

## YUKON ARCHIVES - A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

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Before any proposal to establish a Yukon Archives was sanctioned by the government, even at the conceptual level, historically minded Yukoners, confronted with the disappearance and fragmentation of Yukon source material and the subsequent difficulties entailed in conducting research, realized something had to be done to arrest the continuing outward flow of documentation. While there was no coordinated effort as such to lobby for an Archives, there was an awareness of the need for a facility within the Territory to preserve the Yukon's heritage. On occasion, especially when a Yukon collection was either acquired by an 'outside'<sup>(1)</sup> institution or bought by a private collector, Yukoners appraised the government of its negligence in this respect.

Reminded of its obligation to ensure that whenever possible primary sources remained in the Territory and cognizant of its own records management deficiencies, the Yukon Territorial Government in conjunction with the Federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development decided to consider the possibility of a 'long overdue' regional archives. There were a variety of factors that influenced this decision. The understanding that once the Yukon had a suitable facility historical Territorial Government records removed by the Public Archives of Canada would be returned, served as a catalyst; as did the fact that an Archives would fill a vacuum and thereby reverse the outward flow of documentation and conceivably enhance the opportunity to repatriate source material no longer in the Yukon.

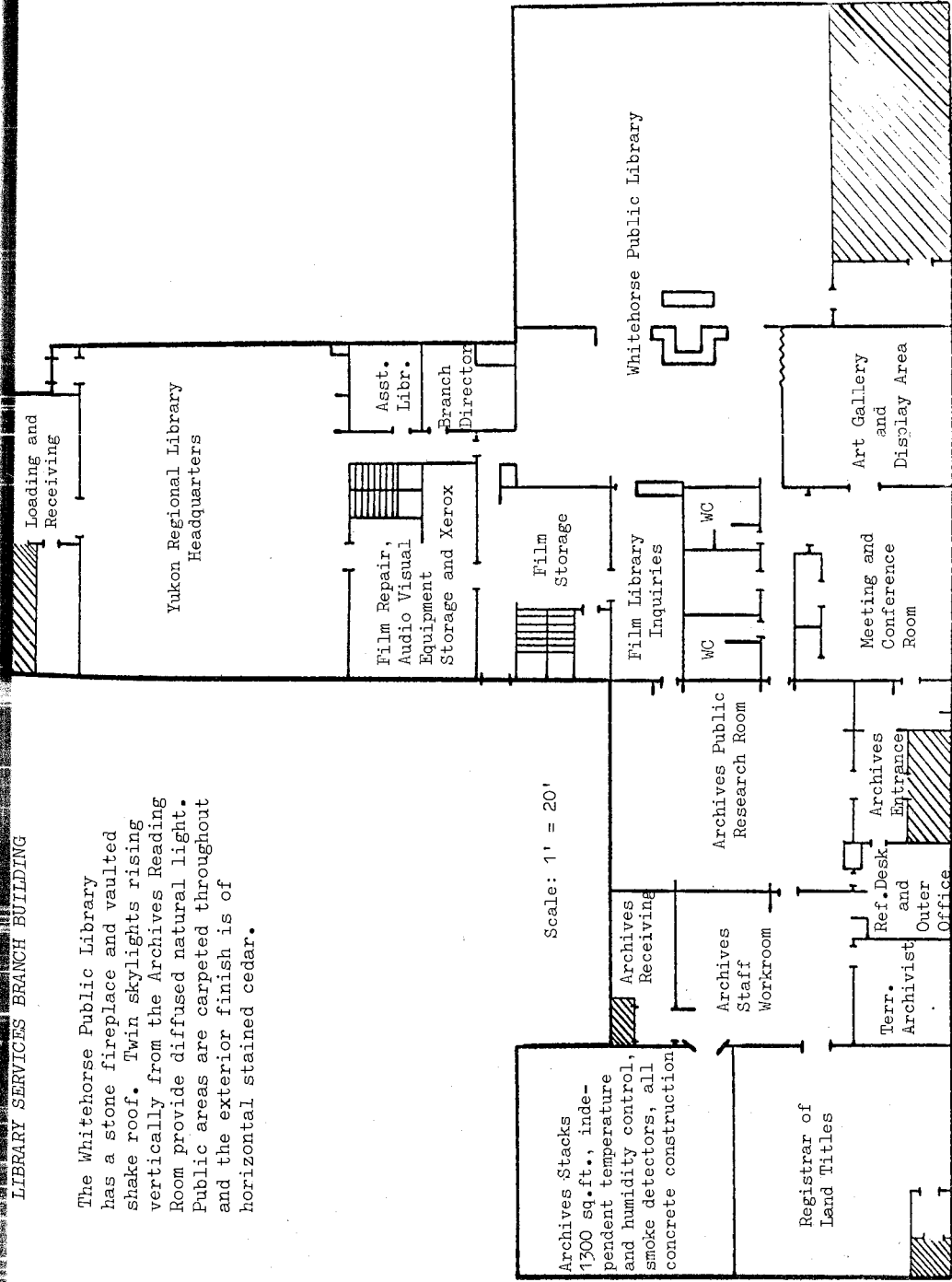
The raison d'être of a Yukon Archives or for that matter any regional repository is evident in Bernard Weilbrenner's remarks that "for the archives a certain regionalism is normal, indeed essential. The territoriality principle of archives, which is generally accepted, foresees that the archives, being the reflection and the emanation of a given territory, belong to the society which gave them birth and should be kept there where they have been

