

## Historical Research in the State Archives of North Carolina

### About the State Archives of North Carolina

The State Archives of North Carolina (State Archives) houses over a hundred million items documenting the history and culture of the state. Holdings consist of government records transferred from both state and local government agencies for permanent retention, copies of some U.S. federal and foreign governments materials, and special collections—non-governmental collections which supplement and complement public records. Special collections include photographs, moving images, audio recordings, maps, military papers, private collections, organization records, Bible and church records, microfilmed newspapers, historical posters, and student records of defunct post-secondary schools and colleges. Additionally, the [North Carolina Digital Collections](#) contain over 85,000 historic and recent images, state government publications, manuscripts, and other resources on topics related to North Carolina.

Researchers interested in North Carolina history are invited to visit the Search Room which maintains printed research tools such as finding aids, inventories, indexes, files, and catalogs. The Search Room is staffed by archivists available to assist with reference and research inquiries. An online catalog, [MARS \(Manuscript and Archives Reference System\)](#), and some [online finding aids](#) may be accessed remotely from the website. *Please note that staff cannot conduct historical research by telephone or mail.*

**Use of the materials.** Because the State Archives houses and preserves valuable documents, there are policies regulating their use. Rules and regulations regarding original material are set forth in [Title 7 Subchapter 4M](#) of the North Carolina Administrative Code. Please visit the website to review these before visiting, or telephone 919-807-7310 for more information. Visitors to the Archives and History-State Library building must register in the building lobby *and* at the Archives Search Room security desk, with photo identification such as a driver's license.

## Locating Records Online—the Manuscript and Archives Reference System (MARS)

The [Manuscript and Archives Reference System \(MARS\)](#) is an online catalog system for locating archive records. Because records in the Archives are arranged in hierarchical order, descriptions in MARS reflect the five levels of arrangement and description: record group, series, box, folder, and item. The system can be searched at any level of description by using indexed fields, key-word searches, or overnight textual searches. While MARS usually does not provide the actual information the researcher is seeking, it will report the records that contain the information and the location of these records in the Archives.

A number of [online finding aids](#) may be accessed to aid your research.

### Record Types Useful in Historical Research

#### North Carolina State Agency Records

**General Assembly Records, 1707-1974.** Certificates of elections, journals, petitions, legislative bills, amendments, data on contested elections, reports of state officials, tax lists, and resignations.

**Governors' Records, 1688-Present.** Letter books, general correspondence, minutes of the Council of State, requisitions and extraditions, lists of justices and notaries, records and reports of state agencies, pardons and paroles, appointments to official positions, press releases, and proclamations. The Colonial Governors' Papers have been digitized and are available online thorough MARS.

**Secretary of State's Records, 1663-1959.** Letter books, general correspondence, land entries, land surveys, land grants, court records, tax lists, original wills and estates papers prior to 1798, Constitutional Conventions, Provincial Congresses, Committees of Safety, Court of Chancery, Continental Congress, election returns, Revolutionary military papers, oaths of allegiance, Indian affairs, boundaries, and voter registrations.

**Literary Board, Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction's Records.** Letter books, general correspondence, addresses, common school reports, and land entry payments.

**Attorney General's Records.** Letter books, general correspondence, and opinions.

**Auditor's Records.** Correspondence, receipts, reports, accounts, pension voucher stubs, and Civil War pension applications.

**Treasurer's and Comptroller's Records, c.1731-Present.** Letter books, accounts, bonds, day books, cash bonds, ledgers, journals, tax lists, muster rolls, militia returns, commissary records, discharges, boundary line surveys, tax records, sheriffs' reports, vouchers, warrants, agriculture, Capitol Building, Conventions and Congresses, Indian Affairs, Internal Improvements, military papers, public claims, and papers pertaining to the Shellfish Commission.

**Adjutant General's Records.** Letter books, correspondence, land warrants issued to soldiers, ledgers, registers of troops, and records of some Civil War units.

**Supreme Court.** Case files, dockets, and minute books.

**Court Records.** Colonial Court records, District and District Superior Court Records, and North Carolina Supreme Court. Archives Information Circular #9, "*North Carolina Courts of Law and Equity Prior to 1868*" details the roles of early courts. A more detailed account of North Carolina's courts is available in Helen F.M. Leary's *North Carolina Research: Genealogy and Local History*, 1996. A copy of this volume is available in the Search Room.

