

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with W. NEIL FRANKLIN

Former Chief, General Reference Division

Alexandria, Virginia - August 15 and 23, 1972

Biographical Information Pertinent to Interview:

Born, Morristown, Tennessee	1902
A.B. University of Tennessee	1924
A.M. Princeton University	1926
Ph.D. Princeton University	1929
Asst. and Assoc. Professor of History, Southern Meth. Univ.	1928-1932
Assoc. Professor of History, Maryville College	1934-1935
Assoc. Professor of History, University of Tennessee	
Summers	1930-1935, 1935-1936

National Archives

Special Examiner	1936-1938
Associate Archivist, Div. of Veterans Admin. Archives	1938-1943
Chief, Division of Navy Department Archives	1943-1944
Chief, General Reference Division	1944-1962
Chief, Diplomatic, Legal and Fiscal Branch	1962-1966
Archivist, Territorial Papers Branch	1966-1972
Retired	1972

National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Research intermittently performed, 1972 --- for editors of  
NHPRC-sponsored projects:

- The papers of Andrew Jackson
- The papers of Andrew Johnson
- The papers of Ulysses S. Grant

(Dr. Franklin has transferred to the National Archives, R.G. 64, a complete set of Archiviews; nearly-complete set of minutes of Administrative Conference and Seminar Conference of senior professionals on assigned topics, 1943-1944; seminar in Federal administrative history conducted by Dr. Buck 1939 or 1940.)

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National Archives and Records Service

Oral History Project

Interviews with Dr. W. Neil Franklin  
Former member of the NARS staff  
Interviewed in Alexandria, Virginia

June 30 and August 23, 1972

Philip C. Brooks, Interviewer

BROOKS: Neil, I well remember when you first came to the Archives staff on June 1, 1936. As a veteran of 11 months service on the staff I was assigned to show three new staff members around the building. One of them was Neil Franklin and the other two were Oliver Holmes and Robert Bahmer. I wondered if you would tell me a little bit about what led you to come to the Archives in the first place and then, so that we'll know what points of view you do represent, the different positions that you held in the Archives.

FRANKLIN: Well, Phil, I well remember the incident you refer to on June 1, 1936. That's one of the standout dates in my career. Back at that time, so far as why I came to the National Archives, I belonged to that rather large group of professional persons who were looking for better pay and positions. I was then at the University of Tennessee teaching history. But it was on a year to year basis. When Phil Hamer had left the staff at the University of Tennessee and in '35 joined the staff of the National Archives, he told me later that year about the work of the National Archives, and described it in very interesting fashion. So interestingly, in fact, that I decided to apply for a position in the National Archives, which I did. I heard nothing from my application, except that it had been received, until along in the spring of 1936 at which time by letter I received an invitation to appear at the National Archives, at my own expense, of course, for interviews on April 18, 1936. The initial interview was with Collas Harris, Executive Officer, and a second interview was with Dorsey Hyde, Director of Archival Service. This required the better part of one Saturday morning. I was told that no offer could be made to me at that time but that I would hear from the National Archives in due course. On May 1 came a letter offering me a position and the letter referred to a post as Deputy Examiner at the grade of P-3. Arrangements were made for me to report for duty at the National Archives on June 1, 1936, which I did. And on that date I received a letter signed by the Archivist of the United States, R. D. W. Connor, stating that I was being appointed to the position of Special, not Deputy, Examiner. To this day I do not know why the change was made from the offer as Deputy and the appointment as Special Examiner. The grade was P-3; the salary \$3,200 per year.

FRANKLIN: As a Special Examiner, I remained with that title until February 1, 1938.

BROOKS: That was the time the Special Examiners' office was abolished and all of us were transferred.

FRANKLIN: To the Division of Accessions.

BROOKS: Right. Then under Hamer.

FRANKLIN: Right. And the former Deputy Examiners who had not already been made chiefs of divisions remained in the Division of Accessions. And that setup continued until the summer of '38. On June 1, 1938, I was sent to the newly-created Division of Veterans Administration Archives, the chief of which was Thomas M. Owen, Jr.

BROOKS: He had become chief about the beginning of 1938 when they accessioned the first Veterans Administration records. He was transferred then.

FRANKLIN: I would have guessed later than that. And I was second in command in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives. A promotion to the grade of P-4 within the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, occurred on September 16, 1941. I have these dates written down and they're based on correspondence which I have in my personal files. Then came World War II with many personnel changes and when Robert Bahmer left the National Archives staff to transfer to the War Department, I was placed in charge as Chief, Division of Navy Department Archives, at the grade of P-5 on August 17, 1943. That setup remained in effect for a little less than one year. A general reorganization of the staff of the National Archives occurred on July 1, 1944, at which time I was made chief of the newly-created General Reference Division, the chief function of which was to administer the Central Research room. I remained in that division for 18 years, specifically until 1962, and on the 18th of December of that year I was made chief of what was called the Diplomatic, Legal, and Fiscal Branch - Records or Division Branch. In that Division I remained until July 5, 1966, at which time I was transferred to the Territorial Papers Project and in that unit remained until my retirement on June 30 of this year, 1972. Now that, Phil, is a very hurried running over of the highpoints in my career at the National Archives.

BROOKS: Well it's not only interesting in itself but it will enable anybody who uses the transcript to know from which point of view you speak. You talked with Hyde and Harris. In what I've read about the Archives at that time and in refreshing my memory by looking at the Annual Reports and especially interviewing Harris - I can't interview Hyde, he's not with us anymore - I get the feeling that Harris was much more than being Executive Officer just in charge of the administrative activities, but that he mixed up in most all the professional functions. Now, do you think that was because he was ambitious, because he was basically interested, or because, as I suppose, it was partly because Connor had a great deal of confidence in him, or was it partly that Hyde, about whom I can't find very much now, was not very effective and there was a sort of vacuum there?



FRANKLIN: I have a feeling, Phil, that Harris' empire building, if one chooses to call it that, sprang in part from all of those reasons that you mentioned. He was interested in having as much responsibility delegated to him as possible. He definitely had some interest in the professional activities of the National Archives. So I think all of those factors enter into Collas' empire building.

BROOKS: I don't mean to disparage a guy who can't now defend himself, but I didn't think at the time and I don't now think that Hyde was the most effective person and I think he vacillated a great deal. He wasn't very sure many times. The best simple example of that, and it probably is an exaggeration, is one time when we were having one of those interminable conferences that we had about items on disposal lists, Hyde said if we voted to throw out a given type of record three times then the fourth time we ought to vote the other way just so we wouldn't set a precedent. We were working just as hard as we could to set precedents. We thought by that time that was the only way to act. But I think that this was typical of Hyde.

FRANKLIN: Yes, I think you're entirely right and I recall that particular incident that you mention. And I can recall another remark of Hyde's somewhat along the same line and probably at one of these interminable conferences to which you refer in which Hyde said that he always wanted to examine carefully every possible point of view before coming to a decision himself on any matter that came before him. And of course by devoting so much time to every conceivable point of view it was procrastination or dilatory tactics.

BROOKS: What was your impression when you first came to the Archives of the organization, the building, the people? It must have been quite different from anything you'd been in before as it was for all of us.

FRANKLIN: Well that's very easy, Phil, for me to think back and give you the impression and I think, even though I'm almost 70 years of age now, that my memory has been quite good with respect to first impressions. In regard to the building I thought it was spacious, monumental, and that the American public deserved the best efforts of all staff members in some kind of return for the outlay of money that went into it. I was properly impressed and I still am impressed by the architecture, the result of the work of John Russell Pope, and by the fittings of the building. Some seemed too elaborate. For example, the steel records containers. Experience seemed to indicate that that was an unwise decision to have put so much money into heavy equipment that took up a great deal of space. Also it was actually somewhat risky for the user. One could pull out a metal drawer that itself weighed several pounds and when filled with paper records weighed still more, and unless one was quite careful that drawer might fall to the floor injuring not only the records but perhaps the foot or feet of the person who had pulled out that drawer.

BROOKS: I remember once that actually happened to Miss Miriam Edwards of the Veterans Administration. We had a tour of a number of VA people. The drawer went out and fell on her foot, and she didn't like it.

FRANKLIN: I well remember Miss Edwards, though I don't recall that particular incident. Well, passing more from the building to personnel, and to the Office of the Special Examiners which was administratively a part of the Office of the Director of Archival Service, Dorsey Hyde, and his assistant, Marcus Price, I think perhaps, Phil, the thing that most impressed me was the youth of the corps of Special Examiners. After all I was then almost 34 years of age. I had had 8 years of college teaching experience and I was ushered into a large room with several examiners, all of whom looked to be and were much younger than I, and who certainly had not had the 8 years with college teaching experience. But I soon learned that so far as mentality went their minds were just as sharp and penetrating as one could ask for and I enjoyed meeting them and working with them. But I very definitely was impressed by their youthful appearance and youthful outlook. They were all enthusiastic about the work, looking forward to it, feeling there was a contribution to be made. I had a feeling of relief in August of '36 when a person older than myself came on the scene. This was Miss Irene A. Wright who had been in Seville, Spain, for several years working in the archives of Spain. I was told, Roscoe R. Hill, Chief, Division of Classification, had caused the Archivist, R. D. W. Connor, to send to her in Seville a cablegram with the one word, "come." And so Irene Wright came to the National Archives. And I think somewhat to her discomfiture she was assigned to the Office of Special Examiners. I say "discomfiture" because I don't believe that at any time she really felt that she was enjoying her work as a Special Examiner or that it was contributing greatly to the science of archives in this country. She had ideas well based on the value of records and would much prefer to have been, I think, a Deputy Examiner helping in the survey of Federal records in the District of Columbia or perhaps attached to the staff of the Chief of the Division of Reference, then under Nelson Vance Russell.

BROOKS: I think that's very true about Miss Wright. She never enjoyed that job. Her work in Spain had been with records of the 1700's and before. She'd never had any experience with recent records. A lot of the ones we dealt with were junk. Furthermore, she must have had, far more than you, the impression of being put in an office with a lot of young, very young people.

FRANKLIN: I have no doubt of that.

BROOKS: I found in the papers of Dr. Connor at Chapel Hill correspondence with her indicating that although Roscoe Hill was probably influential, the correspondence seemed to be the most important in bringing her in was with Charles McLean Andrews.

FRANKLIN: Well, that is interesting to me because I think that Irene Wright herself attributed more weight to Roscoe Hill in influencing Connor to appoint her, but it may well be that she remained in ignorance of the part that Charles McLean Andrews had played in it.

BROOKS: She had written to Andrews and he wrote to Dr. Connor and there was some correspondence back and forth. You note Dr. Connor said in the Christmas of 1934, when he'd been there about 3 months, he already had, what, 10,000 applications?

FRANKLIN: When I arrived in June 1936 Collas Harris told me, and I well remember this, that there were then on file no fewer than 35,000 applications for positions in the National Archives.

BROOKS: So I always thought that for any one of us probably it took somebody to jog our applications loose. I sent an application in the fall of '34 and I had an interview with Dr. Connor while they were still over in the Justice building. But nothing happened about appointing me until a letter was written by a professional friend, Samuel F. Bemis, in June of 1935. And I was appointed in July of '35.

FRANKLIN: And you attribute much of this to Sam Bemis?

BROOKS: Oh yes, very much so. And I think you can say the same thing about almost everybody in the professional line on that staff. Some came through Waldo G. Leland, some came through somebody else.

FRANKLIN: Now I still am in doubt as to just why I was appointed rather than someone else. I assumed that Phil Hamer, one of my former teachers, had something to do with it. So I went to see Phil Hamer on June 1, the day I first reported for duty, and told him that I wanted to thank him for the part - whatever it might have been - that he had played in making my appointment. "You don't have any thanks to give to me in any way because," he said, "I had nothing to do with it." And he asked me if I had written to any Member of the Congress in connection with it. I told him no, I had not done so, but perhaps I should have. Well, he said he had. He wanted to play safe but he didn't know that the letters to the Members of Congress had anything at all to do in making his appointment.

BROOKS: I don't think they had much to do with appointments on the professional side, judging from Connor's correspondence. I think that Dr. Connor in his statements and especially Harris orally have said that political patronage had nothing to do with appointments. Harris had dealt with the Congress as personnel officer of FERA and Connor had once been a member of the legislature in North Carolina. He was very conscious of the importance of the legislative relationship and you know he used both Page and Harris to work with Congress. They sometimes overlapped, I thought. But I don't think in the professional divisions the political endorsements made much difference. I had to get a clearance. Just a routine clearance from an Illinois Senator that didn't know anything about me.

FRANKLIN: Well, were you asked to submit that clearance?

BROOKS: Yeah, by Harris.

FRANKLIN: No one ever asked me to submit a political endorsement.

FRANKLIN: Well, getting back to my own case, I still do not know what influenced Dr. Connor to make the appointment. I do recall that Marcus Price, soon after the appointment was made, told me that he had been in Dr. Connor's office a short time before the appointment; that Dr. Connor had several applications on his desk and he said "Price, I'm going to make the choice from among these and as of now I'm inclined to this one," and pointed to my application, but without making any reference whatever to Price as to why he was leaning in my direction rather than that of others. So it's still a mystery.

BROOKS: Neil, you and I are the only people that are left of the original Special Examiners. One thing that impressed me about the Special Examiners' work was that we started out, and I'm not sure whether this was the result of any person's particular way of doing things or just because nobody quite knew what he was doing, we started out with what seemed to me a rather cumbersome procedure and in the course of a few years there were various ideas developed for simplifying it. What's your memory about the procedure and about who was responsible for the ideas of scheduling and records administration and so forth?

