

## HISTORY HELP

### Conducting Research in the North Carolina State Archives (Part One of a Two-Part Series)

By Debra A. Blake, Public Services Branch Supervisor

*Editor's note: The North Carolina State Archives is one of the oldest state archives in the nation and has an extensive collection of records of interest to historians, genealogists, and other researchers. This two-part article explores the different types of records that the Archives has and describes how to find and request items if you come to the Archives to conduct research.*

The North Carolina State Archives invites you to discover a wealth of historical resources available to help you with your research. When you come to the Archives in Raleigh, you can consult a will written in the seventeenth century; read court records from the 1700s; peruse the papers of governors, legislators, and other prominent North Carolinians; and more.

The North Carolina State Archives maintains custody of over 100 million documents and 500,000 reels of microfilm. The holdings include local county records, state agency records, private manuscripts, and maps. The Archives also holds over 1 million photographic negatives, newspapers on microfilm, audio-visual materials, copies from family Bibles, church and cemetery records, organization records, colonial and district court papers, military records, and many other categories of records.

#### The County Record Series

The record series used the most frequently by the public are the county records. Most of the older records of the current 100 counties and the six defunct ones are arranged and preserved in the Archives. County records are arranged into nine series, labeled 100 through 900. This numbering scheme is reflected on the call numbers found in the Search Room card catalog.

*The 100 series* includes bonds, with the exception of marriage and guardian bonds. Apprentices, bastardy, tavern (or ordinary), and officials' bonds are included in the series. Officials' bonds include sheriffs, constables, clerks of court and other county officials that are elected or appointed to positions with fiduciary responsibility.

*The 200 series* includes county copies of the decennial federal census. The Archives has microfilm copies of

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the census from 1790 to 1930, with the exception of 1890. (Nearly all of the 1890 census for North Carolina was damaged in a fire in the U. S. Department of Commerce and later destroyed.) You can also see the original census volumes of the 1850-1880 decades; these volumes are state or county copies. Please note that a 72-year restriction is imposed upon federal census records. It will be 2012 before the 1940 census is available for research.

*The 300 series* includes county court records. These include minutes, appearance, and both civil and criminal trial and execution dockets, equity records, and loose civil and criminal action papers. Civil actions concerning land have been arranged as a subseries of the court records, and selected counties have other specialized subseries, such as those concerning railroads or concerning slaves.

*The 400 series* includes land records, except those which are part of civil actions. Original deeds left at the register's office by one of the parties to the conveyance, retired deed books, grants, land entries and grants, deeds of gift and trust, petitions for partition, land divisions, proceSSIONERS records, and land foreclosures for taxes are all included within this series. The Archives has microfilm copies of county deed books. Indices to land conveyances are also available on microfilm.

*The 500 series* includes court records related to the settlement of the financial affairs of people who died intestate. These are generally referred to as estate records. Folders of original estate papers are arranged alphabetically by the surname of the deceased within

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each county. Another alphabetically-arranged and related series is the guardians' papers. The series is arranged by the names of the ward. These original estates and guardians records may also have been transcribed in one of several recording docket, bearing titles like appointment of administrators, executors, and guardians, accounts of sale, guardians annual accounts, final settlements, and petitions for widows' dowers or yearly allotments.

*The 600 series* includes such vital records as birth, death, marriage, and divorce. It includes marriage registers, licenses and certificates, records of cohabitation, divorce actions, disinterment/reinterment permits, and records of grave removals.

Not included in this series are marriage bonds, which were issued in North Carolina from 1741 to 1868. These early marriage records are grouped into a separate series and arranged by county and then alphabetically by the name of the groom. Most marriage records created after 1868, such as registers and licenses, remain in the courthouses but are available on microfilm at the Archives.

North Carolina did not keep statewide birth and death records until 1913. The Archives does not have any birth certificates, but it does have death certificates until 1975 on microfilm. Death certificates are also available online at *Ancestry.com*.

*The 700 series* includes tax records. Please note that some early tax lists are filed under various state agencies such as the Secretary of State, Treasurer and Comptroller, Governor's Office, and General Assembly Papers. The lists are cross referenced in the Search Room card catalog within each county division.

