

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with FRED W. SHIPMAN
Chevy Chase, Maryland

First Interview - March 27, 1973

Philip C. Brooks, Interviewer

BROOKS: Now I understand that your interest in materials for historical research, Fred, began quite early. Right?

SHIPMAN: Yes. When I was a freshman in high school, I went to work for the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, which had the greatest collection of early Americana in the country up to that time. And I worked in that library for 10 years under the direction of Dr. Clarence F. Brigham while I attended high school and college and graduate school.

BROOKS: You went to college and graduate school at Clark University in Worcester, right?

SHIPMAN: That's correct. During this 10-year period, I became acquainted with the leading American historians in the United States, who generally found their way to the American Antiquarian Society Library to do their research. This gave me rich experience in historical methods and research and acquaintance with the leading people in the profession. This is what had its impact on my thinking and interest.

BROOKS: And after you graduated from Clark, was your next activity in the Library of Congress?

SHIPMAN: I then went to the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress where I was put in charge of what was called Project A, a project under the Rockefeller fund for the gathering of copies of archival materials from the Archives of Europe which were being supplied by Samuel Flagg Bemis on his searches in the European Archives and transferred to the Library of Congress for preservation.

BROOKS: How did you happen to come down to Washington?

SHIPMAN: I came down to Washington for the Inauguration of President Hoover because I wanted to see Washington. I was impressed and went back and told Dr. Brigham, and he wrote in my behalf to Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, who was Chief of the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress. And almost by return mail, I received an offer of a position, which I accepted. I then came down and stayed on in the Library of Congress for 18 months. Just about the end of that time I was asked by Boston University to come there to teach courses in American history, and I decided I would do that and go back to New England and continue my graduate study at Harvard University. I went back and taught one year at Boston University, and while I was there, took courses in the history of U.S. western development in graduate school under Frederick Merk, and American social history under Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. At the end of the year, I decided to return to Washington, and Dr. Jameson again gave me an assignment. I worked on the papers of George Washington, preparing a calendar for the use of Fitzpatrick, who was then publishing the Washington papers.

SHIPMAN: While I was there, I learned of the establishment of a project known as the publication of Territorial Papers of the United States. And again, Dr. Jameson, who was sponsoring this activity, advised Dr. Clarence E. Carter, who became the editor of the Territorial Papers, that I would be of valuable assistance to him if I were to be taken on as assistant, which I was. That was the beginning of the Territorial Papers project. As a result of my work on the Territorial Papers project, from 1931 to 1935 . . .

SHIPMAN: The classification was historical expert. In this work with the Territorial Papers, I examined archival material from practically all the leading archival collections of the Government that were in Washington, including those of the War Department, the Navy Department, the Interior Department, the State Department, the Treasury Department, the GAO, etc. I was given many compliments because I astounded people for the volume of and kind of material I located. I uncovered material that had not been known to exist. The result was that the Territorial Papers, instead of being a short-term publication, turned into a multiple volume affair which is still going.

BROOKS: During that period when you worked for Dr. Carter, you were in the Library of Congress often then, weren't you? I think that's where I first met you.

SHIPMAN: Well, I worked among the Washington papers, Gallatin papers, the Knox papers, and other private collections, some of which were in the Library of Congress; some were in the Massachusetts Historical Society; some were in the New York Historical Society, but the bulk of the material that I found was in either the Library of Congress or in the archives of the executive departments, the Congress, and GAO.

BROOKS: There were a number of people around; Karl Trever told me the other day that he first met you, I think, teaching at Boston . . .

SHIPMAN: Boston University.

BROOKS: And there were a number of people around that were interested in the Archives and how it was progressing, that eventually got into it. Let me ask, what first brought the Archives to your attention? How did you first happen to be interested in it?

SHIPMAN: Well, I don't recall who first told me the Archives was being planned. Of course I was a member of the American Historical Association, and in my associations with Dr. Carter and other historians, this was a matter of general discussion from time to time, and the progress of the Archives Act, the bill, was constantly before us. Dr. Jameson was actually considered the Father of the Act, and he was making many inquiries from time to time concerning the Archives. While I was with Dr. Carter, the Territorial Papers was recognized to be a special project. It had perhaps a limited time to exist, and it had a small staff. It limited my own advancement. So the combination of the interest, plus the interest in something of the founding of the National Archives, obviously was a great motivating force that caused me to watch and inquire more about what was going on. And I talked to Dr. Jameson about it and Dr. Carter, and they both concluded that I was a must if the National Archives came into being because of my experience and background and general knowledge of the Archives.

BROOKS: Who else worked for the Territorial Papers?

SHIPMAN: Mary Walton McCandlish, who was the niece of Walton Moore, who was the Representative from the State of Virginia and Counsellor of the State Department. She was on the staff of the Territorial Papers. A Mrs. Grace Grife, who was the typist, and Mrs. Carter, Dr. Carter's wife. I did the searching.

BROOKS: I wondered if there were any other people that later came to the Archives.

SHIPMAN: Mrs. Mary Walton McCandlish became Mrs. Livingston, and she in later years came to the National Archives when the State Department archives was transferred from the State Department to the National Archives. She became a member of my staff in the National Archives. Dr. Edgar B. Nixon succeeded me on the Territorial Papers staff and later became assistant director of the FDR Library.

BROOKS: Well, I assume that some of these people spoke to Dr. Connor about your availability.

SHIPMAN: Yes. Dr. Jameson spoke to Dr. Connor. Dr. Carter spoke to Dr. Connor at my request because he hadn't known my interest. Dr. Brigham also spoke to Dr. Connor about my experiences and my abilities in this field and recommended that I be considered for a position in this new organization.

BROOKS: So you were appointed as one of the first of the Deputy Examiners in 1935.

SHIPMAN: I was one of the first, yes. There weren't more than eight of us, I guess. If there were eight.

BROOKS: In the report, it says there were nine.

SHIPMAN: Nine, well all right.

BROOKS: That included Irvine and Schellenberg and Leavitt and several others. And you were under the direction of Tom Owen?

SHIPMAN: Well, Tom Owen was named the Chief of the Accessions Division, and also as a result had been, we had been assigned to him to carry out the survey of the archival collections in Washington. This didn't mean that Tom Owen was going to be our permanent supervisor, but he was really at the early stages directed to proceed to organize the survey. When the survey was completed, the staff of the National Archives was increased in number. The organization began to take shape, and I was made the Chief of what was called Department Archives No. 2. And Arthur Leavitt's was called Department Archives No. 1.

BROOKS: That was in March of 1936.

SHIPMAN: That's right. That was the beginning of the records divisions. But at that time, the records divisions hadn't been actually fully envisioned as to what their responsibilities were to be.

BROOKS: This is quite true. I recently found in the Library of Congress in the papers of Dorsey Hyde a memo that he wrote to the Archivist on December 1, 1934, describing the setup of the Archives. And he referred very briefly and sort of incidentally to 10 section chiefs, who were referred to in the report of the Louis Simon Committee of 1930. They were often, as you know, referred to as "custodial divisions" and their function was largely custody of records and some activity in reference. But there was no concept then, as I see it, of the records divisions as they came to be. And really, the transition from the early to the later organization of the place took about 4 or 5 years.

SHIPMAN: I think you're modest when you say 4 or 5 years. I think it went on much later than that. Even after I left for Hyde Park, many changes took place, but what was particularly baffling was who were to be the experts in the subject matter. Other than those responsible for the technical protection and care of the material, who were the experts? And this, of course, is what caused a great many differences, a great deal of friction. There had been established in the minds a library-type of organization to be set up. As a matter of fact, for a central cataloging section, there was a well-known librarian and a very able man, Mr. Russell. What's his name?

