

Archives, Power, and History: Dunbar Rowland and the Beginning of the State Archives of Mississippi (1902–1936)

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Abstract

The histories of archives are especially significant because their collecting practices affect the writing of the history going on beyond their walls. This essay explores the early history of the Mississippi State Archives through the activities and practices of its first archivist, Dunbar Rowland. Rowland was not only a member of the first generation of southern state archivists, but was also a member of the Mississippi planter elite and an aspirant to participating both in the wider world of archival practice and thought and in the post-Reconstruction interpretation of southern history. This investigation divides Rowland's work into three periods: foundation, collection, and publication, and argues that Rowland's example shows how archival practice itself can reflect the stance of its times toward the construction of public memory.

Introduction

The academic history profession has now achieved enough maturity to reflect upon the implications of its origins in the German historical tradition and its own cultural and political contexts and their effects over time.¹ Historians have had little to say, however, about the intellectual histories of the archival institutions whose creation they encouraged and on which they

¹ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1988) provides a fine outline of the intellectual history of modernist historical practice and its origins in document-based research in the German "scientific" tradition. See also William F. Birdsall, "Archivists, Librarians, and Issues during the Pioneering Era of the American Archival Movement," *Journal of Library History* 14, no. 4 (1979): 457–79.

have depended for source materials.² This is all the more surprising because the political and financial insecurity of archives has made them vulnerable to all kinds of influence merely to secure their existence in the first place and certainly to continue existing.

In the present atmosphere of secrecy and cover-ups in government and business, wrangling over electronic records in incidents like the PROFS case and the arguments about the National Archives' General Records Schedule 20, not to mention reports of intentional archival destruction in the course of civil wars and genocides worldwide, we are reminded every day that it is impossible to write history on the basis of documentary evidence that has been destroyed or that was never collected.³ Yet these very cases, along with the history of archival protection of documentation, make us only too aware that archives have *never* been able to capture an "ideal" level of documentation. As institutions with a costly and open-ended mission, archives' most effective cost-justification has always been their role as a support for cultural or political legitimation, so that they must be afflicted with an inherent bias toward suppression—by omission or commission—of whatever does not serve to legitimate that which supports them. As potential repositories of political and cultural power, archives are pulled by so many interests that their motives can never be unmixed, nor can they usually contain the records of greatest power. There is, in short, nearly always an inherent tension between what historians and archivists would like to collect and preserve and what economic and political constraints allow them to collect and preserve.⁴

² Walter M. Whitehill's standard reference *Independent Historical Societies* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1962), essentially a guide to collecting archives of historical manuscripts, is strong on the Northeast but less helpful for other regions or state archives and glaringly uncritical in its author's view of the motivations of historical society founders and archivists. For a contemporary and critical examination of the origins and history of the documentation of one locality, see Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), which treats the institutional histories of the libraries and archives that preserve Philadelphia history. On a wider scale, Michael Kammen's *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) places the emergence of archives and other institutions of memory in the context of the construction and modification of an "American" identity from colonial times to 1990. More recently, in the context of decolonization historiography, there has been a vigorous discussion among historians of especially the British Empire about the constraints and constructed nature of archives and archival collections: see Antionette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005). The strongest current thread of critical evaluations of archives comes from those whose stories have been systematically excluded or expunged from them.

³ In a phrase coined by Verne Harris, we must face the fact that "archives offer researchers a sliver [what archivists choose to keep] of a sliver [what archivists are empowered to choose from] of a sliver [the once-existent documentary record of social memory]" (64–65) of what might at some point have been known about anything in the past: see "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 63–86.

⁴ This fact is reflected in Richard Cox's aptly named *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004), but its implications have long been part of the post-modern critique of the writing of "true" history: see Keith Jenkins, *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1999).

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We must admit that archivists, too, come to their work as products of their time inevitably occupied with their own agendas. The sense of belonging to a profession has helped to shape archival agendas to an ideal designed to assist in the success of the profession itself. Until the impact of voluminous modern paper records and especially digital records compelled reconsideration of both archival roles and practices, however, archivists accepted as unproblematic their right to set the agenda for archival preservation of the historical record—indeed their right to define what might constitute that record. This was certainly plain from the beginning of formal archival activity in the United States.

This paper discusses an archival beginning (the Mississippi State Archives and its first director, Dunbar Rowland) to show how such contextual issues have worked from the outset of the creation of a state archives that was born of a specific effort toward the construction of public memory. What personal, political, and economic constraints and motivations were there? How much can we understand of them and what basis do we have for that understanding? How do the choices made at the outset circumscribe what historians can do with the holdings of the archives today? These kinds of questions are far more fundamental than those we now see raised by new media and documentation forms, and they need to be answered and understood if archives and archivists are to develop a theory that is not contingent on their very institutional situation. The surprising outcome of such an investigation is that the very embedding of archives themselves in historical processes make them into unintentional witnesses of their times.

Creating a State Archives for Mississippi in the Wake of Reconstruction

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) was created in 1902 by Mississippi State Senate Bill No. 26, Chapter 52, Laws of 1902, which states its objects and purposes as follows:

There shall be for the State of Mississippi a department of archives and history . . . and the objects and purposes of said department are the care and custody of official archives, the collecting of materials bearing upon the history of the state and territory included therein, from the earliest times, the editing of official records and other historical material, the diffusion of knowledge in reference to the history and resources of this state, the preparation and publication of annual reports, the encouragement of historical work and research and the performance of such other acts and requirements as may be enjoined by law.

The “care and custody of official archives” bears specifically upon the work of preserving the records of government, which by that time had been accumulating for 104 years since the creation of the Mississippi Territory in 1798. The

whole tone of the act is clearly antiquarian, as one would expect: Dunbar Rowland's tenure as the department's first director falls under the "Culture and Education" category in Victoria Walch's outline of American archival history, where she points out the historical mission of the earliest state archives.⁵ For the first quarter of the twentieth century the American Historical Association's Public Archives Commission, of which Rowland was an active member, encouraged the creation of state archives to preserve the sources of the country's early history. This was not, however, merely a kindness extended to the general public. In fact the emergence of a history profession as a field of university specialization in the United States *required* the creation of archives, since it required, in the light of the introduction of German historical models, the existence of original documents and institutions to preserve and provide access to them.⁶ It was clear that most professional historians would not have the private funds that had enabled avocational historians like Francis Parkman to assemble private collections of documents to support their work during most of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, some historians began to be involved directly in the work of institutionalizing documentary holdings and developing an archival profession, building on mostly governmental models from Europe. The creation of the Mississippi archives was enmeshed in all of these processes.

But although some or all of these abstract national aims were adopted by the creators and leaders of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, this was not their sole motivation. They all had their own personal histories as southern white elites, and those histories were of necessity bound up with the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction. As Charles Reagan Wilson's research has suggested with respect to many of the other activities of the same men and the same *kinds* of men across the South, one significant purpose of their labor was the creation of a monument to the Lost Cause of the Confederacy.⁷ The creation of early state archives everywhere in the United States was most often motivated by a filiopietistic desire to preserve evidence

⁵ Victoria Irons Walch, "State Archives in 1997: Diverse Conditions, Common Directions," *American Archivist* 60, no. 2 (1997): 132–51. Note that Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, considers that during the period from 1870 to 1915 there was a national and more general trend to rescue and create public memory about the American past.

⁶ William F. Birdsall, "The Two Sides of the Desk: The Archivist and the Historian, 1909–1935," *American Archivist* 38, no. 2 (April 1975): 159–73.

⁷ See, generally, Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980). Wilson addresses himself to religious and educational institutions, but does not discuss archives explicitly. Richard Cox has observed more pointedly, "the pioneering Southern state archives were part of an effort to re-establish a Southern white hegemony, requiring the re-invention of the past among other things" ("Shifting Strategies in Appraising, Scheduling, and Maintaining Records," in *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* [Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000], 91–106), 106.

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important to the people who promoted their foundation.⁸ Just as culture is always being constructed, education always has a purpose, and archives as the basis for both are also purposefully constructed.⁹

Neither the Mississippi legislature that created the Department of Archives and History during the early years of racial segregation, nor Rowland who directed it, was interested in the participation of the whole Mississippi population in the understanding of history, nor indeed were archivists in other parts of the country much occupied with populist concerns. As a result, the archival foundations laid during Rowland's tenure focused on some materials and ignored others, and no holistic record of the past was preserved. But this is not only a judgment of our time; regional rivalries among institutions of memory and historical practitioners and the hegemony of sections other than the South highlighted some of these omissions and cost the institution and Rowland personally a loss of prestige and respect. Locally, the elitist bias that was part of the early success of the archives eventually made it and Rowland himself hostage to the evolving political and economic forces in his state.

Rowland was not only committed to an ideology; he was also totally absorbed in creating a broadly conceived archival institution that covered every facet of the version of Mississippi history that he supported and that offered the fullest possible access to those he considered qualified to work with the materials collected. He was determined, furthermore, to apply to that effort the most advanced methods that he could find. His history as archivist of Mississippi, therefore, is a complex case study in the building of an archives.¹⁰ The long dominance of this single individual reveals his achievements and magnifies his flaws: his influence on what would become the historical record shaped it detectably; his identification with the archives constrained how it could function as an institution during his life and continues to echo today. But the emergent European archival theory of the turn of the twentieth century was beginning to construct a formal concept of documentation, and I think that it guided

⁸ It was the lack of such focused interest that delayed the creation of the National Archives until 1934. See Victor Condos, Jr., *J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives, 1906–1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 175–76. Condos's careful exposition of each step taken over twenty years shows just how indifferent essentially local politicians of the U.S. Congress were to the need for a national repository, even as they praised the founding of more local archives; it needed the political pressure of a national grassroots group with similar goals, the American Legion, to bring the task finally to conclusion.

⁹ For a recent overview of this critical approach to archival history, see Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1–19.

¹⁰ To the extent that bolstering white supremacy and formulating a specific subcultural public memory were projects shared by the former Confederate states, elements of this study may be familiar, though the archival story has not been told. The trajectory of Rowland's career, which touched on nearly all the great movements of archives and history during his lifetime, also provides a useful historical transect through those events.

Rowland to a practice that was in some senses “good enough” for his time and for subsequent Mississippi archivists to build upon.¹¹

An Attempted Adams “Colony”: Franklin L. Riley and the Birth of the Mississippi Archives

The leader in the statutory creation of Mississippi’s state archives, however, was not Dunbar Rowland, but Franklin L. Riley. Born in 1868, in a home in Simpson County, Mississippi, that had been commandeered by Union forces for a headquarters during the Civil War, Riley grew up to graduate from Mississippi College in Clinton and to become a student of Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins. Adams was the national leader in the introduction to the United States of the “scientific” German historical method of writing history from original documentary sources.¹² His students, many of whom were men from the South who were interested in writing a southern history *not* hostage to the sentiments of the Lost Cause, fanned out to teach in colleges across the region, where they campaigned for the collection of original documents and started historical publications series to serve as vehicles for their own and their students’ work.¹³ They had their work cut out for them; the state of public documentary collections across the South at the time was terrible. As a student, Riley had been unable to write a dissertation on a Mississippi topic for lack of access to adequate documentary evidence for political institutions in Mississippi, so he had settled for writing about New England state senates.¹⁴ Riley then returned to Mississippi, first as the president of the Baptist Hillman College for Young Women

¹¹ Most of the original source material for this study was drawn from the holdings of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. It should be mentioned here that although there is extensive correspondence authored and received by Rowland in these collections, there is very little reflective writing on his archival work, either because Rowland was not particularly introspective or because his wife, Eron, who arranged his papers for archivization after his death, did not consider such writing worthy of preservation. The work here has instead a touch of the forensic in that it is drawn from his frequent public utterances, his publications, and the patterns of his activity apparent in the collections he made and the way he arranged and described them.

