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There has been increasing interest expressed in the archival literature for an historical perspective on the profession. This study examines the case of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It was approached both from the collection point of view and collector point of view, that of Dr. J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton. In the study, I attempted to connect some of the themes expressed in recent journal articles about the history of the archival profession.

The result draws together the role of the individual who initiates a manuscripts collection, the institutional climate in which it occurs, and nature of collecting itself. Thus it is part biography of collector and collection, and part an examination of what drives the creation of collections of all sorts. I hope that the history provided will prompt a close look at the institutions archivists oversee and help develop a professional history that will enhance our profession.

Headings:

Archives – Aims and Objectives

Archives – History

Librarianship – Philosophical – Aspects

THE ACCIDENTAL ARCHIVIST: J.G. de ROULHAC HAMILTON AND THE
CREATION OF THE SOUTHERN HISTORICAL COLLECTION AT CHAPEL HILL

by
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INTRODUCTION

The Southern Historical Collection was officially established at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on January 14, 1930, with Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton as its first director. The story behind this bald statement is as complex as the man of whom it is about. It is a combination of individual and establishment, of one man's will and of his ability to sell that will to an institution, and a region. The venture is one that is not really dependent on an individual for its success - many people and organizations are brought in to see that it works - yet one man is the force that propels it forward. Without Hamilton it is doubtful that this ambitious project, started in the Great Depression and running full tilt through the Second World War, could have not only survived but thrived. Later chapters look in detail how the historian became a collector, and a champion for the papers of both the famous and the least known figures.

Examining the genesis of a manuscripts collection like this is valuable in several ways. The story adds a personal dimension to the institution, reminding us that such things do not emerge fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. It also describes a stage in the development of archival practice, giving the profession a context for its growth. It is ironic that even as we are caretakers of the physical traces of history, we have only the most skeletal understanding of our own professional history.

Much of the focus in professional archival journals has centered upon technical needs, and questions of access, and the solution to these problems. But there is a growing concern that we are allowing our professional identity to languish in the rush to be current with all of the latest technological advances. A group of archival theorists have occupied themselves in recent years in championing the need for a historical perspective on the archival profession as a means to solidify our professional identity and give it relevance in

the face of technologically based advances. The basis of the argument is that we are not simply functionaries reacting to a kind of programming, but that we can bring an intelligent and thoughtful posture into our profession, a kind of "value-added" benefit that acknowledges that we are more than simply caretakers, but are also thoroughly aware of the effects of our efforts within our collections.

TURNING THE MIRROR ON OURSELVES: A NEED FOR AN HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE ON THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION

"We should study the changing historical fortunes of archival repositories, of particular archival collections and individual documents, to discover the complex of practical and emotional reasons people invested so much time, effort, and cash in them."

James O'Toole, "The Future of Archives History"

Archivists in the U.S. have long suffered an identity crisis. In an article from 1991, Luke Gilliland-Swetland attributes this to two main archival traditions that developed over the years. He refers to the first as an "indigenous historical manuscripts tradition dating back almost to the birth of the country" which had been "shaped by private and antiquarian-collectors...and was institutionalized in places such as the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Library of Congress, and the American Antiquarian Society"(161). By the early twentieth century, practices and theories from librarianship were applied to the management of these collections, but the administration of the collections remained strongly aligned with historians. At the same time a second tradition, based on the European public archives model, was being advocated as an alternative. Fundamental to it is the concept of provenance; that is, preserving as much as possible the original order of documents as they appeared in the place of their first incarnation. It was hailed in 1912 as the "only basis for the 'scientific' management of records", and indeed "provided a compelling solution to the increasing physical backlog and confusion of intellectual access points to materials"(Gilliland-Swetland 161-162). It also provided an "objective" method of description, compared to the "subjective" description found in the library system.

The need for a cohesive archival theory and practice became more acute, and the two traditions faced off over their different philosophies. Gilliland-Swetland sums up their positions:

Defenders of the historical manuscripts tradition perceived themselves as members of a community of humanities scholars and, by extension, as historian-interpreters of the documents they preserved. Advocates of the public archives tradition perceived themselves to be professionals with mastery over a body of specialized theory and practice; consequently they viewed their role as administrative-custodian of the documents they preserved (163).

The division within the profession occurred at a time when manuscripts collections were enjoying a period of growth. Interest in "scientific" research in history created a demand for primary source materials, and historians lobbied states and the federal government for the creation of manuscript repositories. In large part this was due to changes within the universities and among historians brought about by Progressivism:

Central to Progressive thought was a belief that scientific principles and techniques could, and must, be applied to the management of every aspect of an increasingly complex world. In the first years of the new century, commitment to scientific principles, specialization, and professionalization were a sign that one stood upon the cutting edge of modernity (Gilliland-Swetland 164).