BROOKS: John Russell.

SHIPMAN: John Russell. They could not have found a more capable man in his field. And the point of what he would catalog, whether he was going to catalog a particular document, or catalog a dossier, or catalog a file, or just how he was to handle these matters was certainly something which caused no end of discussion. Everyone was trying to solve the problem. They weren't necessarily trying to push a view; they were trying to work on a problem that had not been solved, and no one had experience enough to know just what was best.

BROOKS: And they had just as many problems with the Classification Division.

SHIPMAN: The Classification Division was obviously much like the Cataloging. But the Classification Division people had less experience in the field of handling documents in this fashion than the Cataloging Division by far. They were people who had primarily a background in history and proceeded to become organizers of files and setting up classifications, technical classifications.

And while the subject matter was, of course, of primary importance, methods were something with which they were completely unacquainted. Now they worked diligently, but what they were lacking in was the background in methods. And this was where the library trained person up to that point could do a job, but one who had never been trained in files couldn't. The classifier didn't organize it well. They were doing what would be very nice for a historical group, but the techniques of record organization were completely unknown to them, although they didn't realize it, and neither did many people who worked in other areas of the Archives with or for them. It took time for this to seep through. Now I'd like to interject one more thing at this point. Because this was going on, there seemed to be high-level discussions around the Archives. When I say high-level, I was one, because there were only a few of us, and we were all high-level. We were the officers and there would be give and take, often because we had our own views, based on our own experiences. But this led me to wonder what was the actual practice in more established archives of Europe, particularly in the western world, so I wrote to archivists of France, Great Britain, Austria, and the Netherlands. I asked them some of these pertinent questions regarding classification and the cataloging of archival material and what they did. In each case, I received a full answer in detail of how they operated and also written manuals. This astounded some of the people who hadn't thought of doing it. And Arthur Leavitt, who was the chief of the Commerce Department Archives and who had facilities with language, translated these documents, and they were then published in the new publication, the American Archivist. And it, I think, did a great deal to open up to more people what was meant by provenance and other terms that became everyday usage in the future, and we began to understand that we were not to spend our time on every single paper but to have some concept of groupings and origins and an approach in this fashion. Otherwise, we were going to be completely swamped, as was evident from what happened to the Classification Division when it worked on the Food Administration files of World War I. They worked diligently but ruined the order of the files. The group was actually floundering in regard to how to handle the archives material because each one had different kinds of experience. Some had done research. Others had had experience, as Dr. Buck in being director of historical collections, and Dorsey Hyde had been in the library field.

BROOKS: Hyde was primarily interested in setting up an information center. I don't think he had any real concept of Government records or their value.

SHIPMAN: He had none whatever. Dr. Connor was the Archivist of North Carolina, and he had a very rich and well-organized archival collection. When we made the survey up, those of us who brought our material together, despite all our experience, and that includes certainly what I thought I had myself despite all that, when we really were given carte blanche and made an examination of all the archival material and records in the agencies, we found the

quantity overwhelming. The concept that we were dealing with State papers, which was perhaps really in the minds of most of us, the kind that you think of in connection with the Monroe Doctrine or the diplomatic correspondence. These began to become almost, in terms of volume, insignificant problems. It was the great volume of documents produced by the thousands and thousands of clerks who worked for the Government, the land records, the financial records, the Veterans records, all the personnel records of Civil Service, and the records of the Congress. These made up the greatest volume, and we found they had such value to individual citizens and to the Government. Many of them had legal effect and were obviously of historical value. Their situation was also aggravated by the tremendous amount of duplication of records. Copies of the same material appeared in many, many places. And this led Dr. Connor one day in a conversation with me to say, "Well, you know that when we came here, we thought we were going to be working with historical materials and would have an opportunity to produce something, but we are overwhelmed by a mass of records produced by the clerks of the Government of the United States which are necessary for the function of the United States, and we have to look on the Archives in an entirely different manner." And this is what led, I think, all of us into a situation where we had conception of what we were getting into. Even the planning of the building never anticipated accommodating the great mass of records for which we finally felt we were responsible. This required a considerable amount of reexamination of all these concepts about classification and cataloging and reference also, because even in the area of subject matter, knowledge there came a point where the techniques of using organized methods of research were essential. Nobody, except in very special areas could cover the subject material that well. You might have someone, a specialist in foreign relations, or a specialist in land problems, or Indian affairs or some such subject matter, and maybe some generalists, but when it came to the mass materials, if you didn't have adequate organization and finding aids, you just could not control it or master it. And if you didn't sift out the useful and get rid of that which was not of value, you were so cluttered up that it was impossible to make intelligent use of the material, to say nothing of the physical problem of ever handling it. And this is what confronted the Archives.

BROOKS: I think that's very true and extremely important. One of the first things that had to be done to correct that situation was to set up the Special Examiners' Office, which wasn't even dreamed of in this memo that Hyde wrote on the organization of the staff 6 months before. And we had to deal with these great long lists of useless papers. Didn't you work with us one time for a short time? You and McAlister and Lewinson?

SHIPMAN: For a short time.

BROOKS: When you came into the Archives, did you understand that you were going to be chief of the State Department Archives Division?

SHIPMAN: No, there was nothing like that at all. I had no assurances of anything beyond the position of Deputy Examiner, and which way the Archives would develop organizationally was unknown. There was no blueprint, it was talked about, and it would vary from time to time. And I must say in passing, Dorsey Hyde would change his mind at meetings regularly, so we never were sure of one thing or other. Dr. Connor, however, was far better organized in his thinking, and when he decided on matters, we knew where we stood. And there were, I think without a doubt, one or two people who did have very definite personal feelings about their own positions in the National Archives. And one of them was the chief of the Reference Division, who had established in his mind that he was to be really the authority in the National Archives on practically all matters relating to the Archives--their use, their access. He was to be the only one who could answer anything for the Archives relative to what was in it, and to also to demand that others conform to what he wanted in order to get what he desired--Nelson Vance Russell. This should be made plain; as soon as material came into the National Archives, the first thing we wanted to do was to start giving service. We didn't stop service, and service on them went on simultaneously. As a matter of fact, even during moves of records.

BROOKS: I thought I remembered that. I'm glad you said that.

SHIPMAN: We made arrangements that no service was interrupted, and while this was going on, and of course people like those in Reference and Nelson Vance Russell, who was chief, didn't even know the records existed until they were in the "stacks." Russell then began to take us over and tell us what the records were and what they should be or shouldn't be. This, of course, didn't sit very well. I might say at this point what I consider and I think for historical record, it's important that there was a tremendous resistance to the National Archives movement on the part of some of the agencies of the Government. Particularly the State Department and the military, and there were others such as Justice. They did not want to turn their records over. It was partly agency-wide, and many times it was the people who actually had the positions in the agency who were fearful of losing their jobs. Well in the mind of Dr. Connor, these people knew the records better than anyone else and would be a great asset, that we should transfer as many of them as we could bring over budget-wise and could use. Our first staff selections should come from those people in the agencies who were familiar with the records so that that knowledge wouldn't be lost. He felt that it would be terrible just to bring records over and have total strangers begin to administer them. He didn't want any interruption of Government service, whether it was for Government purposes or to the public, or to the researchers or anything else.

