

# The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Progress and Procedures in the Enterprise at Princeton<sup>1</sup>

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## I

**I**N JULY 1809, five months after Mr. Jefferson had retired from the Presidency to his Virginia home, a bookseller in Petersburg named John W. Campbell wrote him, making what he called a "proposition," which was to publish "a complete edition of your different writings, as far as they may be designed for the public; including the 'Notes on Virginia.'" To this Jefferson sent a very characteristic reply. He named over the several works he supposed Campbell had in mind. The *Notes on Virginia*, Jefferson said, he planned to revise and enlarge, but the work of revision could not be undertaken now. The *Summary View* "was not written for publication" in the first place:

I do not mention the Parliamentary manual published for the use of the Senate of the U. S. because it was a mere compilation, into which nothing entered of my own, but the arrangement, and a few observations necessary to explain that and some of the cases.

I do not know whether your view extends to official papers of mine which have been published. Many of these would be like old newspapers, materials for future historians, but no longer interesting to the readers of the day. They would consist of Reports, correspondencies, messages, answers to addresses; a few of my Reports while Secretary of State might perhaps be read by some as Essays on abstract subjects. Such as the Report on Measures weights & coins, on the mint, on the fisheries, on commerce, on the use of distilled sea-water &c. The correspondencies with the British & French ministers, Hammond and Genet, were published by Congress. The Messages to Congress, which might have been interesting at the moment, would scarcely be read a second time, and answers to addresses are hardly read a first time.

So that on a review of these various materials, I see nothing encouraging a

<sup>1</sup>Paper read at Chapel Hill, N. C., October 28, 1948, at the joint annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists and the American Association for State and Local History.

printer to a republication of them. They would probably be bought by those only who are in the habit of preserving state-papers, & who are not many.

I say nothing of numerous draughts of reports, resolutions, declarations &c. drawn as a member of Congress or of the legislature of Virginia, such as the Declaration of Independence, Report on the money Unit of the U. S., the Act for religious freedom &c. &c. These having become the acts of public bodies, there can be no personal claim to them, and they would no more find readers now than the Journals & Statute books in which they are deposited.

I have presented this general view of the subjects which might have been within the scope of your contemplation, that they might be correctly estimated before any final decision. They belong mostly to a class of papers not calculated for popular reading, & not likely therefore to offer profit, or even indemnification to the republisher. Submitting it to your consideration I tender you my salutations & respects.

Negotiations went a little further but were then dropped. Evidently Jefferson, though perfectly cooperative, brought Campbell round to his own view of the matter. He would willingly have seen a collection of historical records published, for he presumed there were some others besides himself interested in acquiring such records; but he could not recommend the proposal as a money-maker, and he said so frankly.

Campbell's plan for an octavo volume of Jefferson's writings was the first attempt at what we are hoping to do in fifty rather larger volumes. It is pleasant, if not particularly rewarding, to speculate on what Jefferson would have thought of our undertaking to gather and print all of his papers. He would, I know, have been surprised. He would not, I think, have been irritated or distressed. There is abundant evidence to show that he expected to have his papers studied and used by scholars. No other President except the second Roosevelt has possessed so strong an archival instinct; and however badly his papers have been manhandled since, Jefferson himself left them in beautiful order. If he had had anything to keep secret, he could and presumably would have destroyed it; yet there is no evidence that he ever destroyed a scrap of paper except his correspondence with his wife. That belonged to him, but everything else was preserved for the public to scrutinize in the future with all the curiosity that it wished. In the Princeton file there are literally hundreds of scraps of paper saved by Jefferson, and among them are some of the most entertaining and occasionally significant pieces in the whole body of his archives. There are mathematical calculations; designs for machines and furniture and landscape details; recipes for macaroni and other dishes; itineraries; agric-

tural and meteorological data; tables of useful information; book lists; and notes and memoranda on an incredible variety of subjects, from the use of Archimedes' screw at Kew to snuff, Sophocles, and specific gravity. These may be trivia; nevertheless, we owe the recent recovery of a fragment of the earliest text of the Declaration of Independence to Jefferson's habit of not throwing away anything he had written. Or, to take a less spectacular yet important and characteristic instance of his archival habits, I may mention a dossier recently found, just as Jefferson left it, of material relating to his tour in the Low Countries and up the Rhine in the spring of 1788. There are over fifty separate pieces in the group, including a record of daily expenditures, itineraries and advice on travel conditions, a colorful group of printed and engraved tradecards from inns and shops in the towns where he stopped, and receipted bills (in four languages) for lodging, meals, coach-hire, and purchases along the way. Dipping into the collection is as effective a means as I know of reconstructing the life of the roads and hostleries of a century and a half ago.