**Other State Agency Records.** Varying quantities of records covering various dates are preserved for many other departments and agencies of state including Administration, Agriculture and Consumer Services, some Boards and Commissions, Commerce, Community Colleges, Correction, Crime Control and Public Safety, Cultural Resources, Elections, Emergency Relief Administration, Ethics, Governor's Office, Governors' Papers, Health and Human Resources, Insurance, Justice, Labor, Natural Resources and Community Development, Revenue, Transportation, and the University of North Carolina System.

All state agency records are described in MARS. Some, such as Secretary of State probate records and wills, have been digitized and are accessible online. State agency records are listed by group and series within their agency in the printed *Guide to*

*Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives: State Agency Records*, 1995. This reference volume also provides agency histories. A copy is available in the Search Room.

### **County Records**

Some records of all of the 100 existing counties, 5 extinct ones, and 12 counties now in Tennessee are housed in the State Archives either in original form or on microfilm. The quality and quantity of these records vary with the county. The 2002 version of the *Guide to Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives: County Records*, or the *County Records Guide*, as it is also known, is [available in PDF format](#). This guide lists more than 9,000 bound volumes and 21,000 boxes, as well as over 24,000 reels of microfilm of county government records and documents available to researchers in the State Archives. To order a copy of the updated (2009) version online, visit the NC Historical Publications Shop, <http://nc-historical-publications.stores.yahoo.net>.

Almost all of the counties have transferred their pre-1868 records, except deed and will books and marriage licenses, to the State Archives. Each county's records are sorted into the following categories to facilitate research: bonds, census records (county copy), court records, land records, estate records, marriage records, tax records, wills, and miscellaneous records. In addition to original records, there are microfilm copies of wills, deeds, court minutes, marriage registers, and estate records and most other records. Most of these records are for the period before 1940, although for some counties, these records extend to 1968.

All county records are described in MARS. The card catalog in the Search Room contains descriptive cards that record precisely what records exist in the State Archives for each county. Because some county records are stored offsite, it is recommended that visitors call the State Archives 24 hours ahead to check on their availability.

### **Municipal Records**

A few records of municipalities, mostly on microfilm, are preserved in the State Archives. Most of these are minutes of the governing body of the municipality. Some original records for Raleigh, Wilmington, Conover, Fayetteville, Roxboro, Oxford, Edenton, Elizabeth City and Salisbury are housed in the State Archives.

## **Federal Archive Records Relating to North Carolina**

**Bureau of the Census Records, 1790-1930.** Printed population schedules for the census of 1790 and 1820 for North Carolina, printed mortality schedules for 1850-1880, microfilm copies of population schedules, 1790-1930, and microfilm copies of the special agriculture, industry, mortality, and social statistics schedules, 1850-1880. Printed indices are available for 1800-1870 population schedules and Soundex is available for 1900-1930. An information circular describing the contents of the various censuses, "[Overview of North Carolina Census Records, 1787-1930](#)" is available on the website.

**United States Circuit Court Records.** Mixed case files of civil (1790-1860), and criminal cases (1790-1897) for the Raleigh division are available on microfilm.

**North Carolina District Court Records.** Microfilmed minutes of various court divisions: Albemarle, 1801-1914; Cape Fear, 1795-1911; Pamlico, 1858-1914, and Raleigh, 1791-1866. Admiralty Final Record Books for 1858-1907 and Confederate District Court Records for 1861-1864 are included in this series of records. The estates records for the Edenton District Court have been digitized and are available through MARS.

**Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.** Post Civil War microfilmed letters and telegrams, and reports of operations, ration issuance, personnel, court cases, indentures, lands and property, outrages and arrests, accounts and claims and reports of registrars recommended for the Election of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1868.

**Bureau of Indian Affairs.** Microfilmed letters from 1824-1880 relating primarily to the Cherokee, census records for the Cherokee for the years 1898-1939, records of the Cherokee Indian Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835, and an index to compiled service records of volunteer soldiers who served during the Cherokee disturbances and removal from North Carolina.

**Records relating to military service.** These records contain a few compiled service records for Revolutionary War soldiers. The largest group of records in this series is that of Compiled Service Records for Confederate Soldiers, Sailors and Marines. Descriptive Books of the 35th, 36th and 37th Regiments of United States Colored Troops, Hospital and Prison Records for Confederate Marines and Navy, and prison records of Point Lookout,

Maryland and Elmira, New York. The Search Room maintains reference cards to Confederate Medical Officers and Adjutant General's records regarding *The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639-1886*.