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<sup>1</sup> In standard Yukon vernacular 'outside' refers to any place other than the Yukon.

LIBRARY SERVICES BRANCH BUILDING

The Whitehorse Public Library has a stone fireplace and vaulted shake roof. Twin skylights rising vertically from the Archives Reading Room provide diffused natural light. Public areas are carpeted throughout and the exterior finish is of horizontal stained cedar.



Archives Stacks  
1300 sq. ft., independent temperature and humidity control, and smoke detectors, all concrete construction

Registrar of Land Titles

Archives Receiving

Archives Staff Workroom

Archives Public Research Room

Terr. Archivist

Ref. Desk and Outer Office

Meeting and Conference Room

Art Gallery and Display Area

Whitehorse Public Library

Yukon Regional Library Headquarters

Film Repair, Audio Visual Equipment Storage and Xerox

Film Storage

Film Library Inquiries

WC

WC

Asst. Libr.

Branch Director

Loading and Receiving

created."(2) While a Yukon repository and northern research centre had definite appeal undoubtedly the most attractive feature of an Archives as far as government administrators were concerned was the integrated records management programme which would provide systematic records scheduling and maintenance and thereby alleviate acute record storage problems.

Willard Ireland, Provincial Librarian and Archivist of British Columbia, in the capacity of a feasibility consultant, presented a survey report on August 10, 1970 in which he emphasized the interdependence of archives and records management and recommended that "a Yukon Archives should be established by ordinance defining its responsibility and powers; that a Public Records Centre should be established; that regulations for effective records scheduling should be devised." The submission elicited a favourable response from the government and throughout the remainder of 1970 there was a flurry of internal government reports and memoranda devoted to the mechanics of implementing and financing such an endeavour. In view of the size and structure of the Yukon Territorial Government, the embryo Yukon Archives was designated as a separate and relatively autonomous section of the Library Service Branch. It was the logical choice since the Branch was already responsible for the Yukon Regional Library, a network of branch libraries and deposit stations within the Territory; the circulating Film Library and the Whitehorse Public Library.

Government echoed Willard Ireland's suggestion that plans for an Archives be incorporated in the expansion and remodeling of the Library Services Branch building. Necessary capital costs were approved and construction began in September, 1971. Target date for completion was June 1972, but it was not officially opened until December 10, 1972 at a cost of \$450,000.00(3)

After relevant legislation in other jurisdictions was examined a comprehensive Archives Ordinance, comparable to a Statute, was prepared and assented to on February 26, 1971. Besides defining what qualifies as public records and allowing for the issuance of records management regulations, the Ordinance delineates the objectives of the Archives. Although there are references to publications, displays and oral history, the primary functions of the Archives under the Ordinance are to identify, acquire, preserve, describe, catalogue and make available those public records, private manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, maps and in print secondary sources that pertain to and document the overall history and development of the Yukon. While the sphere of interest is generally confined within the boundaries of the Territory, the Archives is, to a certain extent, concerned with peripheral regions that are inexorably linked to the Yukon's past and present. Atlin, British Columbia, a turn of the century mining town just south of the 60th