Margaret Cross Norton, state archivist of Illinois, was a proponent of the application of Progressivism and scientific principles to archival practice. To do so, she brought in European public archives principles. But as Gilliland-Swetland observes,

Like all importers, she was selective, ignoring the fact that, unlike American public archives, the European public archives tradition embraced both official records and unofficial or private papers, and that the European tradition itself had been developed in part as a way to facilitate historical research. Norton adopted those European principles and practices that provided solutions to the problems she perceived to be confronting American archivists (165).

Norton believed that "historical libraries managed by historians were not archives". In her view,

Historians had a research agenda that was fundamentally at odds with the mission of the archives. The latter, as Norton saw it, was primarily to serve the administrative needs and public accountability demands of its institutions and the needs of scholars only secondarily (Gilliland-Swetland 165).

While she acknowledged that archives and "historical libraries" shared common goals - preserving materials and creating places to house them - she also "clearly believed public

archivists to be in competition with the historian-archivists in the fight for scarce resources" (Gilliland-Swetland 165). Norton's allegiance was decidedly with the public archivists. This was clearly demonstrated when she became editor of American Archivist, the publication of the Society of American Archivists, in 1945. During her tenure "the journal was purged of the influence of historical scholarship, no longer publishing articles that detailed the scholarly use of archival materials" (Gilliland-Swetland 166).

By the mid-twentieth century, the National Archives, staggering under the inflow of material, adopted archival principles to manage its growing collection. When the Library of Congress followed suit, many of the major collections began "incorporating the central practices of the public archives tradition, using arrangement according to provenance as the basis for intellectual and physical control over holdings" (167). Historical collections found the principle of provenance "provided a powerful tool for understanding the historical context...in which the materials were created," making it a valuable practice to adopt (Gilliland-Swetland 168). The relationship between public archives and historical collections stabilized with the common ground of shared principles.

What had started in the early part of the century as a debate over about the nature and role of archives in society had by the 1960's and 1970's turned to focus on the archival profession. For Gilliland-Swetland, the new debate centers on "what is the nature and role in society of the archivist as professional" (168)? At issue were "priorities such as enhancing the professional status and public image of archivists, an agenda that would serve in part to perpetuate society's commitment to its archival caretakers"(Gilliland-Swetland 169). This need is ever greater with the advent of new technologies - archivists must continually remind the public of their relevance and the value of the materials which they oversee. High-profile use of the new technologies help keep collections from falling into dusty obscurity in public perception . Yet from digitizing projects to new preservation issues, many of these ideas are more concerned with housekeeping than with development of ourselves as archivists. These cannot be ignored, but they do distract from the creation of unified sense of

the profession, one that is not so focused on the future as to be deaf to the present and past.

Fortunately, a number of archival thinkers have addressed their energies to urging that we once again direct our attention to the past, to the people and organizations and events that underlie the current archival structure. They argue that without a history of our practice and profession we are ill equipped to prepare for the future. Barbara Craig says that,

The need for historical study of the profession and of its practices is urgent precisely because archives history is vital to the health of archival theory and practice in the future. In my opinion, the neglect of archives history has weakened the archivists' ability to respond to the challenges posed by technological change and its new ecology of records, and blurred the archivists' sense of identity ("Archives Theory" 42).

Gilliland-Swetland quotes Richard J. Cox's challenge:

"It is vital," he suggested, "that we know as much as possible about the development of the profession to aid our continued self-study, reevaluation, and progress, especially in time of unusual stress and change. We need to direct the historian's perspective not only to the records under our care but to our profession as well" (qtd. in Gilliland-Swetland 175).

Looking back is not a fashionable practice. As Craig says, "the past is seen as a barrier to progress - to be overcome rather than understood," and she cautions that "archivists cannot afford to leave their history in the hands of others, however capable they may be: the research agendas of others are not driven by archival concerns" ("Archives Theory" 43).

Much concern has been placed on where we are going, and archivists, along with many other professionals in many other fields, are uncertain about how to react to the rapidly changing milieu in which we find ourselves. Craig points out that "history builds up an immunity to the destabilizing effects of future hype and current happenstance," and that while it "might not provide specific answers...it shows the questions we should be asking" ("Archives Theory" 45). She sees a number of benefits in historical study, that it gives archivists valuable perspective on the present and future, enabling us to make better decisions and handle changes intelligently and effectively.

In her article "Outward Visions, Inward Glances: Archives History and Professional

Identity," published in 1992, Craig discusses the issue at length. In three examples she explains specific advantages of this kind of self-study:

History helps us sort out our relationships. Archives history has a geographic utility, placing us and our records into context within a continuum. Knowing what has past, we are in a much better position to assess the novelty of situations that we encounter....Second, it would seem to be a truism that we cannot decide what to keep nor how to keep it unless we understand the history of documents, of records-keeping practices, and of communications methods....There is also a third point, that archives history makes the records we deal with more intriguing, and this stimulates a vigorous interest in daily work and improves the quality of public services ("Outward" 117-118).