FRANKLIN: Well, I think you're right, Phil, in connection with the procedure being cumbersome. Particularly in that each item on a disposal list required an investigation and an appraisal by a Special Examiner. And the report on that was on a fairly long Special Examiner's survey form and we had to do that to each item on a list. This often ran to dozens if not hundreds of items and required a considerable expenditure of time.

BROOKS: We had to do it over again. If the same item came up the next year we had to do it all over from scratch.

FRANKLIN: Right. Year in, year out. And I can well remember that Irene Wright complained bitterly about the slowness of that procedure, and that the records that she dealt with on disposal lists, seemed invariably to be the chaff rather than the wheat. And she constantly said that there should be changes in procedure which would enable the Special Examiners to look at records recommended by agencies for disposal in comparison with records of permanent value which were the ones for the most part that the Deputy Examiners dealt with in their survey of Federal records in the District of Columbia. I have no idea, Phil, as to whether the origin of the idea of scheduling records for disposal rather than have them recommended by agencies year in and year out can be traced to any one person or any group of persons, but I suspect it flowed from a variety of persons and from a variety of causes. I think the Special Examiners as a whole were aware that that was not sound procedure re-recommending year by year the same items for disposal when presumably something ought to be done in order to permit a single one-time appraisal of the item that would last through the years. You will remember, Phil, I believe that at times the Special Examiners became bogged down by the number of items on the lists. And particularly when a session of Congress was nearing adjournment and it would be highly desirable to submit to that session as many items reported by agencies as possible,



in order to get the Congress to authorize their disposal and give the agencies relief regarding the space that the records occupied. Deputy Examiners were sometimes temporarily converted into Special Examiners. They would come down to Room 5W and we would hold enlarged sessions and pass upon the recommendations made by the individual Examiners on individual items. I think if anything the Deputy Examiners abhorred that kind of work more than any Special Examiner - such as Irene Wright - might have abhorred it.

BROOKS: At one time we had Fred Shipman and Paul Lewinson and I guess Frank McAlister working with us for several weeks.

FRANKLIN: Yes. And they disliked it very much. And I can still remember Paul Lewinson's classic remark made time after time after time when we asked for his vote on a particular item. The remark was, "Throw them out." And that was his feeling, but virtually none of the items reported for disposal were actually worthy of permanent retention.

BROOKS: I think the Special Examiners were necessarily, because of our work, more conscious of the need for improving this procedure than anybody else. And at first, as I remember, we didn't have any basic authorization for our work. Passing on records to be disposed of was the responsibility of the Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, by an Executive Order of 1912, and then by agreement, I think. I don't think that was formally recognized in legislation until I came to the National Archives long after the National Archives was set up in 1939. There was a Joint Committee on Disposition of Useless Papers in the House that passed on these things without formal action by the Congress as a whole. But it wasn't until the basic Disposal Act of '43 that we really got a good definition of records, and I think it wasn't until then that the Congress authorized the Archives to take action on approving disposal lists when Congress was out of session. A few years after that we got the authority to schedule, that is to say a certain form could be disposed of after 4 years on a continuing basis as long as it didn't change.

FRANKLIN: Yes. That's my recollection too.

BROOKS: I've always thought the Act of 1943 was a very important Act.

FRANKLIN: But the initial authority of the National Archives to pass on disposal lists was the result, so I was told, of an informal agreement between the Library of Congress and the National Archives. The Library of Congress was quite pleased to relieve itself of the task of going over these lists submitted by the various agencies.

BROOKS: I remember talking with Ed Leahy in the Special Examiner's Office while it was still in existence, probably some time in 1937, about the desirability of scheduling records for continuing authorization and one of us citing the example of the British who had some sort of provision for scheduling long before we did. And we also talked, probably all the Special Examiners did, about the relationship of the Archives to the agencies that produced the records and the fact

that if the agencies would set the records up better we could do a better job. That really was part of the basis of the records administration program. But I don't know whether Ted Schellenberg deserves any credit for partially initiating all this business or not, but he was interested in scheduling in the Agriculture Department, I remember. And who did the Special Examiner's work on Agriculture? I did some of it.

FRANKLIN: I did some myself.

BROOKS: I guess we divided it.

FRANKLIN: And I don't know whether any of the other Special Examiners were in on it, but I can well remember certain of the bureaus within which I worked. One was Agricultural Economics. Another, I believe, was Entomology. And perhaps others.

BROOKS: One of the notes I came across the other day interested me especially. When Dr. Buck first came to the staff, in the fall of 1935, the day he first came on the staff in which he visited us, or we were involved, and he asked some questions about the possibility of continuing disposal authorization. Also about the difference between public records and personal papers, as early as the fall of 1935.

FRANKLIN: Well that's interesting. I don't recall Dr. Buck's special interest in this problem of disposal and scheduling. But of course he was interested in all aspects of archival administration so I'm not at all surprised that he was interested in it. One point about procedure, Phil, and I'm just a little hazy in my own mind, but I seem to remember that that old Special Examiners' survey form carried on the reverse side the names, or at least the initials, of all the Special Examiners and whether or not in conference they voted for or against the recommendation made by the Examiner who made the survey. But I seem to remember that there were the conferences and that the survey form carried an indication of whether each Examiner voted for or against the recommendation made by the Examiner who had prepared the survey.

BROOKS: I think that was true as long as the Special Examiners Office was in existence and when Lewinson said, "Throw them out," somebody put a check on those that he voted for disposal.

FRANKLIN: And then what happened to that survey form? Did it go to Marcus Price as Assistant Director or Dorsey Hyde as Director?

BROOKS: Well, at some time the decision as to whether to recommend the item for disposal or not went onto the list, and was referred to the National Archives Council before it went to the congressional committee.

FRANKLIN: That's right, too.

BROOKS: And that went on until '39, I think.

FRANKLIN: It could even be that the Archivist of the United States himself put his okay on that form.

BROOKS: It could be. The whole procedure was terribly involved and I'm sure if you asked the young ladies that typed up the forms they would agree that it was terribly involved.

FRANKLIN: There are a couple of other aspects of that procedure that might be of interest to a historian of the National Archives, Phil, one of which I'm sure you well remember. That was the reliance that the Special Examiners placed, when it came to records dealing with accounting procedures or fiscal procedures, whether or not the General Accounting Office retained another copy of a particular form. And if the General Accounting Office did retain on a more or less permanent basis another copy the Special Examiners slept soundly after recommending disposal of those copies reported by other executive agencies for disposal.

BROOKS: And the General Accounting Office kept a great many of them, because it had all the monthly disbursing officers' accounts and accompanying forms from the very beginning of the Government in the 18th century. And that was true up until Lyle Holverstott and the Treasury Division worked out a disposal program with GAO and they threw out most of the records up until about 1900, except for selected ones.

FRANKLIN: I don't recall when that was, but probably in the early 1950's.

BROOKS: I remember going with Grover one time shortly after he became Archivist down to Cameron, Virginia. The GAO had all those warehouse buildings down there as records warehouses and there were great long corridors with stacks 12 shelves high full of these records. I took Grover down there and showed it to him, and he said it made him sick.

FRANKLIN: Because of the volume of the records. The question of what to do with them.

BROOKS: Right. Of course when we first started, as you will probably remember, the GAO had records in 16 buildings all over town. One was the Pension Building, the main one. Another was the New Post Office Building where they once had a fire. Was that after you came on?

FRANKLIN: I think that happened just before I arrived on the scene but I well remember hearing about it.

BROOKS: I left my briefcase up there the day before the fire and I was eager to get through the fire lines the next morning and did to see if it was still there. It was. Somebody had carefully laid it on top of a bookcase. But the firemen had just pitched batches of records out the window. They were all over the courtyard of that building.

FRANKLIN: The other point in regard to this matter of procedure that I think may be of interest, too, to the future historian of the National Archives is the retention of samples of records disposed of. The disposal list would be normally accompanied by samples of the individual series, portions of which were being recommended by the agency for disposal, and these would be carefully studied. Sometimes followup visits were made to the reporting agency by the Special Examiner, and then after his report was in and a definite decision made as to retention or disposal, those samples would be carefully packed away in stack areas of the National Archives.

BROOKS: Are they still there?

FRANKLIN: I was going to ask you if you know whether they still are. I do not know.

BROOKS: I don't. I would assume that they are but I don't know.

FRANKLIN: I do not know, but that, too, was one of the reasons why the Special Examiners felt that it would be safe to dispose of the records. In other words there at least would be a sample for those persons in the future who were interested in a particular series. That would be particularly interesting in connection, let us say, with series of records of correspondence which might relate to an area of subjects rather than a single form where a single copy of the form might well illustrate its function.

BROOKS: The more I think about procedure the form probably developed, Neil, in '35 when that work first started. They probably developed in conferences of Hyde and the Special Examiners and we all fumbled around wondering what to do, and Mr. Hyde just wanted us to answer all possible questions and we had all possible questions on that form.

FRANKLIN: Yes, you had a very lengthy form, which was already in use when I arrived.

BROOKS: I doubt that it was any one person's responsibility.

FRANKLIN: Oh, one other thing occurs to me, Phil, while we're talking about procedures in the Special Examiners' Office and you doubtless will recall too. It came about some months after my arrival on the scene and experience with the work and I think it was a result of our joint thinking on the matter. We developed within the office a form, not printed or processed, but simply a stereotype in which a single 5 by 8 card would relate to a functional type of record. And on that 5 by 8 card we indicated the type of record involved, and we would indicate specific disposal lists on which we had noted that type of record reported. If there had been discussions



with agency officials about it, some reference probably would be made on the form. But the idea was that we perhaps could move along toward the development at some time in the future of a reporting procedure which would result in the disposal of types of records as distinct from individual items on the list. And to some degree that is tied in with what we had been talking about a bit earlier the scheduling of records.

BROOKS: Very definitely. I think that was a very important phase of our work. And you have spoken about the fact that the Deputy Examiners disparaged and didn't like the work and we dealt mostly with records that were not of permanent value. I read in the Annual Report for 1937 and 38 that 97 percent of the items on disposal lists were actually reported by the National Archives to Congress for disposal authorization. Do you think the work of the Special Examiners was worthwhile?

FRANKLIN: Yes I definitely do think it worthwhile.

BROOKS: Do you remember any particular things that were brought into the Archives that you had retained from a disposal list?

FRANKLIN: As I recall, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics were brought in, the raw results (schedules) of a survey known as the Southern Mill Study made by the Bureau in certain North Carolina mills, primarily knitting mills, and which for some reason the Bureau of Labor Statistics had never analyzed to the extent of preparing a study which would be placed in print, and it had no intention of placing them in print. The other Special Examiners went along with me in the recommendation for retention and it's my recollection that those schedules were brought into the National Archives. Whether they have ever been used for reference purposes I do not know, but it is not inconceivable that even though they have not yet been used for reference purposes someone may come along next year or 10 years hence and see the value that lies in them.

BROOKS: This was always a problem we had, as I remember. We had a phrase - from the law- we were to report items to Congress for disposal that did not appear to have administrative, legal, or historical value. Right?

FRANKLIN: I believe that was the case.

BROOKS: And on historical value especially what we had to do in essence was to guess whether somebody 10 or 20 or some number of years from now would use the records. We couldn't prove it. It simply had to be a question of judgment. I do remember records from the Department of Agriculture - the Bureau of Irrigation and Investigations. They intrigued me partly because the head of that Bureau was Elwood Mead, I believe, a friend of my father's, and my father was interested in its work as a member of the Agriculture Committee of the House of Representatives. But they were some pretty important records, I thought, and they were brought in and I'm

fairly sure that they had been used for research. That Bureau grew eventually into the Bureau of Reclamation. These records were pretty important basic records from the first days of its organization.

FRANKLIN: Yes, I can still remember our discussions about those particular records. You asked, Phil, whether I thought the work of the Special Examiners was worthwhile, and my answer was definitely, "yes." One reason, I think, entirely apart from the records angle, was the experience gained by the Examiners themselves in preparing them for archival work in other activities, other responsibilities at a later date. And one thing particularly was the acquaintances, the friends, that they made in the various executive agencies that proved in later years in other connections to be of value to them. Reference has been made, I believe, earlier in our discussions, Phil, about these conferences with Dorsey Hyde as Director of Archival Service and Marcus Price as Assistant Director of Archival Service. You will remember, Phil, that as a rule once a week the Special Examiners would go for luncheon to the Harrington Hotel located near the Archives Building and nearly always either Marcus Price or Dorsey Hyde would go along and on rare occasions Dr. Connor, the Archivist himself, would join the group. And I remember with a great deal of pleasure the discussions that went on there in which varying points of view were brought out and the Special Examiners always had the benefit of what the Director of Archival Service and Assistant Director of Archival Service were thinking about our work and about other aspects of archival administration. I think those luncheon meetings were extremely interesting. I can recall one such at which Dr. Connor was present and at which I asked him the earliest date in connection with records with which he thought the new National Archives ought to be concerned. And he said, without any hesitation, 1774, when the first Continental Congress assembled. He went on to remark that as far as records prior to that were concerned they were only of incidental interest to the National Archives.

BROOKS: I've recently found from his correspondence, and from talking to other people, that there was discussion as early as that about transferring the Declaration, the Constitution, and the Continental Congress papers to the National Archives.