Sometimes there were more people working on them than we would have been able to handle budget wise. That sometimes required a certain amount of negotiating because somebody couldn't be used. But that was not in terms of the people who really knew the material. The objective of Dr. Connor was to get these people over there who knew the material. Now an incident here and there doesn't change the whole principle, and that was a principle he worked on. As a matter of fact, a good example was the State Department. When the State Department records came over, we did everything to take the State Department archival people right over. The problems that existed were sometimes that people didn't trust the Archives and didn't want to come over, or felt that they were losing out, if not in grade-wise, certainly in prestige, that they were losing prestige by coming in and being part of an organization instead of being head of an organization. For instance, Mrs. Natalia Summers felt that she would lose prestige. She never lost prestige, and she never lost a nickel of pay. She was given every assistance. The only thing was that she was in a bigger organization, and she was given a place to work where she used to have a quiet little corner and that was where everyone came. And these were personal qualms. And I certainly can understand it. This is not unnatural at all, and it takes some understanding. But I'd like to point out one thing. And this, I think, is very important, and I know you've heard it before. In this matter of resistance to the National Archives movement, which we just discussed, there were many steps taken to try to show how impossible it was for anybody else but the people in the agencies themselves to handle many of these records and how indispensable they were to these agencies; they also tried to get money to even improve the care and the preservation of records in the agencies and to set up a policy where such things as the State Department archives would never go out of the State Department's control. There was one example in France because there, the foreign affairs archives are not under the National Archives. This was considered a good example. So they tried to push this idea in a State Department budget of 1936, I believe. Hunter Miller put in his budget that he wanted some \$5,000 to rebind the early diplomatic correspondence up to 1906 that needed new binding, that was in the archives collection of the State Department. This request was spotted by James Preston who was liaison for the Archivist with the Congress, and he discussed the matter with me. He asked if the Archives has every facility here, and this is one of the services it would have if we took these materials over; why would the State Department have this done privately on contract and get money to do it itself. And I pointed out that this was doing something the Archives was set up to do, and I didn't think State should be supported. So James Preston went down to the Hill and talked to the committee-men, particularly I think it was Senator McClellan, and he pointed out that this was just another dodge on the part of the agencies to frustrate the Archives movement. And here was the Archives with a big building, everything ready to go, and these people were trying to avoid this change. And as a result when the hearings came up, the subject was brought up, and Mr. Messersmith,

who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Administration, then was asked about it. And the embarrassment was such that he immediately contacted Dr. Connor and told him he wanted to make arrangements for a transfer of the Archives up to 1906 to the National Archives. Dr. Connor called me in as soon as he got the word; he was elated. It was the first break in the Archives movement, and he told me that he wanted to congratulate me on my part of it, and that we had succeeded in breaking the movement. He said now we can never tell anybody this, but all we need now is the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and the Archives can't be stopped.

BROOKS: Yeah. Certainly the State Department was probably the first big hurdle.

SHIPMAN: It was the State Department that made it. The State Department broke it.

BROOKS: Fred, in 1936, according to the Annual Report, the file of proclamations back to 1791, and Executive Orders from 1862 on, and the Administrative Orders of NRA were transferred to the Archives. Did they presumably come from another office in the State Department, not from Mrs. Summer's place?

SHIPMAN: No, they were specially held by Brauner; it was a part of a legal office.

BROOKS: Was Brauner the one that was later in Federal Register?

SHIPMAN: That's right. And actually when the Federal Register activity was transferred to the National Archives, the records came into the National Archives. These presented an internal problem of interest, and sometimes I'm not sure whether we were a little bit too consistent, and yet it shows how we were thinking in those days. Brauner, who was the editor then, used to work on the Federal Register and edit these documents, particularly the ones you've mentioned. This didn't have to do with all departmental orders.

BROOKS: It was Proclamations and Executive Orders.

SHIPMAN: Proclamations and Executive Orders. When this material which dated back 1789 came in, the question is where in the National Archives should they be located? Well Brauner said, "I'm putting out this material; I cannot work unless I have all of these here with me; they must be in my office." Yet at the same time I had been taking material from other parts of the Department of State saying we could service them from our records division. And the question came up as to what should be done? Dr. Connor, who wanted to be very fair, asked me to write a memorandum, which I did. I used the principle of consistency, and said we had the same question to deal with in the transfer of records into the National Archives all the way through. We had indicated that

if material which was occasionally used, the service on them could be given from the records division. The material would be better preserved in the records division and also be available to more people. And within the Archives, we defeat ourselves and said "oh, no, they can't, it must be left in an office." We're not doing ourselves what we're telling other people to do. The result was I was complimented, and it was decided to put those records in the records division. And they were transferred to the State Department Archives Division.

BROOKS: Were you involved in, or know anything special about the passing of the Federal Register Act?

SHIPMAN: No.

BROOKS: That was in the summer of 1935.

SHIPMAN: No, I had nothing to do with that. This all came along about at the same time. But there's one thing I would like to say now since we've gone into State Department records as such. First let me say this that the reason that I was the one assigned to work in the State Department was because I had had 5 years with the State Department, and Dr. Connor felt that with familiarity with the people and the organization and all its operations, I could be in a better position to work there than a total stranger. I came over from the State Department highly recommended. As a matter of fact, when I left the State Department, it became a concern of Wilbur Carr that a person of my experience should be taken out of the State Department and had not been given advancement enough in the State Department to induce me to stay, and he had an investigation made of the personnel situation that would permit a thing of this kind to happen. So I had good relationships. And this made it possible to work within the Department because everything was open to me. Actually, my field of interest was in domestic history, and particularly of the West, as you perhaps recognize. I said I took my graduate work in Harvard with Merk and Schlesinger, although I had worked under Blakeslees at Harvard and Langer at Harvard. I had worked and had good courses in my masters and undergraduate work in foreign history, but my specialty was in the American field. As a matter of fact, the American Antiquarian Society was a research center for American history. So I found myself in this particular area and of course became vastly interested. The archival material which was organized and collected into what was known as the Archives Section in the State Department at this time was cut off at the period 1906. Now they had most things there. There were some things they did not have that they should have had, and I picked up very important things. For instance, the whole collection of appointment papers and letters relating to appointments they never touched, also papers relative to publishing U.S. Statutes. And this

had to do with a certain amount of snobbery on the part of the people in the Archives because "what were appointment papers," even though these were letters to George Washington and all the Presidents, and everyone up and down the line. They related to people being appointed, or the whole area of giving contracts to publish the Laws of the United States to all the newspapers. All those files were left in the sub-basement. They were interested in the diplomatic correspondence, Indian treaties, and maps, and so forth.

BROOKS: "They" being the Archives Section of the State Department?

SHIPMAN: Yeah, Mrs. Summers. They never bothered themselves to look at such things. And if there's anything as rich in material in history, more rich than the files of the papers that go into the appointment files in the State Department and that related, of course in those days, to domestic appointments to all the territorial offices and judges, and all are in there . . . All of the letters and recommendations from leading people, all our public figures of our time. There are letters in there from people such as Andrew Jackson and any number of people of different stages in their careers, writing and endorsing other people to the President. I dug these out of the sub-basement from behind furnaces and one thing or another, so the Archives people did a job up to a point. Now what they did do was very carefully list what they had, and when the transfer was made. This was very helpful.

BROOKS: If you don't mind, maybe you'll say something about the lack of cooperation of the records divisions and the "front offices," especially the Reference Division.

