

A LEGACY PRESERVED:

North Carolina's

Local Records Educational Assistance Program

1996-1999

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I. BACKGROUND

In the early 1990s North Carolina reached a critical crossroads in records preservation and access. New electronic and digital technologies began to modify the nature of records keeping and transform service strategies. While some of the state's records repositories were in the forefront of applying new technology to archival issues, other institutions were only beginning to become aware of its possibilities. Many smaller repositories lacked sufficient or permanent staffing, and tight budgetary considerations and the ever-present need for archival storage space continued to present logistical headaches and questions of prioritization for most the state's records holding institutions.

In January 1993 the North Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) and members of the Society of North Carolina Archivists, the North Carolina African American Archives Group, and representatives of almost ninety institutions with archival components met in Durham to formulate long-range plans for the profession in the Tar Heel State. Larry J. Hackman, then archivist of the state of New York, served as the keynote speaker. As a result of that statewide conference, the SHRAB published a ten year plan, "To Secure Our Legacy," obligating the board to collaborate with the state's archival community in carrying out several ambitious initiatives. One major objective was a local records regrant program that would reach a broad spectrum of constituents across the state.

To fund this project, the SHRAB applied to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1995; in March 1996 the SHRAB learned that its projected Local Records Educational Assistance Program would receive NHPRC support.

II. THE PROGRAM

The Local Records Educational Assistance Program was inaugurated in the summer of 1996. There were two complementary features of the program.

The Regrant Component

One major component was the project's regrant program. The NHPRC awarded the SHRAB \$50,000 for its first year cycle of regrant funding, 1996-1997. For 1998-1999 the NHPRC offered a challenge grant of \$50,000, which was matched with another \$50,000 in State Grants Program funds, secured through the cooperation and under the auspices of the Friends of the Archives, Inc. Thus, through the Local Records Educational Assistance Program, a total of \$150,000 was available for regrants to North Carolina institutions with records holdings.

The local records regrant initiative was aimed at three major constituent groups: (1) units of local and county government, including offices of clerks of court and registers of deeds, town and city councils, and boards of commissioners; (2) the state's historically-black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other academic institutions; and (3) local libraries, museums, religious institutions, and other historical organizations with records holdings. An effort was made to involve institutions and organizations that had not previously benefited from or participated in support programs.

There were three subject areas for regrants: (1) preservation and reformatting projects affecting both endangered traditional documents and newly-created electronic records; (2) institutional infrastructure support to enhance internal operations,

management, and staff training; and (3) short-term consultancies (utilizing the resources of organizations such as the North Carolina Preservation Consortium and professionals approved by the SHRAB) to offer advice to institutions creating or strengthening records management programs.

One unique feature of the Local Records Educational Assistance Program was its informal pre-application consultation process. For both regrant cycles the program offered potential applicants the opportunity to receive such assistance by mail, fax, or telephone. During July and August 1996 and April and May 1998, professional staff of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History offered informal advice and guidance on kinds of projects to be funded, how to apply, and addressed general questions posed by respondents, many of whom had never before participated in a grant application process. Feedback from applicants and non-applicants alike praised this process as "very helpful," "informative," and "beneficial in our preparation." A total of thirty-nine prospective applicants participated during the 1996 consultation process; in 1998 another twenty-four potential applicants took advantage of the advice offered by the professional staff of the Division of Archives and History.

During its first year cycle, 1996-1997, the program received 121 requests from throughout North Carolina for application information; for 1998-1999 there were an additional eighty-four requests. A total of forty-seven institutions and organizations requested funding during the August-October 1996 formal application period. Of these applications, 10 were submitted by historically-black colleges and universities and other academic institutions; 8 by library groups; 6 from county registers of deeds; 6 from

historically-black historical and religious organizations; 1 from a municipality; and 14 from other historical and archival entities.

Eight significant projects were awarded re grants for the first year cycle, December 1, 1996-November 30, 1997. Each institution had to apportion cost sharing matching funds amounting to 40 percent of the SHRAB regrant. The recipients were:

THE NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION/ ROUND TABLE ON SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: This project included a series of five day-long workshops held in Lumberton, Tarboro, Asheboro, Salisbury, and Waynesville, designed to assist members of local organizations to learn how to collect, preserve, and provide access to local and historical records materials. Archival and library professionals served as faculty, and 173 persons attended, representing historical, library, and genealogical organizations in fifty-seven of the state's one-hundred counties.

NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY/ TRAINING SEMINAR IN RECORDS AND ARCHIVAL MANAGEMENT FOR HISTORICALLY-BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: Cosponsored by the Institute for the Study of Minority Issues, an initial statewide preparatory session on specific African American archival challenges was followed by the completion of archival "mini-projects" by eleven North Carolina historically-black institutions: Barber-Scotia College, Bennett College, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, North Carolina A & T State University, North Carolina Central University, St. Augustine's College, Shaw University, and Winston-Salem State University.

NORTH CAROLINA PRESERVATION CONSORTIUM

PRESERVATION WORKSHOP SERIES: Six institutions (Bluford Library at North Carolina A & T State University, the Charlotte Jewish Historical Society, the American Dance Festival, DeTamble Library at St. Andrews Presbyterian University, Edgecombe County Memorial Library, and the Person County Register of Deeds) were selected to receive day-long archival and records site surveys by North Carolina Preservation Consortium professional staff, a written report on conditions and status of the repository, and subsequent training sessions.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RALEIGH/ARCHIVES PROJECT: A significant records preservation project involving two historic records series of the Diocese of Raleigh received funding, including support for two temporary interns from the Public History Program at North Carolina State University.

WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY/ARCHIVAL RESOURCE PROGRAM FOR THE STUDY OF ARTS AND ATHLETICS: Matched by university funds, this project helped preserve, process, and make available to researchers the manuscript collections of Clarence “Bighouse” Gaines and Hayward Oubre Jr., both former staff members of this predominantly African American university, and, respectively, a nationally-recognized coach and well-known artist and sculptor.

NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF SURVEYORS/LAND PLAT PRESERVATION PROJECT: With SHRAB support 16,210 surveyors’ plats from Franklin, Forsyth, and Wake counties were collected and microfilmed (according to accepted archival standards). Forty-four reels of indexed, original, silver nitrate microfilm were presented to the North Carolina State Archives as a result of this project.

WILSON COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS PRESERVATION

PROJECT: Four of the oldest land record books of this county (volumes 1, 2, 19, and 22, 1855-1900) were restored and preserved using the Brown's River Bindery in Vermont. Volumes were made available to researchers.

HALIFAX COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS

PRESERVATION PROJECT: Ten fragile grantor/grantee indices, 1732-1904, and three marriage registers, 1867-1903, were restored and preserved, detailing much of the early history of this historic rural county, using the services of the Brown's River Bindery.

The second year of the Local Records Educational Assistance Program ran from October 1, 1998, until September 30, 1999. Of the thirty-one applicants, twenty-two were chosen to receive regrants. Nine institutions were awarded funds through NHPRC support; thirteen received regrants through matching funds secured by the Friends of the Archives. A total of \$100,000 was made available. The 40 percent cost sharing requirement was maintained. The twenty-two recipient institutions were:

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY/BARBOUR BOAT WORKS PROJECT:

An award was granted for the preservation of the records of the historic Barbour Boat Works, the longest operating boat works in North Carolina, including correspondence, contracts, specifications, blueprints, and photographs. These records offer an unparalleled view and source of maritime history in eastern North Carolina.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE/RAMSEY

LIBRARY E. M. BALL PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION PROJECT: Support

enabled UNC-Asheville to convert a selected core of nitrate negatives in its historic E. M. Ball Photographic Collection to more stable film. This collection is the most extensive collection of photographic material related to western North Carolina and a source of valuable research.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RALEIGH/ARCHIVES PROJECT: Regrant funding permitted the diocese to continue the development of its archival program, including support for photographic and electronic records management workshops and the utilization of interns. Records, including parish registries, marriage and death records, correspondence, and other official documents, were preserved.

MATTAMUSKEET FOUNDATION/LAKE MATTAMUSKEET RECORDS OF HYDE COUNTY PROJECT: Support was given for the preservation of some twenty-thousand paper documents relating to the historic Mattamuskeet Drainage District and the three corporations that successively owned Lake Mattamuskeet, the largest lake in North Carolina, and attempted to develop it commercially between 1909 and 1934.

BARBER-SCOTIA COLLEGE/ARCHIVAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY: This institution received funding for an archival consultancy to develop a long-range plan for the preservation of African American-related Presbyterian Church records housed. Among important collections there are papers of Mary MacLeod Bethune.

