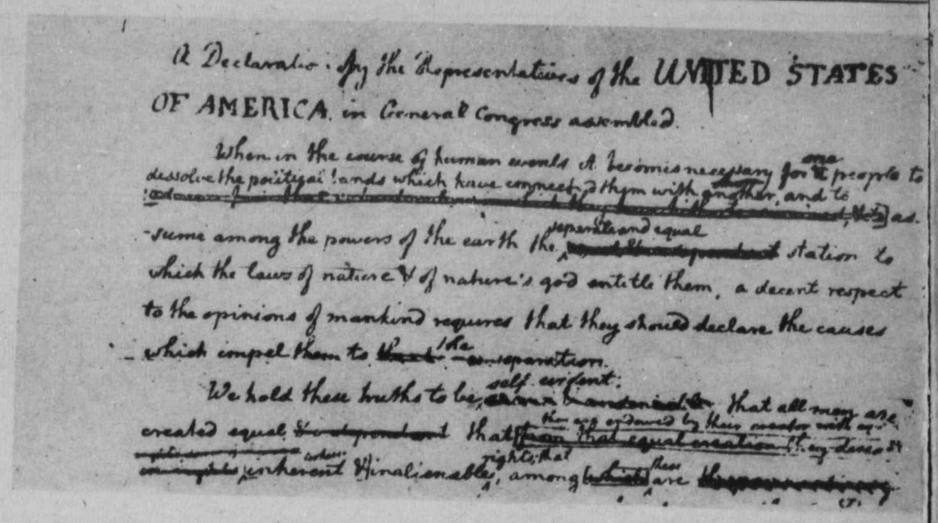
A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature & of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inherent & inalienable rights; that among these are

one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President:

William H. Seward,
Secretary of State.

Invaluable Treasures Included in the Nation's Archives—The Declaration of Independence and, at Right, the Emancipation Proclamation, Showing Lincoln's Signature.

Times Wide World and Harris & Ewing Photos.

OUR NATIONAL ARCHIVES FIND A HOME

In a Stately New Grecian Temple at the Capital Will Be Gathered the Documentary Record of Our History

By MILDRED ADAMS

WASHINGTON.

THE archives of the nation are at last to have a home of their own and an archivist—the first Archivist of the United States, Robert D. W. Connor, Professor of American History at the University of North Carolina, who was recently named by President Roosevelt. No more will precious records of our early days lie under the eaves of dusty attics and in dark cellar corners. No more will spiders spin geometry above the signatures of Washington and Lafayette.

Their new house, a Grecian temple of great stateliness which occupies a whole block of the famous triangle development, is almost ready for them. It is being prepared like a most modern and expensive home, conditioned as to temperature and content of air, and given all the light that papers can stand, which is not very much. From the standpoint of printed matter the surroundings will be perfect. Special arrangements have been made to accommodate the humans who want to work there, but the place will be very hard on the worm whose favorite diet is a book.

If you tell all this to the man on the street he is very likely to look blank and perhaps declare that he did not know America had any archives. It is an ancient word and a rather musty one, bringing up pictures of blinking scholars and books more strange than legible. As a matter of fact, the official archives of the United States are not piles of papyrus, nor first editions in the literary sense, nor manuscripts a lifetime in the making. They are all those papers which are created in the regular course of government business; the documentary evidence of the movement of peoples and events; history in the making, in the form of its daily raw material.

Some of them are payrolls, muster rolls, bills of lading, copies of form letters, orders in triplicate, acknowledgments and receipts, seeming so unimportant that they surely might be destroyed. Some of them are messages that have stirred the world. Some are thin and blurred, easily crumpled, almost anonymous. Some are edged with gold and traced with the signatures of men who have remade their nations. In any one of them may lie the precious key to a puzzle of personality or event that scholars have spent years unraveling.

* * *

THE archives have been piling up ever since we declared ourselves a nation and went to housekeeping on our own. Strictly speaking, the papers of the Continental Congress, which concerned the colonies, antedate our national archives, and for that reason they may remain in the Congressional Library, where they fill 307 fat volumes. But from the moment on Sept. 17, 1787, when we adopted our Constitution, the records began to collect.