Thus her vision is a history that brings a deeper understanding for those of us within the profession and enriches the experience of our user population.

Archivists are concerned with records - the material traces of people, organizations, nations. Craig argues that we should embrace this part of our work, asking

Why should we hide a healthy fascination for records? If we take delight in records do we not make research in them more intriguing and useful to others? Why should we deny that there are artistic interests to be satisfied in archival work? Would it not be better, through the historical study of records, to develop a genuine aesthetic which satisfies a unique human need to connect with the past on a level that transcends information ("Outward" 118)?

"Transcending information" is a pleasing way of approaching archival materials -

"information" seems too synonymous with "fact". For within these collections are myriad ways of telling a story, and the telling is constantly evolving. Craig's questions return us to the earlier debate between the historical and public archives traditions, and suggest we have allowed ourselves to become too far separated from the materials we oversee.

We are custodians of the raw material of history and memory, yet how our collections come about, and the individual collector's impact on them, has been discussed very little. Perhaps it took the development of postmodern discourse confront these problems. Many of the questions formed within it are applicable to archival collections. Terry Cook asks,

How, for example, have archivists reflected...changing societal realities and power struggles as they built their "houses of memory"? How have archival assumptions,

concepts, and strategies reflected the dominant structures and society ethos of their own time? Upon what basis, reflecting what shifting values, have archivists decided who should be admitted in their houses of memory, and who excluded (19)?

Cook sees these as central questions in pursuit of an archival history. By looking at what was considered important and what was forgotten we can help redress some of the inequalities that continue to haunt us in a larger cultural sense.

Hugh Taylor addresses the tradition that makes the archivist "keeper and remembrancer", which has tended to be ad hoc and to temper itself to the social climate of the time. He says,

In more recent times, we have helped to decide what shall survive out of what has survived by means of piecemeal appraisal based on an arbitrary evaluation drawn from our limited reason. This reason has in turn responded to the tenets of scientific reductionism and includes a rather narrow view of what constitutes the needs of historians, and those of a general public bent on supporting, for the most part, a triumphalist view of progress at both national and local levels ("Archivist" 2).

This suggests that by studying archival history we can also study the social pressures and decisions involved in selecting materials to be saved. The larger implication of the findings is how these decisions affect the construction of memory and our perception of our culture past and present. Collections are formed both by individuals, in the historian/collector tradition, and by public offices - states and nations. In each case, there are agendas underlying their formation, and they are not always guided by the purest motives. As archivists we should take a hand in this process: Taylor writes that

meaning cannot be left entirely to the historians; in our role as appraisers, we must try to understand the role of the documents in terms of their purpose and impact on the users (which include us) as we strive, in [Ronald] Weisserman's words, "to uncover patterns and to wrestle creatively with ambiguity" ("Archivist" 3).

Part of our job as archivists, then, is to have a relationship with our materials that makes us better guides, and to acknowledge responsibility for the part we play in the construction of memory, of remembering and re-remembering. Taylor quotes Terry Eastwood on the importance of this: "we remember in order to survive because all present actions are shot through with the process of making sense of past experience, which is the only guide we

have to future action for controlling events and making things in our environment somewhat predictable"(qtd.in "Archivist" 6).

A CHRONIC RESTIVENESS: COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS

Much of the successful growth of the Southern Historical Collection must be attributed to Hamilton's own character as a collector. Hamilton the historian was certainly motivated by the lack of primary source material about the South, which in the developing trend towards "scientific" research was necessary for historical writing. In his early lobbying for a collection of southern records this was the clarion call, to bring together materials that would ensure that a more accurate representation of the past included a thorough understanding of the South as told by her own people. His zeal in pursuit of manuscripts, though, went beyond a desire to set the records straight. As time went on, and he devoted more and more of his time to the collection, it becomes clear that the hunt was less about history and more about the papers themselves.

The difference between dilettante and collector is largely one of degree. Interest becomes a need, urgent and constant. At its most extreme, the collecting frenzy can be disturbing, resulting in rooms full of matchbook covers or Kewpie dolls, with which the collector has little relationship beyond an overwhelming urge to find more. When addressing this extreme, writing on the subject tends to do so in psychological terms, particularly psychoanalytical terms. The objects of the collector's desire and his desire to accumulate them can be seen as a self-protective gesture. Werner Muensterberger says, "despite all the possible variations, there is reason to believe that the true source of the habit is the emotional state leading to a more less perpetual attempt to surround oneself with magically potent objects" (10).

