.*; Sainsbury to Saunders, October 2, 1885, Saunders Papers, NCSA. In such cases, Saunders was to mark which items to be copied and return the list to Sainsbury.

¹¹³ For example, see Sainsbury to Saunders, March 13, 1885, Saunders Papers, SHC; Saunders to Sainsbury, February 20, 1885 (pencil draft), *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ References to Chalmers are at *CRNC*, 5:xiv, xx; to Williamson at *ibid.*, vii, xxi; and to Martin at *ibid.*, xxv, xxxi. For the work of these early North Carolina chroniclers, see Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 133-145.

¹¹⁵ A. R. Spofford to Matt W. Ransom, December 22, 1882, in Ransom to Saunders, December 22, 1882, Saunders Papers, NCSA.

other works by Peter Force,¹¹⁶ George Bancroft's *History*,¹¹⁷ the *Life and Writings of George Washington* by Jared Sparks,¹¹⁸ the *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, John Lawson's *History of Carolina* (1714), and the *History of the Dividing Line, and Other Tracts* by William Byrd (1866).¹¹⁹

As material for proprietary North Carolina was so comparatively scant, Sainsbury went through great efforts to fill in the documentary "blanks" by locating records that related to the province "indirectly" (such as though events or matters of policy affecting the colonies in a general way).¹²⁰ Early public records were supplemented by selections from the private papers of the first earl of Shaftesbury, one of the original lords proprietors of Carolina.¹²¹ At the beginning of 1884, Sainsbury, unsatisfied with the lack of sources gained thus far, turned to B.T. Proprieties,¹²² and broadened his search to include three series that had not been on his original list of volumes to be examined—

¹¹⁶ Undated memorandum from P. M. Hale to Saunders, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *CRNC*, 10:vi-vii, xiii, xxxix-xl.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5:xv.

¹¹⁹ J. C. Birdsong to Saunders, February 12, 1886, Saunders Papers, NCSA.

¹²⁰ Sainsbury to Saunders, May 23, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹²¹ Sainsbury to Saunders, November 17, 1883, *ibid.* Sainsbury had calendared the Shaftesbury Papers after their acquisition by the P.R.O. in 1871; that portion of the collection dealing with Carolina was published in the *Annual Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* of 1872 and 1873. He had also made full copies for the city of Charleston, S.C., in 1883. These transcripts were published, along with material from the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* and the South Carolina archives, in 1897 as *The Shaftesbury Papers and Other Records Relating to Carolina and the First Settlement of Ashley River Prior to the Year 1676*, volume 5 of the *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society*. "Records from the Public Record Office," 330; Alexander Moore, review of *The Shaftesbury Papers*, ed. Langdon Cheves, *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 101 (July 2000): 262; *Report of the Committee of the South Carolina Historical Society in the Matter of Procuring Transcripts of the Colonial Records of This State from the London Record Offices, 3d October, 1891* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, 1891), 14 (hereinafter cited as *Report of the S.C. Historical Society*). During his tenure as historical agent, David L. Swain had wanted to look for papers of the proprietors among the private collections of their descendants in order to secure a complete record of the early history of the state. Towards that end, George Bancroft had promised to make inquiry with the current Lord Shaftesbury. *Swain Report*, 11-12, 15, 18-19. The effort seems to have been unfruitful. For the successful efforts of another state to recover proprietors' papers, see Richard J. Cox, "A History of the Calvert Papers, Ms. 174," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 68 (Summer 1973): 309-322.

¹²² This class of records contained material pertaining mostly to colonies other than North Carolina. Sainsbury to Saunders, July 16, 1883, Saunders Papers, SHC.

B.T. Plantations General, B.T. South Carolina, and B.T. Journals. “Of course I will rigidly attend to any instructions you may send me,” he assured Saunders, “at the same time as you have left a discretionary power with me—in selection of documents—I will do what I think the best to make the selection as complete & valuable as I can.”¹²³

Sainsbury suspected the B.T. Journals held the most promise, telling Saunders he would try them and see “if le jeu vaut la chandelle.”¹²⁴ In April 1884, he reported that this series was “of inestimable value,” and would help “to make the whole History of the Colony in her earlier stages perfect.” As he explained, the minutes of the Board of Trade revealed everything that came before the home government, while all other matters were left to the lords proprietors, for which there was but little surviving evidence. Thus Sainsbury proposed continuing copying the journals through at least 1729, along with corresponding material from B.T. Proprieties.¹²⁵

