

**GUIDE TO THE MATERIALS  
FOR THE HISTORY  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
IN SPANISH ARCHIVES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649751983

Guide to the materials for the history of the United States in Spanish archives by William R. Shepherd

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**WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD**

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Guide to the Materials  
for the  
History of the United States  
in Spanish Archives  
(Simancas, the Archivo Historico Nacional, and Seville)

BY

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WASHINGTON, D. C.:

Published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington

1907

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ILL.  
HISTORICAL  
COPY

CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON

PUBLICATION No. 91

PAPERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH  
J. FRANKLIN JAMESON, DIRECTOR

PRINTED BY BYRON S. ADAMS  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

P R E F A C E .

METHODICAL exploitation of the materials for American history in foreign archives is one of the chief tasks incumbent upon the Department of Historical Research in the Carnegie Institution of Washington. In natural order the first step in the case of each important archive or group of archives is the preparation of a general survey of the materials of this kind which it possesses. On the basis of such a general guide, further exploitation by this Department or by other agencies can be conducted with intelligence and with due sense of proportion.

With the exception of England, concerning whose public archives a thorough report by Professor Charles M. Andrews is in preparation, no country has so strong a claim as Spain to such attention on the part of an American historical agency. Professor Shepherd sailed to Spain for the collection of materials for this report early in June, 1905, and returned in the latter part of September. Though he already had a considerable familiarity with the American papers in the chief Spanish repositories, the time was short for the purpose in hand. His attention was therefore confined to the three archives containing the greatest amount of material for the history of the United States—the Archives of Simancas, the Archivo Historico-Nacional at Madrid, and the Archives of the Indies at Seville. Other depositories, some of which are important, may be the subject of later reports by the Department. Professor Shepherd also left at one side all papers relating to Columbus and his voyages, and restricted himself to the history of the continental portions of the domain of the United States. The nature and plan of the report, in other respects, is sufficiently described in his introduction.

The natural complement to such a report would be a list of documents in these Spanish archives of which transcripts exist in American libraries or archives, or which have been put into print. This would enable historical inquirers to avoid searching *in situ* for materials which they can consult without leaving home. Such a list is intended to accompany this report. But as delays attend the construction of certain parts of it, it is deemed best to publish Mr. Shepherd's report without waiting for the completion of this supplement.

J. FRANKLIN JAMESON.

#### NOTE.

FOR effective aid in gathering the materials used in the preparation of the Guide, the compiler acknowledges his obligations to the courtesy of the following gentlemen: Sr. D. Julian Paz, director of the archives at Simancas; Sr. D. Vicente Vignau, director of the National Historical Archives at Madrid; and Sr. D. Pedro Torres Lanzas, director, and Sr. D. José Gonzalez Verger, vice-director, of the Archives of the Indies at Seville. To Walter Saberton, Esq., formerly American vice-consul at Seville, and to Sr. D. Francisco Carretero, secretary of the archives at Simancas, his appreciative thanks are due for a number of friendly services.

WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD.



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## GUIDE TO THE MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES IN SPANISH ARCHIVES.

### INTRODUCTION.

OF all the European repositories that contain documents of importance for the history of the United States, the archives of Spain are the least known; yet there is no country except England with which our relations have been so close. The course of development in our continental domain, south and west of the original thirteen states, the problems that confront us in the West Indies and the Philippines, and the questions arising out of our connections with the Spanish-American republics, need for their proper understanding the information that the Spanish archives afford.

Why the manuscript records of a country like Spain, which left the impress of its type of civilization on so many areas associated, organically or otherwise, with the United States, should have been scantily examined by American students seems, at first glance, difficult to explain. Doubtless the neglect has been due to various causes — to prejudices derived from English sources, or from the frontiersmen of our earlier years, to a sense of that exclusiveness for which Spaniards were long noted, to the frequent omission of Spain from the itinerary of American travellers in Europe, and to the difficulties that confronted certain American scholars about the middle of the last century, when the Spanish archives were in fact a sort of inner sanctuary penetrable only by special permission from the Crown.

During the last sixty years, however, the rigidity of official bonds has undergone a gradual relaxation until the terms of admission to the most important repositories of historical manuscripts are now very liberal. Nowhere in Europe are the good offices of diplomats less needful, the facilities for personal investigation more varied, and the officials in charge more courteous and helpful than in Spain.

The archives of the kingdom, together with its libraries and museums, are placed in charge of an official body of archivists, librarians and curators (*Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios, y Arqueólogos*). This body forms a department of the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. For their respective careers the members (*facultativos*) are required to pursue a special course of university training.

The many repositories in Spain are classified, according to the nature of their contents, as general, regional, and special. To the first class belong the archives which concern the nation at large and its former colo-

nies. Regional archives are those which refer to a certain portion of Spain or to one of the kingdoms that formerly composed it. Universities and the offices of government constitute the special repositories.

The documents in the archives fall into two great classes, namely, public and reserved. The former class comprises all papers dated up to 1834, when the government of Spain became a constitutional monarchy. These are presumed to have a historical character, and hence are made accessible to the public. The latter class includes the documents of later date, and those also which might prejudice in any way the royal family or the relations of Spain with foreign powers. Even here the propriety of allowing a responsible person to use them lies within the discretion of the director of each repository, but papers less than fifty years old are seldom shown.

Most of the documents are preserved in the form of bundles (*legajos*) varying in size, and held together by pieces of strong tape cross-knotted. Some *legajos* are inclosed between heavy slabs of pasteboard or in pasteboard boxes (*carpetas*); others are covered with wrapping paper; while not a few lack any such protection at all. Within the *legajos* many of the manuscripts are folded; but an effort is now being made in certain repositories to unfold them, and thus to remove the danger of their breaking apart. A goodly number of documents, also, are kept in bound volumes (*libros*). Under appropriate designations both the *legajos* and the *libros* are arranged numerically in wooden racks (*estantes*), or in closets. Practically no difference between the *legajos* and the *libros* is observed in the system of numbering or of reference, both being commonly called *legajos*. For a few manuscripts of great value special precautions are taken against theft and against injury by moths, dust, and mildew. To this end, and also for the purpose of ready exhibition, such documents are kept in locked show-cases (*vitriñas*), or in ledger-like wooden boxes placed on shelves in the library or general workroom.

Though described to some extent in printed catalogues, the nature and collocation of the papers are set forth chiefly in manuscript indexes and inventories (*indices, inventarios*), and also in paper slips (*papeletas*). In the catalogues, indexes, and inventories the items usually concern *legajos* or *libros* as a whole. They are numbered consecutively, and afford a brief statement of contents, together with the inclusive dates. Where detailed inventories (*inventarios razonados*) exist, they furnish practically a calendar, at times of individual papers, but more commonly of groups of them (*expedientes*), which may relate to given subjects. The *papeletas*, however, are intended to replace the inventories and indexes as rapidly as they can be prepared, and eventually they are to be printed in book form. In their specially constructed table-cases (*casilleros*) these paper slips are arranged in a fairly accurate fashion by names, topics, localities, and dates,