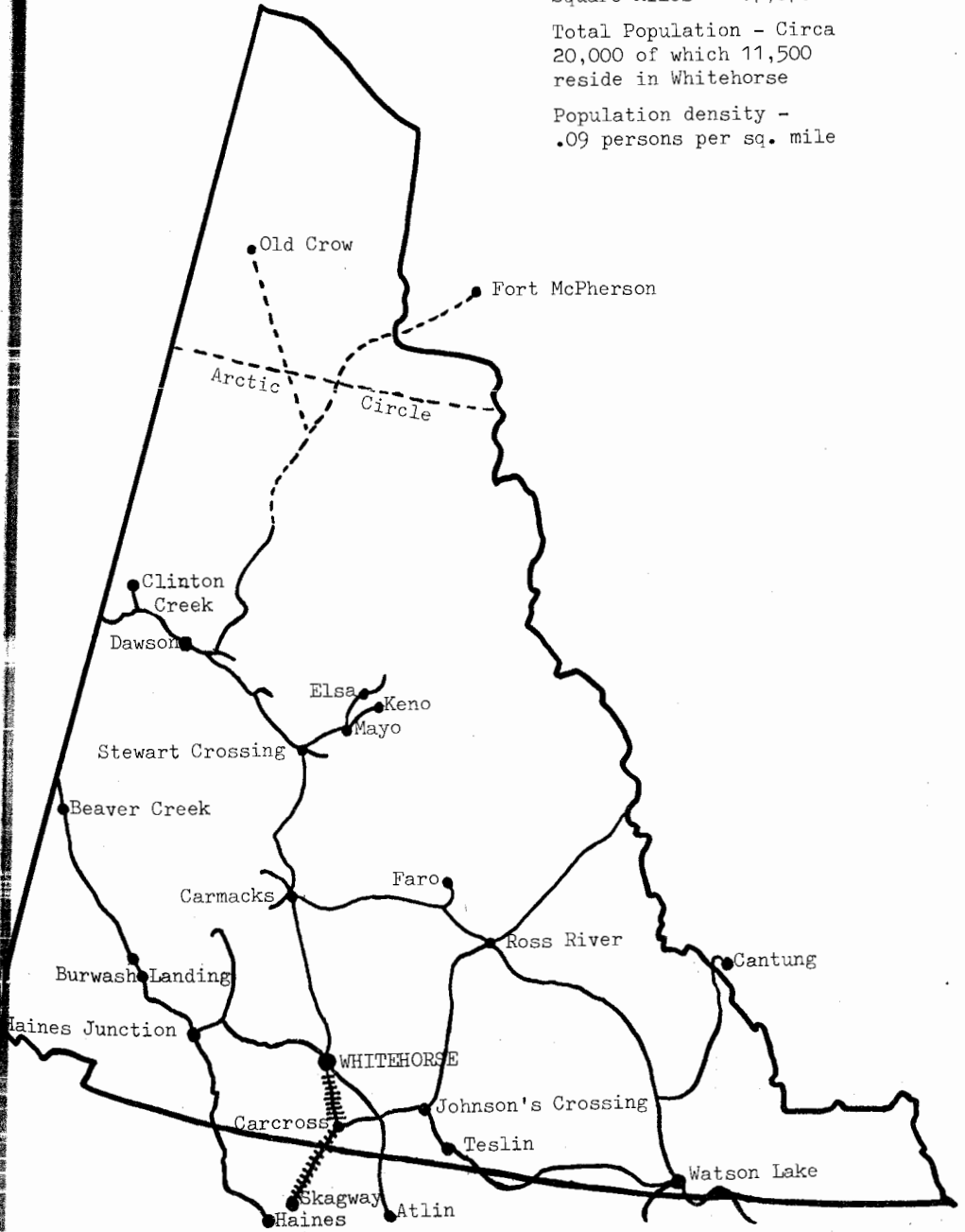
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2 Bernard Weilbrenner, "Les Archives et le regionalism"; Regionalism in the Canadian Community 1867-1967, University of Toronto Press, 1969, p. 264.

