
The surrender was in a pleasing manner and an invitation to come to York from the Town, Corporation and Chief Burgesses. When 18 miles of Joy. David Small, G. & sons.

The wedding dinner & supper, next day news came the Yankees are coming of the way.

See Gettysburg Battle.
THE Department of Internal Affairs, as you know, is custodian of many of the most valuable records in Pennsylvania. They include, for instance, records which form the basis for title to every square inch of land within the Commonwealth’s boundaries, records which, in addition to their very great historical value, are of the highest legal importance to every owner of real estate in Pennsylvania.

When I took office as Secretary of Internal Affairs, I was appalled to discover that many of these records—which can never be replaced—were imperilled by disintegration, by the possibility of destruction by fire or loss by theft, or by deterioration because of poor storage methods. After a little more than a year in office, however, I am proud to be able to say that we have initiated a program to preserve and protect these priceless records and also make them more readily accessible to you and to the public generally.

As Secretary of Internal Affairs, I am tremendously pleased that your Association, with your vigorous interest in Pennsylvania history, feels that this new program is so important, so urgent, and so vital to the welfare of Pennsylvania that you have asked me to come here and tell you about it. I am proud of what we have un-
dertaken to do, and when I have finished telling you about the magnitude of the task to be performed, how we hope to do it, and how the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is giving whole-hearted assistance toward accomplishing it, I hope that you, too, will be proud of this program for the preservation and better utilization of Pennsylvania's records.

The number of records in the Department of Internal Affairs and the variety of their subject matter are almost unbelievable, and virtually every document in each of our five Bureaus is of historical importance.

The conditions which I described a moment ago as "appalling," however, currently threaten the documents in the Bureau of Land Records, and I wish to speak chiefly of those records tonight.

The Bureau of Land Records is the Land Office of the Commonwealth. This is the oldest of all State offices, and is older than the Commonwealth itself. It was authorized by William Penn in 1681 before he made his first voyage to America, but its holdings include records even older than that. Titles issued by the Duke of York as early as 1665 are on file there, along with some records of land titles stemming back to the Swedes, to Lord Baltimore and others. The records of the first titles acquired by the Penns or by the Commonwealth, and the records of all grants and conveyances from the proprietaries or the Commonwealth during approximately three hundred years are in the custody of the Land Office. These documents are of inestimable value, because it is only through them that ownership and title can be proved for the lands they describe . . . and that is every foot of land within Pennsylvania. The title to the land upon which your own home is built originated from a conveyance recorded in the Land Office. In the same way, ownership and valid title to every home, every farm, every churchyard, every industrial tract, and every other plot of ground in Pennsylvania, whether improved or unimproved, traces back to the original record on file in our office. These records are legally and historically priceless, because they cannot be replaced . . . and they must not be allowed to disintegrate or deteriorate beyond remedy.

Envision, if you can, the confusion and damage which would result in your county should your courthouse be destroyed and with it all the recorded deeds and wills—and then envision, if you can, the confusion and damage which would result in all sixty-seven
of the counties should these proofs of original purchase and ownership in our Bureau of Land Records be lost to those who need them.

The Bureau of Land Records contains many other records besides those which guarantee the title to Pennsylvania lands. Papers relating to surveys of state and county lines, and reports of commissioners relating to boundary lines of Pennsylvania, are filed there. As many of you know, the Bureau also holds the minutes of the Canal Commissioners and many other records pertaining to public works. There are maps and many, many papers relating to the Colonial history of Pennsylvania, and there are records of the Depreciation Lands and Donation Lands awarded by the Commonwealth to Pennsylvania soldiers of the American Revolution.

Nor are all the records of that nature. Hannah, second wife of William Penn, brought action against the executors of the Penn estate, and the record of this action, complete with a copy of William Penn’s will, is in the Bureau of Land Records. Some of the early books record charters issued, for example, to library companies, churches of various denominations, assistance societies, and trade organizations such as the Master Coopers, Society of Master Tailors, Society of Shipwrights, and many others. Counties were formed and Penn’s representatives appointed the necessary county officers, and the commissions of these appointees also are on file there. Some of the books record pardons, granted by the king or queen then on the throne, for stealing such commodities as molasses, linens or silverware, and there are various proclamations by kings or queens, frequently for “fast” days in commemoration of some special event. An old listing tells us there even are love letters of an early official, seized along with his other papers in an effort to obtain satisfaction of claims against this early dignitary who apparently was not as meticulous in keeping his accounts and paying what was due as he should have been.