**Miscellaneous microfilm records.** Office of the Controller of the Currency, 1865-1874; Revenue, 1792-1807; Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Registry, 1815-1915 for various ports; Blue Ridge Parkway Construction Scrapbooks 1931-1959; the Treasury (US Coast Guard); the US Supreme Court records concerning Granville Claim; US Mint registers of gold bullion; US Department of State, War of 1812 papers; US Post Office Department, appointments of postmasters, 1789-1929; US Army Corps of Engineers: Report on Construction of Fort Caswell, 1824; records relating to surveys of Cherokee country, 1837-1839; and records of the US Continental Congress, 1775-1788.

### Foreign Archive Records Relating to North Carolina

**English Archives, 1663-1783** - these records are manuscript copies and photocopies of originals in Great Britain, chiefly memorials, letters and materials relating to North Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution. This collection also includes letters to governors, military and financial records, land grants, data on quitrents, and miscellaneous materials.

**British Archives, 1585-1783** - records consist of photocopies and microfilm photocopies of originals in Great Britain primarily from the National Archives in London, the British Library, and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Records include copies of letters, log books and other documents of the Board of Admiralty and the Navy Board, correspondence and miscellaneous other documents produced by the Colonial Office, and letters, reports, shipping returns, etc. of the Treasury Board. Other record groups include those from the War Office, Chancery, High Court of Admiralty, Audit Office, Board of Trade, High Court of Delegates, Foreign Office, Maps and Plans, and Customs. These records are calendared by type in the Search Room and are described in MARS.

**Spanish Archives, 1566-1802** - typed copies and photocopies of originals in the archives at Seville, Madrid, and Simancas, relating to Florida (approximately 1650-1760) and to the

Spanish Southwest (approximately 1783-1802). These records are in Spanish; translation assistance cannot be provided by staff. They are described in MARS.

### **Military Records**

The most extensive holdings of military records relating to North Carolina are to be found in the National Archives ([www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)), but a number of colonial and state government records relating to military activities are held by the North Carolina State Archives. The overwhelming majority of these records are of a financial nature, and many of those from the colonial and early statehood era have been published in *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*. They include:

**The Tuscarora Indian War, 1711-1715** – records consist chiefly of lists of colonists whose estates were specially taxed to raise money; who were levied for provisions; or who claimed reimbursement for military supplies. These records are found among Colonial Court Records, Taxes and Accounts in folders titled “Corn Lists, 1715-1716”; “Claims, 1713-1720”, and “Public Accounts, 1694-1739.”

**The Revolutionary War, 1776-1783** – consists of records of the Treasurer and Comptroller including vouchers issued by the state in payment for military service or for goods purchased for the war effort, the corresponding Revolutionary Army Account Books, and files of final settlements. Bounty land warrants and grants given to soldiers for service in the Continental Line as well as records relating to proof of service are among the records of the Secretary of State.

**Cherokee Indian Wars, 1776-1790** – surviving pay vouchers for service are among the records of the Treasurer and Comptroller and their corresponding account entries are found in the Revolutionary Army Account Books.

**The War of 1812** – consists of pay records among the Treasurer’s and Comptroller’s records and muster rolls in the records of the Adjutant General. Published indexes to these records are available for use in the Archives Search Room.

**The War with Mexico, 1846-1848** – consists of published *Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War with Mexico* available for use in the Search Room.

**The Civil War, 1861-1865** – consists of rosters, letter books, and accounts and ledgers among the records of the Adjutant General and pension applications in the records of the state auditor.

**The Spanish American War, 1898-1899** – consists of records in the Adjutant General's office in the State Archives and a published *Roster of the North Carolina Volunteers in the Spanish American War, 1898-1899*.

**World War I, 1917-1919** – consists of some lists of servicemen among the records of the Adjutant General.

**World War II, 1941-1945** – consists of records among the records of the Adjutant General.

These records are discussed more fully in the *Guide to Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives: State Agency Records* and in *North Carolina Research: Genealogy and Local History* copies of which are available for use in the Archives Search Room. Many other military related records are found in the Military Collection (*see* the Special Collections section of this brochure) and among the papers and letter books of the state's governors.