SHIPMAN: The Reference Division chief, Nelson Vance Russell, took the position that he was the person in charge of all affairs and everything that would be done in organization of material and access to the material, making material known, giving information on material, with was exclusively the responsibility of the Reference Division; that anyone else was intruding on his preserve. And he failed in every way to cooperate or to talk to people, to discuss the problems or to understand that he was really, to put it politely, he was among equals and none of us had all the answers. But all of us, I can say without hesitation, everyone on the National Archives staff at the levels I'm speaking of, were persons of intelligence, well equipped in the knowledge of the general field, and also aware that we had problems and that none of us had the answers to but we had to keep working for solutions. And no one person should feel that their particular way of doing things was the only way or even the best way. But this was something Nelson Vance Russell could not understand. He said he had met Dr. Connor on a trip to Europe, and Dr. Connor had promised him this job, and by gosh he was the man to do it, and no one was going to tell him what to do. Well, Dr. Connor had been concerned about this lack of cooperation between the Reference and the Records Divisions, and he asked me to have a

consultation with Nelson Vance Russell and for both of us to work out a plan of how we could solve these problems, and bring our views forward, so he'd have a basis on which to make some decisions on how we should operate. I went to Dr. Russell's office, and he snubbed me, really, and made it known that he didn't feel it was up to me to talk to him about anything regarding reference. He wouldn't have anything to do with me, and I could tell that to Dr. Connor. And I did tell Dr. Connor. And shortly after that, Dr. Russell resigned. I want to repeat again, that the Archivist's position had been, in principle, to have people of knowledge working with the records; that he had where possible within the realm of good management and budget, he wanted to bring over to the National Archives qualified people who were aware and had knowledge of the material, people who worked with the material. He was concerned that they would have knowledge of the subjects and also that the services to the Government and the public would not be interrupted by even all of the changes going about. The result was that all of those of us who worked with the records and the people we brought in with us from the agencies, were knowledgeable in the subject area. Being put in the position that we were not capable of answering a question because Mr. Russell was establishing a staff of people who didn't even know what the records were, and what they were going to do was incongruous, and it was so obvious that we wanted to have it ironed out. And unfortunately, it wasn't ironed out before Russell left and the subject had to be worked out by people who came after him. But there was an obvious recognition that when it came to specialization and deeper problems that the people who actually handled the records daily were people of special information, and should not be shut off from the people who were looking for information. In other words, if for any reason information that was wanted could not be given from the Reference room, these people should not be told that we don't have information, but they should be given the opportunity to talk to people who actually worked with material and could answer their questions. Now this is a combination of information of all areas of knowledge that you have to cover in the archival field, whether it's in finance, or personnel, or military. But it also had to do with the technical problem of where do you find things--not that's just the subject level, but where you find things, and it would be those in the Records Divisions, so many times, and still is I'm sure, who have the answer to many questions.

BROOKS: Well, Fred, everything I've read in the earlier reports and heard bears out that this confusion about reference service was one of the most serious of a good many differences that arose between the front offices and the records divisions. And while I'm seeking to get your comments primarily, I would like to say particularly that I certainly agree with the desirability of bringing people from the Department that really knew the records. Mrs. Summers and Judy Bland, for example, had helped me in my own research in 1932, and they were just invaluable. I was conscious of that as late as '47, when I was in charge of the division that included them.

SHIPMAN: I think there should be a qualifying thing here. The Archivist, himself, depended upon a few of their people who realized and understood the Archives movement and what it was trying to accomplish. These people handled their own, and they were just as important as I said, but they were not aware of the Archives movement as such. But what do you do with all these? This was the problem for the Archivist. And this is where we came in. We weren't repeating. We weren't just doing what they did. We were doing more, and more had to be done . . .

BROOKS: Well, Fred, in 1935, I came on the staff about 2 months after you did, and shortly after that I was handed a great list of items on a list reported as "useless" papers from the Veterans Administration. You and I went together. Do you remember that? We surveyed all the depositories of the Veterans Administration including the one where the early pension records were.

SHIPMAN: Oh, yes.

BROOKS: And those people evinced the same pride in the possession of their records and the same fear of their jobs that was quite naturally felt elsewhere. But I noticed in the Annual Report that the first records that came in from the Veterans Administration were the pension records of soldiers, sailors, and marines of all the wars up to World War I.

SHIPMAN: That's right.

BROOKS: And they came in in 1936 when you first had that division.

SHIPMAN: Yes.

BROOKS: And they immediately brought a large number of reference requests.

SHIPMAN: The reason I got into the Veterans Administration activities was that I finished the State Department survey, and there was an interim period between what I was doing there and the transfer of the State Department records. The Veterans records being a large operation, I was asked to work on those. So I went in, and I don't know, now in proportion to all of Veterans Administration records, whether I did the whole thing or part of it. I think I did the whole thing.

BROOKS: I think you did the whole thing.

SHIPMAN: You know who one of my assistants was? The first one.

BROOKS: Who's that?

SHIPMAN: Wayne Grover.

BROOKS: Oh, is that right?

SHIPMAN: Wayne Grover was my assistant, and I remember because we had been getting such meticulous instructions from Dorsey Hyde that we couldn't trust how much was in a cabinet, and we couldn't trust this, that, and the other. You'd have to measure it. And of course, we were trying diligently to get good figures, and I remember putting Wayne through some very unnecessary business of getting a ruler to find out how much was in each drawer and averaging it out, instead of saying, well, here's a hundred file cabinets, and we find out that two-thirds of the drawers are empty. By having to go through every one of them, Wayne was just working his head off and saying, "Well Fred, I don't think this is necessary." And I always remember that because Wayne and I were good friends all the way through.

BROOKS: He came on as a CAF 1. He had to do a lot of grub jobs for a while.

SHIPMAN: He was my assistant. Well, anyway, we did these. And the question came up that the Veterans Administration records and pension records were housed in a building that is now used by the Goodwill Industries, I think, right in that area, if not the same building down on New Hampshire Avenue; and as with others, the building space was short in Washington, and they were being threatened with a move to some other place. They couldn't find a place, and these were very important records. They were being used daily. And as I was surveying this whole matter, the people, the Veterans Administration, called me in, Mr. Hilldring, and said that it was the National Archives' responsibility and that they were not going to look for any space for these old records that I was there surveying. This was for me to take care of. Well, I brought the matter up to the Archivist, and he said to find out what there is to find out, what there is to it and so forth. We went into this matter and decided that this was a good thing to cut our teeth on, and maybe we should take the records over. There was a serious discussion as to whether they'd be too active and whether they should be in such a place as the National Archives. But Dr. Connor decided that we would go ahead and do it. Really, why we did it was that while we were making our position known in the Congress that people were trying to get space for some of their records such as the State Department records, and we had the space, the Veterans Administration was saying, "Look, here is this multi-million dollar building and not a thing in it, and we have all these records, and we have no place to house them." And the pressures were such that the Archivist asked me my view. I made the survey and said we could handle them. I think that in the long run, it perhaps was the wisest thing to do because those records, the