FRANKLIN: That is interesting. There is one other phase, Phil, of the work of the Special Examiners that perhaps should be touched on. That has to do with experience that they gained about records and records procedures and from making contacts in other executive agencies deriving from what I'm sure you will vividly remember - several trips on official business made by the Special Examiners. It was felt by the group of Examiners in connection with certain items on certain disposal lists submitted by certain agencies that they could perhaps gain considerable additional knowledge about the procedures which produced the records particularly of field

offices by making trips into the field, looking at the records where they were being created and processed, and then discussing the procedures with the persons who were intimately concerned with the production of the records. I'm not too familiar now with the specific places to which the other Examiners went, but I seem to recall that all of us made such trips and that in one instance George Ashworth and Emmett Leahy visited the Customhouse in New York City in connection with examining and appraising cargo manifests and passenger lists - particularly the cargo manifests. And in connection with my own trips I well remember three that I took, although one was after the date the Special Examiners were no longer functioning as a group. My first was in early 1937 to Buffalo, New York, to examine records of the Bureau of Customs and of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The second was in the fall of 1938; it was for the purpose of examining records of the Bureau of Customs; first at New Bern, North Carolina; secondly at Wilmington, North Carolina; thirdly at Charleston, South Carolina; and fourthly at Savannah, Georgia. I might interject here before passing on to the third visit that I made that my arrival in Charleston, South Carolina, in September of 1938, immediately after a hurricane had struck the city. I arrived very late in the afternoon, went to the Hotel Charleston, and had to be shown to a room by candlelight because their electric current was off. The next morning I went over to the Customhouse and was accosted by National Guardsmen who were guarding the entire area. Many buildings in the vicinity had been completely flattened by the hurricane. The Customhouse, however, had been built many years earlier; its walls were several feet thick, and it had been entirely undamaged. I finally persuaded one of the guardsmen to let me in to see someone in the Customhouse and once inside I had no trouble gaining access to the records I had come to see. Now the last of these trips on official business in connection with disposal was one in the summer of 1939 - after the Office of Special Examiners had been abolished - to the Customhouse at Mobile, Alabama. This case illustrates, Phil, very well, what I'm sure you can cite other instances of, how officials in executive agencies misinterpreted instructions. It so happened in this case that Miss Helen Chatfield, the Archivist of the Treasury Department, had sent out a kind of form letter to Customhouses all over the country inquiring about records and their possible transfer either to the central office of the Treasury Department in Washington or directly to the National Archives in Washington. In any event the officials in the Customhouse in Mobile had entirely misinterpreted her letter and had prepared a disposal list to which they attached a many page list of customs records. The list had been prepared by workers of the Work Projects Administration who had been laboring for the Survey of Federal Archives and the Historical Records Survey and through this misunderstanding of the Customhouse officials in Mobile, the Treasury Department was in effect officially recommending to the National Archives for disposal many Customs records which, when I to to Mobile, I found dated back even to the very early years of

the 19th century - some of very great historical value. Included were records related to work of Confederate officials in operating the Customhouse during the period of Confederate jurisdiction in Mobile. In time I was able to round up all of the records, identify them, and through correspondence with the National Archives arrange the shipment by freight of the entire body of records that appeared on that list so that they could be studied unhurriedly series by series after they came to the National Archives. This was done. In my opinion that was a very interesting case of a misunderstanding in the field of what should have been fairly clear instructions received from the central office.

BROOKS: Let me say one thing on that subject. In 1936 I went to San Francisco on my own, on a vacation at my own expense, but I took official administrative time for 6 weeks to do a survey of the Sub-Treasury in San Francisco which had long since been abandoned. The Treasury Department, I believe, had proposed to dispose of a lot of the records which had been surveyed by the Survey of Federal Archives people. Now, on the whole I think the Survey of Federal Archives like the Historical Records Survey did truly valuable work. But necessarily, because it was that kind of project, they sometimes had people that really didn't quite know how to list things clearly, and they didn't do a very good job on the Sub-Treasury records. On the same trip, however, I had looked at records in the Customhouse and there was a man in charge who was a hanger-on. He had no particular qualifications for the job. On the second floor of the building they had piles, not files, but piles of records they were proposing to throw away. Most of them were book records from way back in the time when they kept book records and the man picked up one of these books simply to illustrate to me the kinds of useless uninteresting junk they had in this batch. This particular book was a list of every ship that had entered the port of San Francisco in the year 1851! I'm sure that that was retained and I hope all the rest of those records were. But I took an official trip during that period to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The only thing I can remember about it is seeing the desk on which the Treaty of 1904 was signed ending the Russo-Japanese War and I don't think the records that I saw were of any particular value.

Well Neil, we probably have dealt with the Special Examiners' office as much as we can profitably. One of the very interesting developments in the early years of the Archives was the transition from having several centralized functional divisions, the original setup of the place, and then records divisions which were referred to as custodial divisions and really didn't have much more function than that. This was the plan that apparently was set up by Hyde, Connor, and Harris because they were about the only three people on the staff when they had to send the first budget justification to the Budget Bureau in the winter of '34-'35. There was a centralized Division of Cataloging, a Division of Classification, a Division of Research, a Division of Accessions, and a Division of Reference. At least those, except for the Reference Division, were later completely decentralized to the custodial divisions which became the records divisions. Now I believe the first step in that



process was the abolition of the Special Examiners' office in the spring of 1938, when we were all absorbed into the Accessions Division. That in turn was divided up among the records divisions and we were parceled out in June of 1938. You went to Veterans and I went to Navy. I remember that, perhaps before he became Archivist but certainly about that time, in the fall of '41, Dr. Buck was very much interested in this process of reorganization and strengthening the records divisions. I've tended all these years to give the main credit for this decentralization to Dr. Buck. But I have realized, in reading Annual Reports particularly, that the process was well underway before Dr. Connor left, and the basic decision, I think, to eliminate the decentralized divisions was within Dr. Connor's period. Do you have any special comment on that or any memory of the people involved?

FRANKLIN: I'm afraid, Phil, I can't throw very much light on that. I'm aware, of course, of the fact that such administrative decentralization occurred but as to who was responsible - Dr. Connor, Dr. Buck, Dorsey Hyde, Marcus Price, or others - I have no information. Now the Reference Division, headed first by Nelson Vance Russell and later by Philip M. Hamer, remained a centralized unit as you well know long after the decentralization program had begun with the abolition of the Divisions of Cataloging and Classification, the abolition of the Division of Research and the setting up one after another of what came to be called records branches or records divisions. That is branches or divisions concerned primarily with the administration of the records of particular Executive agencies as they were transferred to the National Archives, such as you mentioned, the Divisions of Navy Department Archives and State Department Archives. There seemed to be in the beginning, Phil, a cleavage, a very distinct cleavage, between members of the professional staffs of those records divisions and staff members on the other hand of the so-called "front offices," that is, the Office of the Administrative Secretary dealing with public relations and the Division of Publications, headed by Solon J. Buck originally, and the Division of Reference itself. Now I was more aware of the suspicion, of the resentment even, on the part of members of the reference staffs of the records branches toward members of the staff of the Reference Division. Perhaps this cleavage was a natural sort of thing but it seemed that reference service was not decentralized in the same way in which, let us say, decisions on recommendations on transfer and on the disposal lists, and the descriptive work had been pretty much decentralized. So far as reference work was concerned the Division of Reference wanted to dictate policy and did dictate policy with respect to such things as how much time might be devoted to particular inquiries, the kind of replies that should be made to certain types of inquiries, and more particularly that the written responses to inquiries should go out through the Reference Division, particularly if they involved more than one records branch. And there were instances, perhaps not numerous, but they did occur, in which the phraseology of the report prepared in a records branch was deliberately changed by personnel of the Reference Division. And persons in the records branch who had prepared the report felt that they were just as well versed in the usage of the English

language as were staff members in the central Division of Reference and rather resented the changes in language, because such could afford the basis for a wrong interpretation to a statement made in the reference service report. So there was very definitely a feeling of difference, a feeling of contention, a feeling that the Division of Reference was not cooperating as it were in the way in which the records branches felt it should. Then in addition, Phil, there's the angle of the handling of researchers themselves. In practically all cases according to my recollection, in those years the central Division of Reference met the new researcher and discussed with him his needs, and as a rule telephoned to employees of a given records branch and indicated what the employee of the Division of Reference thought should be sent to the central research room for use by that particular researcher.

BROOKS: The original concept was that all the records studied by researchers from outside would be done up in that very elaborate Central Research Room, right?

FRANKLIN: Right. And it was a rare thing that the researcher ever got back to the stacks. Now I well remember one such case in the old Division of Veterans Administration Archives when I was there (1938-43). I don't recall how it happened, but if I remember rightly this particular researcher - whose name was Wallace Davies, then a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard - was using records at the Library of Congress. His topic was "Patriots on Parade", which I thought was a genuinely catchy title for a study that he was making of patriotic societies prior to perhaps 1900. Someone at the Library of Congress acquainted with me and knowing that I was in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives of the National Archives suggested he call me, and perhaps I could be of help to him. So arrangements were made for him to come to the National Archives. After getting his card of admission in the Reference Division, he was permitted to come to the Division of Veterans Administration Archives and we were of assistance to him, particularly in getting permission for him to use certain records in the Veterans Administration that he later said were of great value to him. I remember this case because it stands out as an exception rather than the rule and those of us in the records branches felt that we knew at least something of the records that we were dealing with each day and felt that more recognition should be given to that body of knowledge that the reference personnel in the records branches possessed.

BROOKS: Let's digress a minute before we get back to reference, as to the decentralization program and the early abolition of the Special Examiner's Office and the Accessions Division. I suspect that one reason the Cataloging and Classification Divisions were not abolished until a year or two after that was because they had pretty big staffs. The Catalog Division was headed by John Russell who was a trained librarian and later was for 25 years Librarian of the University of Rochester. I think he had 22 girls up there who were cataloging all the records in the Archives and it soon developed that that just wasn't feasible - that archives didn't lend

themselves to that kind of cataloging. The Division of Classification was headed by Roscoe Hill who was an older man and undoubtedly, I'm sure, felt uncomfortable with younger men over him. I think Roscoe was uncomfortable with anybody that didn't want to do something his way, but that may be a bit of a prejudiced remark on my part. He was a cantankerous individual.

FRANKLIN: I referred earlier to those weekly conferences at lunch at the Harrington Hotel which the Special Examiners enjoyed along with Marcus Price and Dorsey Hyde and occasionally with the Archivist Dr. Connor. I can remember, and I believe it was at one of these luncheons, that Dr. Connor in speaking of Roscoe Hill made the remark that he lacks a single redeeming vice. And that remark has remained with me through these years. Roscoe, as you know, did not smoke, reputedly did not drink, and I believe you told me once about his interest in economy to the extent that he did not give you a lift all the way home after attending the Chattanooga meeting of the American Historical Association in December of 1935.

BROOKS: This is very vivid in my memory. Ed Leahy and a friend of mine, Jack Kemble from California, and I rode back from Chattanooga - I went from Chicago - we rode back with Dr. Hill and paid him a penny a mile and I'm sure he came out all right financially on that trip. And right at midnight on a cold winter night he went over the Key Bridge into Georgetown, 25th Street, and said "Well, I guess you boys can get a streetcar from here up to the Hill," where we lived. And we got a streetcar.

Well Roscoe was always a cantankerous individual and he set up a sizable division. I've forgotten how many people were in it. Some of the most important people in the Archives now or in recent years were originally members of the Classification or Cataloging Division. You remember Hill's division did a considerable job of setting up the classification scheme - an artificial scheme - for the records of the World War I Food Administration. Probably those records lent themselves to that kind of scheme better than some other records because they were long inactive and disordered, but I think it was realized after a while that you couldn't impose an artificial classification scheme on a batch of records without violating their archival integrity.

FRANKLIN: Right, and particularly I think, Phil, because of the changing administrative structure which every executive agency is subject to. May I comment about the high caliber of the personnel of the Division of Classification? I seem to remember that Roscoe Hill practically required a Ph.D. degree of all of the appointees on his professional staff.

BROOKS: That's correct. They had some fine people in there and in the Catalog Division too. Well, when John Russell left the Archives and went to the University of Rochester, Roscoe - when his Classification Division was abolished - went to the Foreign Affairs section, didn't he? He was there for some years, I think.

FRANKLIN: He became Chief of the Division of State Department Archives, as it was called at that time. I believe that he remained Chief of the Division of State Department Archives until 1948 or 1950 when he reached the age of 70 and retirement became mandatory.

BROOKS: Right. And when he retired I was in charge of the division over him. That wasn't a very pleasant relationship either. The Division of Reference was originally headed by Nelson Vance Russell, who was a historian of some experience and repute, I guess. I don't know much about his background now. He left early, I think in '39 and went out to Carleton College and died not too long after that.

FRANKLIN: Well, after he went to Carleton College, I believe, he became President of Carroll College. I think it's somewhere in Wisconsin. I'm sure the name was Carroll and after being at Carroll a few years he died in office.

BROOKS: Well, I suppose it was more difficult to simply transfer the function of reference entirely to the records divisions as you could with accessioning, classification, and so forth because with reference you always had the problem, and still have, of the private researchers who come in from outside who don't know where the material is and it doesn't matter much to them which division or branch it may be in. And there has to be somebody centrally to guide them. And I suppose it's always been a problem just how you ought to cut the pie.

FRANKLIN: Oh yes. There is presently, as you know, the Central Reference Division, and there are still conflicting ideas as to what the records branches contribute to the reference picture and what the Central Reference Division does. And there will always be differences of opinion as to where the line shall be drawn.