The archivist continued to work sedulously, keeping “several Transcribers” busy while he maintained a wide-ranging search in detail through likely sources up to the royal period. “I am very glad you wish the examination of our Records to be thorough that the work need not be done over again,” he told Saunders in May, “because I find as I proceed that during the Proprietary Period of the History of North Carolina, the documents which relate to it are scattered broadcast and to be found in several different series of Papers.” His examination of B.T. Proprieties (“a magnificent series,” he interjected) had directed him to B.T. Maryland, while B.T. Journals led him to B.T. Virginia, where he discovered “a perfect Gold Mine of historical information. . . . I am therefore thoroughly convinced

¹²³ Sainsbury to Saunders, January 26, 1884, *ibid.*

¹²⁴ “The game is worth the candle.” *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Sainsbury to Saunders, April 24, 1884, *ibid.* For further thoughts by Sainsbury on the value of the B.T. Journals, see Sainsbury to Saunders, May 23 and September 24, 1884, *ibid.*

that many many Volumes prior to 1729 must still be diligently gone thro' in the hope of stumbling upon fresh matter not be found in *Proprieties*," he continued. Copies he was readying came from some fifty volumes in various series, and he found it "absolutely necessary in order to carry out your wishes for an exhaustive search so that nothing be missed" to look for more early material in "a still large[r] number of Volumes."¹²⁶

Copying through 1715 was largely complete by June 1884.¹²⁷ Three months later, the British official had "culled" early papers from forty more volumes in several series, including fourteen volumes of the B.T. Journals, 1716-1729, and sixteen volumes and bundles from B.T. Virginia through 1700. The final fourteen volumes of B.T. Journals were also complete through 1729, and "unless instructed by you to the contrary," he wrote Saunders, he would finish the Virginia material, along with B.T. Maryland, up to the same date. At that point, having already completed B.T. Proprieties, Sainsbury believed he would be able to say "with some confidence" that he had uncovered all records in his department related to proprietary North Carolina.¹²⁸

Sainsbury did not pronounce copying of proprietary records finished until April 1885, two years after work began. During that time he had examined 154 volumes. The documents thereby obtained, he told Saunders, formed "links which on being well arranged & welded together will make a fairly consecutive & authentic historical chain & thoroughly trustworthy."¹²⁹ Turning to the editor's original list of material lacking in the

¹²⁶ Sainsbury to Saunders, May 23, 1884, *ibid*.

¹²⁷ Sainsbury to Saunders, June 24, 1884, *ibid*.

¹²⁸ Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884, *ibid*.

¹²⁹ Sainsbury to Saunders, April 10, 1885, *ibid*. Elsewhere Sainsbury noted that "but for what we have been able to glean" from his comprehensive search through the various B.T. series, as well as the Shaftesbury Papers, the documentary record before 1729 would have been "sadly deficient." Sainsbury to Saunders, March 13, 1885, *ibid*.

archives in Raleigh, he assured Saunders that the process of transcribing papers for years under royal administration—located in A.W.I. and B.T. North Carolina, along with B.T. Acts, North Carolina¹³⁰—would be “plain sailing”; because the records were much more complete, there would be no need for wholesale searching in series pertaining to other colonies, which had theretofore taken so much time. Accordingly, he outlined a straightforward approach—taking the governors’ correspondence in sequence about a decade at a time, and then proceeding to the journals of the assembly and council from the same period. He would, however, continue to make extracts from B.T. Journals as a complement to the executive papers.¹³¹

Transcription of all material through 1740 was nearly done by November 1885.¹³² Sainsbury informed Saunders the following August that he had delivered “everything I have been able to rake out here” concerning North Carolina up to 1750,¹³³ while work to 1771 was finished by September 1887.¹³⁴ At the beginning of 1888, Sainsbury reported having examined “upwards of 350” volumes of papers in the P.R.O. in order to make the collection “as complete as possible”—meaning he had searched in some two hundred in the royal period up to that point.¹³⁵ Still he continued to supply material, copying documents regarding Indian affairs in the first part of 1889,¹³⁶ and sending along a few items as late as the following August.¹³⁷ The total number of volumes of British records

¹³⁰ Sainsbury to Saunders, September 24, 1884, *ibid.*

¹³¹ Sainsbury to Saunders, April 10, 1885, *ibid.*

¹³² Sainsbury to Saunders, November 20, 1885, Saunders Papers, NCSA.