The Jefferson archives contain masses of material of this kind — social documentation, if it is to be given a colorless name. Jefferson would have been happy to see it put to use, however surprised he would have been to learn that his papers constitute an encyclopedia of his times.

Though I am among those who find Jefferson's words unfailingly interesting and frequently inspiring, this is a technical rather than an inspirational paper. I shall therefore pass over the early history of the enterprise: how it grew out of Mr. Julian P. Boyd's work as historian of the Jefferson Bicentennial Commission in 1943; how The New York Times Co., seeking an appropriate memorial for the late Adolph S. Ochs, agreed to finance the editorial operations; and how the Princeton University Press undertook to publish the work in an estimated fifty volumes. I propose here to present a report of progress thus far, and to treat in some detail of the three major phases of the work: gathering the materials, processing them, and getting them into print.

## II

The plan Mr. Boyd set forth in his *Report* to the Bicentennial Commission called for the assembling of the entire Jefferson documentation in photofacsimile form; and the agreement with The New York Times Co. called for the publication of *all* of the papers assembled (some, to be sure, in only summary form). These two

decisions placed the work on a different footing from any previous undertaking. It was to be a new and in some respects a unique combination of archival and editorial aims and functions.

The work could not have been undertaken at all, of course, without the aid of the microfilm camera — an instrument which makes us all equal, in a way, with Peter Force or Lyman Draper. Of almost equal importance to us has been the continuous-process enlargement printer, familiar to everyone as the V-mail machine, which enabled us to obtain paper prints of the documents in the larger collections at a very low cost per page. In addition to economy, the use of photofacsimiles has certain other solid advantages. In the several editorial processes, one cannot handle an autograph document 150 years old with the freedom one can handle a print of it. The reproduction can be cut up and distributed by date if necessary, as in the case of letterbooks or in the many cases we have encountered of Jefferson's using a single piece of writing paper for several purposes. A reproduction can be stamped for control purposes; marginal notes or readings can be placed on it. And so on.

At the same time dependence on photoreproductions has some grave disadvantages. In any given 5,000 microframes made from mounted or loose MSS., one can always count on a few accidental omissions. When blank pages are not filmed, endorsements and docketing memoranda of consequence are sometimes overlooked, and perplexities and doubtless errors sometimes result in attempting to reconstruct the original document. Reading from poor prints, or prints made from defective originals, can be among the most exasperating experiences of editorial life. One is forever straining to discover what was in the inner margin into which the camera did not reach, or in the outer margin obscured by the mounting sheet. For these and other reasons we are obliged, as we transcribe and edit, to bombard the custodians of the originals with queries that must tax even their notorious patience.

The second decision mentioned above — that the edition was to comprehend the entire body of Jefferson's papers — differentiated the undertaking from others of its kind in one very obvious respect: it was to be much larger than any similar publication. It is not possible, even if it were worthwhile, to compare statistically the total bulk of the Jefferson archives with the archives of other highly productive public men; but it is doubtful whether, before the advent of the typewriter, any other public figure left as many papers. Franklin lived as long and had almost as wide-ranging in-

terests, but he was never President. Washington was President and, what is more, commander-in-chief for eight years, but his interests were narrower and his life considerably shorter. In any event, there has been no attempt at either a comprehensive *Franklin* or a comprehensive *Washington*: we have only one side of their respective correspondences in print. The Bicentennial *Washington*, it may be pointed out, though running to thirty-seven volumes of text, contains only about one third the number of words (8,000,000) and about one third the number of documents (17,000) that the *Jefferson* is planned to embrace in fifty volumes of text. Or if we compare the *Jefferson* with the enterprise most nearly like it in editorial form, the Yale edition of Horace Walpole's *Correspondence*, we find that, though the *Walpole* is to be completed in fifty noble volumes, only about one quarter as many documents are being included in each of its volumes as are planned for each volume of the *Jefferson*.