BROOKS: And I suppose the structural pattern followed, or was affected to some extent by the trends in reference service. I've always had the general feeling that up until the war we weren't in business long enough to get a great amount of demand from private researchers outside. In the Annual Reports there are many studies cited, practically all there were, I believe. Historians weren't as used to the Archives as they later became. You remember Roy Nichols at Pennsylvania published an article in 1940. It was a paper at one of our Society of American Archivists meetings called "Alice in Wonderland or The Historian Among the Archives." I think it reflected a certain amount of confusion and set forth some things the Archives ought to do by way of finding aids, and so forth, to make the records more available. During the war there was necessarily an emphasis on service to Government agencies. The private historians were going off to war themselves and percentage-wise there was far less reference service by outside scholars, right? So this, I've always supposed, picked up after the war. But in the meantime, sometime, you had the development of certain classes of researchers that seemed to want special attention, particularly genealogists, and I think they've always been centralized



in Central Search, have they not?

FRANKLIN: Pretty much so. Yes, I think in general what you have said, Phil, is correct, and I have been under the impression that prior to World War II few established scholars, if we may call them that, scholars possessing reputation, came to the National Archives for research. Apparently they saw no need to do so. They had their reputations, they could continue to do what many of them had done before, that is, use published records extensively and maybe pounce on a single manuscript collection or two or three such in their immediate locations and not have to journey to Washington. So they were completely unfamiliar as a body with the potentialities of the National Archives. Then came World War II at which time reference service was curtailed. Transportation services were drastically curtailed so that unless the historian lived in the Washington area he had difficulty getting here and our reference service made no pretense of offering much to the scholar during World War II.

So it was not until after World War II that there was any reason for what might be called an upsurge in reference service, and that did occur after World War II. I think part of the upsurge was owing to the GI Bill of Rights which made it possible for veterans who enrolled in graduate schools to take advantage of the financial opportunity to come to Washington and utilize primary sources for preparation of their dissertations. And since that time those students have grown older, become faculty members themselves, and have seen to it that their students in turn are required to come to the National Archives and to the Library of Congress or some similar depository to make use of the goodies that are there for them.

BROOKS: Neil, before we get any further, and it relates to this question of use by scholars, because it involves the question of how well we ourselves knew the records, and how well we knew what was in them. Do you have any particular impressions about the effectiveness of the preliminary survey as a basis for carrying over into the Archives information about the records when they were accessioned?

FRANKLIN: Well, I can speak only for myself, Phil. I don't know to what extent other professional employees benefited or failed to benefit by the results of the survey of the Deputy Examiners of Federal records in the District of Columbia. In my own case, those surveys were, I would say, of limited value. I rarely used them in my own work in looking up references to specific bodies of records.

I'm thinking particularly here of my work in the two records divisions of Veterans Administration Archives and Navy Department Archives. Comparatively few requests for transfers of records were made by the Veterans Administration prior to World War II, and then it, as well as the Navy Department, was pinched almost overnight for office and storage space, and flooded the National Archives along with the requests from other executive departments and agencies,

for transfers of records that were not needed in transaction of day-to-day business. But rarely did I have occasion in connection with those agency transfer requests, as we called them, to go back to the preliminary surveys made by the Examiners. But I do think that one thing of positive value growing out of them was of a personal nature. In other words, the Deputy Examiners had spent considerable time in each of the executive departments and agencies and had made contacts with officials from higher positions down to file clerks so that when the day came for transfers of records, and that day was not long in coming, why the contacts were there. It was much easier to arrange for the transfer of the records than it would have been otherwise.

BROOKS: In most all cases the people that made the preliminary surveys became heads of the appropriate divisions, I believe. The first division was called Division of Department Archives Number 1, under Arthur Leavitt. Fred Shipman headed Division Number 2. It dealt primarily with the State Department. Shipman's first job was to do the preliminary survey in the State Department. He later did all the Veterans Administration preliminary surveys, and I went with him. I was working on the disposal lists from Veterans and we thought it would be sensible to do it together. I think that's the only time when a Special and Deputy Examiner got together on it.

FRANKLIN: Yes, that's correct, Phil. Then you were interested, I believe, in my work in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, particularly regarding the functions involved and just how it was carried on. So I do have a few thoughts about that. The work that I did in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, Phil, was what might be called all inclusive. That is, it touched on all aspects of the work of the division. As noted earlier in our discussion, the chief of the division was Thomas M. Owen, Jr., who had been transferred to the new division from the liquidated Division of Accessions, of which he had been the chief. And I tried to aid Tom Owen in all aspects of the work. He and I felt sometimes rather bitterly about our inability to get personnel so that the division could carry on work in a certain function that in some of the other divisions seemed to go forward pretty well. I refer to the function of description, or descriptive work. The explanation in our case was that we had such a heavy reference load and still later a matter of accessioning large bodies of records as well as small that it seemed the so-called front offices could never give us enough personnel even to keep these more vital or at least more pressing functions up to date. One result was that in all of the time that I was in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, that is, from 1938 to 1943, almost no descriptive work was done, much to the regret of Tom Owen and myself. We could not dodge the reference service, because it was extensive and because answers had to be made to the requests. Many searchers came to the Central Search Rooms and even though they might seek only genealogical information, as was true of a majority of them,

we were required to search for the requested record and if we could locate it send it to the Central Search Room for service there. Then the Veterans Administration itself required considerable attention. As far as loan service went, every day the Veterans Administration truck, which we persuaded that agency to use in connection with that loan service rather than requiring the National Archives to furnish transportation, came to the National Archives Building bringing a list of records, case files which they wished the next day, returning those that they had finished with and picking up those that had been requested on lists furnished the day before. It was a very active loan service and one that was carried on very much to the satisfaction of the Veterans Administration. One might wonder that the Veterans Administration would need case files that it had decided earlier should be transferred to the National Archives. But the answer is quite simple. In so many instances new claims for pensions or other veterans benefits would be submitted to the Veterans Administration by widows or by children of veterans, and whose claims as far as the veteran had been concerned would have been closed long before and the case file sent to the National Archives. There was simply no way of knowing how far back the case file might have been temporarily closed because even in those days there were a few files relating to military service, believe it or not, in the War of 1812. We had the file and if a new claim were presented based on the service of that old-time veteran why we sent the file to the Veterans Administration to help in adjudication of the new claim. But of course the great mass of those files that went back on loan to the Veterans Administration had to do with Civil War and Spanish-American War service.

BROOKS: I suppose that the nature of the work of each records division varied somewhat according to the kind of records it had. Weren't the Veterans Administration records very largely case files? Was any substantial amount of material transferred other than case files?

FRANKLIN: Now you're entirely right, Phil. The vast percentage of the volume of VA holdings is made up of case files relating to military service beginning as early as the Revolutionary War and coming up through the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, and a few peacetime files relating to service in the 20th century. We did not, however, have any of the Veterans Administration World War I files until after World War II began. Then it became necessary to transfer additional records in order to relieve the Veterans Administration of a space problem. Among case files transferred were those relating to guardianship of World War I veterans or their dependents, the Allotment and Allowance Program of World War I, or the War Risk Insurance Program of World War I. As World War II progressed the Veterans Administration became more and more interested in transferring to the National Archives large blocks of records series that related to World

War I activities. But, as you indicated, they were for the most part in the nature of case files.

It may be of interest and concern to future researchers in the National Archives that there exists in volume very little of the administrative records of the old Bureau of Pensions which administratively dates back of 1849, when it was placed in the newly created Department of the Interior. Originally it was a small office within the War Department. Regarding those Pension Bureau administrative files, many questions have come up about them. They would be of considerable use to the historian but we do not know what happened to them. They simply have disappeared. The Veterans Administration officials through the years have told me that they knew nothing of these records. I suppose that there are in the National Archives now as a result of transfers what remain of those administrative files. We had one searcher who was close to a Member of the Congress and wanted to see those files but simply could not believe that they had disappeared. He therefore had his Congressman write a letter, which he drafted, addressed to the Archivist of the United States asking what had happened to those Bureau of Pensions administrative files. So Bob Bahmer, the Archivist, sent me the letter and I prepared a reply for the Archivist's signature saying they simply had disappeared, we did not know what happened to them other than these fragments that are now in the National Archives. Too bad. That's just one of those things.

I would like, Phil, to add this along the line of what we were talking about a moment ago. As you well know, the administrative records of the Bureau of Pensions became a part of the records of the Veterans Administration when it was established by law in 1930. In the Veterans Administration in its early years there existed an administrative unit called the Historical Library and in that Library were located many of the surviving fragmentary administrative records of the Bureau of Pensions. I came to know quite well as a Special Examiner and later as a member of the staff of the Division of Veterans Administration Archives the librarian and the assistant librarian and they permitted me to go through the holdings of the Historical Library unit by unit. And by that careful check I found in that Historical Library many of these records, the sum total of which remains few, but they were transferred to the National Archives. It appears that the predecessor of the Historical Library's head, after the Veterans Administration had been created, had gone through the agency visiting practically all its offices and where he could see those older records - usually in bound manuscript form - he would pick them up and with the consent of the head of the office carry them off to the Historical Library. In that manner most of them had found their way to that Library. It was rather easy for me with the full encouragement of the Librarian to arrange their transfer to the National Archives Building.



BROOKS: I don't know whether there was much reference to those records by outside researchers before 1943 or not, but suppose somebody came in and wanted to look at the record of his grandfather in the Civil War or wanted to study some problem of administration of the veteran's claims in the latter part of the 19th century. Those case files weren't all open to private researchers, were they? Was there a problem of access?

FRANKLIN: No. As I recall, Phil, there was no problem of access to the case files that came over to us. Later there arose the question of military service and the reports by the Office of the Adjutant General of the War Department concerning service, and an agreement was worked out between the National Archives and both the Adjutant General's office and the Veterans Administration whereby if that service was older than 75 years the researcher might see the AGO report. If, however, the service had terminated 75 or fewer years ago the researcher was not permitted to see the file. And that 75-year limitation, so far as I know, is still in effect.

BROOKS: It still holds for medical records and a lot of other kinds of records.

FRANKLIN: All kinds.

BROOKS: Well, there was a provision in the original Archives Act for the head of an agency to close certain records to research and the Archivist didn't have much to say about it as the law was originally passed. But we were comparatively innocent in those days about all this problem of access, security classification, and so forth that's become such a very great problem with us in more recent years.

FRANKLIN: Certainly as far as Veterans Administration records went there was no such problem. That agency had adopted well defined rules to guide us. Turning, Phil, to another matter, a highlight of my service in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, and for that matter my service in 36 years at the National Archives, was my finding in the Veterans Administration storage warehouse - which was a converted garage on Upshur Street, NW., Washington - of the surviving schedules of a special 1890 census. The special census was of Union veterans of the Civil War or their widows in case the veterans were deceased. These schedules were unbound and tied in large bundles, one large bundle usually for each of the states. Unfortunately we have not yet come up with the schedules for the states running alphabetically from Alabama through Kentucky. To put it in other words, what we do have in the National Archives now, after they were promptly transferred in or about 1943, are the schedules for the states running alphabetically from Kentucky through Wyoming. Now those schedules take on added significance when one is reminded that virtually all of the schedules of the regular 1890 population census were destroyed in a fire in 1921 in a temporary building located on Virginia

Avenue in Washington, D.C. We have in the National Archives now the fragment of those regular 1890 census schedules and if I remember rightly the number of individual entries in the schedules for about a half dozen of the states total no more than 6,000. Therefore, these schedules of the veterans and widows of Civil War veterans have added importance. Why they were tucked away in some odd corner under bodies of other records, I do not know. What is significant is that they now are in the National Archives. They have been placed on microfilm and quite a number of positive prints of the microfilm have been sold to libraries and other institutions over the country.

BROOKS: That certainly warrants being called a high spot. Had the regular 1890 schedules that were burned already been tabulated?

FRANKLIN: Yes, as far as statistical results are concerned, but the average genealogist is interested in the name and location of a given person at a given time, and that information for 1890, with the exception of this fragment of 6,000 or so names, has disappeared.

BROOKS: Neil, one more thing about your work in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives. Was most of your time spent on any one or two functions or was it pretty well distributed?

FRANKLIN: During my early period of service there my time was for the most part devoted to reference service because we were always somewhat behind in answering inquiries. Among functions priority was given to establishing procedures in connection with various phases of search room service, a loan service to the Veterans Administration, and particularly the preparation of written replies to inquiries that were received by mail. In 1940 there was transferred to our division the 3,000 cubic foot collection of records relating primarily to service in the War of the Revolution and the War of 1812.

BROOKS: Was that the first substantial transfer?

FRANKLIN: Not of records to the building because Fred Shipman at the time he was a Deputy Examiner had arranged for the transfer, I believe in 1938, of a very large volume of Civil War and later pension applications files. They fill several stack areas.

BROOKS: They were in the main building at the Veterans Administration. I remember when we surveyed the Veterans Administration records I was doing the Special Examiners survey and Shipman was doing a preliminary survey. I think they had two sub-basements and there were just miles of cabinets for those records. But I guess the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 records, were down in the Munitions building on Constitution Avenue near 17th Street. Mrs. Margaret Finch was in charge. And she was very much upset about our coming and said, "Oh, it's come at last," because she foresaw the transfer of the records.

FRANKLIN: The handwriting was on the wall. Yes, there was first the very large transfer arranged by Fred Shipman of the Civil War and later pension application files which fill several stack areas in the National Archives. And then, as I remarked, in 1940 there were transferred the pension application files relating to service in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. In number there are for each war approximately 75,000 files. That doesn't mean a file for each veteran. Sometimes the veteran married and later the widow put in her pension claim and then perhaps still later a dependent child might have made a claim so it doesn't mean there were that many veterans. Along with these records came the still larger collection of the so-called bounty land application files. These relate to claims for bounty land based on service from the Revolution right through 1855, the date of the last act for bounty land. The total number of files in this bounty land collection is something like 500,000. Now those were arranged, as I remember, in 16 different series so one may well imagine the difficulty of searching in 16 different series for a particular bounty land file. One of the good results, Phil of the Work Projects Administration was that through the assignment of a large number of persons being paid out of WPA funds, an alphabetizing project was carried on within the National Archives building. Result: instead of 16 series within which a search conceivably would be conducted, there is only one series, alphabetically arranged of approximately 500,000 case files.