¹² Wendell H. Stephenson, “Herbert B. Adams: Southern Historical Scholarship at Johns Hopkins,” in *Southern History in the Making: Pioneer Historians of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 52–70. See also, Robert Reynolds Simpson, “The Origins of State Departments of Archives and History in the South,” PhD diss., University of Mississippi, 1971, and O. Lawrence Burnette, *Beneath the Footnote* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1969), 50–51.

¹³ Some of Adams’s southern students were of decidedly liberal leanings on the questions of race and the Civil War: see the articles on John Spencer Bassett in Stephenson, “Herbert B. Adams,” 93–131. Correspondence between Adams and his students is in W. Stull Holt, ed., *Historical Scholarship in the United States, 1876–1901: As Revealed in the Correspondence of Herbert B. Adams* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1938).

¹⁴ Franklin L. Riley, *Colonial Origins of New England Senates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1896). Northeastern states’ historical societies had begun collecting documentary source materials early in the nineteenth century; see Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*, and Burnette, *Beneath the Footnote*.

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in Clinton in 1896–97, then as the University of Mississippi’s first professor of history in 1897.

Once employed in Mississippi, Riley was well positioned to establish an Adams “colony” there from the base of a university professorship and family connections. First he was determined to remedy the lack of an archival institution. He began by reviving the Mississippi Historical Society, started in 1858, whose revival in 1890 had been followed by collapse a few years later.¹⁵ Its membership predictably included educators, clergymen, old soldiers, lawyers, and women of similar background, many of whom had been part of the antebellum power structure that wanted to preserve a story justifying the actions of their state and its favorite son, Jefferson Davis. A particularly significant role was played by a group of middle-aged men who had graduated from the first few classes at the University of Mississippi after its reopening in 1865, men twenty years Riley’s senior who had been boys during the Civil War and who grew up to overturn Reconstruction and construct the apartheid of Mississippi segregation using tactics that would come to be known as the “Mississippi Plan.”¹⁶ This group fits the profile of societal segments who were committed to the permanent memorialization of the Lost Cause as described by Wilson, through control of institutions of public memory and their content.

Riley also started a publications series, *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, to distribute the proceedings of the meetings and eventually his students’ work, for the first volume of which Adams contributed an essay that sketched his documentary method and offered idealist inspiration to potential students of history.¹⁷ In his spare time, Riley also wrote a history of Mississippi, which was condensed to make a very successful textbook for use in the schools.¹⁸ The volume reflects a romanticized view of the antebellum era, portraying slavery as a benevolent institution and excoriating Reconstruction, joining many other southern-written school histories of the same ilk.¹⁹ Using the society’s clout and his own name recognition as the leading academic historian in the state, Riley

¹⁵ For the early history of the Mississippi Historical Society, see Charles S. Sydnor, “Historical Activities in Mississippi in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Southern History* 3 (May 1937): 139–60. For an overview of Riley’s activities in Mississippi, see Conrad W. Gass, “Franklin Riley and the Historical Renaissance in Mississippi, 1897–1914,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 32 (1970): 195–227.

¹⁶ During the years just after the University of Mississippi’s reopening, most of the faculty consisted of veteran Confederate officers, including L. Q. C. Lamar. The classes of the late 1860s included future MDAH board members R. B. Fulton, Charles B. Galloway, Edward Mayes, and R. H. Thompson. See Warren A. Candler, *Bishop Charles Betts Galloway* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1927), 17–20.

¹⁷ Herbert Baxter Adams, “The Study and Teaching of History,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* (hereafter *PMHS*) I (1898), 74–84.

¹⁸ Franklin L. Riley, *School History of Mississippi for Use in Public and Private Schools* (Richmond, 1900). For its relation to his longer unpublished history, see, “The Report of the Mississippi Historical Commission *PMHS* 5 (1901), 282.

¹⁹ See Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 12–14, chapter 7.

then persuaded the state legislature to follow Alabama's lead in the establishment of a Historical Commission of leading citizens. The commission's report was published as the fifth volume of the *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* in 1902. It consisted of an inventory of historical materials in Mississippi that the commission felt needed collecting into a state archives, compiled mostly by Riley and Professor James M. White from the Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Mississippi State University). This inventory provides a baseline for judging Rowland's collecting activity.²⁰

In its turn, again following Alabama's 1901 lead and even using similar statutory language, the commission lobbied the Mississippi state legislature for the foundation of a Department of Archives and History in 1902. According to Robert Simpson, resolutions on the subject of history by the United Sons of Confederate Veterans, of which Alabama archivist Thomas Owen was "Commander-in-Chief," shaped the original "Alabama Plan" that lay behind the Alabama legislation and assured the availability of the Confederate muster rolls and rosters needed to establish veterans' claims to pensions and qualifications for membership in veterans' groups.²¹ Riley's original desire for a permanent job for himself free of "political" interference from university faculty and alumni influenced the inclusion in the foundational statute of control by a self-perpetuating board.²² Once the department was founded, however, Riley did not pursue the job of director, although he served on the department's first board of trustees and remained in that position until 1914, when he left the state for a professorship in history at Washington and Lee.²³

The job was taken instead by Dunbar Rowland.²⁴ Rowland came from a similar though perhaps even more privileged background of English Virginians, born in 1864 in Oakland, in the heart of the Yazoo–Mississippi Delta in Yalobusha County, as the youngest of four sons of a physician father from a planter background. Educated in private schools in Memphis, Tennessee,

²⁰ The commission's report and inventory were published as *PMHS* 5, 1902.

²¹ Simpson, "Origins of State Departments of Archives," 94–100. Rowland's correspondence as MDAH director during the early years is rich in letters from veterans seeking to tap these vital records. This was a significant need for them and their families: even the youngest Civil War veterans were by that time in middle age, and the oldest were beginning to die.

²² Much information about Riley's motivations is revealed in Charles S. Sydnor, ed., "Letters from Franklin L. Riley to Herbert B. Adams, 1894–1901," *Journal of Mississippi History* 2 (1940): 100–110. But this correspondence stops with Adams's death in 1901.

²³ At Washington and Lee, appropriately enough, he researched and wrote *General Robert E. Lee after Appomattox* (New York: Macmillan, 1922). Note that Wilson characterizes Washington and Lee as one of the Lost Cause universities.

²⁴ Biographical information about Rowland comes from a variety of sources, including biographical sketches written by Rowland himself. See MDAH Subject File for "Dunbar Rowland" and MDAH Private Manuscripts collections cited subsequently.

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he attended the A&M College (that would become Mississippi State University) for a BS in 1886 and then law school at the University of Mississippi, graduating in 1888. He practiced law in Memphis for four years, and then settled in Coffeeville, Mississippi, near his brothers. As a Coffeeville attorney he kept up his Memphis connections and contributed frequently to newspapers such as the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* and the *Atlanta Constitution* on historical topics. When Riley resuscitated the Mississippi Historical Society, Rowland was an enthusiastic participant, publishing steadily in the society's annual *Publications* series.²⁵ But he was not an academic: he was an attorney and an avocational historian.

Rowland was not, however, the only candidate for the job of the Mississippi archives' first director. Although I have so far been unable to discover why Riley did not himself apply, a candidate very like Riley did do so: Charles Hillman Brough. Brough's connections with Riley were not few or coincidental. He had obtained his BA from Mississippi College, like Riley, and had then studied history under Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins. He obtained his PhD in 1898 in history with an economic focus (apparently he was a prodigy, since he was only twenty-two at the time), then became professor of history at Mississippi College. The following year, Riley named him to the Mississippi Historical Society executive board, and he contributed to its *Publications* as did Rowland. As if that were not enough, he completed a bachelor of laws degree at the University of Mississippi in 1902.²⁶ In addition, though born in Utah, Brough had lived as a boy for many years with his aunt and uncle the Hillmans, who operated the Hillman College for Young Women in Clinton where Riley had served briefly as president. In short, Brough was in many ways a younger (by eight years) version of Riley and was indeed well known to him.²⁷

²⁵ The *PMHS*, edited by Riley, were published almost annually from 1898 to 1914, and consisted mostly of essays by amateur historians about issues connected with the Civil War. Riley aimed for coverage of the whole of Mississippi history, but dominating the series toward the end were reviews of Reconstruction in individual counties of Mississippi, consisting mostly of anecdotal reports of atrocities against innocent whites, written by former officers, by women active in the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and apparently by Riley's students. Riley was credited with encouragement of the Reconstruction articles by fellow Johns Hopkins alumnus St. George L. Sioussat in "Historical Activities in the Old Southwest," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1 (December 1914), 400–417; see page 403. It is hard to say what influence Rowland had over the series during this time, but certainly his own contributions were much in the same vein. Later on he revived the series as a vehicle for documentary publications.

²⁶ See Foy Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough: A Biography* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 13. The legal profession was extremely influential politically in Mississippi at this time, with a significant proportion of legislators and many members of the Mississippi Historical Society having legal qualifications. See Willie D. Halsell, "The Bourbon Period in Mississippi Politics, 1875–1890," *Journal of Southern History* 11 (Nov. 1945), 519–37.

²⁷ Brough supported Riley's work consistently and wrote letters to Adams praising Riley's efforts (Simpson, "Origins of State Departments of Archives," 133). When Brough did not get the department directorship, Riley was one of several Mississippi academics who wrote testimonials of high praise for him to assist him in obtaining an academic job outside the state. See Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough*, 14.

There was, finally, a third candidate: W. F. Hamilton from Carrollton, Mississippi, an amateur historian. In the end, Hamilton withdrew, Rowland received five votes, Brough four. Given Riley's failure to apply, why was Rowland chosen over Brough, who was so much better qualified as a historian and user of archives? There is next to no documentation of any relations between Riley and Rowland among Rowland's correspondence, although they must have been well acquainted through the historical society. A simple letter from Gen. Stephen D. Lee as president of the society notified Rowland of the meeting of the constituting board. It seems evident that the answer to the board's choice lies in the social history of white supremacy in Mississippi after the "Redemption" of 1875 that overthrew Reconstruction, the 1890 constitution that effectively denied black suffrage and rolled back remaining remnants of Reconstruction, and the success of the "Jim Crow" regime of racial oppression, all of which altered significantly the meaning of "preservation of the historical record." Rowland was well aware as a lawyer of the implications of documentary evidence and as a latter-day "Bourbon" of the planter class he must have appeared to be a potentially reliable ally in the official establishment of this elite's version of history.

The board's intent had already been outlined in the Historical Commission's circular sent out to the public to request assistance in surveying potential archival materials:

Mississippi, in common with the other Southern states, is entering upon a great historical renaissance and the people of the South are beginning to realize as never before that "there is nothing wrong with our history, but in the writing of it." The purpose of the State Legislature and of the Historical Society in the creation and appointment of this Commission, is to provide the most effective means for the correction of this defect.²⁸

As Wilson and others have amply shown, this language in fact alluded to the southern elite's determination to seize control of the national discourse about southern slavery, planter culture, and the motivations for entering into war and to tell the story in a way that ennobled their practice and motivations on all counts. In this cause they were glad to appropriate the mantle of Adams's "scientific" history and to cast their arguments in whatever mold would carry the most weight: new historical standards meant that collections that included original records material were a requisite foundation for this "historical renaissance." That the planter-dominated Mississippi legislature of 1902 considered such a project worthwhile explains the ease of passage of the legislation that created the Department of Archives and History.

²⁸ Circular letter written by Gen. Stephen D. Lee, president of the society; printed in *PMHS* 5, 13.