Jean Baudrillard notes that collecting is a common childhood act, and says "for the child, collecting represents the most rudimentary way to exercise control over the outer world: by laying things out, grouping them, handling them" (9). He sees darker implications

in the adult collector's passionate accumulation of objects, including a desire to escape from reality and fear of death. For Baudrillard, temporal displacement is fundamental to collection. He quotes Maurice Rheims' observation that "'a phenomenon often associated with the passion of collecting is the loss of all sense of the present'"(qtd. in Baudrillard 15). He goes on to assert that

In fact the profound power exerted by collected objects derives neither from their singularity nor their distinct historicity. It is not because of these that we see the time of the collection as diverging from real time, but rather because *the setting up of a collection itself displaces real time* (16).

The objects themselves become abstracted and are no longer functional, but referential to the collector and to one another. Further, Baudrillard sees them as a kind of thanatopsis: "Indeed we might be prompted to say that *the object is that through which we mourn ourselves*, in the sense that, in so far as we truly possess it, the object stands for our own death, symbolically transcended" (17).

Fitting Hamilton into this complex of psychological theory is not easy. Was he trying to keep death at bay? Surely anyone who assembles a collection of this sort is aware of creating a legacy, but is he always haunted by a fear of the Reaper? Hamilton was a respected historian at the time, and published prolifically on the subject of the South. If anything, his hopes for life after death probably resided in his historical writing. In his correspondence towards the end of his life Hamilton frequently speaks of his regrets that his death will interrupt the gathering of manuscripts, saying "for the life of me I don't know how I will get this work done before I die" (Southern Historical). Irritation at the prospect of leaving the task undone seems to underlie his statement more than a hope that the objects will accomplish a symbolic transcendence of death.

Baudrillard is more effective in describing collections themselves, since he abandons the tendency to psychoanalyze the collector. He says that

what makes a collection transcend mere accumulation is not only the fact of its being culturally complex, but the fact of its incompleteness, the fact that it *lacks*

something....And this exigency, modulating into the quest and the impassioned appeal to other people, is enough to interrupt that deadly hypnotic allure of the collection to which the subject otherwise falls prey (Baudrillard 23).

Indeed, this appeal, as noted above in Hamilton's querulous comment, is a powerful drive in his work. As much as he relished the additions to the collection he worried over the fate of as yet undiscovered materials, and this fuelled the passion of his search. Hamilton certainly would have agreed with Baudrillard's observation on the limits of collecting:

My whole philosophy is that there should be no limit, because otherwise one is limiting the collection....I know collectors who collect tins of a certain size because that's all they want to do. They're not really collectors, to my mind, they are just gatherers, people who want to put things up on a mantelpiece to look interesting (32).

Indeed, a collection of manuscripts by the very nature of its contents is limitless. As Baudrillard shrewdly observes, "*the collection is never really initiated in order to be completed*" (13).

In their introduction to a volume of essays called The Cultures of Collecting, editors John Elsner and Roger Cardinal muse about Noah as the first and archetypal collector. They say, "menaced by a Flood, one has to act swiftly. Anything overlooked will be lost forever: between including and excluding there can be no half measures" (1). It is this characterization of the collector with which J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton is mostly closely aligned. The urgency with which he pursued his quarry was accentuated by a sense that time itself was the enemy - each day meant precious historical material could fall victim to the trash fire, rats, mildew, utterly lost. Elsner and Cardinal could have been talking about Hamilton when they observe, "here is saving in its strongest sense, not just casual keeping but conscious rescuing from extinction - collection as salvation" (1).

One of his most effective selling points to bring papers to Chapel Hill was Hamilton's dire warnings of their fate should they be left where they were. His disgust when his fears were borne out is nicely illustrated in a note in his trip diary from 1934, where he describes how Mrs. Julian Glass

sent me to see Miss Patty Yarborough at "Pitt's" Folly, who says there is nothing there

but told me of a terrible destruction of material that took place some years ago. They had an occupant of the house, a nervous old gentleman who was always trying to get into the garret. He was particularly upset when they put in electricity, and one day when they were away he broke into the garret, cut open the trunks and chests and had all the papers carried out into a field near-by and burned, saying that he knew that it was not what they wanted but that he felt it his duty to burn them in order that they might not catch on fire. I expressed a desire to learn where his grave was so that I might dance on it while I cursed him (Hamilton papers pg. 25).

So much of the discourse about collecting leans towards the psychoanalytical that it is hard to escape seeing it as a neurosis, at its most extreme a psychosis. Elsner and Cardinal's interpretation is more generous: "In the myth of Noah as ur-collector resonate all the themes of collecting itself: desire and nostalgia, saving and loss, the urge to erect a permanent and complete system against the destructiveness of time" (1). These themes drove Hamilton's quest to assemble the traces of southern history into a cohesive collection in Chapel Hill.