records of the wars after 1812, were still so very active that they really were the responsibility of the Veterans Administration itself. They were related to claims that were current, and they were turning them out; I don't know, you may have a figure, but it was a fabulous figure every day. And this was not what we had anticipated as Archives. It also taught us, though, one thing that we hadn't given thought to in relation to reference. The reference people couldn't handle this. In the first place, we had to bring on some people that were clerks from the Veterans Administration who knew how to handle these records, which were filed completely by file claim numbers. They also knew what went into a file, and they were clerks. They weren't archivists in any sense. But that's what we had. Now you couldn't have all that material go through the Reference Division. I don't remember whether we took our truck or theirs; I've forgotten--daily trucks went back and forth; clerks were selecting the claims out and sending them over and collecting them back and filing them. And that's what went on. And then other papers were being added if a claim became active. And if a claim became active, it was kept in the legal office of the VA for a long period and then brought back. Now we also learned something statistically. When the State Department records came and you, we'll say for purposes of discussion, you had a hundred services a month; it wasn't more than that. These services were primarily research services. They were the kind of services that required a good deal of understanding of history in searching things out and in doing a real piece of reference research. In the same month, you might get from the Veterans Administration division, Records Division, 25,000 services. But they required just pulling claims by number. So your statistics were completely useless. One service in the State Department files might, with the kind of research service you were giving, take you a week, but you could go pull hundreds of these claim files by number daily and send them out. But statistics came out on the services given throughout the Archives, and unless you had some way of equating them, the statistics meant nothing. Now later on in my career, I've had the same experience in the State Department, and we kept two kinds of service statistics, reference research and ready reference. The ready reference was the kind of thing when someone says, "well, I want to know is so and so is so and so's name in the Who's Who?" Now you get the Who's Who out. But if you have to go searching through a real reference research, you can't compare it. So statistics in reference became quite a problem. But it really upset the easygoing plans . . .

BROOKS: Fred, there's been one matter that has always been a problem for the Archives, and I'm not sure that it's always been successfully handled. This is the education and training of archivists. I tend to make a distinction between the education that you either expect a person to have before he's employed or he gets through academic channels later in a general background--a distinction between that and more or less on-the-job training in the Archives proper. Was that a problem, and was much done about it that you remember while you were in the State Department Division?

SHIPMAN: Oh yes, this was very obvious. And this I think referred to earlier in the kind of people that were brought over from the agencies because most of the people who were brought over from the agencies were not trained archivists in the sense that we were, who were concerned about the understanding of the significance of archives. They were really people who had in their custody certain records of a limited scope, and they felt quite thoroughly acquainted with them and could find material in them. But the concept of the whole of the Archives being a repository of the record of the activities of people in a manner in which they could be evaluated historically and for other purposes, and the relationships between them and other parts of the Government and to the public, were far from being understood. And most of the people, with the exception possibly of some of the people from the State Department, were lacking in educational background and training. They knew something because they'd worked on it as a file clerk comes to know something. But it was obvious that the significance of many things were not understood. They knew that something was wanted for the moment. They knew that a problem came up at the moment. But the true significance historically and perhaps, legally was completely lost on most of the people who handled material in the largest collections of the records in the Federal Government. This is not true in certain exceptions. I would say, that the State Department people had a depth of understanding and had taken considerable time to study the history and had an appreciation of this; yet, there were exclusive, which was indicated earlier by the exclusiveness and their holding on to what was diplomatic, and anything that wasn't diplomatic wasn't important. This kind of exclusiveness, an archivist, of course, could not possibly tolerate. They hadn't at all inclusive a concern about value. The values were very particularly handled. That was it, and that was only it. Then, too, there was nobody who knew how these things came into being. Now most of the people in the Archives business, I guess, had just come by that material because somebody else had it, and somebody else had it, and somebody else had it. But how do you organize this material? They really didn't know. But how to bring together the whole idea of identifying them with the office of origin, and the value of keeping material together by the office of origin rather than to break it up into a thousand different sub-subjects . . . All these aspects of archival approach were completely foreign to many people who worked in the collections of the agency. This was something entirely new. Provenance had no meaning as far as they're concerned, and not because they were unintelligent, it just didn't apply. Now the other areas are how you handle such a collection, and this whole matter of what do you do when you are trying to get this mass of material together and organize it in a manner in which one can get at it and produce finding aids and so forth. They had only limited collections under their control and generally speaking, they were small collections. Now I'm not speaking at this moment about the material that went on from World War II or some of that kind. I'm talking now, you must remember, about the early period. And there were exceptions to what I have just said in such places as the Land Office and some of the military offices.

BROOKS: Well, as early as 1938, a good many of the divisions had, and the top staff encouraged, divisional seminars at which various members of those divisions and sometimes people of other divisions talked about the principles that you're talking about, or spoke about functions of other parts of the Archives. Did you get into that?

SHIPMAN: Oh yes. There was a series of these started when Dr. Posner came on because he was perhaps the most helpful person that came on the scene. I would say Dr. Connor and Dr. Posner were perhaps the two most helpful people in the Archives movement. I think Dr. Buck had many ideas, but he had no capacity to deal with people, and the good things he did, he destroyed himself.

BROOKS: He had a lot of ideas which show in the records.

SHIPMAN: But he had no capacity to put them over.

BROOKS: For example, in the Committee on Finding Mediums that drew up the plan for reorganizing the staff was, Price was chairman of that, but the memos were drafted by Buck, and that shows in the file.

SHIPMAN: Frankly, Dr. Buck would have been a good man, a second man behind the scenes to help people, but to be the implementer, he couldn't do it because he had no patience with others. He was a good man to put in ideas for somebody else to digest and put in a manner in which he could take out what he thought was workable and use. I don't want to dwell on Dr. Buck, but I think I've always felt I knew Dr. Buck prior to his being Archivist, and I know this is true, and I also know particularly well from Dr. Carter, who was his closest friend that Dr. Buck spent more time getting ready to commence to start to organize things and because of ever present imperfections, he could never get to the point where it satisfied him. Let's put it that way. This was his, I think, his weakness. Dr. Connor, I think on the other hand, had the capacity to absorb people's views and to know well how far you can go and how much you can expect. I don't think he was a perfectionist because he knew that this word perfection is an ideal. You don't wait for perfection before you act.

BROOKS: There are a good many points in these interviews where the fact comes out that Buck was difficult to work with and one big reason was because he did tend to be a nitpicker. I knew that. I worked very closely with him two or three different times, including one before he became Archivist. And Connor was, you're right, perceptive and thoughtful, and he understood what could be done and couldn't. He was fine.

SHIPMAN: And yes, of course, the people who were critical of Connor were people who just didn't understand human behavior. And it's a very interesting thing today to me, and I would imagine to you also, Phil, that in the last 10 to 15 years, one of the most rewarding and one of the most best recognized areas of study and understanding today is what we call behavioral science. And that is applied as we know now to history, and they're going back over why people did things. Well, I think some of that is carried too far. But we know now that human behavior has a great deal to do with success or failure of anything we undertake.

BROOKS: Well, to get back to the question I asked you about training and education. Dr. Posner came over in 1938 on a 60-day visit, and he came to stay in the summer of '39 and started teaching at American University in the fall of '39. That's when the Buck-Posner course started, and from then on he had a great deal of influence on the Archives, I'm sure. He had a great deal of influence on Mr. Buck.

SHIPMAN: Well, I don't recall the exact time, and your dates I assume are right.

BROOKS: I have the jump on you because I've looked at the records.

SHIPMAN: Well, but I'm trying to say I don't know when Dr. Posner first started having formal or informal gatherings. Whether these are the ones you're relating to in terms of actual seminars or you're talking in a more formal sense. That's what I meant by exact time. But we did have discussions often. For one thing, I think you perhaps were part of them; Dr. Buck would get a group of us out on Saturday for lunch.

BROOKS: Right.