In his Introduction to *Young Washington*, Mr. Freeman observes that "nearly as much of the life of a man is set down in the letters addressed to him as in those written by him." With Jefferson this is not only true in general, but in some correspondences the in-letters are of greater value than Jefferson's own. Examples are his exchange of letters with Eli Whitney on the cotton gin in 1793, his exchange with D. B. Lee on transportation by air in 1822, and, still more strikingly, in his correspondence with Gen. William Clark in 1807 on fossil excavations at the Big Bone Lick. Jefferson had a really boyish enthusiasm for fossils. In the fall of 1807, at his own expense, he engaged Clark to conduct a thorough search of the fossil area at Big Bone Lick in Kentucky. The bones Clark dug up and shipped—some 300—were divided between the American Philosophical Society and the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, the latter group forming the basis of Baron Cuvier's fundamental studies in paleontology. The Big Bone Lick excavations and Jefferson's part in the founding of paleontological science have been exhaustively written about, but none of the learned historians of the science have, apparently, looked through the letters Jefferson received. If they had, they would have come upon a twelve-page letter Clark wrote to Jefferson from Louisville on 10 Nov. 1807. This, in the opinion of experts, is one of the best reports on early paleontological research that survives, and it is at the same time, in the opinion of anyone who can read, a wonderfully entertaining document. When one begins to quote

from it, one cannot stop, and so I must forbear altogether. It goes without saying that letters of this caliber we plan to publish entire. But a great many of the in-letters, particularly those of a routine nature, will be summarized. The availability of a letter elsewhere in print will influence our decisions on this point. The location of the MS. and of printed texts, if any are available, will of course always be given for the documents summarized.

The operation of gathering the materials to reconstruct the Jefferson archives began with certain obvious steps. The main mass of Jefferson's "official papers" (the term is a very loose one) became the property of the United States in 1848 and, since the beginning of this century, has been in the custody of the Library of Congress. In 1944 the Library was in the process of recataloguing and microfilming its Jefferson collection and was gathering in, as well, microcopies of other major Jefferson collections. We became the Library's collaborators in the latter operation, and by the beginning of 1945 had received and processed prints of some 31,000 Jefferson documents in the L.C., the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; during 1945 about 14,000 further documents were added from several large Virginia repositories, the New-York Historical Society, the American Philosophical Society, the Huntington Library, the New York Public, and the Pierpont Morgan Libraries. In 1946 and 1947 the large holdings of the Missouri State Historical Society, the Virginia State Library (a second crop), and several large private repositories were rounded up. A systematic search at The National Archives was begun before the end of 1947 but was interrupted and has not yet been completed. Soon after our operations started, the inflow of material from smaller repositories and private collections began. Though at times it has shrunk to a trickle, it has never dried up. Nearly eighty documents a month were accessioned during 1948.

We have done everything we could within reason — and sometimes perhaps without much reason, though with definite advantages — to stimulate and maintain the flow. In a sense we have been concerned more, as in the Scriptural story, with the fugitive one than with the dutiful ninety-nine. A case in point is the mission to the Otoe Indian reservation in 1946 to obtain a photostat of one of Jefferson's addresses to a delegation of Indian chiefs. This was the only such paper known to survive in the custody of any tribe that had received messages from Jefferson, and so was of some

- Nov. 2. W<sup>m</sup> Carmichael. s.c. by Lamb
- Rich<sup>d</sup>. Obrian. Albany. s.c. by Lamb
- 9. Stephen M. ... s.c. by Lamb et al?
- 10. M<sup>r</sup>. de Cashes. s.c.
- 11. P. Jones. s.c.
- 12. Ben<sup>d</sup>. Head. s.c.
- 13. Limson. s.c.
- 14. W<sup>m</sup>. Newman. seward. 76. Haymarket. London. s.c.
- 15. C<sup>te</sup>. de Verennes. s.c.
- 16. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 17. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 18. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 19. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 20. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 21. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 22. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 23. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 24. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 25. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 26. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 27. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 28. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 29. Mr Adams. s.c.
- 30. Mr Adams. s.c.