BROOKS: Was that associated with the flattening project? There was once a big project of flattening.

FRANKLIN: Yes, you are right. These bounty land files were folded when they came to the National Archives but as a phase of the WPA project they were unfolded, dampened, dried, and placed in a new jacket which was labeled appropriately and then placed in its proper alphabetical order.

BROOKS: They were done by WPA people in the Archives Building. Is that right?

FRANKLIN: Right. It was done under supervision of Arthur E. Kimberly, who was then Chief of the Division of Preservation. And it should be pointed out, I think for explanatory purposes, that while still in the Veterans Administration the files relating to service in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812 had already been unfolded, flattened, and placed in linen-lined envelopes or jackets that have been in use up to the present. And apparently the Pension Bureau, before the days of the Veterans Administration, was able some way to get enough money to order the necessary 150,000 or more linen-lined jackets which have withstood the extremely heavy reference demand that has continued on these files.

BROOKS: Were they in the Munitions Building?

FRANKLIN: All of these were in the Munitions Building. There were bounty land files, Revolutionary War pension files, War of 1812 pension files, and quite a number of other records that came in that same accession, the serial number of which, I believe, was 616.

BROOKS: The climate couldn't have done them any good down there. As I remember the Navy and Munitions buildings before air conditioning were the hottest places in the world.

FRANKLIN: You can well imagine that was the case. But even so, these six ladies who serviced the records were not interested at all in transferring to the first air conditioned Federal building in Washington, namely, the National Archives Building. They wanted to remain with the Veterans Administration.

BROOKS: And now while we're on that subject, did Mrs. Finch come directly to the Central Reference Division in 1940?

FRANKLIN: No. She was placed on the staff of the Division of Veterans Administration Archives together with, as I recall, five other lady clerks who had been servicing the records for a number of years. And so great was the service on the records that there was the rule of sending to each inquirer abstracts or summaries of the data in only two case files per calendar year. This meant of course that a genealogist in the provinces, hoping to build up his family history through reference on this VA collection, would require several lifetimes in order to get enough information to compile a full-fashioned family tree.

BROOKS: That was a rule that had been imposed by the Veterans Administration.

FRANKLIN: Yes, and perhaps by the Pension Bureau before that.

BROOKS: Well this was an example of something that happened in the case of the War Department and I'm not sure how many other agencies, that more or less as a condition to taking over the records we took over some of the people.

FRANKLIN: Right. And there was worked out in this particular case between the National Archives and the Veterans Administration a plan whereby a portion of the VA appropriation for fiscal 1941 was transferred to the National Archives to take care of the salaries of Mrs. Finch and her five assistants. From then on the National Archives would include in its own budgetary request to the Congress sufficient funds to take care of their salaries.

I would like, to interject one thing. I still remember how detailed was the inventory accompanying this accession of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 records. You may recall that the emphasis around 1940, so far as the Office of the Director of Archival Service was concerned, was brevity in preparing accession inventories - get



through as soon as you can describe the records in concise form, allow space for signatures, and let it go at that. But I knew from my experience up to then in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives that we had no help in the Division for descriptive work. We had no plan whatever for any descriptive work but realized how valuable a detailed inventory would be when it came to servicing the records. My accession inventory therefore, ran to a number of single-spaced typed pages. And as I indicated, the inventory covered not only these three main bodies that I mentioned - the Revolutionary War pension files, War of 1812 pension files, a half million bounty land files - but a very large number of related records of one kind and another which I described in great detail. I doubt that any inventory that has been prepared in the 33 years since is any more detailed than that inventory, just as Oliver Holmes often went out of bounds in preparing his inventories. They proved useful in performing reference service.

BROOKS: This is a very important point of the transition from the agency to the Archives, that the Archives must have depended very heavily on those accession inventories for reference service.

FRANKLIN: We certainly did. I will add one additional thing to go along with talking about reference service in the former Division of Veterans Administration Archives. I found that the Veterans Administration employees who were transferred to the National Archives were in their replies abstracting those bits of information in the individual case file that they believed would be of particular interest to the genealogical inquirer. They were couching these bits of information in a stereotyped fashion. So it occurred to me that considerable time would be saved both to the assistant in our Division who prepared the reply as well as for the typist if we could develop form letters that would fit as many of these occasions as possible. So Tom Owen, the Chief, and I prepared a large number - I would judge by recollection perhaps 12 or 15 - of form letters which were applicable to our reference requirements. These form letters were used for a considerable period of years and I think were quite effective in regard to saving of time of employees.

BROOKS: Let me ask you a question. I hope it's not unreasonable. You can answer or not as you think best. Tom Owen's name has come up several times in this and other interviews. He had a rather extensive background in archives work because his mother was Archivist of Alabama. He also had a heavy political background and he had an interest in history, at least to the extent of being National Historian of the American Legion. Was he on the one hand, a good archivist? On the other hand, was he a good administrator? I've always felt that the ability and the character of these people who were the first heads of units in the Archives was of great importance.

FRANKLIN: Well I have mixed feelings, Phil, about Tom Owen. For the most part I think he was a distinct asset to the staff of the National Archives. In your mention of the background of Tom Owen you failed to make reference to his father, Thomas M. Owen, Senior, who was, of course, really the founder of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, about 1900 or 1901, and who functioned in that capacity until his death in, I believe, 1920. Tom Owen presumably came to the National Archives in part because of his political connections. As you may remember, he had an uncle, John Bankhead, in the Senate and another uncle, William B., who was Speaker of the House, and I'm sure that no other National Archives employee had anything like the influence on Capitol Hill that Tom Owen had. But be that as it may, he had headed aspects of the work, I believe, of the Historical Records Survey in Alabama and had worked extensively in Alabama in behalf of the American Legion and had prepared a history, which was printed, of the Alabama Department of the American Legion. Also he had worked firsthand with records in the Alabama Department of Archives and History. And his work in the American Legion had brought him into contact with a large number of persons and so far as his chiefship of the Division of Veterans Administration Archives was concerned, it was extremely fortunate that he was the National Historian of the American Legion. His Legion connections included a group within the District of Columbia named the Post-Mortem Club, rather appropriately titled because it was made up of former national officers of the American Legion. Now the American Legion, as anyone would surmise, did maintain and now maintains close connections with the Veterans Administration. For many years the head of the Veterans Administration was Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, and Hines, I believe, was a former official of the Legion. At any rate he belonged to the Legion and he and Tom Owen were very close personal friends. On several occasions I can recall going with Tom Owen to General Hine's office, being cordially received, and talking over not only matters of Legion interest but those of concern to the National Archives primarily regarding disposal lists. And perhaps more importantly there were discussed possible accessions together with loan service to the Veterans Administration and aspects of reference service on VA records transferred to the National Archives. So that I would feel Tom Owen's close connection with Brigadier General Hines was of the greatest importance in facilitating or smoothing relations with the Veterans Administration, and General Hines, as you may recall, was well received on Capitol Hill and he would go there with requests for appropriations for Veterans Administration. Through him, and his knowledge of the National Archives activities being in part through Tom Owen, why I think that the Appropriations Committee perhaps looked with a little more indulgence on requests from the National Archives for funds.

BROOKS: Well, this is something important, that Thad Page and I talked about, the fact that Dr. Connor was very sensitive to and understanding of the importance of these relationships, especially on the Hill. Much more so than his immediate successor who didn't particularly get along well on the Hill. Dr. Connor was, I think partly because of his own legislative experience in North Carolina, aware of the importance of those things. And he recognized that you

simply had to have good relations up there.

FRANKLIN: I may add what you may or may not know, Phil, along this same line. I don't know to what extent National Archives staff members at the time knew about it. I doubt that very much if anything about it was reduced to writing, but there's something, too, that I believe the future historian of the National Archives would be interested in. Dr. Connor resigned, as you will remember in September of 1941, and this was before World War II really came to play much of a part in National Archives activities. His resignation projected Solon J. Buck into the archivistship, if we call it that, of the United States. Now Tom Owen was never regarded, and I'm sure you're aware of this, too highly by Solon J. Buck, whatever the reason may be. But Tom Owen developed an idea pretty early in the war period - this was after Pearl Harbor of course - and after America's direct involvement in the war. Tom Owen developed the idea that there might be erected, either during the war or planned for immediate post-war erection, a building somewhere in the vicinity of the National Archives and the Capitol which would serve a double purpose. First it would be a memorial to United States servicemen of all wars. Secondly, it would serve as a storage space and a servicing place for records relating to servicemen of all American wars. The building would be under the administration perhaps in part of the War Department, but certainly in part of the National Archives. Part would be a shrine and part would be functional, in that the records needed by individuals would be consulted there.

In regard to the administration of such a national memorial or national shrine, Phil, it was the idea of Tom Owen that the National Archives would play a leading role. Perhaps the War Department and the Veterans Administration in some way that could be worked out would share in the administration but primarily it would be a building over which the Archivist of the United States would preside. Now I recall that Tom Owen visited General Hines of the Veterans Administration in order to elicit his support of Tom Owen's idea, and apparently General Hines was quite willing to go along with it. Tom Owen also visited officials of the War Department, perhaps even the Secretary of War himself, and gained the impression that at least the War Department would not oppose any proposal of this sort. Additionally, Mr. Owen talked at Indianapolis, Indiana, the national headquarters of the American Legion, with influential national officers of the Legion. He found them heartily willing to back the project. He had the support of Senator John Bankhead of the upper house and that of the Speaker, his uncle William B. Bankhead, of the lower house and so Mr. Owen approached the Archivist of the United States, Solon Buck, in connection with the proposal. Solon Buck at least was willing to discuss it with General Hines, Administrator of Veterans Affairs. Tom Owen made the arrangements for them to meet. And such a meeting did occur and discussion did take place. But according to what Tom Owen told me, and he in turn had derived the information both from General Hines and Archivist

Buck, the meeting was not a particularly cordial one and it may be that Solon Buck did not press General Hines hard enough. At any rate he seems to have made no positive efforts in the direction of the War Department, Capitol Hill, the American Legion, or in other directions to obtain support or even to give free reign as it were to Tom Owen to pursue the project further. At any rate this idea was something that withered on the vine. It looks as though with all of these factors converging toward its post-war adoption, and not during the war - including what I was about to forget, the influential support of the hundreds of thousands of genealogists, and would be genealogists, scattered over the United States - that the project could have been under proper encouragement brought to fruition. It was an idea that to Tom Owen remained a grievous disappointment. That is the story as I recall it of this project that failed to come to fruition.

BROOKS: I think it's a good illustration of the significance of the character of those two people. Dr. Buck, of course, did have a way of rubbing people the wrong way. Especially people in other agencies, that he would tend to lecture to and tend to be over precise and over academic with. Although I think he really understood the objectives and the functions of the National Archives very well. I think because Tom's political backing was so very evident and because his own nature was a little bombastic, probably all of us that didn't work closely with him tended to denigrate his ability and his importance. Probably we were not entirely fair to him.

FRANKLIN: Yes. What you say, Phil, reminds me of this, and I think it's self evident. Tom Owen unquestionably aspired to the headship of this particular shrine or memorial. It was a perfectly natural thing because of his background and his urging of the proposal. And since Solon J. Buck did tend to denigrate Tom Owen, it would hardly be in keeping with Solon Buck's temperament to himself have pushed or attempted to push a project which would result in Tom Owen getting the spotlight, so I think unquestionably that fact entered into the situation.

BROOKS: The establishment of a supplementary building where that type of records would be put came up in a number of different proposals.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yes.

BROOKS: Including F.D.R.'s idea and that of several other people that after the war the Pentagon wouldn't be needed anymore, and it could be used as a records building. And now we have, with credit to Tom Owen's idea, in St. Louis a depository that has all the service records at least through World War I in it.

FRANKLIN: That's right. And the old Pension Office was another building that consideration was given to for converting to storage



of records, not necessarily veterans files, but records in general. And now of course we have the Federal Records Center at Suitland which is another side of the same story.

Second Interview

BROOKS: Neil, for the second interview you wanted to say something about today?

FRANKLIN: Yes. You said the date is August 23, 1972. Come tomorrow I will have reached the seventieth milestone, and as a kind of footnote I might emphasize that some of these things that I recall may not be quite accurate as to the dates and even names of persons, but I certainly will do my best to state the facts as I do recall them as a septuagenarian.

BROOKS: Your memory is better than most people by a good deal. Furthermore, I don't think that in an oral history interview your main aim is to get dates and names of precise things that you can look up in the records. I think it's much more important to get impressions and memories of what people think are important; why things were done; explanations that wouldn't appear in the written records.

FRANKLIN: Yes, Phil, I agree wholeheartedly that for the benefit of the historian it's the general impression that counts.

BROOKS: I thought perhaps we might talk a bit more today about the effect of the war on work in the records divisions. I think I told you that in December of 1942 Dr. Buck, who had just become Archivist shortly before, made a statement in two separate conferences, to the principal staff members about the objectives of the Archives as he saw them and as they would be affected by the war. And he talked a good deal about such things as not only stressing reference service to Government agencies that might be involved in the war, but also stressing liaison work with the agencies in records administration. It was just at the time we were beginning the records administration program, and he also stressed internal work such as packing and shelving, putting the late years records on the back of the shelves, eliminating the bulk of folders inside the boxes, and of course stressing finding aids on records that might be used during the war. I wonder how effective all that was, how much of all that was really done?