SHIPMAN: And the Saturday lunches were rewarding. We talked a great deal. And this is the way things were done, not in the formal sense of courses at the American University and the like. Now, this kind of information was brought back to our staff by Mr. Arthur Leavitt and me particularly during a period when we had our offices in the same part of the building. But these things we would have at our regular staff meetings, and we would discuss these things and would make available readings to the people. Now we didn't have these, everybody on the staff wasn't going to all these meetings. Discussions were generally held for the division chiefs and for the other offices of the department rather than for all of the staff members. Most of anything that went down to staff members was primarily reports brought back by the division chiefs in their regular weekly meetings. Then there was a series that Dr. Posner and Buck gave in the National Archives, and I think that was before the American University courses were formalized.

BROOKS: Well, I believe that's the same thing. In the fall of '39. That was the American University course. Anyway, the American University thing was always given in the Archives Building.

SHIPMAN: We would be engaged in the science of diplomatics. Archival material was looked on as being old parchments and to be so treated, identification of handwriting, water marks on the papers, probably so we'd know the age and be able to tell an original from a copy. And these would have to be carefully preserved; no light should ever be allowed to be shown on them, and that the humidity and the temperature should be controlled so they would be preserved and put in a steel case. These were going to be extremely delicate, valuable documents. And the concept apparently was also in the minds of those who had started their work on planning the equipment for the Archives before those of us in the Archives staff came aboard.

BROOKS: Yeah, this was first in Louie Simon's office and . . .

SHIPMAN: Would it come from the office of Louie Simon? That was at the procurement division of the Treasury Department, and it was developed at his direction at the Bureau of Standards. But they were not completely designed by the time we became members of the staff. There were many experiments with designs in the Archives with the Bureau of Standards' attempt to meet the proper size and depth and the ability to use the boxes and the places for labels and all of that. This went on and on and on. But as this was going on, we were beginning to get really a first-hand acquaintance with the records of the Government, agencies, and realized in that particular area that we were not just going to have the precious, fragile, and unique documents that would be limited in number and individually of tremendous value. We would have these tremendous, long files of papers that were produced by thousands of Government employees in the clerical status engaged in the business of operating the Government. And these papers would be typewritten, not necessarily something we should have to work in the area of determining which was the original, and the problem of handwriting. These problems, except for the early records, were no longer part of the problem of the Archives. You couldn't compare ourselves with the Archives of Europe in this connection. As far as that is concerned, we didn't have that many in the early days. This was quite all right when you're dealing with the early days before the typewriter and copies, but it, with all this mechanical method of typing and writing, these skills became less and less important. And so here we were with the steel boxes and fine, as I recall them, safe deposit boxes putting in tax returns of individuals, and personnel files, and all kinds of records on agricultural production, and the census and what have you, and it just didn't make sense to put the kind of material we had in these kinds of containers. So the question came up why not try something that was less bulky and more practical in the form of a regular file box of a maybe heavy cardboard or similar as used in many offices in the past. And these were finally devised in the National Archives proper. I and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, before

I became director, devised a cardboard box for letter-size material. And the reason I had letter-size material was that my survey of the Roosevelt material showed me that 95 percent of it was letter-size; therefore, I didn't want to waste space by having legal-size boxes. I also arranged for these to be so that the material that went in there would be laid flat. Now I take no issue on the whole issue of what's flat filing and what isn't flat filing. I said that flat filing merely means flattening it out, and you can stand it up. But there was no question that many papers, when you stood a folder up full of loose papers could easily begin to flop and become unmanageable. So there was no problem, no argument; we just put them flat. But Dr. Buck felt that we were being too literal and had nothing to do with it. We thought it worked, and it did work. As a matter of fact, it became a model for a lot of other places. But the National Archives later developed a box which put the records on end. But it was a cardboard box, and I gather it's still using those, and I take no issue. However, I do recognize that when the records management people decided to have boxes for their activities which was to be used by agencies for their semi-active records and put them in less expensive containers, they used a box which would take one cubic feet of records, and they filed those in folders just as they are filed in a 4-drawer filing cabinet. They didn't put them, standing them up.

BROOKS: Well, they stand up in records center boxes.

SHIPMAN: They do not; any I ever had in the State Department.

BROOKS: That's just as they are in the file cabinet. They're stood up in folders.

SHIPMAN: Yeah, but you don't, what I'm saying by standing up, you would not, and they don't do it. And I'll tell you we adopted that box in the records management of the State Department and its equivalent to a drawer. And we didn't start turning upside, up this way. It's a nice question, and you can talk about it, but this was an issue, and what I found very annoying was that I hadn't arranged to put my Roosevelt records up standing in these fashion boxes . . .

BROOKS: On the end of the folder.

SHIPMAN: Buck said that I didn't understand flat filing, which is absolutely absurd.

BROOKS: You mentioned a good deal of testing that went on in the Archives and at the Bureau of Standards. Did Kimberly get involved in this?

SHIPMAN: Yes, Kimberly was involved. I think what happened was that Dorsey Hyde took the responsibility and did everything he could to keep this determination of equipment in his own hands. He took the attitude that we were all novices, and we didn't have any idea of what we were dealing with--that he had a great deal more depth of understanding and in time as the centuries went by, he would be

right, and we were just thinking of something that would take care of an immediate situation. As far as Kimberly was concerned, I think that he straddled it, although I don't think he was convinced, in any way committed to those boxes. I think the person, really, who gave the boxes the biggest play was Dorsey Hyde. And Dorsey Hyde was given a responsibility by Dr. Connor, and I think that he wanted to let him work out with it, and it was he and Louie Simon who did most of it. Hyde would use the Deputy Examiners. And they try at hours and moved the papers around, try them, and go back and forth.

This went on and on and on. And of course, it was growing. What was happening was that the records were coming into the records division. More and more of the people were calling their boxes, the steel boxes, surplus because they didn't need them. For instance, I did in the case of the Veterans and in the case of the State Department. As I say, State Department primarily had bound material; oh, they bound their manuscripts, which was not a good practice, but they bound them. So where I had to put them, I had to take those steel boxes out of the stack area and just use shelves. Now those steel boxes had been assigned to the area, but it would be foolish to put the bound volumes in a steel box. So we took them all out. They went into a warehouse downstairs. Then the same was true with records of the Veterans Administration. As you recall, they came in those long boxes, and they stood up and they were folded eight ways, so you couldn't possibly service these things if you put them in a box. So when we put all those away, we had to take all of that steel equipment out and just put shelves in. Again, the steel began to pile up, and it began to show that it wasn't being used. And then, of course, others that I didn't have anything to do with, had their own experiences. But I think the steel box problem emanates again from the concept of what we were going to deal with, a different type of document. And we didn't know until after the survey.

BROOKS: We learned the hard way.

SHIPMAN: The survey should have been made; the Preliminary Survey would have been best made before they went into the equipment.

BROOKS: Another question I wanted to ask you before we leave the Archives proper is no official was put in charge of exhibit for 4 or 5 years, but there were exhibits in 1936.

SHIPMAN: The first exhibit was from the State Department.

BROOKS: The first exhibit was of the State Department records. Now, who set that up? Who was responsible for the selecting of the documents and so forth?

SHIPMAN: I was.

BROOKS: I wondered if you were.

SHIPMAN: And Jim Preston, and I gather Thad, to the extent that Jim Preston and Thad worked together, and it was done as much as anything to advertise ourselves.

BROOKS: Oh yeah.

SHIPMAN: It was a great opportunity for opening that hall, and what we showed were treaties.

BROOKS: What I was concerned about mostly was the administrative responsibility, who really did the job.

