

The Greater New Orleans Archivists

Newsletter

Winter

1993

**Next Meeting
Tuesday, December 14th
Time: 6:00 PM
Broadmoore Branch
of the
New Orleans Public Library**

Winter Meeting

The winter meeting is scheduled for Tuesday December 14th; our host will be the Louisiana Division of the New Orleans Public Library. The meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. at the Broadmoore Branch of the New Orleans Public Library, located at the intersection of Napoleon, S. Broad, and Fontainebleau. On the agenda are the election of officers and a report from the name authority list committee.

1993 Autumn Meeting

Our Autumn meeting was held on the University of New Orleans campus and hosted by Clive Hardy of the University of New Orleans Archives. After the opening greetings Andrew Simons gave a Treasurer's report. Sally Reeves congratulated those members who took and passed the Academy of Certified Archivists' certification exam. It was noted that copies of the GNOA carnival guide would be delivered to the various organizations and that Mardi Gras

expert and historian, Arthur Hardy, would be giving the guide some publicity. A brief eulogy of Ulysses Ricard was given by Andrew Simons.

Sally Reeves reported on the meeting of the SAA Committee on Regional Archival Activity. Examples of forms and publications of other regional archival organizations were passed around and it was suggested that the GNOA appoint a member to attend this meeting at the annual SAA convention. The GNOA has composed a membership form of its own and copies will be made available. A nominating committee for the election of officers was announced. Members of this year's nominating committee are Wayne Everard, Bill Meneray, Sally Reeves, and Lester Sullivan.

It was suggested that the GNOA work on a name authority list for Louisiana historical figures not listed in the Library of Congress name authority file. After some discussion a committee was appointed to

report on the work that would be involved in compiling such a list. Members appointed to the committee were Wayne Everard, Bill Meneray, Charles Nolan, and Irene Wainwright.

Our thanks to Clive Hardy and the University of New Orleans for their hospitality in hosting the meeting.

A Study Tour Of Chinese Archives, 1993

Seventeen American archivists had an opportunity, while on a three-week study tour in China in October, to see well preserved manuscripts on paper and tree bark, many from the fourteenth century and a few earlier. The delegation was sponsored by the Citizen Ambassador Program, which began in 1956 as an agency of the United States State Department. In 1982 and 1986 the Society of American Archivists had sent a delegation and Dr. William W. Moss, Director of Archives, Smithsonian Institution, was the advisor for all three study tours.

Our delegation visited nine institutions of major types in the great cities--Beijing, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Shanghai. At each meeting, members of the delegation and their Chinese counterparts presented papers, describing the different aspects of archival functions and management.

Current Archival practice in mainland China is based on the national law on archives of 1988. All historically significant documents belong to the state, whether or not they are in the state archives. Any documents that may be historically useful are encouraged to be deposited in the archives; personal or family records may be given some compensation.

Every level of government is expected to preserve its archives, which are subject to oversight by the Communist Party committees. One deputy director whom we met was the brother-in-law of a cabinet minister. There is no "freedom of information" act; access is controlled

by the local archives director. If access is denied, there is no appeal.

The archives were originally designed to make it easy to find dossiers about agencies or individuals, like a license bureau. Therefore, Chinese archives are indexed at the file level, and not until the record group with all its files is completely processed, the pages bound into a volume, the contents examined for name and subject, indexed, and its index on cards in the reading room, is that group opened to research. Record group descriptions, when in process, tend to be held as staff finding aids and not open to research. There is of course a great backlog of work.

Chinese archives frequently rely on strict chronological order to arrange record groups and files. Financial, personnel, and management records may be mixed in a single file, but neatly arranged in chronological order.

Policy, the profession, and training--all emphasize "Opening archives to society," a meaning determined by current Chinese political and economic practice. A part of the "opening" process is documentary publication, one of the chief functions of each archival institution. However, since an archives has the right to first publication of the texts of documents, these files will be removed from general use while the archivists are preparing their own publication.

American historians are a primary motivating force for the collection and management of archives, but we were told Chinese historians rarely sit down with archivists or use the archives. Archivists expect researchers to be members of a work-unit (that basis of Chinese society), who are writing its history (since 1949), or citizens who must verify some point in their past. For example, had members of

the family suffered during the Cultural Revolution?