SWAIN COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS PRESERVATION PROJECT: Program funds assisted in a conservation/preservation project that enabled

this rural Appalachian Mountains county to preserve volumes 1-41 of its Vital Statistics through de-acidification, encapsulation, and rebinding.

JONES COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS PRESERVATION

PROJECT: Funds were granted for a preservation project involving county marriage certificates, 1867-1899 (539 certificates) and deed books 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, and 23, which date from 1822 to 1867.

HALIFAX COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS

PRESERVATION PROJECT: Support was tendered for the county's initiative to preserve its historic birth and death records, which were in precarious condition. Rural Halifax County is one of the state's oldest counties, having been formed in 1758. Some 63 volumes were targeted for preservation and rebinding.

HISTORIC HOPE PLANTATION/BERTIE COUNTY HERITAGE

PROJECT: The SHRAB awarded funds to the Historic Hope Foundation to further its Bertie Heritage Program of preserving historic documents, papers, and photographs of this eastern North Carolina county. Hope Plantation, the home of Governor David Stone (1770-1818), was an important center for this rural county. Records targeted for preservation included photos and negatives, books, and various plantation papers.

WAKE FOREST COLLEGE BIRTHPLACE FOUNDATION/ARCHIVAL

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY: A consultancy grant was awarded this project for the purposes of preparing a comprehensive site plan for the archival collection housed at the Calvin Jones House. A comprehensive report on the records and items maintained by this foundation, including papers relating to the creation and functioning of Wake Forest College, forerunner of Wake Forest University, was prepared.

LIVINGSTONE COLLEGE/HERITAGE HALL SPECIAL COLLECTION

CONSULTANCY: A consultancy grant was awarded to this historic African American college's Heritage Hall initiative to produce a comprehensive plan for the preservation of and access to the college's collection of historic records relating to the early history of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and Hood Theological Seminary.

NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF SURVEYORS/LAND PLAT

PRESERVATION PROJECT: SHRAB support enabled this organization to continue its valuable project of microfilming (according to proper archival standards) the land plats produced by surveyors in North Carolina. These plats had not been turned over to counties and represent an irreplaceable resource for historical research. Originals of microfilm are deposited in the North Carolina State Archives.

NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY-NCCU

FOUNDATION/TRAINING SEMINAR IN RECORDS AND ARCHIVAL

MANAGEMENT FOR HISTORICALLY-BLACK COLLEGES AND

UNIVERSITIES: Grant support enabled North Carolina Central University to bring together administrators, archivists, and records managers from historically-black colleges and universities in training sessions to examine a series of issues affecting the conservation, preservation, and access to records maintained by those institutions.

COLUMBUS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY/NEWSPAPER INDEXING

PROJECT: Funds were awarded for the library's newspaper indexing conversion project for the regional newspaper, *The News Reporter*. A wealth of history related to southeastern North Carolina is found in the pages of this journal.

WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY/BLACK PANTHER PARTY

ARCHIVAL PROJECT: A regrant was awarded for the preservation, arrangement, and accessing of the records of the Black Panther Party of North Carolina and the southeastern United States. A large collection of these records exists at Winston-Salem State University.

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF CHARLOTTE AND MECKLENBURG

COUNTY/CAROLINA ROOM IMAGE COLLECTION PROJECT: "The Carolina Room Image Collection/Access to Local History Project" received a regrant. The Carolina Room at the library contains hundreds of thousands of historic photographs and negatives, books, private collections, maps, and other documents (from 1860 on). Funding assisted the library to develop a complete finding aid, browsing copies, and other aids in accessing the collection.

YANCEY COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS/RECORDS PRESERVATION

PROJECT: This rural county received a regrant for preservation (de-acidification, encapsulation) of four-hundred nineteenth century marriage certificates, ten marriage license books, nine veteran document books, and five deed books.

ROCKINGHAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION/

PHOTOGRAPHIC AND GENEALOGICAL PRESERVATION PROJECT:

Regrant support was awarded the Rockingham Community College Foundation's Photographic and Genealogical Preservation Project, involving the cataloguing and preservation of three-thousand historic photographs and negatives, as well as roughly four-hundred genealogical collections related to the history of Rockingham County and north central North Carolina.