HAMILTON THE HISTORIAN

After graduating in 1900 from the University of the South at Sewanee with an MA in history, Hamilton went on Columbia University to earn his PhD, which he completed in 1906. He joined the history faculty at the University of North Carolina in 1906, and in addition to his teaching duties was also actively involved in speaking engagements, writing reviews and articles, and his own research. He also began speaking out regularly about deficiencies in southern history. Articles written by and about him are carefully pasted in his scrapbooks, but unfortunately most lack dates. They appear to predate the official founding of the Southern Historical Collection by 10-15 years. In any event, their content shows that he is already interested in a kind of "everyman" approach to history, and that he is trying to raise the same interest in his fellow North Carolinians. An article titled "Some Fields of Historical Investigation" includes a piece about local history that illustrates this well:

We all want to see a definite history of the State, but there will never be one until the history of the various localities shall have been written. In every county, in almost every community, there are in the public records, in collections of letters, in files of old newspapers, stores of valuable information as to how our forefathers lived; what they were worth in the goods of this world, with possibly some light on their value in the next; what they thought about; and what they did. This information, be it said, is far more valuable for the purpose of history, and for our own edification and instruction today, than heroic rides, resistance to constituted authority, battles, or even declarations of independence, for more of these last-mentioned events in the past of North Carolina had no effect upon its later history, while what people possessed, what they saw, thought, felt, read, talked about, and - yes, not the least important - what they ate, had a marked effect, and is still having it today...When we are searching for facts of this kind, the advertisements in an old newspaper may be nuggets of pure gold, while a tax list, an inventory, a will-book, or a trunk of old letters will certainly prove to be a mine (Hamilton papers scrapbook #1).

Even though his published works were often compilations of the papers of public figures, he remained committed to the crucial importance of what he termed "run-of-the-mine" papers and the people who created them.

Hamilton was a child of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and like many southerners of his generations emerged from the bitterness of the experience trying to regain a sense of southern identity. Daniel Singal says,

By the end of Reconstruction all that southerners could salvage from their history was the sustaining conviction that, in its day, theirs had been an aristocratic culture infinitely superior to the crass materialistic culture of their enemy. This Cavalier myth, moreover, embodied traits of order, stability, and cohesion that southern society stood in desperate need of. The result was what Paul Gaston has called the New South Creed, a transposition of Cavalier mythology onto the framework of Victorian belief in morality and industrial progress, a fusion of ideological elements so formidable that it effectively blocked the arrival of intellectual Modernism in the region through the First World War (9).

Hamilton's historical works about the war, Reconstruction and prominent figures of that time, tend to reflect this New South ideal. But his adherence to that ideal was tempered a realistic understanding of the ways in which North Carolina was holding herself back in development. One of the contradictions of Hamilton is that he appears to have ascribed to the New South Creed in many ways, yet remained aware and critical of the deficiencies he perceived in his home state. After hearing a speech given at the North Carolina Literacy and Historical Association by Hamilton, a reviewer had this to say:

North Carolina has been inclined to emphasize thing [sic] of secondary importance, Dr. Hamilton said [sic] in his address on the "Vitality of History," assertin [sic] that it is normal rather than dramatic [sic] events which count in the sum total of a nation's [sic] history....The State has been inclined to develop a kind of ancestor worship and smug satisfaction (Hamilton papers, scrapbook #1).

Hamilton himself weaves together both the theme of the noble fight and that of a need to modernize in this statement:

We have constantly reminded ourselves and the world that North Carolina was first at Bethel, farthest at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, and last at Appomatox[sic]. I yield to none in my deep pride and reverence for those men who so nobly and heroically carried the banners of a lost cause, but I submit in all seriousness that their achievements are not so vital in our history as are the facts that North Carolina has been at times first in mortality from typhoid fever and homicides[sic], farthest for a long stretch of years in white adult literacy, and at least close to last in recognizing the overwhelming importance of the great social purposes for which modern governments may be said to exist (Hamilton Papers scrapbook #1).

Another aspect of his view towards history is also part of his personal makeup, and it has its role in his shift from historian to manuscript collector. As noted above, he was profoundly affected by Reconstruction and the how the North imposed it upon the defeated South. The northern hegemony in interpreting events was an abiding resentment, which he used to good purpose in soliciting papers. It also emerges in his own writing. In 1919 he wrote the History of North Carolina: Volume III, North Carolina Since 1860 , which dealt extensively with the trials of Reconstruction. Its preface is interestingly prophetic on two counts - the durability of his interpretation of events and the problem of primary source material:

In respect to the period since 1876, while I have sought always to present with the narrative of fact sufficient interpretation to make an accurate picture of the time, and while I came to the task with little political prejudice and leave it with less, I am aware that there has not been a sufficient lapse of years, for any part of it, to make it a proper subject for definitive historical narrative, much less for any authoritative interpretation. Undoubtedly, some of my conclusions will be altered with the passage of time, and certainly it will be possible later to secure the use of a vast amount of material, now inaccessible, which will make the narrative much more complete and the interpretation more accurate ("History": v).