- Nov. 1. Mrs Adams. London. 20. 1785.
- 2. Mrs Adams. Lond. Oct. 20. 6. St. Rogers.
- 3. Mrs Adams. Grosvenor. Oct. 26. by J<sup>o</sup>.
- 4. B<sup>ro</sup>. Price. Newington. Green. Oct. 26. 1785. by J<sup>o</sup>.
- 5. Ellen Day. N. York. May. 30. 1785. by J<sup>o</sup>.
- 6. Samuel W<sup>m</sup>. Mansard. Lond. Oct. 26.
- 7. Mr Adams. Grosvenor. Sep. 25. by Tho<sup>s</sup>. Parson.
- 8. Col<sup>l</sup>. Searcy. Havre. Nov. 7. 1785.
- 9. Sister Asaph. St. Paul. s. p. m. Oct. 23. 1784 (Nov. 1785).
- 10. Dist<sup>o</sup>. & Co. Morlaix. Oct. 26.
- 11. Ponzus. Brest. s. p. m. Oct. 26.
- 12. M<sup>r</sup>. & Mad<sup>am</sup>. Van Sijghert. Amst. Nov. 3.
- 13. Mr Adams. s. p. m. Nov. 11.
- 14. W<sup>m</sup>. Carmichael. s. p. m. Oct. 26.
- 15. D<sup>o</sup>. & T. Fitzhugh. Havre. Nov. 7.
- 16. Paris. Paris. Nov. 11.
- 17. Tho<sup>s</sup>. Elder. without date of leave. s. p. m. by J<sup>o</sup>.
- 18. Mrs Page. Roswell. Mar. 17. 1785. by J<sup>o</sup>.
- 19. Mr Adams. Grosvenor. s. p. m. Oct. 26. (by J<sup>o</sup> 24).
- 20. W<sup>m</sup>. Carmichael's. 5<sup>th</sup>. London. Nov. 9. 1785.
- 21. J<sup>o</sup>. Nov. 6. 1785.
- 22. J<sup>o</sup>. Nov. 14.
- 23. Limson. Nov. 11. 1784. Havre.
- 24. J. Henley. New Orleans. Nov. 16. 1785.
- 25. Sister. B. Bancroft. Lond. 2. Nov. 6. 1785.
- 26. Mrs Adams. s. p. m. Nov. 11.
- 27. Limson. Nov. 11.
- 28. J. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 29. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 30. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 31. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 32. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 33. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 34. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 35. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 36. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 37. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 38. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 39. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.
- 40. M<sup>r</sup>. de Verennes. Mar. 20.

A page from Jefferson's Index to Letters Written and Received (Epistolary Record), containing the entries for 4 November-30 December 1785. Original in the Library of Congress.





sentimental interest. Furthermore it was owned communally by the whole tribe, and its custody had become a warm political issue within the tribe. Like Conrad Weiser or Sir William Johnson in another age, we found it worthwhile to subscribe to the Indians' deep sense of protocol. And I may add that, upon our return to our desks, we found that a dozen or so other Jefferson documents had emerged from their hiding places as a result of the publicity attendant on our Otoe mission.

Besides publicity, both grave and gay, we have sent out many hundreds of direct-mail appeals to likely quarters — to librarians, patriotic societies, dealers, collectors, descendants of Jefferson and of his correspondents. Leads have come from all directions, and we have chased many a will-o-the-wisp with as much vigor as if it were a bundle of love letters exchanged by Thomas Jefferson and Martha Wayles Skelton. Friends of Jefferson and friends of ours, some of whom never become known to us by name, prod others who own Jefferson autographs to send us photostats. They also write us about Jeffersonian utterances and allusions in out-of-the-way printed sources: in the *Minneapolis Journal* for 26 February 1902; in a German broadside found in the Hessian Archives in Marburg; in abolitionist periodicals and pamphlets; in travel books; and so on. We welcome information of this kind with the warmest feelings of gratitude. A fifty-first volume may have to be devoted to acknowledgments to our many collaborators, but the preceding fifty will be immeasurably richer for their efforts.