¹³³ Sainsbury to Saunders, August 9, 1886, *ibid.*

¹³⁴ Sainsbury to Saunders, September 14, 1887, quoted in Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 222.

¹³⁵ Sainsbury to Saunders, January 30, 1888, quoted in *ibid.* By comparison, John H. Wheeler had examined 155 volumes in 1864—42 B.T. North Carolina, 95 B.T. Proprieties and Plantations General, and 18 A.W.I. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 179.

¹³⁶ Sainsbury to Saunders, January 22, February 7, and April 9, 1889, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹³⁷ Sainsbury to Saunders, August 14, 1890, *ibid.*; Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 223.

Sainsbury searched in seven years is unknown; later he stated that the transcripts themselves came from 141 volumes—32 copied in full and 26 partially, while extracts were made from 83 volumes of B.T. Journals.¹³⁸

The ten volumes of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* were published over four years beginning in 1886.¹³⁹ The contents totaled nearly 11,000 pages—including historical introductions or “prefatory notes” for each volume (over 350 pages in all), written by Saunders.¹⁴⁰ The documents were ordered chronologically,¹⁴¹ though as a result of Saunders’ desire to get the work to press as expeditiously as possible, some material appeared out of sequence, mostly appended at the end of volume 2. The work also suffered from a number of deficiencies. Included were some papers “such as were suggested by a not very extensive knowledge of North Carolina history,”¹⁴² while many

¹³⁸ *Report of the S.C. Historical Society*, 14.

¹³⁹ The volumes were:

- Volume 1: 1662-1712 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886)
- Volume 2: 1713-1728 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886)
- Volume 3: 1728-1734 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886)
- Volume 4: 1734-1752 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886)
- Volume 5: 1752-1759 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1887)
- Volume 6: 1759-1765 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1888)
- Volume 7: 1765-1768 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1890)
- Volume 8: 1769-1771 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1890)
- Volume 9: 1771-1775 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1890)
- Volume 10: 1775-1776 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1890)

British state papers and legislative journals composed the largest part of the documents in the *Colonial Records*. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. “Saunders, William Laurence.” For a closer analysis of the contents of the series, see Weeks, “Historical Review,” 84-99.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁴¹ Sainsbury had stressed to Saunders the importance of ordering the documents strictly by date, believing that the “essence of their value” lay in such an arrangement. Several times he cautioned the editor that owing to the mass of records he had “to wade through” he was sure to turn up more essential material, and urged him not to begin publication until he (Sainsbury) was satisfied that all relevant papers had been located. Sainsbury to Saunders, May 23, June 24 (second quotation), and September 24, 1884, Saunders Papers, SHC; Sainsbury to Saunders, March 3, 1886, Saunders Papers, NCSA (first quotation).

¹⁴² [Bassett], “Report on the Public Archives,” 253.

records valuable to the history of the state lay still undiscovered in county courthouses.¹⁴³ Selection was also greatly impaired by the fact that the work was done before the rise of academic scholarship, and consequent professionalization of archives, began to bring historical source material under intellectual control and made public and private papers widely available.¹⁴⁴ Despite Saunders' desire for accuracy,¹⁴⁵ the quality of the transcription was uneven, due to the necessity of relying on untrained copyists and the inability to compare the result to the originals.¹⁴⁶ The lack of an index also severely limited the usefulness of the volumes.¹⁴⁷ In common with other documentary editions of the time, the location of source texts was not adequately and consistently cited.¹⁴⁸ Saunders' prefatory notes, too, while they won him general acclamation in his day, were irredeemably of the romantic, nationalist school.¹⁴⁹ What is more, some records that were printed in or collected for the *Colonial Records* were never located again¹⁵⁰—reflecting

¹⁴³ Weeks, "Historical Review," 99.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 100-101; Posner, *American State Archives*, 16-24; Mattie Erma Edwards Parker et al., eds., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina [Second Series]*, 11 vols. to date (Raleigh: [State of North Carolina], 1963-), 9:xii. For the rise of "scientific" history, see John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America*, rev ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 6-25.

¹⁴⁵ *CRNC*, 2:xix; Riggs, "Foreign Archival Sources," 297.