Some of the threads he develops are strikingly and painfully anachronistic to the modern reader. They have to do with race, for Hamilton was a racist, sincerely so if one can be said to be sincere about a prejudice. He did not harbor race hatred exactly, attributing many of the evils of Reconstruction to the civil rights agenda brought in by the North, but it is clear that he regarded blacks as ignorant and inferior.

His attitude toward African-Americans, particularly in the complicated political landscape of Reconstruction, makes for unpleasant reading. He says, "In the period following the war, ignorance and the negro accomplished no less evil [than ignorance and slavery]. Reconstruction past, the negro remained as a menace which lowered political morals, caused political stagnation, and along with these, blocked the progress of public education, and was a social evil of the greatest magnitude" ("History" 219). Sounding positively generous in the wake of this statement, he allows that "it was not the fault of the

negro and but for the curse of ignorance he would not have been such an obstacle to progress" (219). Indeed, Hamilton places much of the blame on the carpetbaggers who took advantage of the newly enfranchised black population. He notes that

In spite of race antagonism the feeling was fairly general that after all the negro was not to blame. It was the old story of Reconstruction - the ignorant and inferior race politically deluded and exploited for the benefit of the white men who rose to place and power by means of the indivisible negro vote ("History" 298).

The involvement of African-Americans in politics inspired panic in white southerners, who foresaw a coming domination of blacks over whites. Hamilton quotes Henry Litchfield West in the 1870's as saying "'These two assertions - that the Negro cannot govern, and that the white man will not let him govern - are axioms'"(qtd. in "History" 299). Saying the voting "'will be denied him...even at the muzzle of the rifle, and as long as he threatens to exercise his rights, just so long will the South remain solid,'" West defines the state of race relations that would curse the South for decades(qtd. in "History" 299). Hamilton himself ardently supported disenfranchisement and separation of the races as the only way for the South to stabilize herself.

His statements about race, and the War, tend to overshadow some of his later rhetoric, which stressed how history happened at a very individual level. Looking at the larger picture it is easy to see that he truly felt that mismanagement of race affairs had created even more strife within the South than had been created by the war. And this reveals as much of his resentment towards the northern occupation as it does towards the "inferior race". Still, Hamilton remained committed to Jim Crow and the separation of the races.

Understanding Hamilton's views of southern history is a key to seeing how the historian became a manuscripts collector. He was able to speak to a wide variety of his fellow southerners. Restoration of southern pride, countering the North's often-unkind depiction of the South, resurrecting the Cavalier figure - all were parlayed into his remarkably effective collecting strategy.

"RANSACK" HAMILTON

Letters are in every word and phrase immediate to and revealing of, in precision and complex detail, the sender and receiver and the whole word and context each is of: as distinct in their own way, and as valuable, as would be a faultless record of the dreams of many individuals.

The two main facts about any letter are: the immediacy, and the flawlessness of its revelations. In the true sense that the defendant and conscious letter is as revealing as the best available document of the power and fright of language and miscommunication and of the crippled concepts behind these. The vanity to be found in letters is almost as unlimited as literate human experience; their monotony is equally valuable.

James Agee

Hamilton followed a tradition of manuscript collecting at the University of North Carolina. David L. Swain, president of the university from 1835-1868, collected a number of papers and other materials. Many of his finds were lost during the Civil War, but others turned up later in the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, and in the Southern Historical Collection itself (Wilson 16-17). Kemp Plummer Battle, in his presidency towards the end of the 19th century, also collected manuscripts, which he gave to the library. They were eventually transferred over to the Southern Historical Collection (Wilson 23). While Swain and Battle were able to gather together material and muster support for southern history - Battle organized the Historical Society of the University in 1887 - they never attempted an institutional collection on the scale of the Southern Historical Collection.

In the teens, as his talks to various groups continually emphasized the importance of the everyday and seemingly mundane traces of the lives of the common man, Hamilton also began to pursue papers with what came to be a characteristic approach. He would send out feelers to individuals who, if they lacked the specific information needed, would offer further contacts. A typical reply to one of these castings is a letter from E.W. Nicholl on December

6, 1915:

Your letter of the 2nd instant was received on my return from Lexington Saturday evening. I hasten to reply.

I would advise you to communicate with Col. John B. Purcell, Richmond, Va. Col. Purcell married a daughter to Gen. Thos. H. Williamson, a near relative of Mr. Garrett. I am very sure that Col. Purcell and his wife can give you the information you desire (letter to Hamilton, Hamilton Papers).