3 See p. 27 for an annotated floor plan of the Library Services Building.

YUKON TERRITORY

Square Miles - 207,076  
Total Population - Circa  
20,000 of which 11,500  
reside in Whitehorse  
Population density -  
.09 persons per sq. mile



Scale: 1" = 100 Miles      Roads: ~~~~~

parallel and Skagway, Alaska, of Klondike Gold Rush fame are two examples.

In connection with the Archivists' rôle in determining the final disposition of public records, two sections in the Ordinance are of particular significance. One stipulates that "Subject to the regulations no public records shall be destroyed or permanently removed without the knowledge and concurrence of the Archivist" and the other states that "Where any person is in possession or control of any public record he shall at the request of the Commissioner or his authorized officer forthwith deliver such public record to the Archivist".

A records Administrator was appointed in September, 1971 to assume responsibility for the operational level of records management. In anticipation of scheduling, 9,000 square feet of comparatively inexpensive records centre space was secured in the basement of a government leased building. By no means a perfect location, it does meet inactive storage and security requirements. In addition to performing a custodial function, the centre services the records with an average of 265 retrieval requests per month. Future dormant storage will be substantially improved by 1976 with the allocation of 23,000 square feet in the proposed Territorial Government Administration building.

Any further programme development was held in abeyance until a Territorial Archivist was appointed in January, 1972. An initial familiarization with the composition and recent realignment of the Territorial Government preceded a tour of Yukon communities<sup>(4)</sup> during which Yukoners exhibited a receptive attitude towards the Archives. No one accused the government of being premature in embarking on such a 'novel' programme; instead most Yukoners were somewhat dismayed that the government had not acted sooner. In an attempt to further stimulate public interest and explain just what an Archives is and is not, the Archivist, although unaccustomed to such noteriety, engaged in a modest promotional campaign with appearances on local Whitehorse radio and television talk back shows and speeches to service club luncheons. This public fascination with Archives is largely attributable to the immediacy of the average Yukoner's frontier identification and historical preoccupation with the Klondike Gold Rush and the construction of the Alaska Highway.

By March 1972, records management emerged from the formative planning stage with the Commissioner's unequivocal endorsement. As anyone even remotely involved in records management knows top level support is a prerequisite for success. The programme is a hybrid one, which combines recognized records management practices from the Ontario and Federal Governments. To eliminate confusion about jargon a basic glossary of archival and records management terminology was produced as was a chart of the projected life cycle of public records. In cooperation with the Records Administrator a composite Records Inventory and Records Management Assessment Check List was formulated, as a device to facilitate a department by de-

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<sup>4</sup> See p. 29 for a map of the Yukon Territory.

partment records inventory. When completed it not only furnishes enough information for scheduling but also reveals whether there are inadequacies or inconsistencies in file and classification and control systems. A dual purpose Records Retention and Destruction Authority form, similar to the one in use in the Ontario Government, was designed to serve as either an ongoing retention schedule or a one time destruction request. Once signed by the appropriate officials it constitutes the legal authorization governing the retention period and final disposition of an individual record series. Provision was also made for the direct transfer of a department's dead records to the Archives. A modified version of the Federal General Records Disposal Schedule, a technique to deal effectively with routine 'housekeeping' records common to all departments, is in the process of compilation.

Rather than discuss typical scheduling problems or elaborate on any aberrations peculiar to records handling in the Territorial Government a résumé of some measurable records management accomplishments to date will no doubt suffice. 2000 cubic feet of records out of a total of approximately 5000 cubic feet in the entire government have been scheduled so far, 550 cubic feet of which are destined for the Archives subject to selective retention. An indication of proliferation of paper is that according to an August 1970 estimate there were only 4000 cubic feet of records within the government. A partial explanation of this pronounced twenty percent growth rate in less than three years is that it coincided with the assignment of certain federal functions to the Territory.