¹⁴⁶ Parker et al., eds., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 1:vii, 5:ix.

¹⁴⁷ [Bassett], "Report on the Public Archives," 253.

¹⁴⁸ Butterfield, "Archival and Editorial Enterprise," 167-169; Baumann, "Samuel Hazard," 212.

¹⁴⁹ A trenchant contemporary observer was Cornelia Phillips Spencer, who although complementary of the editor's work, nevertheless reproved him for "gild[ing] with fine words the lawless & insurrectionary doings of our early settlers" in his Whiggish historical introductions. Spencer to Saunders, March 6, 1888, Saunders Papers, NCSA. Referring to the fact that a University of North Carolina professor recently had had a series of articles in praise of the *Colonial Records* rejected by a Raleigh newspaper because the editor, a descendant of one of the royal governors, "did not choose to publish anything reflecting upon his administration," Mrs. Spencer admonished, "What is to become of honest healthy criticism in N.C. if we must not examine & report upon the actions of any given citizen's grt. grt. grt. gr.father. There has always been this unwholesome bit of sensitiveness about us. We are too much inclined to be jealous for the whole State as well as for our special grandfathers." Ibid.; George T. Winston to Saunders, March 5, 1888, Saunders Papers, NCSA.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, *For History's Sake*, 218; [Bassett], "Report on the Public Archives," 262; James C. MacRae to Clark, June 8, 1893 and June 8 and 11, 1894, Clark Papers; Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), 351.

the contemporary view that once preserved by multiplying the copies, the originals had outlived their intrinsic value.¹⁵¹

Notwithstanding its flaws, which were typical of similar documentary editions of the day,¹⁵² the *Colonial Records* was a monumental achievement. According to John Spencer Bassett, a critic of romantic, self-glorifying, pro-Confederate historiography, “More accurate students than Colonel Saunders have found many things which they have wished had been included in the series, but the value of the work was nevertheless so great as to make the compiler the pioneer in the scientific study of the history of North Carolina.”¹⁵³ Sainsbury called the effort “second to no other in your Great Republic—New York not excepted,”¹⁵⁴ and thought it “should be an incentive to other States to ‘go and do likewise.’”¹⁵⁵ Saunders performed the prodigious task of editor in addition to the considerable demands of public office,¹⁵⁶ and while mostly either confined to a wheel chair or completely bedridden due to his rheumatism, often unable to hold a pen.¹⁵⁷ As he stated, only “a taste” for the work “made bearable the years of sheer drudgery absolutely necessary to the preparation for publication.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Baumann, “Samuel Hazard,” 208, 210.

¹⁵² For early professional criticism of late-nineteenth-century documentary efforts, see *Perpetuation and Preservation of the Archives and Public Records of the Several States and Territories, and of the United States*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., 1900, H. Rept. 1767 (Serial 4027), 5-6; J. Franklin Jameson, “Gaps in the Published Records of United States History,” *American Historical Review* 11 (July 1906): 817-831.

¹⁵³ [Bassett], “Report on the Public Archives,” 253 (quotation); Wendell H. Stephenson, “John Spencer Bassett as a Historian of the South,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 25 (July 1948): 298-300; Simpson, “Origin of State Archives,” 197-198; Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 278-279.

¹⁵⁴ Sainsbury to Saunders, October 15, 1890, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹⁵⁵ Sainsbury to Saunders, August 14, 1890, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ For Saunders’ complaints about the overwhelming nature of his duties as secretary of state, see “Report of Secretary of State,” *Session 1881*, 11-15.

¹⁵⁷ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 223-224, 226. Saunders’ chronic acute pain often caused him sleepless nights and necessitated recourse to “morphia.” Saunders diaries of 1879, 1880, and 1881, *passim*, Saunders Papers, SHC.

¹⁵⁸ *CRNC*, 1:viii.