SHIPMAN: Well, as far as that was concerned, I didn't have responsibility for the hall. Now we had responsibility for putting these exhibits in, and Jim Preston, I think, was actually the one who was given that, other than, of course, the custodial care of the place which was in the hands of whom I've forgotten.

BROOKS: Somebody under Harris.

SHIPMAN: Yes, someone under Harris. But Jim Preston and Thad Page-- Jim worked with me on it. You know, he sort of floated around, and this was a great opportunity to show these documents. And I'll say this, and I think it should be put on here, that this was the first time that many of these treaties had been seen in numberless years. They had been in boxes in the basement room in the State Department. The public never had a chance to see them. The Treaty of Greenville, for instance, is one of the most fascinating Indian treaties that you can see. It has the signatures and the symbols of the Indians with the beavers and the otters and these and their marks and the parchments, and the seals. Then, of course, there are the seals that are on some of the more formal international treaties. Some, very beautiful ones in the skippets, the silver boxes, and of course the signatures of Napoleon and the Kings of England and Prussia, and Spain, and of their secretaries of State and so forth. And the whole exhibit was extremely interesting to show the public, and it also made an impression, I know, on the Congress to whom we were beholden for support, because the executive agencies were not supporting us.

If it weren't for the fact that the President of the United States himself was a strong advocate of the Archives, the Archivist would have had a much more difficult time to break the resistance to the movement. And I think there would have been independent agency archives without much question. There would have been

a foreign office archives separate from us. I don't think they would have ever come in under another President, unless a person like Roosevelt who would have said to them, "This all belongs in the Archives rather than for you to have yours as the French do," for instance. There were precedents for their attitudes, and it was something to overcome this precedent. It made us an exception. The naval archives in France are special. You don't get those into the Archives of the Archives Nationales. There were people in the agencies reaching out for this kind of precedent. . .

BROOKS: The military certainly would have had an Administrative archives.

SHIPMAN: And so you had to have strong support, and Dr. Connor was able to get it from the President, and he was able to get it too from members on the Hill. And I'll say this, that no matter what one has to say in terms of Dr. Connor's administration, if it weren't for a man of his sagacity, his ability to work with people, and to know how to demonstrate the advantages of what he was advocating, it could have been a very different history. The Archives would never have made the tremendous strides it made. Now before Dr. Connor left, and by the time he left, the Archives was beset by the problem, now we've got it, what are we going to do with it? But the Archives would never even have had it if it hadn't been for Dr. Connor for a long, long, time. And for some of the people who came after, they had no understanding, nor were they generally of the type that could have done Dr. Connor's job. He was necessary before you had an Archives department going at all.

BROOKS: I've not talked to anybody that didn't speak well of Dr. Connor's administration.

SHIPMAN: Without him, you could have had nothing.

BROOKS: Right.

SHIPMAN: If you'd have had what we had later, you'd have had a whole series of administrative archives. His ability to make plain to people what he was doing and to convince them of the wisdom of it was remarkable. And they were very well impressed. And I must say, the credit for this goes directly to J. Franklin Jameson because it was his personal selection of all the many prominent candidates. The only candidate I know that would have been even comparable to him would have been Waldo Leland, and Waldo Leland had indicated he didn't want to take that position.

BROOKS: And Jameson worked very hard to get Connor to take it and to get Connor appointed. You mentioned the President of the United States a while ago, and I'd like to talk a bit about him, if we may. I've been told that F. D. R. was interested in transferring the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to the Archives long before this became a public matter. Do you know about the earliest part of that story?

SHIPMAN: I don't. I would like to be able to say I do, but I don't. The most I ever heard Dr. Connor say in that regard earlier was what I told you what he said in connection with the transfer of the State Department papers. He told me then that now we've got this underway; all we need now are the Constitution and the Declaration. But what went on between the President and Dr. Connor to bring this about, the Constitution and Declaration, I didn't know, and I can't contribute anything.

BROOKS: Well there's a section on the relations with Roosevelt in Connor's so called "diary." I say "so called" because it's really not a diary. It's a series of essays on different aspects of the Archivist's job, and it's closed until 1975, I think, by agreement between Connor's nephew and Collas Harris, who has a copy of it. It's evident that Connor leaned heavily on Harris for some things.

SHIPMAN: Harris wasn't all bad.

BROOKS: Far from it. And Collas has a copy of this thing which I've seen but not read thoroughly, and I don't know the whole story. But I have been told that Roosevelt expressed an interest in transferring the Declaration and the Constitution when he and Connor first met in 1934.

SHIPMAN: I can tell you this, F. D. R. had a very high regard for Connor.

BROOKS: This is quite evident. I went a year ago to Chapel Hill and spent a week going through the Connor papers, and it is quite evident that they had a close and warm relationship.

SHIPMAN: Oh yes, I think that's what happened in the case of Connor with F. D. R. becoming more and more busy and more things happening in connection with the war; it was more and more difficult to get to him. And I know that Dr. Connor began to feel that he couldn't get to him, particularly in relation to the Roosevelt Library. He wanted to do one thing at the time before he retired that was not done until practically a few months before F. D. R. died, and which we all wanted. And that was to pin down some conditions under which the papers would be made available, and what would be kept secret, and how long, and so forth. Some program. Now finally that came about, but that was after Connor

left and shortly before F.D.R. died. That's another story. But this was something that was bothering him because of the way F.D.R. was loosely giving us material, and we had nothing that pinned it down. The only thing that pinned it down was that I would make a record of it, and Connor and I discussed it. I made the record of it, and in making the record of it as a Federal official, and I got kind of a system with F.D.R., he told me, "I'll send a whole lot of material up to you. The "A" material you can have. The "B" material keep for me." So I had to keep this "A" and "B" material separate, and I had a statement as to what "A" material was, and I pinned the letter and put this so that anyone up here knew anything that was listed "A" we listed it because he had told me it was ours. But you see it wasn't in legal terms. There was nothing in legal terms, and that is why I had my problem later with Buck.

BROOKS: Let's go back and ask when did you first become involved with the Roosevelt story? Was the White House survey the first step in that . . .

SHIPMAN: Yes.

BROOKS: . . . how did you get into that?

SHIPMAN: Well, because I had met Roosevelt the time he made his visit to the Archives in 1937. And strangely enough, there were only a few people allowed to stay in the building to show him around. Dr. Connor had selected me as one of them. And that was quite a thrill.

BROOKS: Well, you already had some of the State Department records then-- '37.

SHIPMAN: No. Maybe we did.

BROOKS: Well, those proclamations and executive orders.

SHIPMAN: Yes, some of those things. There was not much, but we were showing him really the plant more than records. And when he came into the section, back from the front offices into the records area, Jimmy Roosevelt was the one who wheeled him around, and there was the Secret Service, and I was the one in charge. Connor was there, but he said, "Fred Shipman will take care of you." You can imagine my thrill because F.D.R. really was a very fine person, and this was my first meeting with him face to face. And he was interested in everything. And he had stories, of course, of his own, material and stories of his days at the Navy and so on . . . and I gave it little thought after that, except it was a marvelous experience, because it was. And then, it was about before

Christmas of 1938, sometime in that early period around December or fall of '38, Dr. Connor called me down to the office, and he told me then that the President, it was a confidential matter because he didn't want me to mention it to anyone else but to know about it, that he had talked to the President about his papers, and the President had decided he was going to have his papers put in a library at Hyde Park. That F.D.R. had this plan, and that it wasn't exactly what Dr. Connor had been working for. He had been trying to get the President to put his papers in the National Archives, and this was kind of a blow to Connor. He didn't like the idea. It was not his wish. He felt that the place for this material was in the Archives. But he also recognized what all people have recognized so far that there's never been any solution to, what to do with Presidential papers as long as they are under law considered personal property.