The Commissioner promulgated Records Management Regulations on February 6, 1973 as a means to delegate specific duties, legitimize records management procedures, and regularize the framework in which the program is to evolve. Issued pursuant to the Archives Ordinance, they reflect an orthodox and pragmatic approach to records management, characteristic of which is the appointment of departmental Records Officers, the imposition of a scheduling deadline and the inauguration of an inter-departmental Records Management Committee. As an ex officio member, the Territorial Archivist along with the Territorial Treasurer, Director of Legal Affairs and Assistant Commissioner-Executive comprise this committee which is to promote, review and evaluate all aspects encompassed by records management.

Except for direct transfers, the accrual of public records by the Archives depends on scheduling, which guarantees controlled flow of accessions and assures that those current records of enduring value will in time become part of the Archives holdings. Public records introduce an added dimension to indigenous historical research, in that compared to what Yukoners have had access to until now the acquisitions of public records to date broadens the spectrum and affords almost limitless research potential.

Available, subject to a flexible thirty year rule, are 30 cubic feet of Territorial Central Registry Files, [1898-1957] relating to schools, roads, Yukon elections and Game Branch activities. Department of Territorial Secretary and Registrar Generals

records consisting of vital statistics, 1915-46, professional registers for engineers, 1906-10, physicians and surgeons, 1914-49, barristers and solicitors 1898-1949, and a company and partnership directory, 1899-1953 have been transferred to the Archives. At present Company Registration files, dating from 1880 which are no longer active are being scheduled for the Archives. Also recently accessioned are 25 cubic feet of Dawson municipal records [1900-66] which contain city financial records, council minutes, subject correspondence files and tax and assessment registers, 1902-56.

Arrangements have been made with the Dominion Archivist for the return of about 40 cubic feet of Yukon Territorial Government records temporarily deposited in the Public Archives in 1959 and 1958. Included in this transaction are General Correspondence Files, 1896-1934, regarding churches, townsites, education, post offices, transportation, mines and industries, surveys, newspapers, exhibitions, associations and government administration; Commissioner's Office Letterbooks, 1899-1902; Gold Commissioner's Office Letterbooks 1899-1914 and 1920-24 and Comptroller's Office Letterbooks, 1899-1902. The Archives, through another agreement with the Public Archives, has purchased microfilm of Yukon Northwest Mounted Policerecords [1898-1951], composed of Dawson City Letterbooks, 1899-1905; General Yukon Orders 1898-1910; Daily Journals from Bennett, Dawson and Tagish, 1898-1900 and miscellaneous items such as Dawson Gaol Records, 1899-1903, Dawson Convict Registers, 1898-1900, vessel registration at Bennett and Tagish 1898 and steamer passenger lists 1898-1900. The Archives also has microfilm of a N.W.M.P. register of travellers along the Yukon River 1901-03 from the Glenbow Archives. Actually the N.W.M.P. microfilm is only the first installment in a procurement programme whereby the Archives intends to earmark a portion of its annual \$13,000 acquisitions budget each year to obtain microfilm of Yukon oriented sources in the Public Records Section such as Territorial Court Records, 1898-1906; Dominion Land Branch files commencing in 1897, and G.M. Dawson and Associates Geological Survey Notebooks, 1887.

Dawson Mining Recorders records have been microfilmed and even though they are technically federal records the Public Archives had concurred that they should be retained here rather than transferred to Ottawa. As mining is so interwoven with the history and continued viability of the Territory their research value is obvious. The Archives will be the recipient of approximately 600 cubic feet of Dawson mining records 1895-1971 as well as those from the Whitehorse, Mayo and Watson Lake offices once they are filmed. This record group has two main series; placer and quartz mining records, of which the former is by far the most extensive covering all the creeks and tributaries in the Klondike Gold Fields. This placer series is further subdivided into Applications for Grants, 1898-1971; Registered Documents, 1896-1971; Renewal Grants, 1933-71; Certificates of Work, 1899-1906; Abstract Claim Record Books, 1896-1971; Indices of Original Locators, 1896-1908; Free Miners Certificates, 1897-1907; Royalty Ledgers, 1898-1909 and Water Rights Record Books, 1900-63.