*The 800 series* includes wills and related records. The Archives has loose, original wills, although clerks were supposed to copy each will into a will book as well. The will books and their indices, for the most part, remain in the county and the Archives has microfilm copies of them. All of the pre-1900 wills in the Archives are listed in a volume by Dr. Thornton Mitchell called *North Carolina Wills: A Testator Index 1663-1900*. Please note that this book is only an index and does not provide the researcher with a call number for requesting a particular will. Call numbers for all county records are listed on the cards in the card



*The North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh has an extensive collection, including more than 100 million documents and 500,000 reels of microfilm.*

catalog in the Search Room. The contents of Mitchell's book are also in our MARS online catalog, which can be searched at [www.archives.ncdcr.gov/mars](http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/mars).

*The 900 series* includes miscellaneous records, which vary widely from county to county. This series often includes business records, early school records, mill records, road records, slave records, military records, election records, and records of the wardens of the poor. Special proceedings before the clerk, as well as the clerk's orders and decrees, which involved civil cases in which no point of law was disputed, are part of this series. Military discharges are available on microfilm in this series.

#### **State Agency Records**

There are many different state agency records. In the Search Room there are black notebooks that contain finding aids for all the state agencies. These finding aids describe the agency and give call numbers necessary for requesting records that have been fully processed. There are card files for a few of the larger and more useful series within certain agencies, which are even more precisely described.

The Secretary of State's records are among the most useful for the genealogical researchers. This group contains numerous types of records, such as land grants, tax lists, and wills and estates prior to 1798. One important series is the Secretary of State land

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grants. These records, which are simply deeds in which the grantor is the state or the crown, are for the most part in fragile condition and are retired once they are microfilmed. Few land grants have any genealogical information on them at all, although they are invaluable for tracing land.

In the State Auditor records, the Civil War pension series is probably the most valuable series because it contains pension applications made by Civil War veterans and/or their widows. Also of note are the records pertaining to artificial limbs provided to Confederate Civil War veterans. These records are listed in the MARS online catalog.

Military records are of great interest to genealogists and they tend to appear at almost all levels of government: county, state, and federal. An important thing to keep in mind about wars is that they are generally financed by the national governing body rather than the state, so the National Archives or the military branches are the most likely places to have these records. The Confederacy, of course was the financing body for the South in the Civil War but their records were confiscated by the federals when they took Richmond, making their records part of the national body of records. There may be auxiliary records at the state and local levels, but the bulk of the records are created and maintained at the federal level.

Colonial wars and militia returns are records which include primarily lists of men serving in the militia for various periods and include the Spanish Invasion of 1742-1748, Frontier Scouting and Indian Wars 1758-1788, and the War of the Regulation 1768-1779.

Most of the records of Revolutionary War, such as service and pension records, are federal records and are located at the National Archives. There is an index to the pensions, which are by far the most useful of the Revolutionary War materials. The genealogical branch of the State Library, another agency within the Department of Cultural Resources, has four volumes of abstracts of these pension records. The Archives has some Army Account books which list men and amounts of money paid them. These lists give no other information and do not necessarily indicate soldierly service; they do prove patriotic service such as the giving of foodstuffs to the cause. There are also some pay vouchers, which give a name, amount of

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money paid them, and sometimes the reason for the payment. These records are available on microfilm.

The Archives has muster rolls and pay vouchers for the War of 1812. They are very similar to those of the Revolution and are available on microfilm. For the Mexican War, the Archives has a roster of troops that has been published. A copy is in the Search Room.

An accurate roster of Confederate troops is currently being compiled by the Historical Publications Section and is called *North Carolina Troops*. Seventeen volumes have been published and are widely available. The compilers are using available sources in the Archives to compile the roster, including newspapers, muster and pay rolls, service records, as well as other sources available in the Civil War Collection. As previously mentioned, the Archives has Confederate pension records. The service records of Confederate soldiers, while housed at the National Archives, are available on microfilm. Also on microfilm are the records of some of the Federal prisons that held Confederate prisoners of war, such as Point Lookout, MD, and Elmira, NY. Finally, the Archives has a huge array of records in the Civil War Collection. All are unindexed and somewhat tedious to access, but include muster rolls, clothing allowances, regimental records, some reminiscences, and various other types of records. A large finding aid is available in the Search Room.

For the Spanish-American War a roster of troops has been published and is widely available.