Another, whose author regrets that he is unwilling to give up the volume Hamilton inquired about, offers in a post-script a clue to another find:

I think you can get the Michaux volume if it can be found. I should write
Mr. J.S. Michaux
City Clerk
Greensboro N.C. (Hamilton Papers, W.F. Rennett, January 12, 1917)

By the late teens and into the 1920's, Hamilton was spending an increasing amount of his time on his collecting activities. His correspondence shows that he had already established an interest in putting together a collection of southern materials at the University.

A letter from Robert C. de Rosset of New York from March 9, 1919 says,

The inclosed [sic] is an invitation to the commencement dances held at the University in June 1839, sent...to my great-grandmother....I believe you are interested in the collection of such things, and with the hope of its being of some value as a matter of University history, I am sending it to you (Hamilton Papers).

Many people were pleased and honored to give their materials to the University. George Kidder writes on February 4, 1916,

We are deeply gratified that the newspapers sent the University were a welcome addition to your special department, and if in any way they will be a contribution to North Carolina history relating to the four years of the Civil War, my father's preservation and care of them will not have been in vain (Hamilton Papers).

The prospect of safe-keeping and preservation, which Hamilton emphasized heavily in his letters, and the flattering idea that their family papers had historical importance were important points in favor of Hamilton's successful solicitations of donors.

Hamilton had for some time developed the notion of a great collection of southern materials housed at the University in Chapel Hill. He began to seek out financial backing,

writing various individuals and foundations looking for funding. One eloquent request was made to Professor William McMillan of Yale, in which Hamilton notes:

We have already built up a fine nucleus here and we are engaged in building up what we hope will be the greatest collection of material relating to a section of the United States that exists anywhere. We are making distinct progress in the matter, and we hope within the next few years to obtain sufficient endowment to carry on the process of collection and acquisition in a very systematic and complete fashion (Hamilton Papers).

Beardsley Ruml of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial in New York was contacted both by Hamilton himself and by others on behalf of Hamilton's proposal. In May of the same year Dean J.F. Royster writes to Ruml regarding a memorandum by Hamilton, R.D.W. Connor and Louis R. Wilson:

I have read with a good deal of interest the Memorandum prepared for you by Professors Hamilton, Connor, and Wilson in regard to their plans for building up a research library in the University in the field of social sciences....I should like merely to add my word of commendation of the project as it appears to me as head of the Department of English and Acting-Dean of the Graduate School. Such a collection as described in the Memorandum would be of tremendous service in many ways (Hamilton Papers).

Ruml was not encouraging at that time, but Hamilton continued to stay in touch.

In 1928 the University formally announced plans to establish the Southern Historical Collection. And in the following year the collection was given a \$25,000 endowment by Mrs. Graham Kenan, "which helped keep it afloat during the hard years of the depression" (Moore 23). The recently established Institute for Research in the Social Sciences at the University also provided critical funding for collecting trips and other activities. Other foundations, like the Carnegie Foundation, were solicited for funding during the difficult first years of the Southern Historical Collection's life.

In 1930 the Hamilton was officially appointed full-time director of the Southern Historical Collection, and given leave from teaching for two quarters of the year to devote himself to building the collection (Sitterson 47). He continued to use his earlier technique of creating a network of people who could put him in touch with possible donors. He also

spoke widely on the subject of the Southern Historical Collection, particularly targeting clubs whose missions were similar, like the Daughters of the Confederacy, the Colonial Dames, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. The popular historian Claude G. Bowers prepared a pamphlet that proved to be very useful in spreading the word, which Hamilton distributed widely.

His collecting trips, made always in a Ford automobile, were intricately planned to be maximally efficient and cover the greatest amount of territory possible. After mapping out a course, he would often advertise in local newspapers about the Collection, what it was for, and that he was seeking manuscripts to add to it. Hamilton also famously banked upon his widespread family connections, which were spread throughout the southern states, to either donate materials or provide him with an entrée into local families. He was not above seeking out the most distant collaterals. J. Carlyle Sitterson describes how on "one day in 1941 when I presented myself to an elderly gentleman in south Louisiana with a letter of introduction from Dr. Hamilton addressed to his 'cousin,' only to be startled with the surprising question, 'Who is this man Hamilton who calls me cousin' (Sitterson 49)?

Details of his collecting trips were kept in a series of trip diaries, most of which are restricted until 2004. However, one kept from Dec. 1933-Dec. 1934 is open for use, and it provides a fascinating glimpse of the sheer energy of the man in pursuit of his quarry. On one trip early in December of 1933 he planned a course through Kentucky and Tennessee. At one stop he writes,

I telephoned Humphrey Marshall on the strength of his name, to find out he had died some time ago, that he was a descendent of the two Humphrey Marshalls who served in Congress, and that their papers were in the possession of his son who lives in Illinois and whose address I got (Hamilton Papers).