As highwater marks in Yukon history, the construction of the

Alaska Highway and to a lesser degree the Canol Project irrevocably changed the Territory. The records of the United States Northwest Service Command, the military agency especially created in 1942 to carry out these mammoth undertakings, are in the St. Louis Records Administration Center. Hopefully the Archives will be able to purchase microfilm of these records which embrace a wide variety of items, some of which are: the commanding officer's 'file book' on conversations with Canadian officials about the Alaska Highway; 'policy books' on the Alcan and Canol projects; unpublished histories of units in the Northwest District; Whitehorse and Skagway Engineering District Office records and even a file on Japanese balloon incidents. The Archives has already purchased microfilm of the American Consular Dispatches from Dawson 1898-1906 from the United States National Archives.

With virtually no private manuscripts at its inception the Archives has relied on the cooperation of other repositories to secure copies of Yukon sources. The British Columbia Provincial Archives has supplied copies of over twenty natural units in the form of Gold Rush diaries, stamper's accounts, and sundry estrays. From Glenbow the Archives has purchased microfilm of the Yukon Order of Pioneers historical documents and papers, 1886-1922. The papers of William Ogilvie, former Commissioner of the Yukon, 1898-1901 and Charles Constantine, who in 1895 led the first N.W.M.P. contingent to the Territory, are merely two of more than thirty Yukon related entries that appear in Public Archives manuscript group inventories, particularly MG30. As the Public Archives favours diffusion and decentralization of regional source material the Archives hopes to be able to acquire copies of these papers to supplement its holdings.

The Yukon Historical Society on behalf of the MacBride Museum in Whitehorse has donated private manuscripts and corporate records in excess of 25 cubic feet. Nearly half of this presentation embodies White Pass and Yukon Route River Division records i.e. sternwheeler log books, 1899-1951; summary log book, 1901-05; ships articles and crew lists, 1904-46; daily port log of St. Michael, Alaska, 1914-23; Superintendent's Annual Reports on operations, 1902-35; Captain's reports, 1906-27; monthly returns on arrivals and departures of steamers from Alaska and Yukon ports, 1915-34; Whitehorse meteorological and activity reports, 1902-56 and personnel records 1903-46. The remainder of the donation includes Yukon Telegraph Service records, 1899-1919; Whitehorse port register, 1901-19; papers of the Watt Brothers, Dawson financial and insurance agents, 1905-19; the scrapbook of Martha Louise Black, a naturalist and Member of Parliament; and records of the Whitehorse Chapter of the Arctic Brotherhood, 1901-03.

From National Historic Sites the Archives has received the Henderson Family Papers [1882-1947], Robert Henderson being one of the contenders for the title 'Discoverer of the Klondike', as well as assorted Yukon Gold Company correspondence and dredging records, 1907-20. The Archives has copies of the W.L. Phelps Papers, 1904-40, a Whitehorse lawyer and attorney for Skookum Jim, another more justified claimant to the title 'Discoverer of the Klondike'.



The items alluded to in the foregoing paragraphs are indicative of the diversified manuscript collection as a whole, which although increasing at an acceptable rate is unbalanced. As yet there are not enough pre Klondike or native sources, nor is there sufficient coverage of the period between the World Wars when the Yukon was suspended in limbo. This isolation from the mainstream was such that the catastrophic effects of the depression during the 1930's had a negligible impact, if any, in the Yukon where they were viewed as if happening on another planet.

Conscious of the law of diminishing returns that can all too easily occur in a manuscript collection, the Archives is developing a network of contacts primarily through Yukoners' Associations in the Pacific Northwest to avoid this static pattern. Participation in the Yukon Historical Society and Yukon Visitor's Association has produced a number of donors as well. In this context, the annual meeting of the Alaska Historical Association held in Whitehorse in 1972 proved to be of mutual benefit. A copy loan arrangement with the Dawson Museum for their archival material is a distinct possibility as is the prospect of the Anglican Church depositing their early diocesan records in the Archives.

The Archives photograph collection, representing the work of more than 30 different photographers, has experienced a phenomenal expansion. It has gone from zero to where it is now close to 5000 prints with copy negatives for well over half. As shots of scenery, wildlife and dog teams have been kept to a bare minimum the relative value of numbers is more meaningful.