Precisely why documents of such diverse nature should be filed in an office supposed to be concerned only with land records is not entirely clear. I suppose one reason is that it was the first and, for a time, the only office of record, and all documents gravitated to it, as they might go to a central file room today. I know there also were times when the secretary of the Land Office was also secretary of the Provincial Council or held one or more other
official positions involving correspondence and record keeping, and it may well be that in his office, as sometimes in mine . . . and maybe even in yours . . . papers of unrelated subjects became mingled because he happened to be working on all of them concurrently.

I think I have told you enough concerning the nature of the contents to let you know that our Bureau of Land Records is a gold mine of historical interest—a mine from which has been extracted some gold dust but relatively few nuggets because they were hard to find. We hope to expose some of these nuggets so that they will be easier to find—but please do not start a gold rush to get at these valuable records just yet because we are not quite ready for you, and I'll tell you why.

Last January I began the reorganization of the Bureau of Land Records by appointing as its director Mrs. Martha B. Curtis, who is an experienced consultant in records management and who has also had specialized training in microphotography at the National Archives in Washington. She set out to familiarize herself with the records for which she was charged but could find no current, properly set-up catalog of the holdings of the Bureau. Neither was there a locator system, coordinating information regarding the document, the equipment in which it was housed, and the location of that equipment. The records themselves, in some instances—I think I can say in many instances—were filthy, in disorder, and in varying stages of disintegration.

There were no separate supply cabinets. Supplies and thousands of blank forms were housed with the records, or stacked in map cases, or piled three feet deep on the floor for almost two-thirds the length of one aisle. The original boundary maps of Pennsylvania, for instance, were concealed by drafting supplies in a wall cabinet.

A large carton containing more than one hundred reels of highly explosive and inflammable microfilm was found in an aisle directly in front of the original Board of Property records. Old broken wicker porch furniture, old wooden boxes, old cardboard boxes, old wooden drafting and drawing boards, old wooden horses for support of drafting tables, were stacked in corners and wherever space could be found. Employees' personal belongings, old magazines, old newspapers, mops and a great variety of other
odds and ends . . . including old lunches, hair tonic, shoe polish, and shaving equipment . . . were piled on desks and the floor, or in desk and drafting table drawers.

All these conditions were ideal for the start and brisk burning of a fire, which certainly would be disastrous to some of the Commonwealth's most valuable records unless these records were stored in equipment undeniably fireproof.

And what about this storage place?

Until I became Secretary of Internal Affairs and, indeed, for a time after taking office, I was of the impression that the room in which our land records were deposited was truly fireproof. The myth, and I believe that "myth" is the proper word, has long existed that Room 543 on the entresol floor of the North Wing of the Capitol was completely impervious to fire and offered perfect security for the land records. The room had the reputation of being doubly fireproof, first, because of special protection built in when the Capitol was erected, and, second, because of steel equipment housing the records. The room has metal window frames and metal window sashes, and light steel doors with glass panels behind the wooden doors which separate the room from the Capitol corridors, but otherwise that room, as far as I have been able to determine, is no more fireproof than any other room in the Capitol.

The steel equipment in which the records are housed is only sheet steel. In all of the Bureau of Land Records there is not a single piece of file equipment which is truly fireproof. There is none of the "fireproof safe" type in which thick walls of asbestos inside the steel case could be relied upon to protect the records stored within. In a fire of any duration, the present equipment would simply act as huge ovens, in which the records would be baked and charred to ashes. Possibility of destruction by fire is augmented still further by use of wooden desks and carpeting on certain sections of the floor.

Along the walls of the room are huge cases, towering almost to the ceiling and equipped with overhead sliding doors which had locks built in as an integral part of their construction. Some of these doors have broken locks; some, apertures for locks in which there are no locks; and others, locks which will not mesh because they were knocked out of alignment when the cases were jacked up and moved several years ago to rewire the bureau.
There are other cases containing hundreds of document-type drawers which cannot be locked—were not built to be locked—but which contain original Warrants, Surveys, Applications, Returns, as well as original title papers to Commonwealth-owned lands. In these drawers the documents must be folded to approximately the size of a business envelope. This sharp folding and filing of records in document drawers results in creases in the records and the eventual breaking of the paper along the crease. Among the older records in the document files, some are falling to pieces where they have been folded.

The records-housing equipment of the Bureau not only is not fireproof, it is not dustproof nor vermin-proof. Except for those documents which were stored in envelopes, the priceless records are in many instances covered along the back and the edges with fine black dust, through which the trails of silver fish and other vermin are as clearly traced as are the early Indian paths on some of the maps included among the documents.

