

**PUBLICATIONS OF THE
LOUISIANA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, NEW ORLEANS,
LOUISIANA. VOL. VIII - 1914-15**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649684175

Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society, New Orleans, Louisiana. Vol. VIII - 1914-15 by Louisiana Historical Society

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LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

Louisiana Historical Society

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Volume VIII — 1914-15

NEW ORLEANS
THE LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1916

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vols 5-8

FROM THE PRESS OF THE
AMERICAN PRINTING COMPANY, LIMITED.
* 535-37 POYDRAS STREET.
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

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THE Secretary of the Louisiana Historical Society takes great pleasure in presenting to the members of the Society and historical readers generally the following report, written at her request, by Mr. William Price, the learned and accomplished archivist who was engaged by the Society to perform the very necessary, if not imperative work of rescuing from impending destruction the papers contained in the familiarly designated "Black Boxes," confided to the care of the Society by the State of Louisiana. Mr. Price's work has unfortunately been discontinued for lack of funds; but what he has accomplished speaks volumes for the indefatigable zeal and industry that he devoted to his arduous task. The excellence of the card index system has never been more brilliantly illustrated than in this work, or emergency, as we may call it. Each card contains a clear, concise, condensed statement; a matchless résumé, in short, of the contents of some long, intricate, faded document whose worth to the historical student is like that of light in darkness, or a trusty guide in a labyrinth.

GRACE KING.

WORK OF INDEXING LOUISIANA "BLACK BOXES."

Those members of the Society who are interested in the "Black Box" records, need not be reminded that the work of preparing a card index of their contents is already fairly started. More than half the years of the French *régime* (1718 to 1769) have been covered; namely, 1717 to 1743 of the early period, and 1763 to 1769 of the later French rule. The papers for 1717 have reference to Mobile, Biloxi and Isle Dauphine, and center chiefly on the affairs of the *De Lauze* estate; the De Lauze family originating, it would appear, from Limoges or vicinity.

Humble though the scope of a card index be, some practical uses thereof are obvious and respectable. Before this work started, those eight Black Boxes which it represents at present, were like sealed material to all practical intent. The records themselves were jumbled together in great confusion; possibly some orderly hands had packed them in tentative sequence, but certainly some disorderly hands afterwards undid the attempted serial arrangement, because only by blind accident were the papers in this or that box found rationally sequent: Box for 1767 being a modified exception, in that its papers occurred grouped by the month, although not always in either logical or strict chronological order within that month. This actual report, indeed, must be acknowledged an open question as regards a complete showing for each year noted. Many later Spanish records, and also not a few documents reaching all the way down to 1855 of modern Louisiana, were packed carefully mixed with totally unrelated papers of original French Louisiana; so that no finite forecaster may deny that possibly some of the early French papers are lurking displaced in one, ten