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Another clue to the board's intent can be found when we compare the writings of the two serious candidates for the job in those volumes of the *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society (PMHS)* that had appeared by 1902. Brough and Rowland had each written three essays, Hamilton none. Two of Brough's essays were the competent, solid institutional histories one would expect from one of Adams's students (whose dissertation was on irrigation in Utah), sober and relatively plain in language and dependent upon tables and footnoted detail: "History of Taxation in Mississippi"²⁹ and "History of Banking in Mississippi."³⁰ These essays were yeoman work designed to assist in laying a foundation for the history of public institutions in the state, one of the aims of the historical society's publications. Rowland's essays could not have been more different. They offered fiery indignation in "The Rise and Fall of Negro Rule in Mississippi,"³¹ which treated Reconstruction; romantic idealization of the nobility of the planter class and the benevolence of slavery in the manner of Thomas Nelson Page's novel *Red Rock* (the only citation to be found for Reconstruction in Riley's *School History*) in "Plantation Life in Mississippi before the War";³² and, finally, canonization of the political heroes of white Mississippi in the fulsome "Political and Parliamentary Orators and Oratory in Mississippi."³³

In early 1902, before the selection of the director took place on March 15, both Rowland and Brough presented new papers at the Mississippi Historical Society meeting, breaking somewhat with their previous styles.³⁴ Rowland's paper was a rather more temperate "Mississippi's First Constitution and Its Makers."³⁵ Brough changed more dramatically his habitually staid style and subjects and presented a strongly worded diatribe, later to be printed as "The Clinton Riot," which treated the race riot that took place in Clinton, Mississippi, around the election of 1875, in which the white Democrats of Mississippi determined to replace black Republican Radicals and overthrow

²⁹ *PMHS* 2 (1899), 113–24.

³⁰ *PMHS* 3 (1900), 317–40.

³¹ *PMHS* 2 (1899), 189–200.

³² *PMHS* 3 (1900), 85–98.

³³ *PMHS* 4 (1901), 357–400.

³⁴ The MHS meeting took place on January 9 and 10, and Brough and Rowland read their papers in the first and second sessions, respectively; see Riley, "Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society," *PMHS* 6 (1903), 9–13. Brough was serving that year as chair of the MHS Nominations Committee and served as well as the official responder on behalf of the society to the opening address of welcome from the state superintendent of education.

³⁵ *PMHS* 6 (1903), 79–90. This paper consisted of transcriptions of two documents and admiring thumbnail sketches of the major participants, but it foreshadowed Rowland's later arguments about the constitutionality of secession.

Reconstruction.³⁶ In the opening of the paper, Brough refers to Reconstruction governor Adalbert Ames's hated administration as characterized by "mongrelism, ignorance and depravity thoroughly entrenched behind the armed and organized cohorts of the recently emancipated slaves."³⁷ His conclusion could not have been more clearly designed to assert his political standpoint:

This lesson of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, written in letters of blood, will ever remain the most important of the many lessons taught in the modest college town of Clinton to the rising young manhood of a proud and untrammelled Commonwealth.³⁸

The argument was even more clearly aimed toward demonstrating Brough's soundness as a southerner, however, in that he pointed out that the campaign barbecue and the subsequent disturbance in fact took place on land owned by his aunt and uncle and near their actual house, while the whites who put down the rebellion were headquartered at the Central Female Institute that would later be renamed Hillman College. Presentation of this paper was a direct way for Brough to reach the board of trustees of the society, who would choose the winner. As Brough had previously served on the board, his perception of what the board wanted is the best explanation of his altered style.

The board of trustees of the Mississippi Historical Society thus had two very different men to choose between, in spite of Brough's frank move to court them by asserting his political solidarity with the Redeemers. Rowland was thirty-eight years old to Brough's twenty-six. Rowland, however, had had a rural law practice and written mostly for newspapers, while Brough had taken a good degree from the center of the new historical studies, had taught history and been active in what we would now call "outreach" (speeches at women's clubs and graduation ceremonies) to great popular effect in Jackson and vicinity, and had even taken a Mississippi law degree in his spare time.³⁹ Brough was certainly not without ambition, since he went on to a professorship at the University of Arkansas in 1904 and was elected to the first of two terms as that state's governor in 1917. But somehow, even if he was quite capable of

³⁶ *PMHS* 6 (1903), 53–63. According to Riley's report of the meeting ("Proceedings," 9), it was "based largely upon interviews with reliable participants in the unfortunate event." Rowland's earlier paper on "Negro Rule" had outlined the riot as being somehow caused by Reconstruction governor Adalbert Ames in the hope of forcing Grant to send soldiers to put down white electioneering. Brough's biographer was mystified by this sudden shift to a "slanted" "denunciation" that "seems excessive even for the times" (Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough*, 14), missing the connection with his candidacy for the directorship.

³⁷ Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough*, 53.

³⁸ Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough*, 63.

³⁹ Thus suggesting the importance of the legal qualification; note that Owen in Alabama was a lawyer.

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talking the talk, he was apparently not what most of the trustees were looking for.⁴⁰

We do not know which trustees voted for whom, but the list of men on the society's board, who became the Department of Archives and History's first board of trustees as well, suggests several possibilities. The younger men on the board were clearly outnumbered. Even at this early date, there was rivalry between the University of Mississippi and the agricultural college that would become Mississippi State University, and this may have played a part. Nearly every member of the board had some connection to education, but perhaps significantly only four were active teachers.⁴¹

Correspondence and reports make it clear that by and large Rowland did not displease his board. Immediately in demand as a speaker as a result of his new office, he made his position clear. In addressing the Alumni Association of the University of Mississippi on 3 June 1902 on the topic of race relations in the South, he painted a chivalrous picture of antebellum planter society and a lurid portrait of carpetbagger Reconstruction, and he told the story of the white revolution of 1875 and the 1890 constitutional convention with its "organic" law on the franchise. His argument, buttressed by legal citations, advocated that the inferior black race be segregated from the white race and that it never be

Board Member	Age in 1902	Background
B. T. Kimbrough	50s?	judge, lawyer
Stephen D. Lee	69	planter, CSA general, 1890 Constitutional Convention, MSU president
Robert Burwell Fulton	53	UM chancellor
Charles Betts Galloway	53	Methodist bishop, 1890 Constitutional Convention, son of CSA surgeon, Millsaps College board chair
Richard Watson Jones	65	UM professor, CSA major
Franklin L. Riley	34	UM professor
G. H. Brunson	28	MC and MSU professor
James Rhea Preston	49	Leading anti-Radical 1875 politician, owner of Belhaven College
James M. White	30s?	MSU professor

⁴⁰ They may have detected the roots of Brough's future Progressive leanings: he would later emerge as a leading Progressive and supporter of Woodrow Wilson (yet another Adams/Johns Hopkins product). See Lisenby, *Charles Hillman Brough*, especially chapter 4, "A Progressive Governor." Brough was certainly of the wrong regional origin (his father's career was in Utah and California, while the family, including his long-time Mississippi resident aunt and uncle, were natives of northeastern states). Rowland's deeply rooted connections with the powerful in Mississippi also doubtless played a role. The legislation to create the department was introduced on the Mississippi senate floor (after an oration by Gen. Stephen D. Lee) by Maj. Benjamin B. Moore, the father of Dunbar Rowland's future wife, Eron Opha Moore Gregory; Moore's wife (Eron's mother) was Rowland's aunt. Dunbar and Eron, who was widowed in 1902, married in 1906: see Simpson, "Origins of State Departments of Archives."

⁴¹ The efforts of committed Lost Cause memorialists to create educational institutions to perpetuate their views across the South is well documented by Wilson.

allowed political control in the South again.⁴² Rowland also became an apologist outside of Mississippi for the formation of state archives, especially in the South. In early 1905, he spoke before the Tennessee state legislature on the “Mississippi Plan for the Preservation of State Archives,” describing the formation process of the Mississippi archives (and conveniently forgetting that Mississippi had followed Alabama as a model).⁴³

“Care . . . custody . . . collecting”: Rowland’s Archival Foundation, 1902–1914

Having been elected as founding director, Dunbar Rowland served as such for more than a third of the history to date of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, from 1902 to his death in 1937. His influence on the collection and preservation of materials dating before 1900 has clearly been far greater than that of any single one of his successors, simply because the relative availability of such materials for collection, at least in original form, has understandably diminished over time. It is hard to tell how influential were the preferences of the board members, or whether Riley had any influence on Rowland’s work. Riley had certainly developed, in the course of the work of the Historical Commission, a vision of the work of the department as a sort of institutional troika: a Department of Archives and History as physical repository; a director with specific duties; supported by the Mississippi Historical Society with its specific tasks.⁴⁴ The commission report outlined a list of duties for each of the three, but there was a degree of flexibility in the eventual legislation, which assigned to the director of the department some of the activities of the society. The list of Rowland’s “duties” under the legislation was lengthy and multifarious and reflected a concept of a state historical agency that would deal not only in documents, but in printed publications, images, and physical objects constituent of Mississippi history. The department would in addition actually be a creator of written history and an encourager of its creation as it carried out its list of duties:

⁴² Rowland, *A Mississippi View of Race Relations in the South* (Jackson: Harmon Publishing Company, 1903), 4. Published as a pamphlet.

⁴³ His language here may have been influenced by his political leanings as well: the 1890 constitutional provision that disenfranchised blacks by requiring proof of literacy and payment of poll tax to qualify for voting was also hailed by southerners and copied as the “Mississippi Plan,” and that fact could hardly have been foreign to Tennessee legislators.

⁴⁴ As Riley outlined the scheme to the American Historical Association’s Conference of Historical Societies in 1904, he envisioned a partnership between the historical society, dominated by academics and devoted to research, and the archives, a government agency open to the public that would be responsible for collecting historical materials. Both were to be state supported (*Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1 1904, [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905], 229–32). But state support would prove easier to advocate than maintain.

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1. The care and custody of the official archives of the State.
2. The collection and preservation of materials bearing upon the history of the State and of the territory included therein from earliest times.
3. The editing and compilation of official records and other historical materials of value.
4. The diffusion of knowledge in reference to the history and resources of Mississippi.
5. The encouragement of historical work and research among the people.
6. The arrangement and classification of valuable primary material, not official.
7. The collection of data in reference to soldiers from Mississippi in the war between the United States and the Confederate States, and to cause the same to be prepared for publication as speedily as possible.
8. The collection of portraits of the great men of Mississippi, pictures of historic scenes, historic houses and homes.
9. The editing and compilation after each general election of an official and statistical register of the State of Mississippi.
10. The direction of the future work of the Mississippi Historical Commission, as its ex-officio chairman.
11. The collection of historical materials of a printed or documentary character bearing upon the history of the State.
12. Keeping a record of the official acts of the Board of Trustees of this Department.⁴⁵

Although again comparable to the Alabama model, this heterogeneous list also echoes in many ways just the kinds of materials that Adams had assembled for his students to use in their “seminary” or “laboratory” meetings, so the hand of Riley is clearly visible. It also includes interests of the board, such as the Confederate war records needed by veterans, and a few elements, wisely chosen from a political point of view, that would make the new department useful to existing departments of state government. Rowland was not remiss in dealing with any of these instructions, but what he actually did shows that he clearly saw his first duty as the gathering, ordering, and indeed the definition of the state’s archival *fonds*.

In doing this work, Rowland had the support of a very consistent board of trustees, and from early on he was highly influential in deciding who its members would be.⁴⁶ Under Rowland’s administration the history of this board developed

⁴⁵ Dunbar Rowland, *First Annual Report of the Director of Archives and History* (Jackson, 1902), 14–15.