There is no humidity-control in the records-housing equipment. From the resulting dryness, some records have become so brittle and fragile that they literally disintegrate if an attempt is made to pick them up.

There is no proper equipment to house large maps. They are rolled and stacked vertically in cabinets, or in corners, or between records cases, or placed on top of large wall cases—completely exposed to dust and dryness.

Originally, I understand, the Bureau of Land Records had a room for storage of its records, other rooms for administrative offices, and still others for drafting rooms, but the encroachment of other offices and of the State Senate, which wanted additional space for committee rooms, jammed all units of the bureau into the single room originally designed as the depository for records. As a result, there is no office space in the room, which means the bureau personnel works in aisles between equipment. Even more serious from the standpoint of records security, there is no search room for visitors, separate from the records storage area, and no customary charge-out desk. The floor-to-ceiling records cases, twenty-two feet long, down the middle of the room, effectively block an overall view of the bureau east-and-west, while the north-south view is restricted to the aisle opposite which our employees are working. Consequently, with no separate area for visitors, there
is constant danger that some visitor may open a lockless document drawer and remove a priceless document from the contents.

Probably because of the crowded condition of the one room now available to the Bureau, we have discovered that not all of its records are in the immediate custody of the Bureau—that is, they are not stored in the Bureau or where the Bureau can have constant supervision over them. We have discovered some of our records in a sub-basement of the Education Building. We have found others on the fifth floor of the Capitol Building. Others may be elsewhere, as far as we have been able to learn thus far, but as rapidly as we locate any of these outposted records we are taking immediate steps to protect them.

Fairness, I think, dictates that I explain that at least some of my predecessors realized the danger to these priceless records resulting from certain of the conditions I have outlined tonight. For instance, Isaac B. Brown, who was Secretary of Internal Affairs from 1903 to 1907, was very active in efforts to obtain fireproof construction for the quarters designated for the Land Office records, and less than six months after the new Capitol was dedicated, he indignantly denounced what he regarded as a breach of faith in failing to provide a fireproof vault. In a statement recorded in the minutes of the Board of Property, March 19, 1907, Mr. Brown declared that in an effort to prevent the irreparable loss that would be occasioned by destruction of the Land Office records, he had directed official communications to the Governor, to the Commissioners of Buildings and Grounds, to the Capitol Commission, and to the Capitol’s architect, Mr. Huston, stressing “in the strongest English which I could command” the necessity for “a fireproof apartment in the new Capitol where these records might be placed and kept free from the hazard of destruction by fire.” He said that later he was shown the plans for the Capitol and saw the present Bureau of Land Records’ room designated on the plan as a “Fireproof Room for the preservation of Surveys, Returns, Patents, and Warrants.” Let me quote three sentences from his statement as he added:

As the Capitol approached completion, it became apparent that no such fireproof apartment as was named in the plan was being constructed, and the space on the Entresol Floor assigned for the custody of the Land Office records is no more fireproof than any other part of the
Capitol Building... Whether the plans were changed by order of the proper authority or not, I am unable to say. I only know that a fireproof apartment has not been provided and I know that the plans for the new Capitol provided for such fireproof apartment.

Maybe the Capitol Graft Investigating Committee overlooked one feature of the deviation from contract when it conducted its inquiry. Certainly, Secretary Brown's statement discloses that fireproof storage had been promised, but that the promise was broken. It also discloses that the fact that the facilities were not fireproof was known fifty years ago, and that nothing has been done during those fifty years to protect these valuable records from fire.

There also has been an awareness among some of my predecessors that some of the records were disintegrating. I know that from having seen newspaper interviews on the subject and because articles were printed in the department's Monthly Bulletin now and then urging the need for funds for preservation. I also know that about 1940 a microfilming program was started. A few records were photographed and then the project was abandoned and the inflammable film allowed to stand among the records, placing them in constant jeopardy.

I have told you about the lack of security for the records because they are filed, creased, or rolled in equipment which is not fireproof, not dustproof, and not vermin-proof. I have told you about the scattered storage of these records in several buildings and the present lack of control over visitors to the bureau. I have told you about the lack of an index to our records holdings and a locator system by which to find the desired document promptly.

You probably are wondering whether we, too, will wring our hands and then follow the time-honored custom of being content to do nothing more. I'll answer that question. We most assuredly will not. As a matter of fact, we already have started to do something to correct matters, and we have started in three or four directions.