**Military Records in the National Archives** - compiled service records and pension applications (except N.C. Confederate pensions) for veterans of all wars from 1776 to 1900 are in the National Archives, where an application for search may be made. The North Carolina State Archives has a microfilm copy of the National Archives compiled service records for North Carolina soldiers in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars (Confederate and Union) for use in the Search Room.

### **Special Collections**

The State Archives houses significant collections of non-governmental materials which serve to supplement and complement the public records of the state and to fuller and richer documentation of the state's history and culture. A brief description of these types of records follows; more detailed finding media for most of these collections are available for use in the Search Room.

**Private Collections** – The State Archives houses and collects private manuscripts and other materials from public officials whose public records are in the Archives; North Carolinians who have played a leading role in some aspect of government and/or public life; and individuals, families, and businesses that have had a significant impact on the public life of the state. These collections include correspondence, diaries, memoirs, journals, and account books, notebooks, ledgers, and other business records. Materials span the time from the colonial era to the early twenty-first century. General descriptions of the collections are in MARS and the *Guide to Private Manuscript Collections in the North Carolina State Archives*, 1981.

**Organization Records** – The State Archives collects and hold the records of organizations of statewide significance that are judged to be relevant to the history and culture of North Carolina. These records include the collections of many of the state’s private, professional, and civic groups, both active and defunct, such as the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the North Carolina Department of the American Legion, the North Carolina Federation of Music Clubs, and the North Carolina League of Women Voters.

**Photographs, Audiovisual, and other Non-textual Materials** The State Archives houses a large collection of non-textual materials such as photographs, photographic negatives, and audio and visual recordings. These materials include more than one million black and white photographic negatives of images photographed by Archives and History photographers from the early 1950s to the present, images copied from private owners, and negatives made by staff photographers of the *Raleigh News and Observer* from 1938 to 1999. The negative collections are partially accessible through MARS and online finding aids.

The Archives holds over 130 individual photograph collections ranging in size from just a few snapshots to several thousand photographs, oversized prints, and negatives and touch on topics as diverse as rural electrification, early twentieth century coastal fishing, and the 1987 US Olympic Festival Torch Run. Finding aids to these collections are available online.

Over one hundred motion picture films are housed in the Archives that vary widely in length, format, and subject matter and include footage of government officials, home movies, commercial and education films, and films documenting significant events in

the state's history. Of particular interest are many original reels of Depression-era black and white silent films shot by early filmmaker H. Lee Waters in small towns and cities across the state. Other moving image materials include nearly 150 video tapes and DVDs, both original and commercial, illuminating a broad spectrum of North Carolina people, places, and topics.

The State Archives holds a large collection of audio recordings including instantaneous disc recordings as well as reel to reel and cassette tapes and CDs capturing oral histories, music, political speeches, and government events from the 1940s to the present.

Among the Archives' non-textual material holdings is a significant collection of printed posters including political, military, government, and commercial posters pertaining to the history of North Carolina. Many of the posters relate to World War I and World War II activities.

These collections are partially accessible through the State Archives online catalog and through traditional card catalogs. To view any of the photograph and non-textual materials collections, please make an appointment with the audio-visual archivist at 919-807-7311.

**Military Collection** – The Military Collection is a very large group of various records relating to the military heritage and veterans of North Carolina from 1742 to the present brought together to form an artificial collection. These include muster rolls and troop returns raised for the colony's defense during the Spanish Alarm (as the War of the Austrian Succession was known in North Carolina) and the French and Indian War; pay rolls and other financial records for the War of the Regulation; troop returns for the Revolutionary War; pay records for the Cherokee Indian Wars; and two muster rolls for the War with Mexico. The Military Collection also contains voluminous regimental and unit records, bounty pay rolls, reminiscences, and other records relating to the Civil War. Twentieth century and later records include several hundred veteran interviews ranging from pre-World War I to the present; original private papers in the form of letters, postcards, diaries, and reminiscences; souvenir ephemera; modern government documents such as discharges, orders, certificates, citations, maps, identification papers, passes, training and operational materials; and photographs of individuals in uniform,

military units, and other military related subjects. The collection is accessible through traditional finding media in the Archives Search Room.