The photographs, a vast majority of which were taken between 1898 and 1905, visually depict the halcyon days of the stampede and the Trail of '98 from Dyea and Skagway to Dawson. The overall scope of the collection spans Yukon and surrounding communities, street scenes and buildings, interiors of businesses and homes; social life and sports; varied mining activities and dredges; transportation, sternwheelers, stagelines, road houses, aviation, railroad and Alaska Highway construction; N.W.M.P.; Yukon personalities and native people.

From the Public Archives, National Museum, Glenbow and the Alberta Provincial Archives 600 research and reference prints have been purchased. 350 copy negatives from the Vancouver Public Library and 150 prints from the University of Washington Special Collections Section have been acquired without any restrictions whatsoever imposed on their use. A photograph exchange with the British Columbia Provincial Archives has garnered 240 prints. An even more liberal duplicate exchange with the University of Washington has resulted in 350 prints from the corpus of E.A. Hegg's work. Around 300 prints and negatives have been derived via copy loan with the MacBride Museum. Donations account for at least half of the acquisitions; the three largest being 1000 glass plates of H.C. Barley, the official photographer for the White Pass and Yukon Route; 370 glass plates of A. Vogee, 1897-1903, a hitherto unknown contemporary of Hegg and Larss and Duclos; and 300 hand coloured lantern slides, [1898-1935] which belonged to Martha Louise Black.

Since January 1973 two photographs accompanied by an explanatory text have been inserted in the Whitehorse Star each week as a serial pictorial salute to the 75th anniversary of the Klondike Gold Rush. In a similar vein, the Archives is preparing a series of ten one minute audio packages with appropriate stills to be telecast periodically on the northern television service of the C.B.C.

The Archives newspaper collection of over fifty separate mastheads has reached the stage where it now rivals the photographs as the most frequently used source, exclusive of inprint material. As can be expected there is a special emphasis on Gold Rush papers, with microfilm of the Dawson News, 1899-1953; Yukon Sun, 1899-1904; Yukon World, 1904-09; Klondike Nugget, 1898-1903; Whitehorse Star, 1901-16, and every other Yukon newspaper enumerated in the C.L.A. catalogue of Canadian Newspapers on Microfilm.

As a truly international event, the Gold Rush during 1897-98 was often front page news in papers published outside the Territory especially in those cities more directly effected by what was transpiring in the Yukon. Consequently to augment local coverage the Archives has microfilm of the following newspapers for those years: the Edmonton Bulletin, Vancouver Province, Victoria Colonist, Seattle Times, San Francisco Examiner, Harpers Weekly, New York Herald and New York Tribune. Other Gold Rush papers worthy of note are a few scattered issues of the Dyea Trail, 1898, Skagway News, 1897, Klondike News, 1898, Bennett Sun, 1899 and 1900 and microfilm of the Atlin Claim 1899-1908.

Since the C.L.A. microfilm of the Whitehorse Star terminates in 1916 arrangements have been made with the publisher whereby the Archives will receive shortly, microfilm of the paper from 1917 to 1972. National Historical Sites has tentatively agreed to deposit originals of the Dawson News, 1904-53 in the Archives. Newspapers from the smaller Yukon settlements are in the Archives as well. While some, such as the Faro Raven and Clinton Creek Rock Fluff appear regularly, others are sporadic publications often amounting to no more than an occasional mimeographed newsletter. The Archives also subscribes to the Northern Miner, Tundra Times from Fairbanks and the News of the North from Yellowknife.

Perhaps the best capsule description of the Archives map collection is 'adequate and improving'. It contains topographical, Geological Survey, land use, town surveys, detailed creek and bench mining claim maps and sketches. Linen roll maps of the route and elevation of the Klondike Mines Railway along Bonanza Creek and sternwheeler pilot's navigational roll charts of the Yukon River are among the more valuable as is a set of four Alaska Boundary Tribunal Atlases, 1904. The Archives has only a very few architectural drawings and blueprints of government buildings etc., but scheduling of the Territorial Highways and Public Works Department records will rectify this situation.