When an archives and university cooperate on a documentary publication, the archivists examine files, select documents, and transcribe them for publication. Academic historians may suggest emendations, but customarily use secondary works and surveys for their own work.

The archivists whom we met were most courteous and eager to display their processes and holdings-- the compact shelving, microfilm cameras, computers and all. It was difficult to explain to our hosts, the role of private collections and the significance of the historian in American archives. However, we saw one hopeful wall poster: "The more Shanghai opens to the world, the more the world will open to Shanghai." It was a privilege to visit that magnificent country and meet our counterparts who have endured. We found some friends for life.

Marie E. Windell
University of New Orleans.

News From The Archives

Center for African and African American Studies Southern University New Orleans

Norman Smith deposited an addition to his papers which document his activity in the Treme Improvement Political Society, TIPS, of which he is chairman. The additions include political flyers and sample ballots from TIPS and other political organizations such as Louisiana Independent Federation of Electors, The Democratic Beavers, Inc., Independent People for Progress, and the Claiborne Political Association.

Charles Henault, curator of the National Museum of Zaire, presented a lecture titled, "S.U.N.O.'s Zaire Art Collection: Origins, Meaning, Importance" as part of the Lyceum

Series. The presentation was taped for television and will be aired at a future date.

The Historic New Orleans Collection

On display until the 8th of January in the Williams Gallery is the exhibition, "Letter Perfect: Three Centuries of Louisiana Correspondence." Also currently on display is a Christmas exhibition of late nineteenth century magazine illustrations which include images styled after Thomas Nast and Charles Upham. Opening January 18th in the Williams Gallery will be the exhibition, "Through A Lens Softly: The Photographs of Eugene Delcroix." A mini exhibition of photographs by Delcroix's contemporaries will also be on display in 1994.

Recent acquisitions include the Rosenthal Family Papers, the Henry Stern Family Papers, a scrapbook of Elizabeth Kell, and a collection of manuscripts related to shipping in New Orleans.

New Orleans Public Library, Louisiana Division

The Louisiana Division has received VCR equipment from the City Council which will allow them to show and dub copies of the Council meeting videos in the City Archives Collection. On exhibit through the end of the year on the third floor of the library is "Restoring Dakin" a show illustrating the Louisiana Division of the Arts planning grant to explore methods of preserving the James Harrison Dakin collection of architectural drawings.

In connection with other Black History Month activities at the New Orleans Public Library, the Louisiana Division will host its third annual African-American Genealogy Day on Saturday February 26. Greg Osborn will conduct a seminar and staff members will be on hand to assist patrons

with genealogical research.

Touro Infirmary Archives

The Touro Infirmary Archives has received a gift of a portrait of the late Frank Mayer Besthoff, wife of Mr. S. J. Besthoff, Jr. This portrait done by Peter Stevens will hang in the Frank Mayer Besthoff History Gallery of the archives. An exhibition of antique medical instruments and machines once used at Touro Infirmary is currently on display. The images used on the cover of the Fall issue of Louisiana Literature were supplied by the Touro Infirmary Archives.

In conjunction with the Gerontologist convention held in New Orleans the Touro archives was part of a tour of facilities in the community and a mini exhibit on the care of the elderly at Touro Infirmary from 1852 to 1993 was displayed.

University of New Orleans, Archives and Manuscripts/ Special Collections Department

With the Assistance of graduate students enrolled in the History Department's "Advanced Archives and Records Administration" class the department started processing the Community Services Council of New Orleans Collection, 1921-1972, Accession No. 34. This organization was the forerunner of United Way and the collection contains the history and daily transactions of social service agencies and programs generated in New Orleans during this period. The collection consist of approximately 100 linear feet of materials.

Certified Archivists

Susan Tucker of the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women took and passed the Academy of Certified Archivists' certification examination in September. Our congratulations to Susan.

GNOA New Member

Sister Mary Hermenia Muldrey, RSM of the Mercy Archives New Orleans and Mercy Research Library has recently joined the GNOA. We welcome Sister to our organization.

The Greater New Orleans Archivists Newsletter

Please send submissions to Carol Bartels, care of The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130-3179. The fax number is (504) 522-5108.

The Greater New Orleans Archivists Officers

Sally K. Reeves, President
Carol O. Bartels, Secretary
Andrew Simons, Treasurer

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**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
FROM
GNOA**