**Maps** – The State Archives map collection is comprised of nearly 5,000 maps which depict North Carolina or some portion thereof and which include maps of early America, boundaries, roads, railroads, waterways, geological surveys, military maps, and more. The collection is particularly strong in maps created by agencies of state and local government. Maps are cataloged chronologically within classifications and can be searched through MARS and in the card catalog in the Search Room. Descriptions and images of many maps from the collection of the State Archives may be found on the [North Carolina Maps website](#), a joint project of the State Archives, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Outer Banks History Center. Additional information about the map collection may be found in the Archives Information Circular #12, [\*“Maps and Other Cartographic Records in the North Carolina State Archives.”\*](#)

**Church Records** – These records include published histories of churches; original manuscripts, parish and diocesan records; microfilmed records, and other material in diverse formats relating to the history of churches in North Carolina. Security microfilm of the minutes, registries, and other official records of some churches is also maintained and may be researched with written permission of the church. These records may be accessed through card catalogs available in the Search Room.

**Newspapers** – More than 1800 titles of North Carolina newspapers representing almost every county are available on microfiche. Consult the [Guide to Newspapers on Microfilm in the State Archives](#) for a list of these.

## **The Outer Banks History Center**

Located in Manteo and administered by the State Archives, the Outer Banks History Center houses collections built upon the research collection of author and historian David Stick. Primary- and secondary-source materials document the social, economic, and ecological history of the Outer Banks and surrounding areas. Types of records include manuscripts, books, photographs, slides, and negatives, periodicals and serials,

maps, newspapers and public records on microfilm, oral histories, audio and video recordings, ephemera, and original works of art. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed on all state Holidays. For more information telephone 252-473-2655, or email [obhc@ncdcr.gov](mailto:obhc@ncdcr.gov).

### The Western Regional Archives

The Western Regional Archives (WRA) collects, preserves, and makes available for public use historical and evidential materials relating to western North Carolina. The holdings consist primarily of private collections and some microfilmed county records. Located at 176 Riceville Road in Asheville, the WRA is open 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mondays, and 9:00 a.m. to noon, Tuesday—Friday. It is closed Saturday and Sunday and all state holidays. For more information telephone (828) 296-7230, ext. 240, or email [wrarchives@ncdcr.gov](mailto:wrarchives@ncdcr.gov).

### Reproductions

A limited number of photocopies can be made on a while-you-wait basis; the State Archives is unable to make more than 50 such copies per researcher per day. Staff cannot make long typed transcripts of hard-to-read wills, deeds, court minutes, or other records. [Duplication fees](#) are available online.

### IDENTIFICATION AND SECURITY

Visitors to the Archives and History and State Library building must register in the building lobby *and* at the Archives Search Room security desk, with photo identification such as a driver's license. **NO VISITOR WILL BE ADMITTED INTO THE SEARCH ROOM WITHOUT CURRENT, VALID PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.** Books, notebooks with pockets, envelopes, large purses, bags, briefcases or similar containers, personal copiers, or scanners are not permitted in the Search Room. Visitors are permitted to use their personal laptop computers and personal cameras **without a flash**. The Search Room has limited power sources, so users should have charged batteries. Wireless is not available. Free lockers are provided for personal items.

## Parking and Maps

Visitors to the Archives may park in one of three state government visitors' parking facilities:

1. **Visitor Lot #1** (109 E. Jones Street), accessible from Jones or Edenton Streets.
2. **Visitor Lot #3** (120 W. Edenton St), accessible from Salisbury Street.
3. **Visitor Lot #2** (329 North Salisbury Street, ground level of Parking Lot 75), accessible from Salisbury and McDowell Streets.

See the [state parking maps](#) from the North Carolina Department of Administration for more information about these parking lots and decks.

Please note that towing is enforced for all numbered spaces. There is a nominal fee for visitor parking. **The handicap ramp at the Archives and History/State Library Building faces Blount Street.**

## On The Street Parking

Time-limited free on the street parking is available within a short walking distance of the State Archives, most notably the one hour free parking available on the 100 block of Jones Street. On the street parking is also available for \$1.00 per hour, with a 2 hour maximum, on the 200 block of Blount St.

## Bus Access

The R-LINE, a free circulator bus service, is also available to visitors to downtown Raleigh. For more information on bus stops and pick-up times, consult the [R-Line website](#).

## Related Maps

- [Downtown Raleigh](#)