First, we have had our own private "Clean-up-Week"—which required four months—and moved out the debris, including the old lunches and the broken wicker furniture. Then we began making liberal use of a vacuum cleaner to rid these records of the grime of the decades.
We have begun a security program for the records. At the present time we are working on the Department's budget recommendations for the next two years, and we are requesting appropriations to give these priceless records the security they always should have had. We are requesting fireproof steel equipment—the kind with thick asbestos lining that is not only fireproof but also dustproof and vermin-proof. We are asking for funds for a program of lamination to restore deteriorating records where necessary and to microfilm vital records so that a photocopy can always be available if anything should happen to the original. Meanwhile, we are endeavoring to obtain a proper layout for the Bureau which will permit bringing all records under direct supervision and will also permit operating methods suitable to a records depository, such as registration of visitors, check-out of records, and a search area separate from the records-storage area.

And, now, for the phase of our program which will be of great interest to many of you, especially you who are contemplating projects involving research in our records. An overall departmental records management program is planned, and, as a vital part of this program, we are beginning, with the cooperation of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a series of steps which will develop to the fullest the Bureau's research potential.

This program includes a complete inventory of the Bureau's records holdings, which may be generally classified under two categories: (1) Basic land records—applications, warrants, surveys, returns, patents, and certain map series—whose nature and function are basically legal; (2) records whose original function and present age make them at this time primarily of historical interest—papers relating to colonial history, canal records, private papers and many documents not directly connected with land titles. As can be readily understood by historians, the line of demarcation between these two categories is in many instances extremely difficult to draw. Internal Affairs's personnel, as part of the Department's records management program, will conduct the inventory of records considered in the first category; Historical and Museum Commission personnel will be primarily concerned with records of historical interest. The records revealed by the inventory will be indexed, a locator scheme will be devised to show the physical location of records collections and series, and the Department then plans the publication of a catalog or guide to the records holdings
of the Bureau. That done, we can readily make available the wealth of historical information in our possession to historians, educators, students, genealogists and others whose primary interest in the Bureau is as a research center, but can just as readily make the information available to lawyers, surveyors, or local officials whose primary interest is the legal aspects of title search.

In this project, the Department of Internal Affairs is receiving the wholehearted and enthusiastic cooperation of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and I am very happy to have this opportunity to express my thanks to Mr. Melvin and Dr. Stevens. The Commission is undertaking the inventory of records at present stored outside of the Bureau. Working with Mrs. Curtis, who is in charge of the Department's records management program, and with Dr. S. W. Higginbotham, the Commission's new Director of its Bureau of Research, Publications and Records, this inventory will be conducted by Dr. Paul A. W. Wallace, editor of your own Association's quarterly Journal, Pennsylvania History, and Mr. William A. Hunter, Historian of the Commission's staff. After completing the inventory and analysis of the records stored elsewhere, they will also include in their inventory the unidentified manuscript material within the Bureau proper.

Meanwhile, within the Bureau, Dr. Hubertis Cummings, formerly associated with the Commission, will begin the inventory and indexing of historical material housed there, starting with the canal records on which he has done considerable work in the past, as many of you know. Dr. Cummings has joined the staff of the Department of Internal Affairs on a part-time basis for this task.

The work involved in this inventory is a stupendous task. No one knows the precise number of documents in our holdings, but I am certain it runs into seven digits.

After the Commission's study of the historical records of the Bureau of Land Records has been completed—and this is really projecting our plans into the future—the intention is to continue the study of the other older records of the Department to analyze them for historical value. Our Bureau of Municipal Affairs has voluminous records dealing with every municipality in Pennsylvania, which can be valuable in tracing local history or, collectively, in establishing trends in local government in Pennsylvania. Similarly, our Bureau of Statistics has the records of industrial production, employment, and capitalization of 20,000 Pennsylvania
industries, and I certainly do not have to remind a group of historians how valuable those records can be to economic history or in tracing industrial developments of an area in relation to social developments of the same area. Our Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey, where our geologists won't even talk about history in terms of less than millions of years, is also the source of much priceless information regarding Pennsylvania's vast mineral wealth and its development.