Printed bibliographies, guides (such as the Carnegie series on foreign archives), catalogues of manuscript collections, bookseller's catalogues, and auction records have likewise furnished grist to our mill. The Jefferson Checklist at the University of Virginia, an annotated card catalogue of both published and unpublished writings, has proved inestimably helpful. Everyone who has worked with Jefferson knows of the unique aid he himself left in the form of a register of all his correspondence. This "epistolary record" becomes reliable at the time Jefferson succeeded Franklin as our minister in France and continues in an unbroken series of entries until ten days before he died. The period covered is over forty years; the entries for twenty-four of these years are indexed alphabetically by correspondent; and the whole document extends to 656 pages. The Epistolary Record is useful to us in important ways besides telling us what we must hunt for; it is, for example, an almost magical means of establishing the dates of undated or mutilated letters.

Finally, we go out and sniff the air and hunt for Jefferson documents. In 1795 Jeremy Belknap wrote his friend Ebenezer Hazard about his recent trip to Connecticut to gather in the great collection of Trumbull papers now reposing in the Massachusetts Historical Society. He expected, he said, to get some other papers from Governor Hancock's estate, "and when our old patriot S[am] A[dams]'s head is laid, we hope to get more. There is nothing like having a *good repository*, and keeping a *good look-out*, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey." This is as sound a working principle now as it was then.

The search so far has netted just over 50,000 separate documents. This seemed a good point at which to make an analysis of our record of sources, the results of which I am pleased to present. These 50,000 pieces have been drawn from 423 different sources, namely 242 private owners (including dealers) and 181 institutional owners (including clubs, banks, commercial firms, and schools, besides institutions primarily devoted to the preservation of historical materials). The private owners have contributed about 1400 documents as compared with about 48,600 from institutional sources. A breakdown according to size of contribution shows that 192 private and institutional sources have contributed only a single document apiece; 134 have contributed from 2 to documents; 61 have contributed from 6 to 25; 18 have contributed from 26 to 100; 9 have contributed from 101 to 500. At this point the private contributors drop out. Five institutions have contributed between 501 and 1000 documents; 2 have contributed from 1001 to 5000; and 2 have contributed more than 5000 documents.

The geographical distribution of our sources in the continental United States is shown in the following table.

I. From 1 to 10 documents have been located in

Alabama	Louisiana	Oregon
Colorado	Minnesota	Vermont
Florida	Mississippi	Washington
Iowa	Nebraska	Wyoming
Kansas	Oklahoma	West Virginia

II. From 11 to 100 documents have been located in

Delaware	Maine	Rhode Island	Wisconsin
Georgia	New Hampshire	South Carolina	
Indiana	North Carolina	Tennessee	
Kentucky	Ohio	Texas	

- III. From 101 to 500 documents have been located in  
 Connecticut            Maryland            New Jersey  
 Illinois                 Michigan
- IV. From 501 to 1000 documents have been located in  
 Missouri
- V. From 1001 to 5000 documents have been located in  
 California            New York            Pennsylvania
- VI. More than 5000 documents have been located in  
 District of Columbia   Virginia  
 Massachusetts

Among the 40 states (including the District of Columbia) where Jeffersonian material has been located, six have contributed a single document each, while the District of Columbia alone has contributed over half of our total holdings, specifically 28,248 documents. We are not wholly satisfied with the situation that this table reflects. The concentration of sources in the East was predictable from historical causes, but it is unquestionably exaggerated by the fact that the eastern territory has been more thoroughly scoured. It is hardly credible, for example, that there are no Jefferson papers at all in several states through which Lewis and Clark traveled, or that in the great State of Texas there is only one owner of Jefferson autograph material.

An additional word should be said about sources outside the continental United States. Two territories (Hawaii and Puerto Rico) have contributed to our file; also Canada, Australia, and seven countries in Europe. The European countries have contributed about in proportion as they have been scoured; thus France, Holland, and Switzerland, where Mr. Howard C. Rice has personally searched, have made substantial contributions, but our efforts to work by remote control, as in the British Isles, have been relatively unfruitful.

This brings me to a consideration of the searching that remains to be done. The figures given in my analysis above are bound to be altered substantially very soon by the accession of a very large body of material from The National Archives which has been located and filmed but which, on account of our lack of shelf-space before moving into the Firestone Memorial Library, has not been accessioned. An estimated 5,000 Jefferson documents have been located there, the great bulk of them in the General Records of the Department of State, and especially in the Miscellaneous Letters and Diplomatic and Consular Correspondence. Important groups and

estrays have also been drawn from the National Resources Records and the War Records in the Archives. We anticipate another 2,000 or so documents, principally from the Appointment and Pardon Papers in the State Department Records and from the Senate and House of Representatives files in the Legislative Records.