FRANKLIN: As to my experience, Phil, in August of 1943 I was still in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, and so far as I now recall, Dr. Buck's objectives really had little to do with any change in the pattern of reference service as it was rendered before and during the war period. Prior to the war the bulk of reference service so far as written inquiries was concerned, as to genealogical inquiry that is, with information about some veteran's widow or descendant, and that was supplied by the old Bureau of Pensions originally, later by the Veterans Administration when it took over the records of the Bureau. Still later the National Archives had assumed custody of the records. I do not seem to recall that we lessened or decreased the amount of work performed on genealogical inquiries at the time of the war. And so far as my work in the Division of Navy Archives was concerned after August of 1943, I

seem not to recall any change in policy there as to answering written inquiries. We tried to answer the written inquiries as they came in. So far as any great change in that work was concerned, I do not think that took place. We, of course, rendered whatever service we could to the agency of origin, as we call it, that is the agency from which the records came, and to other agencies in the executive branch of Government. We had before the war, as I recall, a plan for expediting the answering of inquiries received from members of Congress, usually forwarding inquiries from their constituents. That certainly underwent no change, and we continued to give expedited service to members of Congress, so that by and large it seems to me that comparatively little occurred in the pattern of reference service. Now, so far as quality was concerned, I suspect there was some change, because the experienced archives personnel that were on deck at the coming of the war, to a considerable degree, accepted commissions or positions in other agencies of the executive branch. Many of them were volunteers in the armed forces, so that we brought in a large number of new personnel who were inexperienced, and under the stress of war conditions. Very little time was given to the training that they theoretically should have had. So that by and large I don't believe there was a considerable change in the pattern of reference service.

BROOKS: Was there any interruption or slowing down during the processes of moving the records?

FRANKLIN: My recollection is that there was very little. And the ladies remained at the Munitions Building on Constitution Avenue until virtually all of the records had been transferred to the National Archives. And I think that they had made searches in the records sufficient to keep them going through the rather long period of the move.

BROOKS: The reason I ask that is because I remember we used to boast about some occasion, in fact more than one, on which reference service was actually given on records during the transfer. The records were on a truck.

FRANKLIN: In any case there was no serious interruption in reference service because of the transfer. And there were about, to my recollection, some 3,000 cubic feet of records involved in that transfer.

BROOKS: And Mrs. Finch and her people were automatically the Correspondence Unit in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, and continued the work pretty much as they had been. Right?

FRANKLIN: Right. It became administratively a part of the existing Division of Veterans Administration Archives.

BROOKS: Later at some time it was moved to the Division of General Reference.

FRANKLIN: A partial transfer, Phil, occurred. And by that I mean Mrs. Finch who had transferred her own operation from the Division of Veterans Administration Archives where she had been located in a stack area to, first an office in 18 North, and still later to the East Search Room.

BROOKS: That's where I remember seeing her.

FRANKLIN: The difference was this - she no longer had anything to do with the preparation of replies to written inquiries. She did supervise the Search Room with regard to use of the records. She would call for the records from the stacks and then after the use of these records she saw that these records were returned to the person in the stacks. On the other side of the coin now, Christine Stokes became head of the Correspondence Unit, but remained in the Veterans Administration Archives Division. And that remained a function of the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, as it had been before, to receive the incoming written inquiry, prepare the reply, and forward it for despatch by the Division of Reference. I don't recall, Phil, the date that Mrs. Finch went to the room on 18N and then to the Central Search Room but I would guess 1946.

BROOKS: Before we get there, it must have been while you were in Navy Archives that for some reason you and I took a trip to Philadelphia Navy Yard together.

FRANKLIN: I well remember that trip, Phil. It was in 1943 or 1944. There was a mixup at the hotel first. You might have forgotten that, but we had been assured by our liaison people that the room would be available for us at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel and rooms in Philadelphia were then scarce as hens' teeth. When we got to the hotel the clerk assured us that the room was waiting. When we got to the room, we found the door wide open, a suitcase open on the bed, neckties strewn across the bed, and a suit on the rack in the closet. When we told the clerk that the room was occupied, he seemed surprised. Then he called another hotel and got us one of the last available rooms in Philadelphia, in an outlying district.

BROOKS: I had forgotten most of that. I do remember that Everett Alldredge was then up there in charge of what I think was one of the very first records centers. It was one of the first established by the Navy, and I guess it was 1943. He was in charge of the records center in Philadelphia, and drove us in a jeep up to the Navy Yard where the battleship Wisconsin was being built.

FRANKLIN: Right. I remember that most vividly, and I believe the jeep was perhaps driven by Lt. Alldredge to the Navy Yard, and I think it was turned over to Seaman Gordon Williams, who was assigned to the records center, who gave us the grand tour in the jeep.

BROOKS: Gordon Williams is the man who later was in charge of the Center at Suitland, Maryland.



FRANKLIN: Suitland. Same man. Yes, I well remember that, and as I recall it my part of it was for the objective of looking over certain bodies of records that the Navy Office of Records Administration had asked be transferred to the National Archives, and there were other bodies of records that they wanted to dispose of.

BROOKS: Well, I was in charge of the records administration program then and was interested in development of centers, and for me I think it was more a matter of carrying out what we called liaison - "Committing liaison" as Lewinson used to say - to see what the Navy was doing in records administration in this very early center.

We're getting now, Neil, to your service in the General Reference Division which was established in July 1944. Would I be right in assuming that out of the Correspondence Unit that handled reference services on veterans records, many of which were genealogical, that there was a direct relationship between that and the genealogical unit that was eventually set up?

FRANKLIN: I do not know the answer to that in detail, Phil. I seem to recall that Dr. Schellenberg had been interested for a long time in services to genealogists, and after he became Director of Archival Management, as I believe his title was, he worked on some of these ideas that I presume he had had while he was in a records division, perhaps as much as anyone else in the institution. And also there had been much interest in genealogy as a profession. Meredith Colket, who came to the National Archives after graduating from Swarthmore College, into the old Division of Repair and Preservation. And speaking of that Division, if I may digress, some people, wishing to be derogatory, made the official title into "Division of Despair and Desperation." Going back to Meredith Colket, I believe that Meredith had one of the lowest positions there for some time, but afterwards was appointed to the professional staff of the Division of State Department Archives, or the Division of Foreign Affairs (I've forgotten its exact title). But in any event Meredith Colket had long been interested in the professional study of genealogy, and had written several excellent genealogical articles himself. He was active in various genealogy societies including the National Genealogy Society which had, and still has, headquarters in Washington, D.C. Meredith somehow aided Dr. Schellenberg in giving more attention to genealogical inquiries. As you may remember, Solon J. Buck had little regard for the genealogical researchers.

BROOKS: I think that there was a rather general feeling around the National Archives that the "genies" were sort of secondary citizens as researchers.

FRANKLIN: Even tertiary. But in any event, Solon Buck as Archivist took particular exception to the genealogists.

BROOKS: Didn't we during the war limit the number of services?

FRANKLIN: Yes, we definitely did cut down. But that did not mean too much, as I said a few minutes before in talking about the reference work of the Division of Veterans Administration Archives. When

we accessioned the pension files, particularly of the Revolutionary and 1812 Wars, we found that the Veterans Administration itself was limiting services, and we could not do more than a limited number. My recollection was that the limit was two written replies per year per inquirer. And also I remember that there was a backlog of something like 6 months service when we accessioned these Revolutionary and 1812 Wars files. This meant that if no new inquiries came in, it would have taken us 6 months to catch up, at the rate of two per year per person.

BROOKS: Well, then, Colket was put in charge of the genealogical unit somewhat later than I thought. Certainly after Grover became Archivist, because Schellenberg didn't go over to become head of the National Archives Division 'til after that.

FRANKLIN: No. I guess it was around '50 or '51 when Schellenberg moved into the directorship, and I would guess it was 1953 or even 1954 until he had time to set up various projects, including Colket's.

BROOKS: I can fairly well date the time Schellenberg moved from Agriculture Archives to be head of the National Archives Division. When Grover was Archivist, he brought me back from the National Security Resources Board to the National Archives in the spring of 1950. And one question he asked me, when I was to be in charge then of the War Records Branch was, could I get along with Schellenberg? He knew very well that Schellenberg and I had practically never agreed on anything. I said "Yes, I guess that is part of the job." I think that probably I got along with him better than most of the records division chiefs. So he must have gone to that position before the spring of 1950.

FRANKLIN: Yes. And Colket's position was set up in the General Reference Division.

BROOKS: Then Frank Bridgers went into that job after Colket went to the Western Reserve Historical Society.

FRANKLIN: I believe that was about 1957, though it hardly seems possible that Colket could have been gone that long from the National Archives. But in any event, it was at the time that Colket transferred to the Directorship of the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio, that Frank Bridgers took the position here.

BROOKS: Frank had been on the Archives staff for a long time before that. Where was he?

FRANKLIN: Frank Bridgers came to the Archives in 1936 in the initial capacity of guide to tourists coming to the National Archives Building to tour the sights, as it were, within the building and to marvel at the lamination process in the Division of Repair and Preservation.

And at a fairly early stage he came to the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, possibly as early as 1938. His work there involved reference services on the pension applications. Later he transferred to the General Reference Division and worked with Colket.

BROOKS: Speaking again of your role as head of General Reference, in the statement of Dr. Buck in 1942 about the development of various functions, he mentioned the possibility of charging for reference services. This is something, I believe, that congressional appropriation committees brought up occasionally, that we shouldn't be giving away all this service. I think that I was involved as head of the War Records Office and later, the Diplomatic, Judicial, and Fiscal Records Office. And I believe the problem mainly was one of measurement of a service to be charged a given amount for, correct?

FRANKLIN: I'm sure that was part of it, Phil. And I suspect that you're right in saying that congressmen brought up the matter. The constituents did not express themselves, and as far as I can remember the White House and the Budget Bureau had no particular interest. The Census Bureau still does make a charge. They have one charge if the inquirer makes no request for special attentions, and they charge more for an "expedite" service.

Now my recollection, Phil, is that it must have been 1950 or '51 that a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations decided that the time had come when agencies of the executive branch should make charges for services to the public, and made that a rider to an appropriation bill.

BROOKS: Well, that jibes with my memory. Dr. Buck had also discussed the possibility of establishing, and this never was totally realized, an archival reference service. Not an organizational function but a service that would be recognized as doing research primarily for other Government agencies. More than simply digging out the records for them, but doing some interpretations, some analysis of the records. I don't think we ever got to that either.

FRANKLIN: No, I think you're entirely right, Phil. Some discussion of the matter came up from time to time, but I do not recall the setting up of any such unit. The nearest thing to it, Phil, was I believe, and it came out of these earlier discussions, the preparation of Reference Information Circulars and it did pretty much serve the same purpose.

BROOKS: They were war related activities.

FRANKLIN: Very definitely.

BROOKS: And there were a lot of them.

FRANKLIN: A large number. I recall one on records related to rubber in the National Archives. With the Japanese overrunning the East

Indies and cutting off supplies of raw rubber, rubber in this country was in the vital category, and it became practically non-existent. Great efforts were made to develop an industry based on artificial rubber and such was done in Brazil. And another Reference Information Circular that I remember had to do with records in the National Archives relating to specific geographical areas. There might be one on a limited area, such as the states of Sonora and Chihuahua in Mexico. There might be countries such as Rumania, perhaps even the larger geographical areas such as the Far East. Other subjects of these Reference Information Circulars had to do with, say, personnel administration of agencies during World War I. And with topics such as that of demobilization, not only of troops but doing away with civilian emergency agencies after World War I. Another had to do with personnel records of various agencies that were located in the National Archives which benefited the World War II agencies insofar as files of persons seeking employment with World War II agencies were concerned. But getting back to your original topic, Phil, of setting up of any particular administrative unit within the National Archives to prepare particular studies, I personally was not concerned with such a unit and do not remember that one was established.

BROOKS: Now these Reference Information Circulars were produced largely in the records divisions, were they not?

FRANKLIN: Yes, but coordinated in the Central Reference Office or the former Records Control Office headed by Philip M. Hamet. But most of the information was indeed actually collected and rough drafts were prepared in the records divisions.

BROOKS: Was Elizabeth Drewry in the General Reference Division after you got there? She transferred out before that, didn't she?

FRANKLIN: She was transferred out just before, and was then, I believe, in the War Records Office.

BROOKS: She did a very important Bulletin of a little different character on the records of historical units of World War I agencies.

FRANKLIN: That was in the series called "Bulletins of the National Archives." Another one was Victor Gondos' one having to do with planning archival structures.

BROOKS: One of the most important that they've used and used and used was Adelaide Minogue's on repair and preservation. I know that one that Elizabeth Drewry did was very much used, and we did a great deal to try to round up such records of World War I emergency agencies as were still stashed around in garages and warehouses.

FRANKLIN: You're exactly right.

BROOKS: In one case I was in charge of bringing in the records of the United States Housing Authority into the Independent Agencies Archives Division. We literally shoveled up some of the records



from the floor after the file cabinets were moved out of a White House garage - the garage on South Capitol Street. And we used to say we were getting the records of World War I agencies so the World War II agencies could study them and make the same mistakes over again.

FRANKLIN: Now that's along the line of an article that Ned Campbell, as you will recall, prepared and published, and as I recall the title included the phrase "pouring new wines from old bottles," or perhaps it was the reverse, "pouring old wines from new bottles." Mainly, the thought was the possible use of the records of World War I agencies for administrative structure by the World War II agencies that were just mushrooming.