⁴⁶ In Rowland’s correspondence with board members about elections to complete their number, apparently existing members suggested names, Rowland approved them, and a vote was taken

as an interesting balancing act among universities, religious denominations, and politicians. The scheme of trustee replacement called for three of them to be replaced (or more often reelected) every two years by the vote of the remaining six, with the candidates to be suggested by the director and confirmed after election by the state legislature. Very few of them would fail to remain on the board for life. The connections with higher education have been mentioned. But there were strong Lost Cause connections, as well. Of the nine, at least two were Confederate veterans, three the sons of veterans, one a legislative participant in the 1875 overthrow of Reconstruction, and two present at the 1890 Constitutional Convention. In 1906, board membership was changed to sever the direct relationship with the Mississippi Historical Society. The only remaining requirement (aside from the unspecified white and male categories that went without saying) was that three members be Confederate veterans, although obviously this requirement would eventually need to be dropped. Rowland observed that the change was made because it “was also considered by the Legislature inadvisable to place a Department of the State government under the auspices of a society over which it could exercise no control.”⁴⁷ The original board-member profile would shift somewhat under Rowland’s aegis as New South connections with business became important and the number of attorneys drew even with and passed the academics, but the white supremacist conviction and the connection with old families would remain constant and was one of his most long-lasting legacies. The “second-generation” board had even more Confederate veterans than the first, and succeeding boards included both 1875 Redeemers and 1890 Constitutional Convention participants.⁴⁸

Given the architecture of power in the state in 1902, with white supremacy fully established under the 1890 constitution but just at the dawn of the advent of populism, this group was already in hindsight doomed to an eventual diminution of political power, but this would take time, and for the first quarter of the century its interests, sympathies, and contacts dominated the historical record

⁴⁷ Dunbar Rowland, *Fifth Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1907), 17. The connection with the original private society was not severed. The director of the MDAH became the permanent secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Historical Society, which permits the close collaboration of the two entities and provides the department with a permanent lobby, dominated by academics and elite lay members. Members of the board of trustees of the MDAH have also at different times held office in the society.

⁴⁸ As late as 1949, thirteen years after Rowland’s death, six of the nine members had been originally put in place by him. Among the last of the Rowland-era board members were Alfred Stone (planter, railroad owner, state representative, chair of the Mississippi Tax Commission, collector of plantation records, and author of *The Negro and Cognate Subjects*), who lasted until 1955 (and who did donate his papers to the department), and Walter Sillers (father a Redeemer; personally a leading Dixiecrat, segregationist, and states-rights exponent who served as a state legislator for fifty years and as speaker of the house for twenty years), who lasted longest, until 1966 (and whose papers were not, ironically, given to the department). Riley’s *School History* makes much of the creation of higher educational institutions for blacks after the Civil War, but the first black member of the MDAH board of trustees was not selected until 1976, was predictably an academic, and only served one term. The first female board member, selected the same year, was white, the wife of a state legislator, and served almost for life.

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as well as the political scene.⁴⁹ The first actions of the board of trustees, in fact, were to direct Rowland to obtain the following list of materials, reflecting the findings and broad recommendations of the Historical Commission but making its own priorities very clear:

1. from the United States Government, copies of the official rosters of Mississippi's Confederate army organizations;
2. from newspaper publishers, all newspapers published in the state;
3. from "owners," manuscripts, portraits of "distinguished Mississippians," and artifacts for museum display.

Although official government records were not included in the board-recommended list, they were clearly a central priority for Rowland, as from the beginning he evidently had a broader notion of archives and a stronger commitment to the vision laid out in the legislation than did his board. He sought out in the Old Capitol building fifty record boxes of the "archives of the State not in use," which he found to be in "lamentable confusion," but was glad to say that they had not been "deliberately consigned to flames and water."⁵⁰ Most of his first annual report was taken up with a history of Mississippi state government records and an inventory of the contents of the first five boxes.

He traced the itinerary of the records from the territorial period in 1789 to 1902: from Concord, the Spanish governor's residence; to Natchez (kept in Washington, at Jefferson College, to 1819); to Columbia until 1822 or so; then to the "old" capitol building in Jackson (now demolished) until the then "new" capitol building (now the Old Capitol Museum) was completed in 1839. In 1863, as Jackson fell in the Civil War, the records—some of which were active—were moved to Meridian, then Enterprise, Columbus, and Macon, being apparently returned to Jackson in 1865. Although the history of the Reconstruction period mentions twice (in 1865 and 1868) that the "archives," formally considered to be in the control if not the custody of the governor, were required to be placed in the power of military governors,⁵¹ in course of time records not in daily use were shunted to the third floor of the Old Capitol building, where they were simply warehoused in confusion until their weight threatened the Supreme Court chamber below. At that time, in Rowland's words, they were "sentenced and committed to the penitentiary"⁵²—the old penitentiary building in the

⁴⁹ For the persistent political influence of the planter class in Mississippi, see James Tice Moore, "Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South, 1870–1900," *The Journal of Southern History* 44 (1978): 357–78. Moore argues that the agrarian Redeemers were not replaced by urban businessmen, as C. Vann Woodward argued, but in some instances became them, taking along "their personal values and intellectual heritage." The example here shows that many also became attorneys and ("activist"?) judges, adept at crafting a legal regime that suited continued white control of the political process.

⁵⁰ Rowland, *First Annual Report*, 15.

⁵¹ Thus emphasizing their symbolic importance *at the time* for legitimizing political regimes.

⁵² Rowland, *First Annual Report*, 18.

center of Jackson where the eventual “New Capitol” would stand—from 1896 to 1900, at which time they were packed in the famous fifty boxes and stacked in the corridors of the Old Capitol pending construction of the New Capitol. There they apparently remained until Rowland claimed them. He was not to move them into new quarters until 5 October 1903, when he and the archives were the last to leave the old building and be established in the new. The new department was assigned two rooms originally designated for the Clerk of the House and the House Appropriations Committee.

During the course of the first year of functioning of the department, Rowland used young women volunteers to help him with his work, but for the second he was authorized to purchase a typewriter and hire a stenographer. In 1913, he would write in a speech to the board:

Some of you may remember the first meeting of the Board in our temporary quarters in the Old Capitol seven months after the establishment of the Department. General Lee and Bishop Galloway, the two men whose names appear so often in our departmental annals, were beaming with joy and enthusiasm over what had been accomplished. I had actually been inhaling dirt and foul odors for six months in my efforts to make a display of the interesting manuscripts which had been rescued from the floors and corners of the attic. These were spread out for inspection on some improvised tables, and in the midst of my enthusiastic comments on the rich store of records which lay hidden away in old goods boxes, General Lee remarked that it would be wise for me to increase the insurance on my life, as it was certainly being endangered by my daily occupation. But I have survived in spite of it, and am of the opinion that the archivist, at least, is a confirmation of the old colloquial proverb that every man must eat his peck of dirt.⁵³

It is clear, therefore, that in the beginning, Rowland must have done a good deal of the work himself, though later he had the assistance of two unmarried women, Alice Chase and Frances Walthall, as well as his wife, Eron.⁵⁴

In his first examination of the official records he rescued from the Old Capitol, Rowland found the papers of the territorial and state governors, territorial and state legislative journals, and early state constitutions, which he hastened to inventory and arrange, though the work was at first slow: five boxes were processed in 1902, fifteen boxes in 1903, and the remainder were completed only when he was able to secure an adequate Hall of Records in the New Capitol, between 1904 and 1912. Rowland’s aim was to improve the usability of

⁵³ Dunbar Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1913), 25.

⁵⁴ Rowland thanked Chase and Walthall in *Eleventh Annual Report*, 12, for their “zeal, earnestness and intelligence.” Eron Opha Moore Gregory Rowland was his unpaid assistant in much of his work but carried out her own historical work, chiefly documentary editing, along similar lines to Rowland’s.

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his archival holdings for a very specific audience: historians.⁵⁵ After rejecting library-style arrangement of government records, Rowland described his method of arrangement in some detail in his 1913 annual report under the heading “Classification of State Archives”:

The records of the territorial and State periods are arranged . . . in cardboard jackets. Each series has its letter to designate it; each jacket has its number. To illustrate: the records of the Territorial period are arranged in five series, Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Auditors and Treasurers, with a letter for each series and a number for each jacket in the series. The records of the State period are arranged in a series for each office of the State Government. In all series there is a chronological arrangement of each document. In other words, the records of the departments and offices of the State Government are arranged just as if they had been carefully and systematically arranged from the beginning. In this way the continuity of each office has been preserved; not only this, but the progressive steps of the State and its people along all lines of development may be investigated in a logical, systematic way.⁵⁶

He had managed to have transcripts of colonial records obtained in Europe bound in large volumes, as he saw was done in European archives when he visited them, and intended to do the same with all his closed series.⁵⁷ Fortunately standards had changed by the time he would have had the funding to carry out this plan for the territorial and state records, so most of those papers remained unbound in folders or boxes.

Rowland also decided from the beginning to divide the materials into three temporal periods: provincial or colonial, territorial, and state. His observation of the recordkeeping habits reflected in the official records of different eras is instructive: “The territorial archives of Mississippi have, fortunately, been more carefully preserved than those of any other period. The territorial governors, it is evident, were industrious and careful, and seem to have had a fondness for keeping executive journals in which were recorded all official correspondences and other writings and proceedings.”⁵⁸ His remarks with regard to papers since statehood were sparse but telling: from 1817 to 1839, while there was no fixed seat of government, records endured “considerable loss”; Civil War records he

⁵⁵ He had written about this in his presentation to the International Congress of Archives in 1910: Rowland, “The Importance of the Concentration and Classification of National Archives,” in *Acts of the International Congress of Archives*, ed. J. Cuvelier and L. Stainier (Brussels: CAIB, 1912), 565–72; see pp. 565–66.

⁵⁶ Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 12.

⁵⁷ Rowland, “The Adaptation of Archives to Public Use,” 269–72 in the Report of the Fourth Conference of Archivists, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1912.

⁵⁸ Dunbar Rowland, *Third Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1905), 23. Rowland clearly admired this practice enough to emulate it: his own official correspondence consists of copies bound into volumes chronologically.

described as showing some graffiti damage from marauding Yankees but otherwise “surprisingly complete”; Reconstruction records from 1868 to 1876, he reported, “were not properly preserved,” nor were those from 1877 to 1895—but in these latter two cases Rowland gives no reason.⁵⁹ By 1913, he was making the claim that due to the existence and influence of the department (in Rowland’s terms, “various kindly suggestions”), state agencies and even county and municipal governments had adopted better recordkeeping practices, but again he gives no details.⁶⁰ Beyond these hints, Rowland does not tell us explicitly whether the arrangement he chose was suggested by any traces among the disorder he encountered, and of course this arrangement would make the development of the state and its people *seem* to have continuity and there is now no record of the disarray he found.

During the early years of his tenure Rowland was instructed to concentrate significantly on the collection of Confederate records.⁶¹ With this Rowland was perfectly in agreement. As he wrote in 1903,

Perhaps the most pressing duty of the Department is the preservation of the peerless record of the heroic soldiers of Mississippi who served in the armies of the Confederacy. . . . If there is one duty of this Department which should stand before all others it is that sacred duty to preserve the record of the deeds of the Confederate soldiers of Mississippi who gave up everything for country and made forever heroic the time in which they lived.⁶²

Before sending to Washington for copies of Confederate records, however, Rowland made it his business to search out such Confederate records as could be found in Mississippi. The “search” was apparently somewhat less than difficult. A master of the dramatic flourish, he presented it rhetorically in his official reports as an epic discovery.⁶³ He had been informed by Col. E. E. Baldwin (presented in Rowland’s report as the sole possessor of the secret of their location) that the Confederate muster rolls and other records had been hidden when

⁵⁹ Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 28–29.

⁶⁰ Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 30. The fact that this seems to have been wishful thinking may account for Rowland’s diffidence.

⁶¹ In 1905, that requirement would be extended to include the records of Mississippi soldiers in the War of 1812, Indian wars, and the Mexican War. Rowland, *Fifth Annual Report*, 18.

⁶² Dunbar Rowland, *Second Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1903), 8–9.

⁶³ Jackson newspapers also reported other finds being made by Rowland as he sifted through the boxes of papers he had already taken into custody; see the daily *Clarion-Ledger* for June 26 and the weekly *Clarion-Ledger* for the same date, which presented two archives-related stories. Interestingly, the June 27 paper printed a letter to the editor in response, suggesting that now that the archives had been safely plucked from the rickety Old Capitol, it would be advisable to tear the building down and make the land into a park—a striking reversal of the notion that the place confers power on the archives held within it. The July Confederate records find was clearly advantageous to the archives’ perception by the white public.