That was 147 years ago, yet experts estimate that half of the existing mass of paper eligible for elevation to this archivistic paradise date only from 1917. The papers begin with the same Constitution and come down to the latest reply to a farmer who would like the government to buy his pigs. That latter is only a potential archive, being still in active use. But let time go by and the pig letter may take its place in the new building along with the letter in which Great Britain refuses to pay us her war debt.

At the present time the pig letter and the British note are in two buildings separated by the width of Washington. There is a letter from Stephen Decatur in Sweden, and in Tangiers an account of century-old treaty making with Algerian pirates. Some of these things are even now available to scholars with generous travel funds, but some of them are hard to reach, some hedged about with official restrictions, some even uncatalogued and forgotten.

There are, for instance, the treasures that have just come to light in the Senate Library—a domain hardly ever seen by visitors that crowd the galleries. For lack of space, it was long the custom to pack papers wherever a corner was free, even up under the Capitol dome, where the Summer temperature approaches that of an oven. The librarian has just found boxes of stuff stored in envelopes, so dry that they crackled as they were unfolded. The only reason they did not fall to bits is that they date from a day before men discovered that paper could be made out of wood pulp.

Here is a notification to the President Adams, together inaugural address Lafayette which emotion of a hundred years or more bearing the signa gone legislator them, the correc tions which befell show more clear book explanation machinery of leg

There are slips away each mem lived. In those d day travel money their home to the supposed to ma miles. At that infant governme representative fr the first Congre York.

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ALL these early course, writ sometimes cl crabbed, always in was no typewriter press was reserved All of them have vividness which ac written by the ill vividness which n only the most tale can convey.

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papers are, of en by hand— arly, sometimes ndividual. There and the printing for other things. that peculiar ompanies papers strious dead, a facsimile, and ted biographer,

nt of this ma mpened and covered, when fine silk tissue into the origi give it added scuring its contents. Then it is classified and bound in great volumes where it will resist the passage of time more easily than when cooking under the dome.

Papers like these were forgotten, but others have long been on display to give a hint of live history to the most casual visitor. The Treasury has glass cases set in its corridors which show old bills, the check that paid for Alaska, receipts signed by each incoming Treasurer for the staggering sum of the national wealth turned over to him by the man who has been carrying on what is to be his job.

The Navy, in the front hall of its long low building down on the Mall, shows ship models rather than documents. But in the heart of its sprawling home it has a library, where shore-bound sailors, or curious visitors who penetrate that far, may see some of its paper valuables. Here are ship prints and paintings, infant cannon, a gorgeous Chinese junk; but here also are letters and orders that concern famous or all but forgotten voyages. Faded old documents which record all the things that happen at sea, faded and water stained, salty, written by hands manifestly more accustomed to canvas than to a pen. Diaries, log books, letters of marque and reprisal—granted by the government to individual privateers in a day when it did not take thousands of steel tons to start a sea fight.

Records like these tell stories to people who know even a little of the national background that burns behind their pages. But there are other records whose very titles are imposing, records that any school child, or any adult who has forgotten most of his schooling, would recognize as part of the very structure of the country. Many of them lie in the vaults of the State Department—partly because it is old and hence has early papers, partly because of its functions, which attract vital documents. Here are organic laws, declarations that started wars and treaties that ended them, letters from foreign rulers with the very surface of the papers hinting of courtly wealth. Some of them are bound into great volumes, some lie flat in velvet cases, some are rolled into ivory and some pressed into steel.