BROOKS: There was a big emphasis in accessioning, and in reference service certainly, to get information from records of World War I agencies. Then as we came to the end of the war there was a big emphasis on accessioning the records of World War II emergency agencies as they folded, and providing information about them.

FRANKLIN: Now your speaking of that, Phil, reminds me, and I'm not sure where this fits in chronologically, but I think you will remember that at one time National Archives personnel, and I'm thinking particularly of Henry Beers and Bess Glenn, made certain studies in Navy Department records that for the most part at least were in the National Archives for the Navy's wartime program. And I seem to remember that one study had to do with Admiral Bristol's administration of the U.S. Fleet in the Mediterranean and particularly in Turkish waters during and after World War I. Bess Glenn's study had to do with personnel administration in the Navy Department during World War I. I'm a little vague and I can't recall at what stage these studies were done, and whether the National Archives did them on its own and mailed a bill to the Navy Department.

BROOKS: I don't remember either, but the nearest we came to the kind of archival reference service for other agencies I think was in just exactly this kind of thing, doing special studies that were useful for World War II. Many people didn't know much about them because they may have been classified. I know at the time, some studies were made on records in the Archives, especially in the Cartographic Records Division and the Foreign Affairs Section. They were used to locate bombing targets. There were a number of special studies made for Government agencies.

FRANKLIN: And we should mention, I think, that many of these Reference Information Circulars did bear a security classification, and were normally circulated only to professional personnel of agencies that presumably used them in their administrative work.

BROOKS: But nearly always, and this is a slight digression, but it applied to Reference Information Circulars and the Bulletins and almost everything else. The name of the person that produced it was printed on the publication. That was a principle that Buck was interested in.

FRANKLIN: Talking about digression, though, this comes to mind. I think that the future historians for whom this work is being done may be amused by it, if not edified. Herman Kahn told me this many years ago. You will recall, Phil, that when the Draft Board began breathing down the neck of Nelson M. Blake, then Chief, Division of Navy Department Archives in the National Archives, Nelson began scurrying about seeking a commission in the Navy itself. He succeeded in getting a commission and was placed in the Office of Naval Records and Library, Headed by Dudley W. Knox, a Captain, United States Navy, retired, who had been brought back into active service.

BROOKS: He was then, or soon after that, a commodore. A very seldom used title.

FRANKLIN: He was promoted to commodore. The title commodore had been revived and Dudley Knox was one of a very few placed in that grade. But in any event Nelson Blake became one of Commodore Knox's lieutenants, and among the projects which that office was doing at the time World War II came was the publication of a series with the title "The Quasi-War with France." The Quasi-War had occurred in 1798, but here was Nelson Blake in the uniform of lieutenant and he came to the National Archives seeking information in connection with the publication of our 1798 naval activities. How he happened to go to Herman Kahn's Division of Interior Department Archives I do not know. In any event he was given a reference which led him to Herman Kahn's Division of Interior Department Archives I do not know. In any event he was given a reference which led him to Herman Kahn and so, according to what Herman told me, Nelson Blake came to him asking for help. Herman replied to him, so Herman told me, "Nelson, I would very much like to help you on the basis of our friendship of these many years but we're now operating under a directive that our personnel must conserve its energy and time and devote itself only to World War II activities, and I just cannot see how the search of 1798 material can be of very much value to the Navy Department in this war." I think Nelson did not obtain the information he was hoping to obtain. Kahn was much amused by this episode.

We were talking about wartime publications describing the records. I feel pretty strongly about the lack of finding aids to this day in so far as certain important record groups are concerned, and in fact any record group may be of the highest importance to any particular researcher. I am thinking of some that are very large in volume, and some that cover a long span of years, and relate to what most people would regard as an important phase of Federal activity. And yet we do not have in our hands a satisfactory published inventory. I don't know what we can do about it.

BROOKS: Are you citing particular examples?

FRANKLIN: Among those I would particularly mention are Record Group 217, General Accounting Office; 48, the General Records of the Department of the Interior, including the Office of the Secretary of Interior; and Record Group 49, Records of the General Land Office. Those

should be sufficient examples, though I'm sure that there are several others. And in time they will be issued. On some groups there are now draft inventories but they are not really satisfactory. I have a good example to cite from my last week's search for U.S. Grant material in the National Archives. One of the experienced employees told me about the records of Special Agents of the Treasury Department, there among the Treasury Department records, which represent a very important aspect of Civil War activity. The nearest approach to a finding aid had been prepared by a person who knew the records, Charlie Rocheleau, who was on our staff prior to World War II, who left to take a position in the Navy Department when the war came, and who never returned to the Archives. But here is this document prepared by him that I was referred to when I needed, in 1972, to get an idea of the subject matter in records of the Special Agents of the Treasury Department. And it's just too bad our administrative officials have not seen to it that by this date perfectly good and complete inventories are in the hands of scholars from one end of the country to the other.

BROOKS: You mentioned the General Accounting Office. This reminds me of a digression. The General Accounting Office made me think of Cameron, Virginia, where at one time the General Accounting Office assembled all the records from, I think, 16 depositories in Washington. They included all disbursing officers' monthly returns from 1789 on. And it was a great problem to us in the Diplomatic, Legislative, and Fiscal Branch of the General Records Division. This would have been in 1947 or '48 I think after Wayne Grover came back from the War Department and became Archivist, and I was in charge of that Division. And there was for a long time a great problem as to what to do with the records of the General Accounting Office. Sometime along there you remember the Archives hired a team of three consultants to make a report on the disposition of the General Accounting Office records - Charlie Gates, Bell Wiley, and Leonard D. White. Pretty substantial people. Well eventually, of course, after my time in that division, I think, most of the records back of 1900 were disposed of. But there was an effort to select those with real importance.

FRANKLIN: Between 1850 and 1900 to be more exact. They were the records that presented the real problem. Just about everybody agreed that the pre-1850 records should be retained in their entirety.

BROOKS: There's an entertaining aspect of that too. This is probably the first time I became much involved in General Accounting Office records - from 1947 on when I went back into the records division and was working with Lyle Holverstott, who was for years Chief of the Treasury Department Section. And there was a man in the General Accounting Office by the name of Manning who had a desk drawer and for years he had put in that desk drawer selected items that he thought of historical interest. And he would pull them out and show them once in a while, but he wouldn't give them to us.

FRANKLIN: I am familiar with that Manning file, not at first hand, but just through discussions. And I was told only a few days ago, Phil, that the Manning file had been microfilmed as a separate unit,

to meet, I believe, the request of a particular searcher.

BROOKS: I remember it was brought in as a separate unit.

FRANKLIN: I asked whether or not the National Archives would retain the negative, and the person with whom I talked did not know, but I presume that the Archives did.

BROOKS: We normally do.

FRANKLIN: But that would be a very valuable file even though it was about as miscellaneous in character as one could imagine.

BROOKS: Right. And this man took great pride in his own special file of these things he had pulled out of the records. I remember going over there one time, when he pulled out an Andrew Jackson note written on a voucher of some sort. He had all sorts of things.

FRANKLIN: And that kind of thing happened, as you well know, in a number of agencies, Phil. One is in the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury who might want to keep some documents framed on the wall of his office.

BROOKS: Yeah. I know that used to be the case with Eva Adams when she was Director of the Mint in Philadelphia. She would not part with a number of very early and historically valuable documents, claiming that she had administrative need of them. That was true of the Civil Service Commission too. They would frame them and hang them on the wall. Well, the reason I was thinking about Cameron, Virginia, was that I took Wayne Grover down to see those records of the General Accounting Office when they were all down there. Something like a million feet.

FRANKLIN: Yes, I visited them once while they were stored at Cameron.

BROOKS: It was a horrible sight.

FRANKLIN: The volume was just tremendous.

BROOKS: And there they were all together. It was like what you see in a great big records center now, but we weren't used to that kind of thing in those days. Well, we had a previous exposure to Cameron. The exhibit section of the Army had a unit down there where they put together the Freedom Train in 1947. And I think you and I both had some exposure to that.

FRANKLIN: Yes we certainly did, especially in helping to get on to the train one of the choice items, which was one of the surrender documents which the German high command had signed in May, 1945. I well remember the transportation that was afforded the documents. One of the members of our car pool, whom you have recently interviewed in your oral history program, was Thad Page; we would alternate in regard to the use of our cars from our homes in Alexandria, Virginia, to the National Archives Building in the Dis-



trict of Columbia. I believe that Thad Page was the responsible official of the National Archives who was scheduled to board the train in Alexandria and was with the documents on board throughout the entire trip until its return to Alexandria. So when the car pool members left work about at the regular time in the afternoon, Thad Page brought with him the German surrender documents in the original to the well traveled car that was in use that day. I can't recall whose car it was; you may be able to remember Phil, whose car it was. It was a well traveled car, and perhaps in not too good mechanical condition. It was subject to a breakdown en route in the midst of rush hour traffic. But we made the trip by car satisfactorily. So Thad Page, carrying the German surrender documents, got on board the train and the document and he made the long journey from Alexandria back to Alexandria. It is interesting to recall that that German surrender document did make the trip from the National Archives Building to Alexandria in a well traveled car with three middle aged archivists in charge.

BROOKS: I think our concept of protecting documents simply hadn't developed at that time, nor had it as late as December 1952, when we had an elaborate ceremony in the Archvies for the enshrining of the Constitution and Declaration which had just come from the Library of Congress.

FRANKLIN: I well remember that. President Truman, I believe, presided. This was after the November election and before the transfer of the reins of authority to the new Republican administration.

BROOKS: Right, and we had had the Bill of Rights here since we got it from Jim Gear and I in his old well traveled car - because the document was in the State Department Division that I had charge of - took the Bill of Rights out to the Bureau of Standards to be put into that case with no further protection than that.

FRANKLIN: I don't believe I ever heard of that journey.

BROOKS: That was the time when the Constitution and the Declaration had to be re-encased, the sandwich had to be done over some way. And in a room not much bigger than this we had the originals of the Constitution and the Declaration and the Bill of Rights brought out the Library of Congress people all out of the cases lying around on tables.

Well, to get back to the Freedom Train. When I interviewed Thad Page, we were a little confused and I looked up in the reports some information on this. He remembered making a trip on what turned out to be a Victory Train, as they called it, in the fall of 1945. He took some of the German surrender documents, not the principal ones I believe, and he rode the train to New England, and out to the Middle West, less of a trip than the Freedom Train took. Now, for that train, he said he took the documents down to Fort Bragg. It started down there. But the Freedom Train of 1947, I remember, was a streamline train painted red, white and blue.

FRANKLIN: Red, white, and blue and the number of the engine was 1776.

BROOKS: 1776. This was assembled under the aegis of the Department of Justice, in part, and about a third of the documents on that train came from what was then the Foreign Affairs Section of the Archives. So I was very much involved in that.

FRANKLIN: Well it was interesting that here was a surrender document of high historical value receiving virtually no security protection. And then getting on a train which was housing a number of men in the armed services who did give it armed protection. I'm quite sure that no one of us three archivists was armed that particular evening.

BROOKS: The Freedom Train in 1947 went all over the country for almost a year. It got the same protection that a presidential train got. A pilot train went ahead to be sure everything was all right. It really got the works.

Well, now there is one other general subject I wanted to get your reactions on. I'm not sure how much you've been involved in this, but it's something I'm sure you've observed. And that is the whole problem of the training of archivists. I think that we've always had somewhat of a confusion, maybe not consciously, between the education of archivists and the training of archivists. But you remember as early as 1939, Dr. Posner when he came to this country to stay started his course under the joint sponsorship of the American University and the National Archives. In the history and administration. This I would call more the education of archivists. Maybe I'm being overly precise on this. Training would be more like the "on the job" training in archival functions that you get in the place. Now, at some time not very long after the beginning of that '39 course we began having interns who were members of Posner's classes that would come do work projects in the Archives. I think we all had experience with them at various times. But I've never felt, even yet, that the problem has really been solved as to how to get the training of archivists properly associated with the recognition of training in the employment and promotion of archivists. It's a very difficult problem.

FRANKLIN: Well, this morning, Phil, I thought a little about the matter of training in the National Archives in the early days and I don't know that there is much, if any, distinction to be made between the terms "training" on the one hand and "education" of archivists on the other. Before the arrival of Ernst Posner and the establishment by him and Solon J. Buck of a course in archives, I believe there was nothing approaching formal training within the National Archives. I certainly don't recall anything along that line. I do recall, however, that within the Division of Veterans Administration Archives, where I was second in command, pretty soon after its establishment in 1938 the chief, Tom Owen, Jr., and I had a discussion as to whether or not there was anything we could do within the Division that might be of benefit to the other members of the staff. We had some 8 or 10 employees in the unit at that time. We came up with a program that I think was

worthwhile. There had been available for quite some time the Manual of Archive Administration written by Hilary Jenkinson, then head of the Public Record Office in England. We used that as our basic text that first year within the Division and various members of the staff would be assigned a chapter each to present to the remainder of the group; then we would discuss the principles outlined in Jenkinson's Manual in contrast with the actual procedures that were in effect in the National Archives. And there were, of course, wide divergences. The second year, as I recall, we tried a somewhat similar course using the manual prepared by the Dutch archivists Muller, Feith, and Fruin. And there was considerable interest in these highly informal discussions. I believe the meetings were perhaps once every 2 or 3 weeks lasting through the "academic year." We also would assign individual members of our staff on assigned dates to talk about their individual assignments, whether they were in accessioning or disposal or some phase of the reference program, so that each person on the Division staff - regardless of what his assignment might be - would be informed at least as to what everyone else on the Division staff was attempting to do.