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Jackson fell to Federal troops and had been left in hiding during Reconstruction and since at the Jackson Masonic temple.⁶⁴ According to Rowland, he and Baldwin retrieved them from thence on 25 July 1902. It was a classic press stunt designed to attract favorable attention to his activities and the new department.

To attract the further interest of the public and its support for funding, Rowland printed in his annual reports lists of the materials he found, frequently in the form of calendars. In 1903, he went to Washington to campaign for the printing of the Confederate rosters by the War Department, and succeeded perhaps of necessity in instigating the printing of both Confederate and Union rosters, since there was judged to be a universal demand by the populace to memorialize the war's participants before they all died.⁶⁵ In 1905, the federal War Department returned captured Confederate battle flags to the states as the project to print the rosters got under way, and the Mississippi flags were preserved by Rowland at the archives.⁶⁶

The commission had warned that the collection of original papers was a matter of urgency:

The letters and papers of our public men, which have not been lost or destroyed, should be gathered together and preserved without further delay. Other State-supported departments of history are invading our territory, and, if they are not met by superior activity on our part, many of the historical materials relating to Mississippi will find permanent places of deposit beyond our borders, and our own people will be forced to the inconvenience, as well as the humiliation, of going elsewhere to learn about the doings of their ancestors.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, this warning came too late for the papers of the centrally important Jefferson Davis. In 1908, as part of his collecting activities, Rowland started work on the publication of the papers and speeches of Jefferson Davis by beginning to secure copies of these from New Orleans and Washington. Rowland's wife, Eron, even compiled a biography of Davis's wife, Varina Howell.⁶⁸ In 1910, Rowland observed: ". . .while the activities of the Department embrace the care and custody of the State records since provincial days, and the records of every

⁶⁴ It should be noted that at the turn of the century there was a strong relationship in Jackson between membership in the Masons and membership in the Ku Klux Klan.

⁶⁵ Rowland's obituary in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 24 (1937–38), 609, notes that he was "author of the national law that opened the Confederate archives in the Department of War. . .".

⁶⁶ Dunbar Rowland, *Fourth Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1906), 18. The battle flags are now preserved in the Old Capitol Museum of Mississippi History, a division of the department. This observation brings up the museological activities that Rowland conducted from the beginning, now viewed by his successors as a bad old "cabinet of curiosities," but in its day, as especially through professional archaeological excavations during the twenties and thirties, rather innovative.

⁶⁷ *PMHS* 5, 33.

⁶⁸ Eron O. Rowland, *Varina Howell, Wife of Jefferson Davis*, 2 vols (1927–31).

period are carefully preserved, no period has received more especial attention than that of the Civil War.”⁶⁹ In 1908, when few other materials were yet adequately arranged and described, the department began providing reference service for its Confederate records.

Rowland partook of the trend of his time to edit and publish historical materials to make them available to the educated public, and his annual reports soon became venues for such publications. Because his aim was to multiply copies of documents as a preservation and access strategy, he obtained copies of Mississippi records where original records could not be secured.⁷⁰ He therefore attempted to collect materials on Mississippi history wherever they might be found, including, as the commission had advised, in various departments of the federal government, in the counties of Mississippi, particularly Adams, and in the archives of the European colonial powers that had variously occupied Mississippi.

In connection with the records of the Spanish dominion in Natchez, which had been formally collected and bound in 1803 and remained in the Adams County Chancery Clerk’s office, Rowland cited the 1902 law, indicating “That any State, county, or other official is hereby authorized and empowered in his discretion, to turn over to the Department for permanent preservation therein any official books, records, documents, original papers, newspaper files and printed books not in current use in their offices.” He noted in 1903 that by then the law had been generally observed by the heads of state government departments, but he had not yet brought it to the attention of local officials.⁷¹ He was not successful in Natchez; in 1905, he capitulated to local determination to retain the records and *borrowed* the Natchez Spanish records to make copies.⁷² Over succeeding years he would find that the phrase “in his discretion” would cripple his efforts to secure public records repeatedly (the Spanish records remain in Natchez to this day), but until new records management legislation,

⁶⁹ Dunbar Rowland, *Ninth Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1911), 14.

⁷⁰ This was already accepted practice in the United States; the Library of Congress had begun giving money to states to obtain copies of unpublished colonial-period manuscripts from the English archives in 1902. When in 1909 the AHA’s Conference of Historical Societies urged states to contribute to a fund to help the Carnegie Institution create a calendar of French archival documents pertinent to American history, Rowland’s MDAH contributed \$250, the largest sum from any state (*Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1909 [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910], 290). This work, supervised by Waldo Leland, would be published as Nancy M. Miller Surrey, *Calendar of Manuscripts in Paris Archives and Libraries Relating to the History of the Mississippi Valley to 1803*, 2 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, Department of Historical Research, 1926), and the original volumes are in MDAH’s collections today.

⁷¹ Rowland, *Second Annual Report*, 13–14.

⁷² Interestingly, this is not how he presented the case in a short paper, “The Importance of Preserving Local Records, Illustrated by the Spanish Archives of the Natchez District,” at the annual AHA meeting to the Conference on State and Local Historical Societies (*Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1905 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906], 204–9), in which he said that the forty-one bound volumes of Spanish records had been *deposited* with the MDAH on 1 May 1905!

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passed in 1981, introduced records management officially in Mississippi, moral suasion was all that directors of the department had to work with in convincing officials to turn over even their noncurrent records.⁷³

Having published a volume of territorial papers in 1905, Rowland began in the following year his project of securing colonial-period transcripts from Europe with a trip to England and France, where he examined available materials and spent \$1,000 on orders for transcripts from the respective national archives. Together with preliminary lists of materials, including a calendar of the materials being copied in France, Rowland published in 1907 short histories of the respective European archives, showing that they had all had periods of inattention not unlike Mississippi's.⁷⁴

Reading these descriptions, it becomes obvious that Rowland, initially through his contacts with Riley and especially the activities of the American Historical Association Public Archives Commission (of which he was a commissioner from 1906 to 1913), had been exposed to the history of archival practice and bureaucratizing recordkeeping in Europe, at a time when new archival practices were just beginning to define an emerging profession. When in 1910 he attended the International Congress of Archives in Brussels as one of four representatives of the AHA Conference of Archivists, he presented a paper on the desirability of centralized governmental archives, citing his frustrations in dealing with widely scattered departmental archives in the U.S. Adoption of “[t]he policy of concentration,” he observed, “is only a matter of time.”⁷⁵ On that trip he toured the archives of Belgium, Holland, and Germany, of which he observed that while the territories of the recently formed German Empire had well-organized archives, there was as yet no national archives.⁷⁶ Rowland was

⁷³ In spite of the law, where state agencies are powerful and determined to retain custody of their records, it is still extremely difficult to secure them.

⁷⁴ Rowland, *Fifth Annual Report*, 30–55.

⁷⁵ Rowland, “Concentration and Classification.” The three others who attended the congress representing the AHA were Gaillard Hunt, Waldo Leland, and Arnold J. F. van Laer. Van Laer would subsequently promote the Dutch view of provenance in the U.S.; see Marjorie Rabe Barritt, “Coming to America: Dutch Archivistiek and American Archival Practice,” reprinted in S. Muller, J. A. Feith, and R. Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, trans. Arthur H. Leavitt, reprint edition (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2003), xxxv–l. Rowland's essay was used as ammunition in the AHA efforts to campaign for a National Archives; see Condos, *J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives*, 28.

⁷⁶ Rowland, *Ninth Annual Report*, 16. It is worth noting that the famous Dutch archival manual had been translated into French just in time for the congress. Rowland did read French, and although there is no evidence to confirm Rowland's having acquired a copy while in Brussels, it is almost inconceivable that he did not. One clue may be that in his 1910 address to the congress, he approved of the use of a library-style card index system for bound archival documents; after 1910 (*Annual Report of the American Historical Association* [Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1912], 270, and his *Eleventh Annual Report of 1913*, 11), he rejected library methods in favor of the inventories, calendars, and indexes favored by MFF. The principle of provenance had already become a topic of discussion in the AHA Conference of Archivists and would continue to be so. See Burnette, *Beneath the Footnote*, 17, who reports such discussions from 1909 (“the gospel of provenance”) and cites Rowland's 1912 paper.

and remained an outspoken proponent of a national archives for the U.S., continuing active in the movement for a national archives until its creation three years before his death.

A comparison of Rowland's writings on the archival principles that guided him and those under discussion by the emerging profession after the turn of the twentieth century, especially as manifested in the Muller, Feith, and Fruin *Manual* and discussed in the AHA Conference of Archivists, shows that in general Rowland's practice followed new ideas coming from Europe. Although he had declared historical usefulness to be his primary consideration, what he meant by that was what would become the *archival* ideal of historical usefulness—preserving provenance to originating office and arranging in chronological order within series—rather than the subject arrangement derided by Muller, Feith, and Fruin when it declared that historians' considerations should be only secondary.⁷⁷ It seems from what Rowland said that very little of the original order of materials in the fifty boxes still remained when he took them into custody, so he did a great deal of analytical rearrangement to restore the records to the order they should have had when created, but this too is what was advised in the *Manual* under similar circumstances.⁷⁸ Another significant goal encouraged by the *Manual* and being practiced by the emergent archival profession in general was the advisability of attempting to gather as complete a collection of records as could be found, even if it meant purchasing from private individuals or gathering copies. Although the *Manual*, as well as the discussions in which Rowland was regularly participating as a member of the AHA Conference of Archivists, was cast in terms of specific bureaucratic documentation practices, archivists of the era recognized that local practices could vary. Dunbar Rowland was no exception to this consensus, either.

He clearly had ideological as well as political and archival reasons for pursuing a complete collection of Confederate records as persistently as he did: to quote him in 1912, when the data gathering in Washington had nearly been completed,

The historical fact that the Southern States fought against overwhelming odds in their effort to establish an independent nationality is not now a subject of controversy, but it seems to me that we should all be glad to know that the South, of its whole population, sent 1,000,000 men to the front from her rather sparse population, for it shows that *our people were a unit in the great contest*, and that the war between the Northern and Southern States was not a contest brought on by the leaders.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Muller, Feith, and Fruin, *Manual*, 65.

⁷⁸ Muller, Feith, and Fruin, *Manual*, 48–99, provides advice on arrangement; in general, it advises original order but allows the analytic reconstitution of order on the basis of clues from a few intact groupings of materials, which seems to have been what Rowland did.

⁷⁹ Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 34 (italics added).

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Since the Confederate History Commission that Rowland convened in the state to collect materials in private hands and to disseminate a questionnaire to all surviving veterans did not collect information from Union veterans or from those who did not serve, such a picture of the data is not surprising. But the date of that assertion of wartime unity may be more important than the alleged fact with its democratic overtones, in that 1912 was a year of major triumph for the poor white dirt farmers of Mississippi against the planters, the year that populist ex-governor James K. Vardaman won one of the Mississippi senate seats against lawyer and planter LeRoy Percy, and Vardaman ally Theodore G. Bilbo was elected lieutenant governor. Also in that year, the Vardaman-controlled legislature denied funding for the Department of Archives and History after Rowland argued violently with one member. Incoming governor Brewer had to borrow money *ad hoc* to keep the department afloat, and in 1914 the sons of Confederate soldiers in the Mississippi senate were circularized to support a bill to fix a salary for the department director.⁸⁰

Just how complete was Rowland's collecting effort in assembling the first archives of the state of Mississippi? A comparison of his 1914 inventory of the department's holdings with the inventory created by the Mississippi Historical Commission reveals the degree to which he had concentrated his efforts. The commission's inventory, though in several respects incomplete (some of the participants had been unable to complete their work on time), foreshadows a sort of documentation strategy.⁸¹ Its members envisioned that the collections of the department would be sought high and low, from abroad, from Washington, from other states, and from private organizations and individuals in addition to official sources. They would cover all aspects of life in Mississippi, comprising, in addition to governmental records (which included those of cities, towns, and counties), those of business, social, women's, and labor organizations; the arts, prehistory, and the documentation of at least famous lives; plus artifacts and paintings of individuals and events for a museum and the marking of historic (and prehistoric) sites. The proposed inventory (though not the completed one) had even included a heading "The Negro in Mississippi as Slave and Citizen." As already mentioned, this broad remit reflected Herbert Baxter Adams's ideas of historical documentation.