The difficulties Saunders encountered in his editorship are well illustrated in a letter he wrote to his friend, former governor Jarvis, in March 1888. Getting the fifth and sixth volumes to press beginning the previous August, he related, “proved a job that I never intend to undertake again, for night and day it kept me busy.” Once printing of the documents was done, he searched for records in several counties around the state, then went to his farm in eastern North Carolina “for a quiet time in which to prepare the Prefatory Notes to the two volumes. I staid there nearly three weeks hard at work every day Sundays included,” he continued, “and then found I had hardly begun; but I was in for it and you know I don’t give up easy.” He kept at the work in Raleigh, “sometimes in bed and sometimes out and got through only about ten days ago. The finished product was “the result of near ten months hard, tedious, and I may say disagreeable work. To vary the monotony of it however,” he had three “violent attack[s] of gravel . . . all in less than a month.”¹⁵⁹

Poor health forced Saunders not to extend the *Colonial Records* past 1776. Upon the publication of the final volume, he reflected, “And now the self-imposed task, begun some eleven years ago, is finished. All that I care to say is that I have done the best I could that coming generations might be able to learn what manner of men their ancestors were, and this I have done without reward or the hope of reward, other than the hope that I might contribute something to rescue the fair fame and good name of North Carolina from the clutches of ignorance. Our records are now before the world, and any man who chooses may see for himself the character of the people who made them.” Referring to the records as “scriptures,” he ended with a rhetorical flourish relating the Revolution, the

¹⁵⁹ Saunders to [Thomas J. Jarvis], March 28, 1888 (pencil draft), Saunders Papers, SHC.

Civil War, and Reconstruction as common constitutional struggles, and quoting the benediction of “the immortal Lee” upon his Tar Heels, “God bless old North Carolina.”¹⁶⁰ In February 1891, the legislature passed a resolution tendering the “thanks of the people of the state” for Saunders’ accomplishment.¹⁶¹ Former Confederate attorney general George Davis wrote the editor that “the real payment” for his achievement would be in “posthumous fame,” adding, “I pour out my blessing upon you for having lifted the old state clean out of the mists of doubt and misrepresentation, into the clear light of a glorious day.”¹⁶² Shortly over a month later, having willed himself to live long enough to see the project through, Saunders died.¹⁶³

The state’s historical publication project resumed two years after Saunders’ death, under the editorship of Walter Clark, and was continued down to 1790 in sixteen volumes of *The State Records of North Carolina* (1895-1907).¹⁶⁴ The combined series was finally completed with a four-volume *Index to the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina* (1909-1914), compiled by Stephen B. Weeks.¹⁶⁵ The publication of the full Saunders-

¹⁶⁰ *CRNC*, 10:xl-xli.

¹⁶¹ Resolution of February 12, 1891, quoted in Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 226.

¹⁶² George Davis to Saunders, February 6, 1891 (misdated 1890), Saunders Papers, SHC. Saunders’ work received praise from both sides of the political spectrum. For example, see S. F. Phillips to Saunders, June 24, 1890, *ibid.*; A. M. Waddell to Saunders, December 26, 1890, *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 226; Jarvis, “North Carolina Historical Records,” 22-23; Waddell, *Life and Character*, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Through Sainsbury, Clark also obtained transcripts of British colonial records overlooked during Saunders’ editorship. This newly-located material was published as the “Supplement” in the first volume of the *State Records*. Clark also later corresponded with Sainsbury’s daughter Ethel in an effort to locate early North Carolina laws. Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 230. Miss Sainsbury assisted her father in preparing the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial* in his retirement, and went on to edit *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc. of the East India Company* (11 vols., 1907-1938). Memorial to Sainsbury, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., 10 (April 1895): 29.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 226-235.

Clark series, with its index, finally made available the primary sources necessary for the proper study of the early history of North Carolina.¹⁶⁶

By the efforts of Saunders and his successor Clark—laboring (as Weeks put it) “without guides, without chart or compass in the wilderness of North Carolina history”¹⁶⁷—many priceless documents were preserved that otherwise would have been lost forever.¹⁶⁸ The most enduring legacy of the *Colonial Records* project, however, was its importance to the founding of a state archival agency. In 1903, Walter Clark announced that he would not continue the *State Records* past its authorized termination point. That year, through the efforts of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association,¹⁶⁹ which was inspired by the documentary publication program begun under Saunders and realized that “the time had come to put the historical work of the State on a

¹⁶⁶ Powell, “Colonial North Carolina,” 27-28; Watson, “Revolutionary North Carolina,” 39; Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 212, 235-236. In 1963, to mark the tercentenary of the original charter granting Carolina to the lords proprietors, the state inaugurated a second *Colonial Records* series, which comprises eleven volumes to date. In conjunction with this publication, a British records copying program was undertaken from 1969 to 1993. *Report of the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1964), 9-11; Robert J. Cain, “North Carolina’s British Records Program,” *Carolina Comments* 38 (September 1990): 134-139. Another transcription project was undertaken in England from 1922 to 1930. Charles Frederick Williams Coker, “The North Carolina English Records Project, 1922-1930: An Historical Appraisal, with a Summary of Preceding and Succeeding Efforts” (master’s thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968).