Oral history has become a necessity in many avenues of research. This is particularly true of native history and frontier life in the Yukon. Almost all of the sourdoughs with personal

memories of the Klondike Gold Rush are deceased but fortunately all is not lost. The Archives has tapes, originally recorded in 1950, of Patsy Henderson's tale of the 'Discovery of Gold' and pioneer merchants Charlie Taylor and Bill Drury recounting life in the early days. Also on tape is Robert Service reciting his poetry in his own inimitable fashion. The verbal observations and reminiscences of Victoria Faulkner, with over 70 years continuous residence in the Territory, 44 of which were spent in government service as private secretary to 9 Commissioners is another valuable addition.

A native oral history programme on the life and times of Skookum Jim, funded by an L.I.P. grant and co-sponsored by Skookum Jim Memorial Friendship Centre and the Archives has been moderately successful for a first attempt. Tapes and hard copy transcriptions of the interviews are now in the Archives. The Yukon Native Brotherhood and Yukon Association of Non Status Indians are both prospective copy loan sources; the former is presently taping stories and legends to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions and the latter has recorded Land Claims Meetings.

A collection of select promotional and documentary films about the Yukon is within the realm of the Archives. Prints of two feature length colour films with soundtrack of the Alaska Highway and Canol Projects shot during construction have been purchased. When Richard Finnie, producer and director of these films, paid a recent visit to Whitehorse a 'premier' showing attracted an audience of over a thousand. Footage of sternwheelers plying the Yukon River which ceased in 1955 will be the next major acquisition.

Displays probably more than anything else contribute to the Archives popularity. A collage of archival sources at the official opening was well received by the three hundred people in attendance. With an art gallery in the building the Archives is capable of mounting thematic displays utilizing originals, facsimiles, blowups, slide presentations and films. As a tribute to the Klondike Gold Rush an exhibit portraying the Trail of '98 is slated for this summer when Whitehorse will be inundated by tourists. After vacation season it will tour several of the smaller western Canadian cities.

As an adjunct to the primary sources the Archives maintains a constantly expanding 'in house' library of some 2000 volumes of Yukon and northern history books, technical and scientific studies, economic and ethnographic surveys, bibliographies and standard reference works. The pamphlet collection is an important segment of the secondary sources as are government documents such as Ordinances, annual reports, Votes and Proceedings, Journals and Sessional Papers of the Territorial Council. Besides hard copy, the Archives has magnetic tape of the Votes and Proceedings dating from 1963 when the sessions were first recorded. On an annual subscription basis the Archives receives sixty professional, historical and northern periodicals and journals, many of which are indexed in the Boreal Institute's computer print out of Northern Titles.

Now well established, the Archives is entering a transitional phase where more staff time will be devoted to the preparation of

finding aids. The direction of the programme has to a certain degree been dictated by the total environment in which the Archives has to exist; namely a northern resource community. Even without a university to draw upon the Archives still averages 5 researchers a day, mostly local amateur historians. Others who avail themselves of the Archives holdings are government and city administrators, high school teachers and students, Native Brotherhood officials, mining engineers, conservationists, anthropologists, geologists, genealogists, journalists and authors, film makers and itinerate academics. Since opening to the public the over reliance on secondary sources has diminished and there has been a noticeable upswing in the quality and quantity of primary research. Klondike '73 celebrations, the creation of Kluane National Park, the interpretative International Gold Rush Park and the historic restoration of Dawson, all add up to increased usage of the Archives.

In essence the Yukon Archives is not a deviation from the norm, its rôle is identical to that of a Provincial Archives. Employing the Archives Ordinance as a criteria to measure success, what has been achieved in a relatively short period, compares very favourably with the objectives set out in the legislation.

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#### WORTH REMEMBERING

Most people with papers think of them as of little value. And yet, the papers on an individual, a family, a corporation or an association are often of considerable consequence to the historical scholar. When it is all said and done, the individual or the survivors often make some effort to memorialize those who have passed on. As an argument for depositing papers in some archival establishment one long-time archivist has published the following:

The only real dead are those who are forgotten. (1)

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1 Louisiana History XIV, I, 1973 p. 5. [contributed by John Andreassen, McGill University Archives.]