As to the extent to which that kind of program, Phil, was carried on in other divisions, I do not know, except that in one case I remember that Phil Hamer asked me to appear in his Division of Reference and talk about disposal procedures, particularly the principles on which disposal was effected, that is, the criteria that were used in deciding whether reference material on disposal lists should be disposed of or retained. But as noted when I first began talking about training programs, Dr. Buck and Dr. Posner set up that first joint course in archival training. Personally I welcomed the setting up of such courses and I believe that I enrolled in every one of those that was offered that met in our own building. I recall there were a couple of them in those early days that had their meetings usually from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., one evening each week through the academic year. And most of them were offered by Ernst Posner, but sometimes Helen Chatfield, Archivist of the Treasury Department, offered some of the courses and I remember being enrolled in certain courses that Helen Chatfield taught.

BROOKS: I think, going back to those divisional seminars, there was quite a bit of that, for some years at least. I remember being in charge of the series that was conducted in Navy Archives, in '38 - '39, and probably along about the same time Irvine had a series in War Archives.

FRANKLIN: Oh Yes, I do recall the War Archives series.

BROOKS: And I've heard Wayne Grover talk about his respect for Irvine and how much he learned in those things. I went up and appeared at one of Irvine's and I think from certain notes that I have that these were encouraged by the front office, probably under the aegis of Buck.

FRANKLIN: Yes, I do recall well the Irvine one, and having heard at the time Sherrod East, who took part in those seminars, speak very highly of the level at which they were conducted and how much

practical value the seminar was. I believe Irvine was then editing Military Affairs dealing with American military history. I suspect there were several of those more or less informal divisional seminars going on.

BROOKS: Well, would you say that up until 1952 the Archives did pretty well in the field of training, or was this something that wasn't adequately faced up to? Do you have any special reaction?

FRANKLIN: I have no special reaction, Phil. It seemed that the courses that were offered were not what one might call theoretical as distinct from laboratory. I don't seem to recall that assignments were made, except to individuals who performed specific tasks such as turning out a finding aid to a rather limited segment of records. Rather it seemed to be pretty much a matter of lectures and discussions on the more common archival principles.

BROOKS: Would this be a good time to turn to the subject of the general attitude of the staff toward the front offices - the whole problem of morale?

FRANKLIN: My feeling is that the coming of World War II brought certain necessary changes in emphasis, and so I'd like to comment briefly on staff morale in the period prior to World War II. I can speak for myself as a professional employee and I believe that in speaking for myself I would speak for most, perhaps not all, of the professional employees. We were for the most part young at that time and had had training in history. We had not had training in archival administration and so we came on the scene, I think, with a feeling that we were in a new field, a new domain, but that we would be able to make a contribution. I think that we viewed the archival field as one not only of importance but of very great profits and each of us, I believe, wanted to make a contribution to that field. You may wish, Phil, to ask more in detail about the pre-World War II aspect before we get into the war period.

BROOKS: The only thing would be this. I remember there was a good deal of dissension, it seemed to me, especially among the deputy examiners as they were the men who were going to become chiefs of records divisions, which were then called "custodial divisions." I always thought that was a rather poor title for them because it didn't recognize the full professional functions. But I remember there were a lot of meetings and we argued more about procedures than anything else. It seemed to me that Schellenberg and Lewinson and Irvine were always bucking Tom Owen about this and that and the other and Schellenberg at one time got out some scathing remark about the "stultifying" procedures under which we operated. Do you think they were fairly superficial manifestations? Still what you say is true about professional devotion.

FRANKLIN: Yes, I'm inclined to think, Phil, that any such disparaging, derogatory remarks as you refer to are pretty much in line with what one would say about a professional soldier. You know that he'll



gripe about his feed, but he knows perfectly well that on the average he's getting better food than he would be getting at home, or had gotten at home. Unless he gripes about his food there's something wrong with him. To a degree that's comparable to the attitude of the pre-World War II professional archivist. He felt perhaps that he should gripe about something, let's say, a procedure his group had to perform. The "front offices" had probably developed the procedure and the ones to whom it was then handed felt that if somebody else wrote it there must be something wrong with it. That I think was no more than superficial, and certainly no indication that the professional archivists disliked the work or felt that it was in any way derogatory or beneath them. So that all and all I think that morale, particularly in these days before World War II, was exceptionally high.

Now we're ready, I take it, to turn to World War II and the period after. I think the coming of World War II represented quite a change in this matter of staff morale - not that it plummeted or went downwards in a great hurry. I don't think it did. But basically certain things had to happen and did happen, particularly in this matter of staff morale. One was that a considerable number of professional employees who had gotten their archival experience in the years prior to World War II left to go into the armed forces, or in a number of cases into archival positions in other agencies of the executive branch of the Government. There was correspondingly an influx of new personnel into the National Archives to fill the places of those who had gone, and in so many instances these persons of necessity were inexperienced so far as archival work was concerned. Some new employees had had training in historical activities rather than in archival activities. But in the war period its pressures to get work done just as rapidly as possible and the emphasis on reference service, on the accessioning of records in order to clear space in the agencies needed for offices, and on the disposal of records in the agencies - again for space saving reasons - meant that certain activities of the National Archives simply had to be emphasized at the expense of such other activities as preparation of badly needed finding aids. And in the same way the training courses that we spoke of a moment ago were emphasizing theoretical rather than practical matters. Nor were they required courses for members of the National Archives staff. So that many of these new employees gained experience only through their day-to-day job activities. Those might have been centered on a particular function - often were - whether it was disposal or accessioning or reference service, with the result that so many of these new employees did not come into contact with archival theory or archival administration in the broad aspects. We were working then a 48-hour week which meant 6 days, 8 hours each, Monday through Saturday, with Sunday only off for relaxation. There simply was not very much time for the average employee to devote, let us say, to matters outside his own particular assignment or task. It seems to me that from that point of view the average professional employee of the National Archives was in a situation quite different from that in which he had found himself in the years before World War II. So over all I think morale, although it was high in so far as an individual believed he was contributing

to the war effort and hoped, of course, to make a contribution toward winning the war and shortening the war, nonetheless from the point of view of archival administration he was not looking at his day-to-day job in the same light that had been the case before World War II. So that brings us to the end of the World War II period as far as my own recollections go.

BROOKS: I have nothing special I would add, Neil, except I think that what you say is certainly true. In addition the staff was growing larger and necessarily, I think this is a characteristic of bigger organization. As the staff grew larger most of the employees in the divisions were more remote from the top level officials - the decision-making officials. In the early days of the Archives we pretty much all had a chance to discuss and share in the problems we encountered and the decisions that had to be made. I think that necessarily was less true of the majority of the officials of the Archives as time went on. You spoke about procedures being established by persons in the front offices that were not directly involved in the day-to-day work. I think that sort of thing necessarily developed, and made it always more difficult to maintain adequate staff morale.

FRANKLIN: I think that's entirely true and the point, Phil, to be emphasized is that as the staff grew the average employee was removed from the decision-making process, at least to a degree. He therefore did not have that feeling of participation or that his own ideas were being taken into consideration when decisions, let us say, regarding procedures were made.

BROOKS: And I have an idea that this probably has kept on being a growing circumstance.

FRANKLIN: Oh, I think so since the staff has grown. And then in the period following World War II with the return to the National Archives staff of a large number of the employees who had either been in uniform, or in records work in civilian capacities in the war agencies, or permanent agencies of the executive branch, these individuals were brought back to their former places with a broadened understanding, I think, of the importance of records. Some of these persons, fortunately, had gained experience in meeting problems connected with archives administration. So that those individuals came back, I think, to the National Archives staff with no loss in morale at all, but if anything a sharpened consciousness of the importance of records and of proper records-keeping principles. Then conversely many of the wartime appointees who had worked through the war period or through part of it in the National Archives were required to give way to returning experienced former employees of the National Archives, so that the lackadaisical attitude that so many of the wartime employees had had was supplanted by the experienced personnel with high morale. And I think again we went on to a period there in which, generally speaking, professional morale was high.

And perhaps another turning point was the passage of the legislation of 1949 by which the National Archives became a part of the General Services Administration. I think that very definitely had its repercussions on the professional morale of the staff members. It presented a question as to whether or not under the new and larger agency, the General Services Administration, staff members would be able to follow the independent course that had been followed before, or whether they would become staff members of a subordinate sub-agency in which the chief emphasis would be on housekeeping-activities development rather than on professional assignments such as those enjoyed by staff members of the Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution.

BROOKS: Neil, I think that probably takes care of as much as we can say about staff morale prior to the absorption into the General Services Administration, which certainly did change the picture from almost the very top levels of the Archives on down. Now there are two or three other subjects quite different from that that we might touch on before we conclude. One goes back to the beginning of our first interview about the days in the Special Examiners' office. You said before we started that you thought it would be worthwhile to mention the establishment of a specialist in accounting records in the Special Examiners' office.

FRANKLIN: That's right, Phil. You may remember we did mention in our first interview that at one stage of our work in the office of the special examiners we developed a set of 5" x 8" cards, each card covering a single type of record. It was hoped that on that card would be given essential information about the usage of that particular type of records, even though it would be found among records of practically all agencies. We were thinking more in terms here of housekeeping records than others. One thing that was not mentioned in the earlier interview was the development of a feeling among the Special Examiners that their office would profit by appraisals made by a person more experienced in accounting procedures than anyone of the Special Examiners, because none of us had had any specialized training in accountancy. And so there was appointed, effective, I believe, September 1, 1936, John F. Simmons, who had had this accountancy training and who then I believe was on the staff of the Federal Trade Commission. He was given the assignment of studying these specialized types of records that one would encounter in the accounting field. When they appeared on any disposal list he would be asked to make a study of them. It was found that often accounting forms would be prepared in many copies and that the records copy would be found as a rule in the General Accounting Office. I believe, Phil, that the future historian of the National Archives ought to be aware that the Special Examiners did feel that there was need of this special type of training. I think it was worthwhile at the time, in keeping with objectives that we had in mind.

BROOKS: I think it well worthwhile to bring that up, because I think it ought to be recognized that we were seriously thinking about how to improve our consideration of types of Government records and their value. Of course I have sort of a fond feeling

toward this whole development because Mike (John F. Simmons was always known as "Mike,") was a friend of Ed Leahy's, I believe, and he (Ed) and I, and undoubtedly you, were much interested in that appointment. And I think we accomplished a great deal in those days in the Special Examiners' Office. You and I were there, and Ed, and George Ashworth, who had a Ph.D from Georgetown. And we had some ladies that have been interested in the Archives ever since. Dorothy Holland who was the manager of the office, became my wife a few years later. Mona Oxrieder was there as a stenographer or secretary. She was with the Archives for several years then, and again after the war.

FRANKLIN: I do believe, Phil, that the names of these persons should be made available to the future historian and we won't forget Eunice Whyte, who had, I believe, left that office by the time I arrived on June 1 of '36. She was working in the office of Dorsey Hyde, the Director of Archival Service.

BROOKS: When Ed and George and I started in July of '35 Miss Whyte was the only lady in the office and she sort of took us all in. She had been a yeomanette in World War I and I think she eventually went into service in World War II in the Navy too.

FRANKLIN: Yes, and at one time was a letter writer in the Division of Veterans Administration Archives.

BROOKS: Is that right? And Mike Simmons stayed in the Special Examiners' Office I guess until it was abolished in 1938, and he then went to comprise himself as the statistical unit in the office of the Administrative Secretary, Thad Page. I think he stayed there until he went into the Navy into active duty, and he was very severely injured in an explosion on the carrier U.S.S. Hancock. Then he came back and has been with the Archives ever since, in charge of the security stack area.

FRANKLIN: Yes, and he did make a distinct contribution to the Office of the Special Examiners.

BROOKS: Oh yes.

FRANKLIN: And I believe Pauline Wernicke was the name of one of the ladies in the Office of Special Examiners.

BROOKS: She came into the Special Examiners' Office.

FRANKLIN: Now, so much for that. One other thing that I think here will be of interest to the future historian in the National Archives is perhaps a program that was supervised throughout the executive branch of the Government during World War II by the Budget Bureau. It was in pursuance of an order that each of the war agencies and those other agencies of the executive branch that carried on war-related activities of the agency. Now I recall, Phil, submitting a written employee suggestion some period during World War II recommending that the Archivist of the United States designate some National Archives employee who would report the war-related activities



of the National Archives, so that in some future date a historian would have at his command a file of material that would make very clear the role played by the National Archives in prosecuting the war effort. Now that employee suggestion was turned down. As you might know, even at the age of 70, looking back over still I feel that it was a good suggestion and would have made easier the task of the future historian.

BROOKS: I was the first chairman of the Employee Suggestion Committee. I hope that didn't come up while I was chairman of the Committee because I think it a good idea. That unit in the Budget Bureau was developed from an idea of Pendleton Herring, who talked about the importance of "capturing and recording" the experience of World War agencies. Later in 1945 or maybe '46 it was headed by Kenneth Hechler, who had been in military service. He'd been a military historian. While he was in charge of that office in Budget Bureau I was the representative of the Archives to go up and meet with all the agency historians, which I did over a considerable period of time. And that unit eventually turned out a volume called The United States and World War II which was quite a valuable volume. Ken Hechler has now been for a good many years a Congressman from West Virginia. A very capable person. This reminds me that I must look at an article I wrote myself published in the Library Quarterly for 1937 entitled Archives of the United States During World War II. It ought to have something about National Archives' wartime activities that would be useful to a historian of the Archives.