



IDAHO STATE  
**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

**IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
REFERENCE SERIES**

IDAHO STATE ARCHIVES

Number 82

1987

Authorized by legislative act of March 12, 1947, transfer of important territorial records to Idaho State Historical Society administration commenced in 1952. These files, stored for a generation in a large historic cabinet in a statehouse carpenter's shop, had been identified in an Historical Records Survey project in 1939 and had been available for occasional research. With a somewhat random arrangement, they needed to be unrolled and put into a consistent order. That was accomplished that August.

A major expansion followed in 1954, when extensive governors' files prior to 1919 were transferred from a basement vault in a location that had been totally forgotten for more than a decade. These records had been inventoried in a 1917 American Historical Association report by Thomas Maitland Marshall, but were completely unusable for several years after their rediscovery because they were packed in with no space--not even an inch or two--left unoccupied. No one could examine and return them to that space without taking them somewhere else providing a new arrangement. When they were sorted, appraised, and arranged for preservation, they became a substantial state archival records series that has been expanded greatly by subsequent additions. Non-current files are transferred regularly to state archives custody.

With a modern, professional historical agency program instituted by Governor Robert E. Smylie in 1956, state archival expansion came rapidly. Important files from a number of elective (attorney general, secretary of state, state treasurer, and state auditor as a start) and appointive officers (state engineer, warden, adjutant general) were added. City, county, and special district (largely mining district) records enriched state archival resources. Until 1969, when legislative appropriation for an archival staff position provided at least a limited amount of funding, practically all of this development had been accomplished by unpaid volunteers under professional supervision. (Up until that time, direct archival expenditures for staff and materials had been limited to several hundred dollars--primarily for file folders and boxes.) Substantial federal staff and project assistance--primarily through library cooperation and National Historical Publications and Records programs has exceeded state expenditure for archival conservation and development, aside from space costs. After forty years of expansion, Idaho's governmental archive program includes records

series from 75 state offices and agencies, 30 counties, 7 cities, and 10 special districts. More than 20,000 feet of records constitute these files, with retention schedules controlling state archival expansion.

Merle W. Wells

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**Publications-450 N. 4th Street. Boise. ID 83702-208.334.3428**