BROOKS: And many problems of access and protection that he must have foreseen.

SHIPMAN: Oh sure. I mean it didn't leave it in the hands of the person . . . it isn't the same as the papers of the Governor of New York, which go directly to . . . or the papers of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. In this country, they are still the private possession of a President.

BROOKS: And I got thoroughly sold on the wisdom of that when I was in Manuscripts.

SHIPMAN: Sure. You and I have a great deal of the same experience, and I don't want to be carrying coals to New Castle. And it's also very interesting how little those who have been close to it understand it and how loosely people talk about it. This is why I feel irate when I see what that man who's trying to criticize the Roosevelt Library, and I know what he did. We wouldn't even have a carbon copy of an invitation to the White House to look at if it weren't for people like us who protected that and had the cooperation of the President. And now to come out and make some fuss . . . Anyway, I don't want to get sidetracked on that. Well, to come back to my story. Dr. Connor told me that a group of them, Waldo Leland and others got together at the President's behest, and what they needed to do was get some factual data about what would be required to house all this material, and of course the thing to do **then** he was quite well aware of. He'd been through the survey of the Federal records, so he felt the thing to do was to survey Roosevelt's Presidential material and any other material that might be going into the library. And they had worked out arrangements by which Mr. Joerg was to look at the map material. I was to look at all records and books. Prints were also included with the maps. That was Dr. Connor's concept. I was interested in that because I'd handled flat materials at the Antiquarian Society,

broadsides and all, you know, and those same things. I'd handled those for years, but I didn't want to say anything. But he used Joerg because he felt Joerg had the type of equipment, and I wouldn't say anything, you know, if that's what he wanted. But I'll tell you, actually, the Antiquarian Society Library is rich in these broadsides, and that was one of my responsibilities. However, Mr. Joerg was always a very nice person to deal with. And there wasn't much for him to do really. There was very little to do. Anyway, he was to do that, and then a man from the Smithsonian Museum looked into all of the objects d'art in the Museum--what material that might be called museum material--and make a survey of what was included in that. So it was arranged. I don't recall if Mr. Joerg really got into much of anything. To tell you the truth, I can't even remember him going to the White House. He might have done it, but I can't remember it.

He wasn't thinking of maps as much as he was broadsides and prints, you know, being oversized flat. I think Mr. Joerg might have made one trip on his own to the White House, but not much more because there wasn't that much material, you know, of that nature. But arrangements were made for me to go to the White House, and it was just about Christmas week of 1938, and I'll never forget it. I went up there, and I know I went alone. Anyway, I went up there to the White House, and I sat down with F. D. R., and he described to me all there was, and then he called Mary Eban in. Mary Eban, she was one of his assistants in the White House, who worked on all his private material, the books and things that came in. She was an untrained person, but she'd been a political worker, and she was working around there. She was a very nice person. A person with broad contacts in the political activities and so forth, and she did these things; she was completely without training. She had no idea what she was doing, but she was doing. He could tell her what to do, and she would do it. So, he told her to be sure that I was taken through the White House from cellar to attic, to leave no place that I might find anything untouched, that I was to see everything. And he turned me over to her, and she did exactly that. I went actually into the attic of the White House. I went into the sub-basement of the White House. I went into all the rooms of the White House. I went into the files of the White House.

BROOKS: Was the file room then over in the west wing?

SHIPMAN: Down in the west wing, downstairs. Mr. Ingling was the chief, and I had spent quite a time. I spent a long time getting myself together. Of course, I was fascinated. I was into every room in the White House. I told Miss Eban, "he said every room, there may be something here, so all right, I want to see it." I'll never forget coming out of the White House that night about 5:30. It

was just about a day or so before Christmas, and it was dark, and the lights were on, the Christmas lights were on, and it was snowing. And you know it was one of the highlights of my life. So, I had that, and I made a couple of contacts back there for questions, I needed to check my notes, you know. And I took all this material after having been experienced in my other survey work. I drew up a report for Dr. Connor to give to this group, and the fellow who wrote from the Smithsonian, he was a curator of the museum, he had a report, and Mr. Joerg, I think, had one, but I'm sure that Joerg's couldn't have been more than a page. There wasn't much of that kind of material. You see, that's what I'm really saying. There wasn't a map collection. Actually, Joerg practically dropped out of it as I recall. I may be doing him an injustice, but I'm talking frankly from what I remember. Well I didn't think much more of it than that, and time went on, and of course, you can follow the legislative history of this proposal. It was getting all kinds of reactions, pros and cons in the newspapers, and columnists said he was going to perpetuate himself and so forth, and then the drive was on for money. I had nothing to do with that. Then sometime after that, Lou Simon wanted to have a meeting with me. He said he wanted to talk over my views, what I found, and what was in my reports. He said that he had a copy. And I had indicated the kind of thing, including these containers that I made, which I know had been a tremendous success. Dr. Connor spoke to me about it, and Lou Simon talked to me about it. And then we had a meeting with Leland and the whole group, and I had to tell them what I thought. They had my report, and I told them what I did and my experience, what were my conclusions, and what should be necessary. Now I wasn't taking in anything but equipment to handle this material. I wasn't planning office space, and I wasn't planning museum rooms, and I wasn't planning reproduction units, or that kind of thing. Kimberly handled the reproduction planning. He did all that. The museum space, the rooms were part of the President's own idea, the architects's own idea, and were all thrown in from these reports. And then they took it all and wrapped it up. To my surprise I found a lapse of time, and then Louie Simon was calling again. Wanted me to come over to the Treasury Department. They were working on my report. So we all went through this business of measurements and so forth and also what kind of stacks I liked. I liked the slot shelving. I don't like the brackets that you hang. I had them in the Antiquarian Society. They doubled stack size, while I was there and I had worked on that one with Brigham. Much the same as I did on this. Brigham was interested in books, but he hadn't the slightest idea of, well you know, put a square peg in a round hole, and I was the one doing his work for him in this area. So this was, in a sense, you asked me earlier how I came into all these things. I had been doing these things, but I'd been doing it with very priceless material. This material I worked with as a boy, the Bay Psalm books and Indian bibles and the first newspapers and periodicals. These books and these collections are priceless. I've worked with priceless collections all my life. So I was not just looking at things strictly as physical. However, Louie Simon, to my surprise kept in touch with me, and then he came over to see me. I found myself being constantly engaged in

conferences which were not generated by me, but as a result of the fact that I had made this survey and reported on it and described what was to be taken care of. And how I thought it could be best handled, most efficiently in space, and in treatment. And the report's on file. So this became a working paper for all of them.

BROOKS: What was the relation between Louis Simon and the architect?

SHIPMAN: I never worked with the architect to that extent. But I think that was more between F. D. R. and Connor because it had to do with where he wanted it, even to the tree out front, and so forth. And F. D. R., you know, himself, drew a freehand drawing of what he wanted.

BROOKS: Including the wings, right?

SHIPMAN: Yeah. That's up in the library. But I never worked directly with the architect. I worked with Louie Simon. I wish I could fill you in on these things. Connor could better fill you in on that. And also, just remember these people who were on this group that Leland headed for the President. They were called, not trustees, what were they called? You know, the ones that raised the money and all that which Leland was chairman of. You know. They had to be kept informed of the needs and what was being done.