AMERICAN DANCE FESTIVAL/ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION AND

ACCESS PROJECT: A regrant was made to this nationally recognized institution for the preservation of its important collection of original films and tapes of American dance dating back to the 1930s.

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA/ARCHIVAL

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY: A comprehensive master plan for the diocese, encompassing parish, marriage, baptismal, and official records dating from the last half of the nineteenth century, was produced by this consultancy.

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY/"CHEROKEE PHOENIX"

PRESERVATION PROJECT: Western Carolina University received regrant support for its project to microfilm, index, annotate, and make available electronically the extant copies of *The Cherokee Phoenix*, a newspaper published from 1828 to 1834. This paper was the mouthpiece of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation before its transferal to Oklahoma and includes historically significant articles published in the written Cherokee language developed by Chief Sequoyah.

SHAW UNIVERSITY/PRESIDENTIAL MANUSCRIPTS

PRESERVATION PROJECT: A regrant was awarded to Shaw University for its Presidential Manuscripts Preservation Project to arrange, describe, preserve, and make accessible the historical manuscripts of the presidents and administrators of this historically-black institution since its foundation in 1865.

The Teleconference Component

A second major feature of the Local Records Educational Assistance Program was its teleconference component. NHPRC funding (\$31,200) enabled the North Carolina SHRAB to organize and produce a series of four two-hour televised conferences using the facilities of the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications (APT). The first hour of each telecast featured panel presentations; the second hour offered viewers an opportunity to call in with questions. The subject matter covered by these teleconferences paralleled the areas targeted by the regrant component: preservation strategies, electronic and digital technology, and strengthening institutional infrastructures. Conferences aired, using the APT's C-band (large dish) satellite system, over a three-year period and were viewable by anyone in the nation with C-band capability. For participants involved in the Local Records Educational Assistance Program regrant process, convenient downlink reception sites were selected throughout North Carolina.

One of the conditions for receiving a regrant was that a representative from applicant institutions attend the teleconferences. Institutions participating in the first-year regrant cycle, 1996-1997, were required to be represented at the first teleconference, "Remembering Who We Are: Preserving Our Documentary Heritage," which aired on September 26, 1996. More than 200 persons attended this presentation at thirteen sites, including ten in North Carolina and three in South Carolina. Public service television ads advertising the conference were aired. North Carolina State Archivist David Olson; Harlan Green, formerly of the North Carolina Preservation Consortium; Don Etherington of Etherington Conservation; and Karen Jefferson, formerly of Duke University, served

as teleconference panelists and discussed significant issues in documentary preservation. Following the broadcast the SHRAB received requests for thirty-eight videotape copies of the presentation.

"Remembering Who We Are" was rebroadcast on May 6, 1998, with the same panelists and a new second hour of live discussion. Institutions participating in the 1998-1999 regrant process were represented at six sites statewide with more than one-hundred persons in attendance at these locations. An additional fifteen videotapes of the presentation were ordered. On January 6, 2000, a portion of "Remembering Who We Are" was rebroadcast with a new discussion segment over the "Open Net" public access cablevision network, reaching a potential 97 percent of the population of North Carolina. North Carolina State Archives staff members David Olson, Steve Massengill, and Barbara Cain served as panelists for this telecast.

Regrant participants had the opportunity to attend one or both of the last two televised presentations in the SHRAB series as a part of their regrant qualification. The third teleconference, "Digital Demands: Preservation and Access Issues," was broadcast on August 12, 1998. Panelists included Paul Jones of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Rhoda Channing of Wake Forest University, Lee Mandell of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and Druscilla Simpson of the North Carolina State Archives. Addressing the challenges of digital technology in records preservation and management, this telecast attracted 140 attendees to thirteen sites across the state. Thirty videotapes of this teleconference were distributed to interested persons and institutions.

The first hour of the final teleconference in the Local Records Educational Assistance Program series, "Archives Look to the Future: Planning and Issues for the 21st

Century," was prerecorded in April 1999. With a live call in segment the program aired October 27, 1999. Delaware State Archivist Howard Lowell, North Carolina State Archivist David Olson, Michelle Francis of the Presbyterian Archives, Dean Benjamin Speller of North Carolina Central University, North Carolina Central University Chancellor Julius Chambers, and University of North Carolina at Wilmington Chancellor James Leutze made presentations during the first hour. Concentrating on questions and issues confronting the archival and records profession--finances, space, access, communication, and legal considerations--"Archives Look to the Future" attracted nearly eighty persons at ten downlink reception sites across North Carolina. There were 28 requests for videotape copies of the program. On November 2, 1999, the first hour of the October 27 broadcast--the panel presentations--was broadcast over the "Open Net" public access cablevision system to a potential audience of seven million North Carolinians. A new second-hour call in segment was broadcast, with Sarah Koonts, Ed Morris, and David Olson of the North Carolina State Archives serving as panelists.