There is one other point in our program I wish to mention briefly because of its importance to you who are interested in the history of your localities. By an Act of 1907, warrantee tract maps for every township in the Commonwealth must be prepared by the Bureau of Land Records, with copies filed with County Commissioners and Recorders of Deeds. This project was pushed energetically in its early years but then appropriations dwindled and finally stopped entirely. The result is that, in forty-nine years, this work has been completed for only sixteen and one-half counties. At the same rate of performance, it would be sometime after the year 2100 before the mandate of 1907 would be completed for all sixty-seven counties. The prospect of such retarded progress might tickle our sense of humor were it not that these warrantee tract maps really serve many useful purposes and their importance is doubly emphasized at the present time because of the new assessment law affecting counties of the fourth to eighth classes. To me it is a shocking thing that we are so far behind in this program.

Consequently, we plan to ask the 1957 Legislature for an appropriation to complete this work in the remaining fifty and one-half counties, and to rush the work to completion as a service to such county officials as County Commissioners, Assessors, and Recorders of Deeds, and to attorneys, aerial and land surveyors, title abstract companies, and the general public. If we are successful in obtaining the required funds, our plan is to call for bids from professional engineering or survey-mapping firms for the construction of these warrantee maps at a standard rate per tract. That is the only way that I can see that these maps can be finished speedily enough to be of genuine service and to fulfill the mission given to this Department half a century ago.

Incidentally, if we are granted the needed appropriation for those projects too, it is our plan to let contracts for restoration of records through lamination and to let other contracts for protec-
tion of vital information in our records through microfilming. Our records are so important and so fragile that we dare not delay completion of the work or jeopardize the safety of the records through half measures.

The historians of Pennsylvania have a stake in the records of the Department of Internal Affairs and have every reason to have a strong personal interest in seeing that these records are preserved and protected so that their wealth of historical information will not be lost to posterity or even to our own generation. The cost of providing fireproof housing for these records, to laminate or microfilm those requiring it, and to complete the township warrantee tract maps, will involve a considerable sum of money—I do not yet have final estimates but I know it will be many thousands of dollars. Because of the vital importance of all these projects to Pennsylvania and to every landowner in the State, however, I do not doubt that the members of the General Assembly will authorize the expenditures if they fully understand the reasons for them. In order that they may be well informed, I hope that you will explain and advocate these projects to the Senators and Representatives from your home districts. They know you and value your judgment, and, if you can give them a clear understanding of the need for funds for these specific purposes, legislative approval will be assured.

It is singularly appropriate, I think, that this talk regarding the preservation of Pennsylvania's vital records should have been made in York. Certainly every man and woman in this room knows the story of how, after the battle of Brandywine, the British occupied Philadelphia and the Continental Congress fled to Lancaster, and then to York—where the wide Susquehanna could be a safe barrier between them and the enemy. There was one feature of that evacuation, however, which holds particular significance in connection with my remarks this evening.

At the time of the withdrawal from Philadelphia, some government records were dispersed to hiding places considered safe in the nearby countryside, but the most vital records the fugitive patriot government took with it. On the very day that York became the national capital, these cherished records were deposited in a specially selected house which became the records depository for the nine months the seat of government remained here.
Consider, for a moment, the significance of this seemingly simple detail of taking records along on the flight to York. Here were the men who, with full realization of the gravity of their promise, had pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of freedom. Here were men to whom Benjamin Franklin had addressed his pointed advice that “we must hang together or we shall most assuredly hang separately.” Here were men who were fleeing not only from Philadelphia but also from the hinterland through which red-coated dragoons might range, because they knew that if captured they certainly would be destined to hang for spearheading open revolt against the crown. Here were men who, familiar with the crude transportation available in that day, must have known that any impediments would slow their advance overland or across broad rivers and, consequently, increase the danger of their being overtaken by the British light horse. Yet these men, who justifiably could have been expected to be concerned with little except saving their own skins—or, as Franklin suggested, their own necks—were unwilling even in liberty’s darkest hour to risk destruction of important records for which they themselves would never have use if the deteriorating military situation held the fate for patriot leaders which then seemed to threaten so ominously.

Is there a moral in that story? I think there is. The lofty patriotism and the high statesmanship which these men had demonstrated when they penned their names to the bottom of the Declaration of Independence, was demonstrated anew in this seemingly simple act of taking with them the documents vital to the cause they held so dear. Duty to country and duty to posterity were uppermost in their minds.

In this very city 179 years ago, our patriot fathers set an example for us to follow. Today the continued existence of the records vital to the security of title to every home in Pennsylvania is threatened. This is a cause to which every patriotic Pennsylvanian can rally... a cause which you, who have special understanding of the importance of these records, must lead. I earnestly invite you to join in the leadership of efforts to make this program a reality. Success will mean the preservation of records indispensable to Pennsylvania homeowners, indispensable to Pennsylvania historians, indispensable to you.