In contrast, Rowland concentrated almost exclusively on the official government documents of his three periods: colonial archives obtained in the form of transcripts from Europe and Natchez; territorial archives obtained as

⁸⁰ W. B. Murrah, W. T. Ratliff, Edward Mayes, and R. H. Thompson [members of the MDAH board of trustees] to Sons of Confederate Soldiers in the Mississippi State Senate, 18 February 1914. Rowland Correspondence. In letters to people who volunteered to donate money toward his salary, he referred to a "rough political storm" and "a cunning trick of Vardaman to bring about my resignation. . . ." Rowland to Hunt, 15 April 1912.

⁸¹ For a general reference to the "documentation strategy" of appraisal and collection building, see Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist* 49 (1996): 109–24. It should be observed that this appraisal strategy in its contemporary context has its own anti-elitist bias.

part of the famous fifty original boxes and a few private collections received from the Mississippi Historical Society; and state archives also from the boxes and the society (from the latter most notably the papers of the Adalbert Ames administration, which had been given to the society in 1900 and were inventoried in detail in the commission report). He mentioned no local government records and lumped private records in a category of “Unofficial Papers” (including the papers of nineteenth-century scientist B. L. C. Wailes and the archives of the Mississippi Synod of the Southern Presbyterian Church, which had split off in 1856 on the issue of slavery). In 1914, he made no mention of “Aboriginal and Indian Remains” or “Places of Historical Interest,” although he had begun to collect paintings, as already mentioned.

Although the commission had divided “War Records” into categories by source (and had included in them all wars in which Mississippians had fought, including Indian wars), Rowland devoted the series solely to “Confederate Records.” He also lumped tax records under the auditor’s office (although the commission recognized the revenue agent or tax collector, it had noted that the agent’s records were filed in the auditor’s office). His series were designated alphabetically and were not in the same sequence as the commission’s inventory. He added a few series that the commission had overlooked, most notably the territorial and state legislatures, but although the commission had omitted educational institutions through default, and Rowland clearly did not make a point of collecting them, he listed some early records of the public African-American teacher’s college, Alcorn College, under “Miscellaneous Official Records.” Considering that he had no trained staff, that he also had to campaign constantly for support, and that most of the official records with which he began were in a very disorganized state, what Rowland had accomplished in twelve years was amazing, and it would seem churlish to require that he have achieved complete coverage of state history in that time. Nevertheless, it is clear that he had specific priorities, just as his board and his own statements had asserted.⁸²

Rowland had few resources but persuasion with which to pursue collections; except for the small appropriations obtained to pay for transcripts from European archives, he had no funds with which to purchase materials or to travel to seek them out.⁸³ For that reason, he was dependent on the influence of members of the Mississippi Historical Society and the archives board, who, as we

⁸² Rowland’s simple assertion that Reconstruction records were incomplete does not say whether he made an effort to collect them. There is indeed very little of such materials in the Mississippi archives today, hence it is not possible to find details of, for example, Superintendent of Education T. W. Cardozo’s proverbially alleged overspending on schools for black children during 1873–76, which cannot be checked outside the official printed annual report, since although there is correspondence extant for a predecessor and several successors (series 1617, 2409, and 2410), there is nothing for Cardozo. The small series 2406, Reconstruction Era Records, has not been processed to modern standards, and the “Rough Minutes” of the 1868 Black and Tan Convention are so fragile that they can barely be used.

⁸³ Rowland’s European trips in 1906 and 1910 were paid for from his own pocket. His honeymoon with fellow historian Eron in 1906 was partly spent combing the Cuban archives for Mississippiana.

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have seen, shared his biases. In the early years of the department, little official outlay was even made to pay Rowland or his few assistants.

Another constraint on collecting was space. Rowland's annual reports reveal that some pressure and influence had to be brought to bear to secure the original two rooms in the newly built capitol building in 1903, and by 1912, he stated categorically that as far as official records of state government were concerned, "our limited floor space has prevented further accessions" beyond the original fifty boxes.⁸⁴ He did not explain why, in spite of the space crunch, he and his board continued to solicit and collect voluminous private manuscript materials, including those of the First Mississippi Bank in 1913,⁸⁵ although scattered remarks suggest that officials may have been just as unwilling to part with the records of their departments as Rowland was happy to use their reluctance as an opportunity to make a case for more space. In 1903, he said that the governor's office still retained the records of governors Ames, Alcorn, and Powers (1868–1882)⁸⁶ as well as those of their successors, which "give the record of the brave struggle to rebuild the State [after the Civil War and Reconstruction], which has been made under the leadership of Governors Stone, Lowry, McLaurin and Longino."⁸⁷ By 1907, he seems to have obtained these records, however, since he observed that only the executive journals of governors from 1882 to date of writing were "yet on file in the office of the governor."⁸⁸ From early on, he campaigned for the renovation of the vacated Old Capitol to serve as an archival and museum facility, but though he organized women's historical groups to pressure the legislature, notably in 1917, this argument bore no fruit in his lifetime; in 1935, he was still urging the legislature to provide the archives with adequate housing.⁸⁹ But when he published his inventory in 1914, he seems to have accepted the idea that his archives would contain only materials prior to 1900, and the rest would remain in the offices of origin, whether they were in active use or not. Given his legislated assignment and his own personal focus on the construction of a history that

⁸⁴ Rowland, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 29.

⁸⁵ Rowland, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 34–36.

⁸⁶ This is a little odd, since in the *First Annual Report* (p. 62) Rowland listed fifty items from Ames and fifty from Alcorn—though in also listing 500 each from Clark, Sharkey, and Humphries, he remarked, "The official correspondence of Gvs. Clark, Sharkey and Humphries is full of interest, as all the questions of reconstruction are discussed therein."

⁸⁷ Rowland, *Second Annual Report*, 56.

⁸⁸ Dunbar Rowland, *Sixth Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Archives and History of the State of Mississippi* (Jackson, 1908), 26. That the MDAH holdings Rowland secured from the hated Reconstruction governor Adalbert Ames are very rich is shown by their frequent use in documenting white rioting during the mid-1870s by modern historians. But the history of their acquisition is clouded, since in 1913 Rowland states (*Eleventh Annual Report*, 29) that "Governor Ames returned the executive archives of his office, consisting of letter books, reports, orders, etc., to the Historical Society about the year 1900, and these are now on file in the Department." Although the society's collections all eventually came to the department, these differing statements imply that they did not all come at once.

⁸⁹ Dunbar Rowland, *Biennial Report of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History* (Jackson, 1936), 5.

explained events only up to that date, it is not surprising that he then turned to providing access to the archives he had created.⁹⁰

“Diffusion of knowledge”: Publication and Contestation, 1914–1936

From 1914 to 1935, Dunbar Rowland apparently prepared no separate annual or biennial reports; data about the department’s activities are only to be found in its actual publications, Rowland’s correspondence, and the state *Official and Statistical Register* publications first done by the department but eventually taken over by the secretary of state.⁹¹ Indeed, modern folklore and the influential writing of his successor had it that his board of trustees, after its first two six-year terms, was not replaced.⁹² It has even been suggested, again as folklore, that Rowland supported himself by means of publications when legislative funding was unavailable. Still, it is not clear what his operating budgets looked like during those years because the record is so sparse (remember that the archives was not receiving additional official records). Rowland and his trustees during this period were clearly seen to represent an enclave of “Bourbon” interests in an age of “redneck” populist politics. In 1932, a letter in his private correspondence states that there was “considerable sentiment for the abolishment of your [Rowland’s] Department. . . .”⁹³ Certainly the tone of the last annual report, that of 1935, hints that his troubles had been political, since he praises the people, as represented by the legislature, for refusing “to allow the Department to be used as political spoils.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ It is interesting to compare this “access turn” to Kammen’s periodization of the construction of American public memory in *Mystic Chords*. Kammen observes the rise of the “party of memory” during the period between the centennial of the Revolution around 1870 and World War I in 1915, after which, from 1915 to 1945, elitist memory construction was in a losing contest with the “new” of modernity and an increasing democratization of memory. In what follows we will see how Rowland attempted to negotiate these challenges in Mississippi and beyond.

⁹¹ Rowland edited the first *Official and Statistical Register* of state government, full of details about elected officials but also a vehicle for encyclopedic information about Mississippi history, in 1904, distributing 6,500 of them to schools. Subsequent editions were produced in gubernatorial election years of 1908 and 1912. After this the publication was taken over by the secretary of state, with a corresponding reduction in historical content.

⁹² William D. McCain, “History and Program of the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History,” *American Archivist* 13 (1950): 27–34. Further research in the archives, including records of senate confirmations, has shown that indeed there was a functioning board between 1912 and 1936, but particularly in the 1920s it apparently met no more than annually, as the law required.

⁹³ Edmund Brunini to Rowland, 1932, MDAH Private Manuscripts Collection Z0051.000, Dunbar Rowland Papers. To be fair, the state was near bankruptcy in 1932, and the legislature was looking for anything they could cut.

⁹⁴ Brunini to Rowland, 3. He celebrated this in vain and rather disingenuously. From the time he died until the 1980s, when the Mississippi Attorney General’s lawsuit removed current elected officials from service on boards and commissions, the department would have influential elected officials on its board, some of whom, like Stone and Sillers, Rowland had a hand in placing. In view of his struggles, this was clearly done in self-defense.

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Dr. Dunbar Rowland delivering his address, "From Colony to Constitution," in Washington, Mississippi, 14 May 1935 on the occasion of the dedication of the monument commemorating the signing of the First State Constitution in 1817. (Photograph by Moreau B. Chambers.) Reproduced with permission from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Photograph Collection PI/PER/R68/Box 16 Folder 81.

But this does not mean that Rowland was inactive after 1914; indeed, as he saw it and as his board had seen it since the beginning, the collection and classification phase of his work would now be succeeded by a publication phase, so this was part of a plan, not a financial necessity, and it was by no means an unusual plan for its day. In 1914, his guide to the department's holdings provided a pioneering finding aid (according to Posner, possibly the first in the country) not to be replaced until the 1970s, and still useful as an inventory of the materials acquired and arranged by Rowland.⁹⁵ Drawing from the three eras into which he had classified Mississippi history, Rowland, sometimes with the assistance of others, published massive collections of documents from each of the periods: English (one volume, 1911), translated French (three volumes,

⁹⁵ Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 160; see also T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (1965; repr., Washington, D.C.: NARA, 1988), 57, who points out its firstness as a guide to public records.