I hope this partial overview of the Archives’ collection will encourage you to come to the Archives, to visit our web site ([www.archives.ncdcr.gov](http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov)), or to call us at (919) 807-7310 to learn more about our state’s rich documentary heritage. Part Two of this article, which will appear in the March issue of the *Bulletin*, will explore other collections in the Archives as well as how to conduct research on-site and by mail.

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Part One of this article explored a number of records that are available for research at the State Archives, including the county record series, state agency records, and military records. The second part of this article will focus on the Archives' collection of court records, private manuscripts, newspapers, and photographs, as well as on how to conduct research at the Archives and by mail.

#### Court Records

Court records are of great usefulness to genealogists but are often ignored by researchers. Covering the period of 1680 to 1767, the Colonial Court records are some of the oldest and certainly most significant records in the Archives.

The Archives also has estate records from 1665 to 1775 as well as a list of the intestates in the Search Room. Many of these records have been published in the State and Colonial Records series, which is widely available in hard copy and now also available in its entirety on UNC Library's "Documenting the American South" Web site at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr>.

The District Superior Court Records cover the periods 1760 to 1772 and 1778 to 1806. North Carolina was originally divided into five districts, each having its own independent court. These courts maintained jurisdiction over civil actions involving values over £ 50 as well as criminal actions in which punishment could involve loss of life or member.

The five original districts included Edenton, Halifax, New Bern, Salisbury, and Wilmington. Hillsborough was added in 1768, and after 1778 additional districts were added as they were needed. In 1806 superior courts were added to every county in North Carolina, and District Superior Courts were closed.

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The Archives has North Carolina Supreme Court records from 1808 to 1939 in paper format and from 1940 to the 1950s on microfilm. The years prior to 1980 are in the process of being filmed, and the cases after 1981 are on microfiche.

#### Private Manuscripts

North Carolina's State Archives has more than 1,800 private manuscript collections (collections of private papers of individuals), making it unusual among state archives. The Archives collects primarily those papers of people of importance in North Carolina's history, such as the private papers of governors, legislators, prominent land owners, etc.

The Archives also collects papers that deal with events important to the development of North Carolina, such as diaries and letters of soldiers involved with North Carolina in some way, whether as a soldier in one of the state's regiments or as a federal soldier involved in the Battle of Fort Fisher. All of the collections are described in the widely available *Guide to Private Manuscript Collections in the North Carolina State Archives*, compiled and edited by Barbara T. Cain.

#### Newspapers and Photographs

Newspaper records are available on microfilm and include many defunct newspapers in our state. (Please note that the State Library is the source for microfilm of back runs of currently published major newspapers.) Newspapers can be valuable for the information they contain on society and obituary pages. They also cover events held in a town or county and may mention participants. Unfortunately most are unindexed.

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Please note that it is now possible to view more than 23,000 digital images of North Carolina newspapers dating from 1752 to the 1890s at [www.archives.ncdcr.gov/Newspaper/index.html](http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/Newspaper/index.html). This keyword searchable collection includes the *North Carolina Gazette* and various newspapers from Edenton (1787-1801), Fayetteville (1798-1795), Hillsboro (1786), New Bern (1751-1804), and Wilmington (1765-1816).

The Archives also has a large collection of photographs, consisting of more than one million images, and one of the most extensive holdings of North Carolina maps to be found. Much of these two specialized collections are indexed in our MARS online catalog. In a joint project with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, many of the Archives' maps are now scanned and available online at [www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nmaps](http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nmaps).

#### Conducting Research at the Archives

The North Carolina State Archives is located in the State Archives and State Library Building at 109 E. Jones Street, between the Legislative Building and the Governor's Mansion in downtown Raleigh. The Search Room is open Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Search Room is closed to the public on Monday.

To enter the Search Room, the researcher must present a positive form of identification, such as a driver's license. Each researcher receives a card with a unique Archives identification number on it. That number will be used on all call slips, and the card will be held at the reference desk while the researcher uses original records. A list of items that may, as well as what may not, be brought into the Search Room is available on our Web site at [www.archives.ncdcr.gov](http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov).

Upon entrance into the Search Room, the researcher should begin with the card catalog. The catalog features cards filed alphabetically, within each county, and further arranged by the types of records. A call number is listed on each card; that number will be needed in filling out call slips. The call slips are the method by which records are requested.