There is besides, as we are acutely but at the moment helplessly aware, a good deal of searching yet to be done among the holdings of the Division of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress. Between thirty and forty of the L. C. collections, some of them running to many thousand pieces, have been listed for examination at known or likely sources of Jefferson material. We have had, meanwhile, the inestimable benefit of Mrs. Vincent Eaton's help in furnishing us with lists of the Jefferson items in several of the major L. C. collections, most notably in the Washington and Madison Papers. Only a beginning has been made on the great L. C. collection of manuscripts reproduced from foreign archives relating to American history. The coördination of this search with direct searches of the foreign depositories is a large problem so far only partially worked out.

It will appear from this that the staff of three editors has its hands full and its work laid out. It will also perhaps help explain why copy has not reached the press and the volumes have not reached the public any faster.

I turn now to a brief account of our handling of the material when it reaches us in the form of photofacsimiles.

### III

Our processing is extremely simple. A yellow control slip, perforated in triplicate, is typed for each document and carries on it the date, the name of the writer (and recipient, if the document is a letter), the number of pages (exposures), the source, and the accession number. The accession number is stamped on the back of each page of the document facsimile. The document — and from this point I drop the term facsimile — is placed in a manila envelope marked with the same data. The perforated control slip are then separated and distributed in three files: a chronological file, an alphabetical file (letters being filed under the name of the writer or recipient *other than Jefferson*), and an accession file.

Into the envelopes, which are filed on open shelves in chronological order, go the transcripts and other editorial matter pertinent to a given document, and also variant or duplicate copies of



the document itself. For the letters Jefferson himself wrote, the theoretical expectation is to find two facsimiles in our file — one being the copy he retained, and the other the copy he sent. The recipient's copy is usually the more desirable on two counts: first, because press copies are often only semi-legible (though the polygraph, which replaced the letterpress in 1804, made perfect copies), and, second, because the recipient's copy bears a direction, postal markings, endorsement, etc. The copies sent are of course more difficult to obtain, because they must be picked up individually or in small groups all over the map. In some instances we cannot transcribe a letter until we locate the copy sent. A spectacular example is Jefferson's letter to Robert R. Livingston of 18 April 1802, instructing him, as minister to France, to acquire New Orleans for the United States. The text of this momentous document has often been printed but never in full, because the press copy in the Library of Congress is not completely legible. Recently the Museum of the City of New York acquired from a descendant of Livingston the original copy sent. Readers who compare the initial pages of the two texts, as reproduced in the accompanying illustration, will understand why our search continues.

To record missing documents we have used blue slips perforated in triplicate like the yellow ones. (A "missing" document is any Jefferson paper whose existence is verified but which has not yet been found in manuscript form.) The blue slips bear as much data as we can obtain on the fugitive item. Our principal sources of information about missing items are the Epistolary Record, auction records, and printed works, such as the great documentary collections like Force, contemporary newspapers, and the memoirs and writings of Jefferson's contemporaries. A continuous search through the whole body of printed source materials, from Jefferson's time to ours, goes on in our office. It has produced some surprises — including the ferreting out of one group of 149 autograph letters in private hands — and it is an absorbing if interminable task. The printings of documents discovered in the course of the search are recorded on the control cards in the chronological file. This information is often useful in annotating a given document; sometimes it provides a printed text that is more satisfactory than the original manuscript itself, because prepared before the original had deteriorated.

An important subsidiary file in the Jefferson Office is the bibliography of publications by and about Jefferson and his contempo-

raries. This is kept on cards, of which there are now over 6,000, and the entries under Jefferson as subject are classified under such appropriate heads and sub-heads as "Agriculture — Plows," "Campaign Literature," "Jews, Relations with," "Medicine — Vaccination," "Portraits," "Visitors," and so on. We are always eager to enlarge our file of allusions to Jefferson in both published and unpublished writings of his day, and have supplemented our main document file with a considerable body of typescripts and photo-duplicates of material under the rubric of "Contemporary Comment."