1927–1932), colonial documents;⁹⁶ territorial governor Claiborne's letterbooks (six volumes, 1917);⁹⁷ and Jefferson Davis's writings (ten volumes, 1923).⁹⁸ Reviews of such documentary collections appeared regularly in *American Historical Review* (AHR) and other publications, generally praising Rowland for making the materials available but not complimenting his editorial skills. In 1918, however, the review of the Claiborne letterbooks in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (MVHR) by E. S. Brown, though it welcomed the availability of the materials, castigated Rowland for not even mentioning the existence of material available in Washington.⁹⁹ Although the Jefferson Davis volumes clearly had the greatest potential for controversy, especially given Rowland's thesis that secession was constitutionally supported, they were well received. The MVHR review by L. B. Shippee remarked on the great public service represented by the edition, but complained that only the public Davis was represented, while the AHR review, by William Dodd, praised the more nuanced view of Davis that emerged from the documents. Interestingly, the unsigned review in the *Journal of Negro History*, while deriding the work's premise that the aim of the Confederacy was to restore the primitive American Constitution and cautioning that given the scattered state of documentary materials about southern history the collection of documents could hardly be exhaustive, also praised Rowland's having made the papers available to speak for themselves.¹⁰⁰

Rowland also turned to writing narrative history. His 1907 *Mississippi* had been a four-volume encyclopedia of people, places, and events of Mississippi history, the fourth being a biographical volume of famous and still-living men with engraved portraits, the whole being financed by subscription from many of those so represented. His 1925 *History of Mississippi: The Heart of the South* repeated this pattern, this time providing a narrative history for the first two volumes, with volumes 3 and 4 containing biographical sketches and engravings of prominent

⁹⁶ Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Mississippi Provincial Archives: English Dominion*, vol. 1 (Jackson: MDAH, 1911), was the first collection, consisting of the letters of Farmar and Johnstone. Eron Rowland edited documents of British governor of West Florida Peter Chester for the *PMHS Centenary Series*, vol. 5 in 1925. Rowland and A. G. Sanders, ed. and trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3 vols. (Jackson: MDAH, 1927, 1929, 1932). An additional projected volume of French documents was nearly completed but not published, and was only substantially published in 1984 as *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, vols. 4 and 5, ed. and trans. Rowland, A. G. Sanders, and Patricia Galloway (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984). A translation of Spanish colonial materials was prepared under Rowland's supervision but never published.

⁹⁷ Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Official Letterbooks of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801–1816*, 6 vols. (Jackson: MDAH, 1917).

⁹⁸ Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers, and Speeches*, 10 vols. (Jackson: MDAH, 1923).

⁹⁹ Compare Isaac Joslin Cox's review of Rowland, ed., *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801–1816* in the *American Historical Review* 23 (January 1918): 404–7, which found his editing rather sloppy but complimented the MDAH as a model institution.

¹⁰⁰ L. B. Shippee, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 (1924): 470–72; William E. Dodd, *American Historical Review* 29 (1924): 352–56; Anonymous, *Journal of Negro History* 9 (1924): 237–38.

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businessmen and politicians. Although these sketches were flattering of necessity, they do now have their own kind of historical value. Politically, these two publications are an interesting reflection of the efforts conservatives of Rowland's stripe made to accommodate with New South businessmen to retain their positions of influence in the face of progressive/populist forces.¹⁰¹

In another area, Rowland also proved his continued unreconstructed devotion to the Lost Cause and its Redeemers. In 1910 and 1927, the survivors of the 1890 Constitutional Convention—one of whose leaders was R. H. Thompson, an MDAH board member since 1908—met in Jackson, hosted both times by Rowland and his department. The meetings were held in the senate chamber of the New Capitol and were written up and published by Rowland. At both meetings, and particularly the last, the men congratulated themselves on the wisdom of the measures they had devised to deny suffrage to blacks.¹⁰² Certainly the political powers of the day in Mississippi were no friends to black suffrage, but the group with whom Rowland aligned himself and his department, on the losing side of the struggle between planter and redneck by the end of the 1920s, continued to see black disenfranchisement and white supremacy in Mississippi as their major accomplishment, and indeed their efforts were effective in achieving that end for some seventy years.

Although little or no material of an official nature was added to the department's collections during the period in question, Rowland did carry out projects that added to the collections. In 1918, he circularized the Mississippi counties to assemble World War I scrapbooks to send to the archives.¹⁰³ He also opened up another of the original areas of interest to the historical commission when he began to be concerned during this period with covering the history of aboriginal Mississippi. H. S. Halbert, involved with Indian schools in Mississippi, had been an adjunct member of the Historical Commission, writing parts of its report. He had subsequently published frequently on Indian history in the first *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* series, and in 1914, he proposed that the legislature appropriate adequate money to acquire for the department a major collection of antiquities, the Brevoort Butler Collection.¹⁰⁴ Rowland continued this interest during the 1920s when two teenagers, Moreau B. Chambers and James A. Ford, came to discuss their archaeological finds with him, and he subsequently hired them to carry out an archaeological survey of Mississippi, to collect "relics"

¹⁰¹ Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi*, 4 vols. (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907); Dunbar Rowland, *History of Mississippi: The Heart of the South*, 4 vols. (Chicago and Jackson: S.J. Clark Publishing Company, 1925).

¹⁰² *Proceedings of the Reunion of the Survivors of the Constitutional Convention of 1890 on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Constitution* (Jackson, 1910) and *Proceedings of a Reunion of the Survivors of the Constitutional Convention of 1890 on the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary of the Adoption of the Constitution* (Jackson, 1927).

¹⁰³ MDAH Private Manuscript Collection Z 0051.000, folder 32.

¹⁰⁴ Rowland, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 38–39.

for the museum, and to carry out excavations of prominent mound sites in the state. Chambers became the first staff archaeologist, continued to carry out excavations, and was put in charge of the museum, while Ford analyzed and published their findings under a WPA project in 1936 and went on to become one of the most significant American archaeologists of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁵ Although Rowland, as much an enemy of FDR as he had been an admirer of Theodore Roosevelt, refused the assistance of the Works Progress Administration in the form of excavation crews, Chambers was able to persuade him to accept the efforts of diggers provided pay by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

During this time of publishing activity, Rowland was also involved in three professional struggles that affected his national reputation, significant because they reflect regional contestation of control over American institutions and discourses of memory and the continuing northeastern hegemony in this area.¹⁰⁶ Active along with other state archivists in national and regional historical associations from the beginning of his tenure, Rowland reached for greater national prominence briefly in the 1910s, just as (and perhaps because) his political support within the state was waning. He had been active on the Committee on Cooperation of Historical Societies and Organizations from its creation in 1904 in the American Historical Association. The committee had worked to secure and encourage the support of lay historical societies for professional historical work. Although such societies were privately despised by the leaders of professionalizing academic history because they continued to encourage historical amateurism, they were very effectively courted by especially southern historians and archivists. For Rowland, the Mississippi Historical Society continued to provide the source of funding for the *PMHS* as a publishing vehicle as well as continuing political support. Rowland had also been involved along with other regional archivists and historians such as Thomas Owen (Alabama) and Clarence Alvord (Illinois) in the foundation of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (1907) and the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (first issue 1914), which younger academics interested in American topics welcomed as a more receptive venue for publication than the *American Historical Review*.¹⁰⁷ As we have seen, Rowland had

¹⁰⁵ Both men sought out professional apprenticeship and education. Ford's 1936 "Analysis of Indian Village Site Collections from Louisiana and Mississippi" is reprinted along with other publications and biographical material in *Measuring the Flow of Time: The Works of James A. Ford, 1935–1941*, ed. Michael J. O'Brien and R. Lee Lyman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999). Chambers excavated at Chickasaw village sites and at the Natchez Grand Village, among other places; see Patricia Galloway, "Archaeology from the Archives: The Chambers Excavations at Lyon's Bluff, 1934–35," *Mississippi Archaeology* 35, no. 1 (2000): 23–90.

¹⁰⁶ See Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, chapter 12.

¹⁰⁷ See Margaret F. Stieg, *The Origin and Development of Scholarly Historical Periodicals* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1986), especially 82–102. Stieg points to this step as initiating regional specialization as against the *AHR*'s generalist focus and northeastern elitist bias. The MVHA morphed into the Organization of American Historians that now competes with the more inclusive American Historical Association, and the *MVHR* changed its name to *Journal of American History* in 1964, now priding itself as the "journal of record in the field of American History."

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also been an active member of the AHA Conference of Archivists (which would become the Society of American Archivists in 1937) since its founding in 1909. His yeoman work in the AHA, his leadership in the MVHA, and probably his general interests in regional history attracted the attention of the historian of slavery Frederic Bancroft, who tried to use Rowland's influence with the MVHA to unseat J. Franklin Jameson from influence on the board of the American Historical Association and editorship of the *American Historical Review*.¹⁰⁸

Rowland, never shy of public speaking and bringing his legal training to bear on the issue, had in fact fired the opening salvo of what would become the struggle for control of the AHA between the “reformers” against the “Big-University Trust” in a “vehement speech of protest” against nonconstitutional officer elections at the 1914 Charleston meeting of the AHA.¹⁰⁹ He characterized the nominating committee (which that year had ironically included Franklin L. Riley) as doing “no more than conduct a caucus by mail, the effect of which is to preclude a free and fair expression from the men who sustain the Association.”¹¹⁰ Rowland was elected to the presidency of the MVHA the following year and apparently took the election as a kind of mandate to pursue the matter. He used his position to publish with Bancroft several pamphlets containing other attacks on “the trust,” but did not meet with complete success. In the end, the AHA did return to a democratic mode of elections, but Jameson was not removed from the *Review* and Rowland was frozen out of any significant role in the AHA afterward. He had also angered many in the MVHA who did not agree with him for having spoken in their name, and after his ex-president's statutory six years on its executive board he ceased activity in that group in 1922.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ For a one-sided view of this incident that nevertheless provides a detailed account of the events from primary sources, see Ray Allen Billington, “Tempest in Clio's Teapot: The American Historical Association Rebellion of 1915,” *American Historical Review* 78 (April 1973): 348–69. Billington's account is replete with cruel portrayals of Rowland as a figure of ridicule, drawn almost exclusively from the papers of those who opposed Bancroft and Rowland, to which he had privileged access: Billington was Frederick Jackson Turner's student, who in turn was Jameson's student. A more balanced account appears in Stieg, *Origin and Development*, 70–76. An extensive correspondence from Bancroft on this matter exists in MDAH Private Manuscripts Collection Z51, Rowland Correspondence.

¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the most serious irony of this whole affair was that the means of conducting an election, through control of the nominating committee and virtually permanent membership on the board once elected, bore a significant resemblance to the system of trustee and director election that had by then kept Rowland in office past his first six years and would in 1914 supply him with his third term.

¹¹⁰ The “old-boy network” that Rowland and Bancroft were protesting was real: Jameson had been like Riley a student of Adams at Johns Hopkins, as had many others with power in the AHA. But the network, which consisted of the men who were struggling to create an academic historical profession, was too much concerned with this goal to be willing to open up opportunity to anyone with lesser qualifications—or anyone unlike themselves: they were notably antisemitic and antifeminist as well. Rowland's great concern for “free and fair” voting now reads as heavily ironic from a supporter of race-based disenfranchisement in his own state.

¹¹¹ We do not know what Rowland thought about his alliance with Bancroft when the latter's *Slave Trading in the Old South*, which debunked the myths of kind treatment of slaves by Southern masters of which Rowland remained an exponent, was published in 1931.