* * *

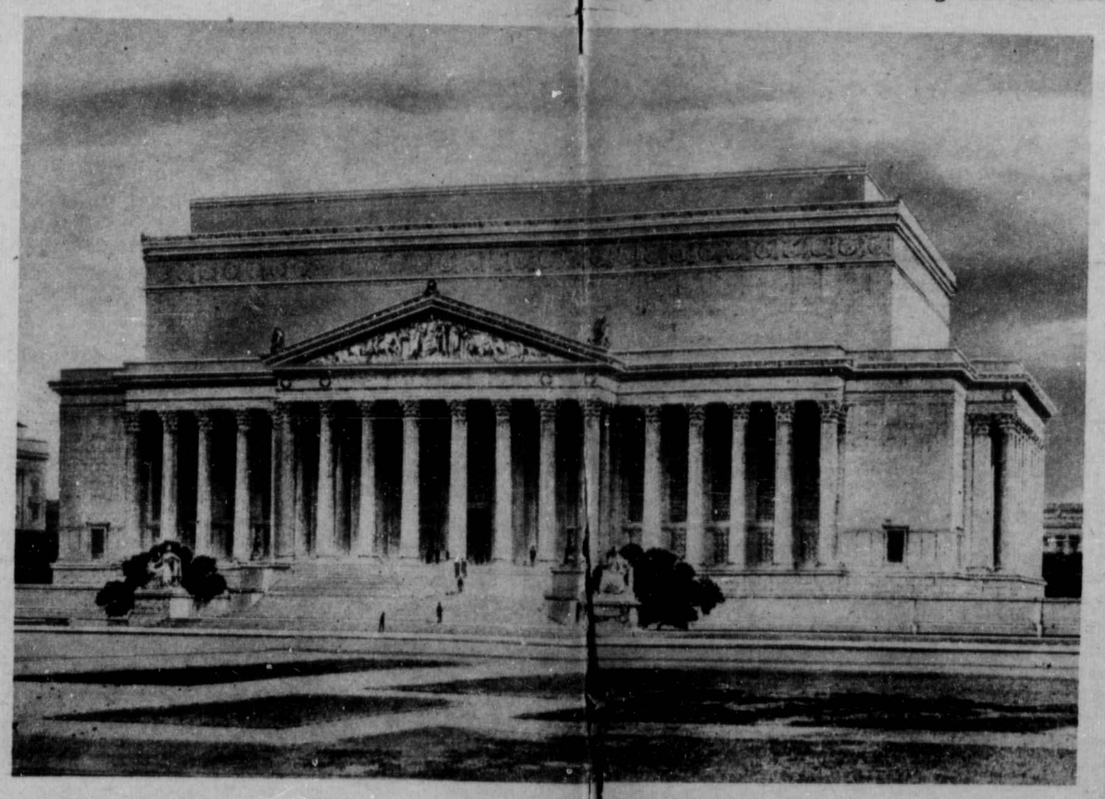
THE Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, generally regarded as the two most important documents in the nation's history, are no longer in the vaults of the State Department but in the Library of Congress, whither they were transferred in 1903. Congress at that time especially directed the transfer and, in 1922, appropriated the sum of $12,000 for "a safe permanent repository" for them. Both original documents are now on exhibition there, in the shrine provided for them, and, according to officials of the library, these two most precious items in our archives will remain where they are unless Congress changes its mind and enacts another law again transferring them, for neither document is mentioned in the act providing for the Archives Building.

In the minds of many people the Emancipation Proclamation—carefully preserved in the State Department—comes next in importance to these two. The Proclamation is a simple paper, five pages long, written by hand, bearing little evidence of its startling value except that it is signed with Abraham Lincoln's full name instead of his more customary A. It is bound into a red morocco book along with other Presidential proclamations, and it carries the marks of endless interested thumbs.

Of all the papers in the locked room that are shown to interested visitors, the most picturesque are the various treaties. Going to war is, in its recorded documentary form, a rather stark process. With all the debates, the public anxiety, the heart searchings, the solemn and terrible tension that attended its passage, the joint resolution of Congress declaring "that a state of war exists between the Imperial German Government and the government and the people of the United States of America" occupies only a single parchment sheet. Signed by Champ Clark and Thomas R. Marshall, approved on the sixth of April, 1917, by Woodrow Wilson, it is bound into the 1917 volume of public acts.

But if wars are declared without written fanfare or published trumpets, they are ended with a flourish. The definitive treaty of peace which marked the close of

(Continued on Page 15)



John Russell Pope, Architect.

The National Archives Building as It Will Look When Completed.