#### IV

A brief account of the plan of the edition will conclude this paper. About four-fifths of the material to be printed will be arranged in a single chronological sequence, making up volumes 1 to 40 and embracing all the correspondence, all messages, reports, bills, and dated and datable memoranda. The remaining fifth of the material is being gradually segregated for printing in a classified series, assumed to be volumes 41 to 50, which will embrace, first, Jefferson's larger published and unpublished writings and papers (the *Notes on Virginia*, *Parliamentary Manual*, *Autobiography*, *Anas*, "Life and Morals of Jesus," the Anglo-Saxon grammar, *Account Books*, *Farm and Garden Books*, etc.), and, second, such other papers as can be most satisfactorily used and edited in classified groups, e.g., the *Legal Papers*, the *Architectural Drawings*, and the *Maps and Surveys*. For the three groups of papers last mentioned, arrangements have been made for more or less independent editing by specialists.

A separate supplementary volume is planned as a biographical register or dictionary for the entire work. It will contain concise sketches of all of Jefferson's correspondents and of other persons mentioned in the work who had significant or continuing relations with Jefferson. In treating well-known figures (say Madison or Vergennes), emphasis will be placed upon their *connection with Jefferson*; for obscurer figures (Jefferson's French cook, or the Brazilian adventurer José da Maia), an effort will be made to be more exhaustive. The advantages to readers in having a separate volume, in which they can readily find the master footnote on any given person, are obvious. The advantage to the editors is likewise obvious, for the editorial notes will by this device be relieved of a great deal of matter, much of it repetitive.

Plans for indexing call tentatively for a throw-away index for

every five volumes of text, with a cumulative index in the required number of volumes at the end.

As for annotation, we have arrived after a good deal of thought and experimenting at the conclusion that exhaustive annotation of such a large mass of documents is not feasible, even if it were desirable. We have stated that our purpose in annotating is to provide information essential to understanding each document presented. Ideally considered, such a purpose would frequently entail a prodigious amount of research in order to set forth the archival and bibliographical history of each document and assess its historical significance; to identify or explain all persons, events, and places, and to point out Jefferson's relationship therewith; to separate fact from rumor; to explain obsolete, technical, and regional terms; to trace literary quotations to their sources; to furnish references to the pertinent literature; and so on. All this and more is "essential to understanding the document" in the fullest sense of the term. Yet to place no restriction on such a purpose would confuse the functions, on the one hand, of biographers and historians and, on the other, of editors. It would not infrequently produce explanatory material well in excess of the documents explained, and it would add to the considerable task of the editor a burden greater than that even assumed by the biographer or historian, since they can and must select, whereas the editor cannot do so.

The providing of "information essential to understanding the document" does not, according to our interpretation, oblige us to explain those common allusions to person, events, places, and terms which the specialist may be presumed to know or which he may find in sources or reference works as readily accessible to him as to the editors. Notes on these topics will, however, be furnished when the editors find themselves in possession of new facts gathered in the ordinary editorial process or when they have necessarily explored sources not readily accessible. Furthermore, routine standards will not be applied in annotating documents that are of special importance or that present unusual features or problems. In other words, we shall try, in our capacity as editors, to solve such problems as we can and to show the way toward the solution of as many others as we can. In so doing we hope to improve upon our predecessors, most of whom have been conspicuously irresponsible in these matters, and to approach the stature of the late and very great editor Edmund C. Burnett. But we do not propose to arro-



gate to ourselves the whole vast scholarly province of Jefferson and his times.

The *form* of annotation we have settled upon may sound at first as if it were more ingenious than practical; but we have found it admirably flexible, and we believe it will best suit the widely varying purposes of readers. There will be a *single inclusive footnote* for all except very long or very special kinds of documents. It will be printed, in double-column and in a smaller point of type, immediately following the document to which it pertains, not at the foot of the page. The note will always be divided into at least two and sometimes into three, sections or paragraphs. The first section is *descriptive* and will furnish physical data, such as the nature of the document (whether a draft, a recipient's copy, etc), the location of the original and of other copies if known, the address and endorsement, notation of enclosures, comment (when called for on the handwriting or the condition of the manuscript, and the like).