Rowland's Bourbon bias was affronted and his historical amateurism and professional naiveté revealed once more in the early 1930s, when the *Dictionary of American Biography* (*DAB*) was coming to fruition. Modern judgments hold that Rowland was at best an indifferent historical editor, even by the standards of his time, and that his historical writing was bombast or documentary paraphrase.¹¹² But he was much offended by the behavior of the *DAB*'s editor, first in assigning the entry on Jefferson Davis ("written with the spleen of a radical") to Civil War historian and Lincoln biographer Nathaniel Stephenson and then in having the audacity to edit Rowland's own twelve contributions on minor figures. As a result, Rowland actually attempted to interfere in the publication of the series by sending his correspondence with the then-deceased editor to Adolph Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*, which underwrote the publication of the *DAB*.¹¹³ When that failed, Rowland published the collection of letters in 1931 as a pamphlet, "The 'Dictionary of American Biography,' a Partisan, Sectional, Political Publication: A Protest," in which he ranted that the dictionary "is in [the] charge of a school of sectional and prejudiced historians" whose maligning of Jefferson Davis should not be borne. Rowland styled himself on the cover of the pamphlet as "Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Secretary of the Mississippi Historical Society, and Historian General of the United Confederate Veterans."¹¹⁴ In the same year, he traveled with his wife, Eron, to attend the first meeting of the Anglo-American Conference of Historians in London as the delegate from Mississippi.¹¹⁵

In the early 1930s, after years of campaigning by the historical profession led after 1906 by Jameson at the Carnegie Institution in Washington and supported by state archivists like Rowland, a National Archives was finally to become a reality. Rowland had seen that Mississippi congressional delegations and Mississippi historical societies could be counted on to speak in its favor whenever it came up.¹¹⁶ When success was achieved, Rowland, with the assistance of senior Mississippi senator Pat Harrison, mounted an intense campaign for the

¹¹² Robert V. Haynes, "Historians and the Mississippi Territory," *Journal of Mississippi History* 29 (1967): 409–28. Of course, bombast and documentary paraphrase characterized much historical writing of the time.

¹¹³ Ever a model of sensitivity, he pointed out to Ochs, who was Jewish, that some of Jefferson Davis's best friends were Jews. Again, however, Ochs's support of the *DAB*, at a time when Jews were barred in practice from professional academic positions in history, is ironic in itself.

¹¹⁴ The pamphlet was privately printed in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1931; a copy may be found in the "Dunbar Rowland" subject file at the MDAH. Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 383, characterizes it as "a rocket-like treatise."

¹¹⁵ Tickets preserved in MDAH Private Manuscripts Collection Z 0051.000, folder 33, show that during the trip he visited such tourist destinations as Ann Hathaway's cottage and that he also traveled in Germany, where he visited the Frankfurter Goethemuseum.

¹¹⁶ For example, in 1911 Rowland and Thomas Owen of Alabama wrote a memorial to the U.S. Congress in favor of a building for a national archives (*Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1911 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912], 324–25).

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position of national archivist, including voluminous letter writing on his own behalf. He lost to another southerner, Robert D. W. Connor, who was not only a professional historian and the state archivist of North Carolina, but had the support of Jameson, whose enmity from twenty years before came back to haunt Rowland. Jameson lobbied Franklin Roosevelt on behalf of Connor as the AHA nominee, in favor of whom all others except Rowland withdrew.¹¹⁷ By 1934, Rowland at seventy was surely too old to undertake the direction of a new national archives, even if he had not already made so many enemies, but the lengthy lists of correspondents and letter copies in his private papers show that he made a personally herculean effort to attain the distinction.¹¹⁸

Rowland was also faced, particularly in the years of the Great Depression, with the fact that growing repositories with determined collectors at their heads, such as the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, were again making raids on the southern states for materials, and because they could pay, they were achieving notable success in carrying off Mississippi materials that Rowland had not collected. In one instance, that of the Rapalje Notebook, we only know what happened because a note accompanies the trading-post account book from the 1790s in its file at the Department of Archives and History, indicating that the owners of the book handed it over to the department in exchange for a transcript after they had been approached by North Carolina collectors, feeling that documents of Mississippi history should not go out of the state.¹¹⁹ These generous donors were unfortunately the exception rather than the rule. When Charles Sydnor at the University of Mississippi wrote on slavery in Mississippi in the early 1930s, he still had to seek source materials in private hands, which suggests how effective out-of-state campaigns could potentially be.¹²⁰

Rowland went on, however, with what he was doing, publishing another omnibus compendium on judges and lawyers of Mississippi in 1935 and in 1936 even publishing another, this time biennial, director's report, in which he urged the legislature once again to provide more commodious quarters for the archives.¹²¹ His death from throat cancer in November of 1937 followed that of his old opponent Jameson by two months.¹²² Jameson rated a lead article in the

¹¹⁷ Donald R. McCoy, *The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934–1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

¹¹⁸ Rowland's private papers, as distinct from his official letterbooks, are to be found in MDAH Private Manuscripts Collections Z0051.000 and Z0051.001.

¹¹⁹ Rapalje/Rapalji (George) Notebook, MDAH Private Manuscripts Collection Z0580.000.

¹²⁰ Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (New York: Appleton-Century Company, Inc [American Historical Association], 1933). See the bibliography, 255–62. Today the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, one of the most voracious of these collecting archives, contains hundreds of collections with a Mississippi provenance.

¹²¹ Dunbar Rowland, *Courts, Judges, and Lawyers of Mississippi, 1798–1935* (Jackson: MDAH and MHS, 1935).

¹²² Rowland in a sense closed the circle of his professional life by seeking treatment at Johns Hopkins.

American Historical Review, while the only mention of Rowland's passing, in the *AHR* Personals, was one that slighted his thirty-five years of work: "The appointment of Dr. William D. McCain of the Division of Classification of the National Archives to the position of Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History to succeed the late Dunbar Rowland is a gratifying recognition of the value of professional experience in the field of archival economy."¹²³ McCain, a recent history graduate, had only brief experience at the National Archives behind him; the remark was not so much recognition of an unproven young practitioner as it was the final rebuff of Rowland.¹²⁴ Before this is taken as the final word, however, it should be noted that in spite of his ideological limitations, Rowland had, by the time the National Archives was founded, already put in place the major functions of an agency of much broader scope than the National Archives would ever attempt.¹²⁵

Conclusion

Dunbar Rowland's efforts had all the marks of "firstness": he was able to take into custody the existing "old" records of Mississippi that did not embody power useful to current incumbents, chiefly of the territorial and statehood periods down to the 1890s, finding them in a confused and sometimes fragmentary state, presaging what R. D. W. Connor and his staff would find when they undertook the classification of federal records as the first employees of the National Archives.¹²⁶ He then acted to acquire copies of records when he could not procure originals, aiming for a complete record in one place to assure the student and citizen of convenience, though his racial and elitist bias meant that what he represented as "complete" and the audience he intended to reach were far from universal.

¹²³ *American Historical Review* 43 (1937–38): 484.

¹²⁴ And an ironic one, too, since McCain proved a staunch segregationist who twice left the department in the hands of others during World War II but did not allow it to be handed over to a permanent director, and then abandoned it without a qualm when he was offered the presidency of the University of Southern Mississippi. McCain painted a picture of Rowland as defaulting in his work that has not been borne out by research, especially since McCain did little to change the system that Rowland had created and that was brought to modern standards only in the early 1970s under Charlotte Capers and Elbert Hilliard. It is worth noting that the obituary that appeared in the *MVHR* (24 [1937–38], 609), in spite of Rowland's withdrawal from the association, portrayed him as both "author of the national law that opened up the Confederate archives in the Department of War, and one of the early leaders in the movement for constructing the National Archives building in Washington."

¹²⁵ To replicate on the national level the functions of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History as Rowland shaped it, NARA would have to include sizable portions of the Smithsonian Institution, parts of the National Park Service, and the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

¹²⁶ Linda Henry has observed in her 1988 essay "Schellenberg in Cyberspace," *American Archivist* 61 (1998): 569–88 that archivists tempted to "postcustodial" solutions should take heed of the experiences of those who had to pick up the pieces after years of "noncustodial" regimes.

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But, in spite of writing clearly about the terrible state of the records and of urging officials to better and more systematic recordkeeping, Rowland was then prevented from obtaining relatively current records because government officials wanted to keep them in their own offices. In practice, he simply treated records after 1900 as current records and left them of necessity in their offices of origin. Given then-current (and indeed now-current) European practice, not to mention the perhaps belated recognition of the frequency of such situations in the recent archival notion of postcustodialism, it is hard to see error in his decision. As a result of the political alignment that supported his historical aims, whose elitism grew increasingly unpopular during his tenure, he was in no position to solve the problem of the management of current or recent records as long as he was director.

The most serious accusation that can be laid at Rowland's door is that he failed to obtain collections that were representative of all the people of Mississippi while they were still available to collect. The list of reasons includes the very good ones that he had no space and no money, but that did not prevent him from acquiring voluminous private manuscript materials that tended to support his own views and that looked determinedly backward to a romanticized Lost Cause of the Confederacy. In addition, he gave no thought whatever to providing assistance to African-American scholars, although the state of Mississippi in his time funded several black colleges.

As to archival practice, Rowland was influenced by his own professional training in the law, but was also an active participant in the early professionalization of archival administration. Like other historical agencies that emerged in the South at the same era, and influenced through Riley by Herbert Baxter Adams's original vision of an assemblage of objects, images, books, and documents for historical study, Rowland shaped the Department of Archives and History from the start to be a complete historical agency, incorporating a museum, library, private and public archives, and literary and artistic collections representative of the state. It would also carry out a broad range of activities to promote historical research and writing and to preserve historical sites and buildings—even if mostly those representing elite white history—across the state. Observing the best practices of his time in the archives of Europe, he adopted the principle of provenance and recognized the concept of the *fonds* by arranging the official records by date within departmental series, and private manuscripts by collections related to individual or family donors, not so very differently from the way they are still kept. “[S]implicity of arrangement is the great object to obtain,” he wrote,¹²⁷ and in spite of all the contingencies of his politics, his struggles, and his failures, he managed to establish and sustain an institution

¹²⁷ Rowland, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 11.

almost singlehandedly and to persist long enough and make it reliable enough that others of changing convictions would want to continue to perpetuate it.¹²⁸ As a result, not only the records he most prized, but many that he would never have collected, are still there, still accessible, and gradually emerging on-line to reach new audiences certainly far beyond his imaginings.¹²⁹

Can we conclude, then, that even the Mississippi archives under Dunbar Rowland, even an archives that may have been created and justified for what we see in retrospect as a biased and interested purpose, has been and will be “good enough” to serve not only its constituents but the general public? To the degree that such an archives documents its own actions or its actions can be documented by external evidence, those actions represent data in themselves, that can be used to frame and contextualize the archival holdings it collects—just as has been the case with Dunbar Rowland’s work in Mississippi. Obviously also, all archives are most vulnerable to criticism in the course of time for what they do *not* have in their holdings, and for contemporary archivists it would seem that a minimal standard would be to document the existence of materials that cannot be collected and the specific barriers that make it impossible. Rowland did not leave much such documentation, beyond the suggestion that records creators (e.g., elected state officials while in office) and the custodians of records that lent some kind of recognized legitimation (e.g., the Spanish records of Natchez) were loath to part with their records. The very principle of archival custodianship of records was one that Rowland and his contemporaries were in the process of establishing, and they were no more successful than more contemporary archivists; “postcustodial” schemes are simply and at long last an admission that this power differential exists and cannot be overcome. Unless archives are avowedly biased in their service of legitimation (and sometimes even then), they are unlikely to be able to collect and retain any materials whose custody actually constitutes a *current* power position, especially if the creators of those materials understand their importance. Hence collecting proverbially dusty noncurrent records will always be easier than collecting records that are in demand. Rowland was by no means the last archivist to eat his peck of dirt.

¹²⁸ It may be worth observing that Rowland’s being essentially a “lone arranger” with a staff too small to escape his surveillance of their activities meant that the elasticity of resistance could not creep into the department’s activities while he was its director. When its collections began to open up in the 1960s and 1970s, this was attributable as much to a growth in size and corresponding forfeiture of absolute central control as it was to any change in policy, which might have been difficult to effect in any case given the persistently conservative makeup of the board.

¹²⁹ The now-on-line State Sovereignty Commission records and the Medgar Evers Collection, whose acquisition crowned the opening of MDAH’s new building in 2003, are only the most well known of these collections; others of Rowland’s successors expanded his early collections in the arts to cover popular as well as elite art, including Eudora Welty manuscripts, Walter Anderson paintings, George Ohr pottery, and Mississippi Delta blues recordings reflecting the misery perpetuated by the racial apartheid regime that Rowland supported.