

CAROLINA CHARTER TERCENTENARY COMMISSION

GENERAL RECORDS

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Schedule references: Inventories of State Agencies, Division of Archives and History, page 32, item 4; page 33, items 5 and 8; and page 34, items 9, 11, and 12.

Arrangement: See description of contents below.

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The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission was established by the 1959 General Assembly to develop and execute a program for the celebration of the tercentenary of the Carolina Charter of 1663.¹ A commission comprised of twenty-five members was created by the legislature. Twenty-two of the commission's members were to be appointed by the governor to serve two-year terms, and the remaining three ex officio members were the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of the Department of Conservation and Development, and the Director of the Department of Archives and History.²

Of major significance was the commission's decision to broaden the scope of the tercentenary celebration to encompass the first one hundred years of North Carolina's existence. The commission decided to expand the time period from 1663 to 1763 for several reasons. First, no suitable focus in terms of geography or time existed in North Carolina to sustain a year long celebration for the year 1663.³ Secondly, the development of North Carolina was a slow process. During the early years of settlement, the population was confined mainly to the coastal region, but by 1763 settlers had moved west to the Blue Ridge Mountains.⁴

Besides broadening the geographic base of the celebration, the time span from 1663 to 1763 offered a variety of events that could be commemorated in 1963 festivities. Another important consideration for selecting 1763 as the terminal date for the commission's plans was the fact that many historians consider the year 1763 as the end of the colonial era in American history. It marked the end of the French and Indian War between Britain and France for North American territory; and Britain initiated her plan to make the American colonies assume part of the economic burden for maintaining the Empire. From this point on, the colonies became increasingly nationalistic and self-reliant in attitude.⁵

GENERAL RECORDS (Cont'd)

In order to formulate plans and carry out the objectives of the charter commission, committees were formed to control various fields of activity. The Committee on the Arts was responsible for the programs for the fine arts, music, and literature. The Committee on Commemorative Events was concerned with the plans for observances of events and activities on the local level. The Committee on Programs in Schools, Colleges, and Universities was in charge of planning and coordinating observances in the state's educational institutions. This committee also initiated a series of educational pamphlets dealing with the colonial history of North Carolina. A Committee on Public Information was formed to assist in promoting the programs and objectives of the commission on a state and national basis through the use of the press, radio, and television. The Committee on Religious Activities was concerned with the development of plans to involve individual churches and religious denominations in the tercentenary activities. The committee was especially interested in securing the participation of churches that traced their establishment back to the colonial period. Responsibility for the identification and selection of materials for exhibit, publication, and microfilming was vested in the Committee on Scholarly Activities. A major project planned by the committee was the publication of a revised edition of the colonial records of North Carolina. The Committee on Tourist Activities was in charge of travel and promotional matters relating to the tercentenary celebrations. Finally, the Committee on Finance and Building was created to procure financial assistance from private sources in addition to funds appropriated by the General Assembly. A major objective of the committee was the procurement of a new building to house the Department of Archives and History. This objective was obtained in 1969 with the dedication of the Archives and History State Library Building.⁶

Besides the projects directed by the charter commission's various committees, other notable achievements of the commission were the acquisition of a mobile museum of history for the Department of Archives and History and the production of a motion picture film entitled The Road to Carolina depicting North Carolina's historical past. Other major accomplishments were the publication of a newsletter entitled Tercentenary News; the production of a folk drama, The Sojourner and Mollie Sinclair, by Carlisle Floyd; and the issuance of the Carolina Charter Commemorative stamp by the United States Post Office.⁷

In order to provide for the effective administration of the funds generated by the Committee on Finance and Building, the commission organized a nonprofit organization entitled the Carolina Charter Corporation to handle these duties. The corporation was responsible for receiving, accounting for, soliciting, and disbursing the charter commission's monies. In reality the Carolina Charter Corporation was the commission's business agent.⁸

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The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission was abolished on December 31, 1963, and its duties were transferred to the Department of Archives and History. However, the Carolina Charter Corporation was not abolished and it continued to generate funds for the colonial records project which became a part of the Department of Archives and History.

Records of the Carolina Charter Corporation, which was organized by officials of the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, have been maintained under the heading Carolina Charter Corporation. For records of the Colonial Records Project, see Archives and History, Historical Publications Section, Colonial Records Project.

¹Session Laws of North Carolina, 1959, chapter 1238

²Ibid.

³Report of the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, by Francis E Winslow, Chairman (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1964), pp. 5-7, hereinafter cited as Report of the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission

⁴The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission (Raleigh: n. p., 1963) p. 3

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., pp. 4-5

⁷Robert G. Hartje, Bicentennial USA (N.p.: American Association for State and Local History, 1973), pp. 163-166

⁸Report of the Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, pp. 67-68

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(moved to Audio-Visual collection)
(Oct. 10, 2004 MPF. 112)
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