The second section (or paragraph) of the inclusive note is *explanatory*. Within the limitations stated above, it will be a combined commentary and series of explanations of particular topics in the document. The key words of the topics annotated will be printed in small capitals in the note, so that the eye may readily travel from an allusion in the text to the point where it is treated in the note. The source of each item of information will follow that item parenthetically in the explanatory note. For this purpose short titles will be employed for all works commonly cited. A list of these, with their expanded forms, will be printed periodically probably with each installment of the index, and the cumulative bibliography at the end of the work will constitute a union list of all short titles used.

A third section (or paragraph) will appear in the inclusive note only when a document presents special problems, such as variations between a draft and a fair copy, matter lined out that deserves to be recorded, and the like. These *textual* notes will be keyed to the text by means of superscript numerals. Except in the case of documents of special literary or historical significance (such as the *Notes on Virginia* and the great state papers), we have not committed ourselves to recording every textual variation between extant copies.

Our decisions on presenting the texts themselves are the product of much thought and conscience-searching on our part, together with an abundance of advice and admonition from without. We have recognized from the outset what some editors have never

Respected Sir

I receive from you the part of the 50th anniversary of the city of Washington, to be celebrated on the 30th June 1826.

The kind invitation I receive from you on the part of the citizens of the city of Washington, to be present with them at their celebration of the 50th anniversary of American independence, as one of the surviving survivors of an instrument, prominent with our own, and the fate of the world, is most flattering to myself, and heightened by the honorable accompaniment proposed for the comfort of such a journey. It adds sensibly to the sufferings of sickness, to be deprived by it of a personal participation in the rejoicings of that day, but acquiescence is a duty, under circumstances not placed among those we are permitted to control. I should indeed, with peculiar delight, have met and exchanged these congratulations personally, with the small band, the remnant of that host of worthies, who joined with us, on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country, between submission, or the sword, and to have enjoyed with them the consolatory fact that our fellow citizens after half a century of ignorance and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. It may be to the world what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all) the signal of an arising dawn to burst the chains, under which man's birth ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self government. That which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion, all eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a few acres of good ground, ready to be taken from them legittimately, by the grace of God. There is a ground of hope for others, for as we see the arrival, return of this day, for ever refresh our recollections of those in and an undiminished devotion to them.

It will be, to some parts sooner to some later, but finally to all, the signal of an arising dawn to burst the chains, under which man's birth ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self government. That which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion, all eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a few acres of good ground, ready to be taken from them legittimately, by the grace of God. There is a ground of hope for others, for as we see the arrival, return of this day, for ever refresh our recollections of those in and an undiminished devotion to them.

Fair copy of the letter to Weightman, made on Jefferson's polygraph and retained by him. This letter was sent ten days before Jefferson died. Original in the Library of Congress.

Draft of letter to Mayor Weightman of Washington, 24 June 1826. Illustrating Jefferson's habits of composition and the importance of collating drafts with fair copies. Original in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

been willing to recognize, namely, that type cannot *simulate* manuscript, for we hold that the first duty of an editor is to present a text that can be *read*, not a set of typographical and editorial hieroglyphics. Briefly, we have determined to retain faithfully the spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation of the manuscripts, though we shall regularly capitalize the first words of sentences and shall clarify punctuation when it is confusing. Except when they are proper names, obscure and awkward contractions will be expanded, but they will be retained in the date-line and complimentary close of letters and in business papers and tabular documents of all kinds. Documents of great textual significance and complexity will not be subject to these general rules of normalization.

I have given here only a sampling of the editorial problems that have demanded tentative solutions before sending off copy of the first thousand of the 50,000 documents confronting us. In grappling daily with these problems, we find ourselves repeatedly amazed by the lack of reliable information on many phases of Jefferson's career. Resort to the entries in our distended bibliographical file is fruitless not only for answers to myriads of small questions of biographical import, but, worse than this, it is impossible to find full and reliable accounts of such capital matters as the revision of the Virginia laws, the history of the Democratic-Republican party, Jefferson's appointments as President, his Indian linguistic studies, his Indian policy as President, and his introduction of Anglo-Saxon into the American college curriculum. The documentation to be presented in the Papers of Thomas Jefferson will throw light on all these and a host of other imperfectly charted or quite uncharted areas in our political and cultural history.

From this point of view we can regard ourselves as pathfinders. In the same breath I must add that editing Jefferson's papers is an efficacious means of cultivating humility. To do the job properly we should *be* Jeffersons. The acute and ever-present sense of how far we fall below that standard is humbling.