Because of technical difficulties with an earlier broadcast, the APT extended the SHRAB credits to use for additional programming. This credit enabled the board to produce a special disaster recovery telecast, "Recovering and Restoring Heirlooms," that aired on September 30, 1999, and was simulcast via "Open Net" public access cablevision and dozens of radio stations across North Carolina. With panelists drawn from the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, the North Carolina Museum of History, the North Carolina Museum of Art, and Etherington Conservation, this program was particularly timely, given the devastation from flooding caused by Hurricane Floyd and the serious practical problems created by that natural disaster.

"Recovering and Restoring Heirlooms" garnered tremendous publicity and a great amount of interest from across the state and nation. Dozens of videotape copies were requested by institutions and individuals throughout North Carolina.

The teleconferencing/cablevision component of the Local Records Educational Assistance Program succeeded in reaching participating institutions and persons in all regions of North Carolina. Well over five-hundred persons attended the series of teleconferences at downlink centers, and nearly 150 videotapes of presentations were distributed. With additional exposure via the "Open Net" public access cable television system, teleconference presentations reached a much broader audience, numbering in the thousands. Feedback from this broadcast initiative was very positive, with an overwhelmingly favorable response from attendees and viewers.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND THE FUTURE

Developing the Local Records Educational Assistance Program was a major goal of the North Carolina archival community's planning document, "To Secure Our Legacy." The program, with relatively meager financial resources, was able to directly assist institutions and organizations in twenty-nine of the state's one-hundred counties. Through its teleconferencing and cablevision initiative, many more individual citizens were reached.

As a result of the program and its effects, several conclusions can be drawn:

NORTH CAROLINA'S RECORDS HOLDING INSTITUTIONS POSSESS AN INCREDIBLE DOCUMENTARY TREASURE, DETAILING AND DESCRIBING THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND ECONOMIC

HISTORY OF THIS STATE. Important documentary resources, whether they are records relating to the history and founding of black churches and academic centers, the various collections of regional and local history, or the early records of some of the state's oldest counties, are at risk and merit preservation.

THERE IS A CONTINUING NEED FOR ASSISTANCE AND STAFF TRAINING FOR NORTH CAROLINA'S ARCHIVAL AND RECORDS REPOSITORIES, BOTH SMALL AND LARGE. Over the life of the Local Records Educational Assistance Program, the SHRAB received 205 requests for application materials from 165 entities with records holdings. Nearly half of these entities had no formalized archival or preservation programs and no professional staffing.

FUTURE EFFORTS TO ASSIST NORTH CAROLINA'S BROAD RECORDS HOLDING COMMUNITY MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SIGNIFICANT INSTITUTIONAL DISPARITIES IN TECHNOLOGY, STAFFING, TRAINING, AND RESOURCES. This state's records holding institutions range from those entities on the cutting edge of digital technology to a much larger number at which documents are still housed in environmentally unsound conditions. Even those institutions in the forefront of preservation activities are subject to budget cuts and the vagaries of governing boards and state legislation.

THERE IS A NEED FOR NORTH CAROLINA'S ARCHIVAL AND RECORDS INSTITUTIONS TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED COLLABORATIVELY IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES CONFRONTING REPOSITORIES. Organizations such as the Society of North Carolina Archivists, the North Carolina African American Archives Group, the North Carolina Preservation

Consortium, the State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Friends of the Archives, and other support groups must work together to find solutions. In doing so, the following goals should be emphasized:

- Future collaborative regrant projects should be a priority.**
- Joint training/educational sessions should be supported.**
- Cablevision access to "get the message out" should be continued.**

With a renewed commitment by North Carolina's archival and records community to preserving our state's documentary heritage, meeting the challenges of a new technological age, and strengthening collaboration and partnership, these challenges can be met. The Local Records Educational Assistance Program will have only been a beginning.