The call number will most often begin with a CR, but in some cases it might begin with a SS or T&C or other such notation, depending on the record group. Please pay close attention when looking at the indi-

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vidual cards in the card file, because they give the information needed to fill out call slips. The card will indicate whether the records are arranged chronologically or alphabetically. If they are arranged alphabetically, a surname is needed on the call slip. If arranged chronologically, a span of years is needed to pull the records.

The card will also give the inclusive dates of the records, so if the record needed does not fall within those years, there is no need to request it. An example is the inclusive years of 1732-1915. As written, the records include all the years between those two dates. If, on the other hand, the dates are written 1732-1755, 1782-1829, 1833-1915, the series is a broken one. In this example, the Archives would not have records from 1769. The Archives keeps the card file updated so that if records have recently been added to those of a county, it will be noted on the cards.

After receiving the records requested, one folder should be taken out of the box at a time and a marker used to indicate where that folder belonged. Though there may appear to be no order to the records in the folder, there is one, and the papers should not be rearranged. If they have remained in their original order, the researcher can follow the legal process just as it occurred at the time.

#### Copying Records

Copies of records can be produced in a variety of media, depending upon the nature of the original. Loose documents and reference books can generally be photocopied for you by staff while you wait. The cost is 10 cents per page. The staff may decline to copy an oversized or particularly brittle document or book when it would be at risk of damage on the copying machine.

No original bound volumes will be photocopied. These records must be sent to our lab, where specialized

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equipment will be used to make the copy without harming the original. Coin-operated reader printers are available in the microfilm room for individual prints from film. Duplicates of entire reels can be reproduced by the Collections Management staff.

The reference staff can offer advice about copying methods. Researchers are encouraged to use their own cameras to photograph documents as long as they do not use a flash.

#### Conducting Research by Mail

In addition to being open for research visits, the State Archives can answer mail inquiries. The volume of mail restricts searches to certain types of easily accessible records, such as the alphabetically arranged wills and estates, marriage bonds, and Civil War pension applications. Copies of other types of records can be provided if accompanied by a specific citation to a page of a certain volume.

The mail inquiry is a two-step process. In response to the initial request, the correspondence archivist will

do the search and quote the cost of copying the requested documents. When that money has been received, the copies will be made and mailed. Please note that if researchers are writing from out of state, they should send their initial request with a nonrefundable \$20 search and handling fee per question. Most researchers will be more successful if they visit the Search Room and conduct research for themselves.

For additional information about researching in the State Archives, please visit our Web site or call (919) 807-7310 with specific questions.

### Useful Resources

*In this section, we review museum or history-related sites that might interest you. We welcome your suggestions as well.*

#### **Laws Governing Non-Profits in North Carolina**

[www.volunteer-connections.org/express/nccenteronlawsgoverningncnps.pdf](http://www.volunteer-connections.org/express/nccenteronlawsgoverningncnps.pdf)

This useful document from the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits and from Nonprofit Connections offers a brief summary of laws that affect non-profits in North Carolina. Examples of the laws mentioned include laws relating to paying taxes, obtaining a charitable solicitation license; unemployment tax, and more.

#### **Online Toolkit to Publicize Conservation Needs**

[www.vamuseums.org](http://www.vamuseums.org)

With the help of an IMLS grant, the Virginia Association of Museums developed an online toolkit that provides marketing and public relations education and tools to help museums educate donors and the public regarding the importance of conservation and

collections care, with the ultimate goal of increasing funding. The toolkit includes a sample marketing plan, sample press release, tips on communicating your story to the media, a press release template, sample good pitch, and more. To find the toolkit, visit [www.vamuseums.org](http://www.vamuseums.org) and click on "Online Toolkit." (The full link to the toolkit is [www.vamuseums.org/ProgramsandServices/IMLSConnectingtoCollections/tabid/175/Default.aspx#Online\\_Toolkit](http://www.vamuseums.org/ProgramsandServices/IMLSConnectingtoCollections/tabid/175/Default.aspx#Online_Toolkit).)

#### **Twenty Free Grant Writing Resources for Non-Profits**

<http://stepbystepfundraising.com/20-free-grant-writing-resources-non-profits>

This blog post by Step by Step Fundraising offers information on free resources available to help non-profits write grants. The blog includes links to free classes, reports, newsletters, and checklists; information on books; grantwriting tools; and more.