¹⁶⁷ Weeks, “Historical Review,” 101.

¹⁶⁸ Despite their shortcomings, other nineteenth-century documentary editions also performed this invaluable cultural service. Butterfield, “Archival and Editorial Enterprise,” 164; Baumann, “Samuel Hazard,” 204.

¹⁶⁹ The State Literary and Historical Association was founded in 1900 (with Walter Clark as president) to promote culture and local pride. One of the association’s purposes, as embodied in its original charter, was “the correction of printed misrepresentations concerning North Carolina.” Toward this end in 1904, Clark and his fellow members proved to their satisfaction the Tar Heel State’s claim, “First at Bethel, Farthest to the Front at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, Last at Appomattox,” the motto emblazoned on the covers of the official *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-’65* (5 vols., 1901), edited by Clark. William Burlie Brown, “The State Literary and Historical Association, 1900-1959,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 28 (April 1951): 163, 177-178 (quotation, from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association constitution of 1900, p. 163).

more permanent basis,” the North Carolina Historical Commission was established.¹⁷⁰

Charged by statute with collecting and publishing valuable records and other source material, the commission (forerunner of the current Office of Archives and History) assumed custody of the state archives beginning in 1907, when it was reorganized with enlarged powers.¹⁷¹ State pride—“frequently ill founded, often ill informed, and unintelligent”—and the desire to vindicate North Carolina’s reputation were always the primary factors in efforts to collect and make available the source materials of history.¹⁷² Led by Murphey, Swain, Saunders, and others, the movement of over nearly a century to preserve the state’s documentary heritage was at long last fully realized. The result has been of inestimable value to historians and the public alike.

¹⁷⁰ Connor, “Lessons from North Carolina,” 122-123 (quotation, p. 122); Waldo Gifford Leland, “Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Conference of Historical Societies, New York City, December 30, 1909,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1909* (Washington, D.C.: [G.P.O.], 1911), 310; Frontis W. Johnston, “The North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, 1900-1975,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 52 (April 1976): 155-158; Brown, “State Literary and Historical Association,” 156-157, 165. “Realizing the reluctance with which the average legislator votes for the creation of new departments and new offices,” as R. D. W. Connor put it, when drafting the 1903 law the State Literary and Historical Association followed Saunders’ example in establishing the legislative basis for the *Colonial Records* project and took the same disarming approach, which Connor described as that of the “the camel which wished to warm his head in his master’s tent.” Connor, “Lessons from North Carolina,” 122-123 (quotations, p. 122).

¹⁷¹ Jones, *For History’s Sake*, 269-282; Frontis W. Johnston, “The North Carolina Historical Commission, 1903-1978,” in *Public History in North Carolina, 1903-1978: The Proceedings of the Seventh-Fifth Anniversary Celebration, March 7, 1978*, ed. Jeffrey J. Crow (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1979), 1-4; James B. Rhoads, “The North Carolina State Archives,” in *ibid.*, 17-19; Willard B. Gatewood Jr., “Rendering Striking Historical Service: North Carolina’s Historical Publication Program, 1903-1978,” in *ibid.*, 32-33; Simpson, “Origin of State Archives,” 192-221; Henry S. Stroupe, “The North Carolina Department of Archives and History—The First Half Century,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 31 (April 1954): 184-187. The state’s first public records law was passed in 1935. Rhoads, “North Carolina State Archives,” 22; H. G. Jones, “North Carolina’s Local Records Program,” *American Archivist* 24 (January 1961): 29.

¹⁷² Connor, “Lessons from North Carolina,” 126-127 (quotation, p. 126); William S. Price Jr., “Plowing Virgin Fields: State Support for Southern Archives, Particularly North Carolina,” *Carolina Comments* 29 (March 1981): 43-44.

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Appendix:
Preliminary Biography of Additional Sources for Study of
The State Records of North Carolina and
Index to the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina

I. Primary Sources

A. Manuscript Collections

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