Another note is a reminder of his own attitude about the worth of everyday papers: "The Jackson letters have been given to the 'Hermitage,' and to the Tennessee Historical Society, but the latter has not been interested in the ordinary family and business letters which I consider quite the most valuable" (Hamilton Papers).

Hamilton was an intrepid hunter, for the southern roads at the time were, for the most part, extremely primitive. The following passage is a harrowing vision of one experience, tempered with his own ability to absorb the spectacular surroundings. He had been told that the road was:

in almost perfect condition with a heavy gravel surface. It meant a saving of eighty-five miles and I took it. It was awful. There was hardly a trace of stone on it, and the light rain that was falling made the red clay as slippery as grease. There are no barriers, and the lake and, later, the rocky and empty bed of the river are a far way down. But I got through without any serious trouble, and finally reached the desert around Ducktown and Copper Hill. I have never seen anything like it. I remarked that night at Murphy that it was interesting and spectacular. One of the men at the table remarked, 'Hell, I imagine, is interesting and spectacular.' I was obliged to agree with the implied conclusion. But it is a marvellous [sic] sight to see those highly colored hills for miles around without a sprig of vegetation (Hamilton Papers)

The following day, December 20, he arrived back in Chapel Hill having covered 2,400 miles in 13 days.

The trips were packed with visits, and he would track prospects down in the most unlikely places. On a lengthy trip through South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee in 1934 one entry says:

I called on Miss Tiny Benning at the hospital and found her in very good shape considering that she was supposed to be dying when I was in Columbus two years ago. She is forgetful but remembered me and was very cordial and said that she still wants us to have the papers in the house (Hamilton Papers)

People who did not have materials but wanted to help the cause offered to track down prospects for him. In other cases, even mistaken identity could provide a lead:

I saw Jesse Yeates in the hopes that he was of the North Carolina group. I found his name by accident in the telephone book. He has no papers himself, he is not a descendent of the man of the same name that I am looking for, but gave me the address of the grandson I am looking for (Hamilton Papers).

At times he, often accompanied by his wife Mary, would make dozens of calls in a day. Still, there were limits to how much time he could devote to a given trip, which caused him a certain amount of anguish. One entry says:

Much against my will I drove through St. Francisville without a pause. Mary said I behaved as if the police were after me and I was bent on escape. As a matter of fact, I hated like the devil not to stop and see some people there....The place is full of wonderful material and cannot be properly worked in less time than a week, and until I can give that much time I had better stay away (Hamilton Papers)

This particular trip covered 5,000 miles.

REFLECTION FROM THE MIRROR

On January 14, 2000, the Southern Historical Collection celebrated its 70th anniversary. It is home to over 17 million items, and is one of the finest collections of its kind in the country. The Manuscripts Department includes the Southern Folklife Collection, which is its sound and image holdings, and the University Archives, home of the official institutional records. It has lived, and thrived, beyond its creator, for a manuscripts collection is at heart an organic thing and its nature is to grow.

Hugh Taylor and Terry Cook both concern themselves with how selection of which materials to keep determines what is remembered and what is forgotten. The Southern Historical Collection is an interesting example to use in exploring this, because even though its creator had very decided ideas about things, he was catholic in his collection building strategy. For a man with his strong views about southern history and race relations, it is much to his credit that he did not build an archive to buttress those ideas. Hamilton's determination that it was the everyday, the "run-of-the-mine" pieces of people's lives that are the heart of history led to a collection of materials encompassing both the great landholders and the sharecropper. Indeed, the very materials he gathered have given historians a way to show a very different South than was conceived in his own work. Jacques Derrida's "archive fever" describes this as a "disorder we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of our modern history and historiography: concerning all the detestable revisionisms, as well as the most legitimate, necessary, and courageous rewritings of history" (90). An even greater irony showed itself recently in a large exhibit of research opportunities in African-Americana in the Manuscripts Department, where Hamilton's portrait looked over a display case showcasing these materials towards a portrait of Confederate General Pettigrew, whose gaze appeared directed at a slave log in the case opposite.

In his work Archive Fever, Jacques Derrida Jacques Derrida explains our condition at present:

We are *en mal d'archive*: in need of archives. Listening to the French idiom, and in it the attribute *en mal de*, to be *en mal d'archive* can mean something else than suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun *mal* might name. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it....It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness (91).

In this he might well be describing what drove Hamilton, for the restlessness of the search amounted nearly to desperation towards the end of Hamilton's life. Finally, quoting an archeology analogy of Sigmund Freud, Derrida provides the perfect sketch in which to see Hamilton:

"Imagine an employer arrives in a little-know region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants...who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him - and he proceeds upon his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels, and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clearing away rubbish and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. *If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory*: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure house; fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past" (93).

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