

The Provenance of The Thomas Jefferson Papers

PAUL G. SIFTON

A STRIKING LACK OF INFORMATION concerning the provenance of his papers characterizes early works on Thomas Jefferson by such diverse figures as Henry S. Randall (1858), Henry A. Washington (1853-54), Paul Leicester Ford (1892-97), and A. A. Lipscomb and A. E. Bergh (1903-4), as well as more recent studies by Claude G. Bowers (1925, 1936), Bernard Mayo (1942), Marie Kimball (1943, 1947, 1950), Dumas Malone (1948-), and Julian P. Boyd (1950-).¹ The deficiency was partially remedied in 1916 by Worthington Chauncey Ford in an essay that still stands as the most authoritative provenance statement on many aspects of the history of the Jefferson papers, both public and private.² Ford's essay was complemented by Helen Duprey Bullock in her 1941 article stressing the origins of the Jefferson collection at the University of Virginia.³

Beyond the insights in the Ford and Bullock essays, it should be recognized that Jefferson himself attempted to remedy gaps in his correspondence; that a small but historically important group of manuscripts collected by Jefferson came to the Library of Congress in 1829; and that there were several notable accretions to the library's holdings as recently as the 1917-22 period. It is when one investigates the rather obscure figure of Professor Henry Augustine Washington that one gains new understanding of the tangled tale of the Jefferson manuscripts after 1850. None of these points are developed in the Ford and Bullock essays which, although models of their kind, require both a note of caution and these additional facts to set their information in proper perspective.

Paul G. Sifton is specialist in early American history, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. On October 1, 1976, he presented a somewhat different version of this paper to the SAA panel on Revolutionary Age Material and Modern Methods, and another adaptation of it appears in the *Index to the Thomas Jefferson Papers* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1976).

¹ Henry S. Randall, *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, 3 vols. (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858); *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Henry A. Washington, ed., 9 vols. (Washington: Taylor & Maury, 1853-54); *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Paul Leicester Ford, ed., 10 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-99); *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Andrew Adgate Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh, 20 vols. (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903-4); Claude G. Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1925) and *Jefferson in Power: The Death Struggle of the Federalists* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936); *Jefferson Himself: The Personal Narrative of a Many-Sided American*, Bernard Mayo, ed., (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1942); Marie Kimball, *Jefferson, The Road to Glory, 1743 to 1776* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1943), *Jefferson, War and Peace 1776 to 1784* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1947), and *Jefferson, The Scene of Europe, 1784 to 1789* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1950); Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1948-); *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-).

² Worthington Chauncey Ford, "The Jefferson Papers," in *Thomas Jefferson, Architect*, Fiske Kimball, ed. (Boston: privately printed, 1916), pp. 3-9.

³ Helen Duprey Bullock, "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson," in *Jefferson Papers of the University of Virginia: A Calendar*, Constance E. Thurlow and Francis L. Berkeley, Jr., eds. University of Virginia Bibliographical Series No. 8 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Library, 1950), pp. 279-91. Originally published in the *American Archivist* 4 (October 1941).

The beginning history of Jefferson's papers is familiar enough to students of the third President's life. Peter Jefferson, Thomas's father, was a surveyor, planter, and county colonel, and he had no more than a nominal interest in preserving a body of papers. The manuscripts he possessed passed to his son at his death in 1757. Undoubtedly, his father's papers meant little to Thomas at the age of fourteen. Soon thereafter the young Jefferson went to Williamsburg to pursue his collegiate and legal studies.

As a student of the law, Jefferson kept his commonplace books and a small library in his rented quarters in Williamsburg. The remainder of his papers, as well as those of his father, were at his home, Shadwell. In February 1770, Shadwell burned to the ground, and with it burned most of the papers of the two Jeffersons. Jefferson wrote to his friend, John Page, that the fire involved "every paper I had in the world, and almost every book. On a reasonable estimate I calculate the *cost* of the books burned to have have been £200 sterling. . . . Of papers too of every kind I am utterly destitute. All of these, whether public or private, of business or amusement, have perished in the flames."⁴ Other than a few items retrieved from the disastrous fire, Thomas Jefferson's small accumulation in Williamsburg was all that remained of his youthful correspondence. The want of pre-1770 manuscripts has, therefore, given historians an imperfect view of Jefferson's formative years.

A second catastrophe occurred when Jefferson's letterbooks as governor of Virginia were lost during Arnold's raid on Richmond, in December 1780. To fill in this gap, insofar as possible, Jefferson borrowed, for copying, his gubernatorial letters to Washington as commander-in-chief. To a similar end, Jefferson in 1793 borrowed Gen. Horatio Gates's letterbook to copy 187 letters to 55 correspondents written during the period June 21, 1780, to October 7, 1781.⁵ In both these actions, Jefferson was consciously trying to fill in gaps in the gubernatorial correspondence for the last months of the Revolution.

Additionally there is a mysterious gap in the 1790s, commencing immediately after Jefferson left office as secretary of state. Worthington Ford has stated that these particular papers were destroyed for political reasons; however, Julian P. Boyd disagrees, stating that "There is not a shred of evidence to support such a charge."⁶ Fortunately, these are the only serious gaps in the extensive accumulation of manuscript materials which Jefferson left when he died on July 4, 1826, exactly fifty years after the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

Three months before his death, Jefferson executed a will which bore the following codicil: "My papers of business going of course to him [his grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph] as my executor, all others of a literary or other character I give to him as of his own property."⁷

Sarah Nicholas Randolph, in her charming and informative work *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, has noted Jefferson's relationship with his grandson:

Mr. Jefferson had found the cares of his large estates too great a burden for him to carry in his advancing years, and gladly handed them over into the hands of the young grandson, in whose skill and energy he expresses such perfect confidence. . . . Until the day of Jefferson's

⁴ Jefferson to Page, February 21, 1770; Yale University Library. Quoted in Boyd, ed., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 497 n.

⁶ Boyd, letter to John C. Broderick, May 24, 1973; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (LC).

⁷ Original holograph will, Clerk's Office, Albemarle County, Virginia; photocopy in Thomas Jefferson Papers, Series 9, Manuscript Division, LC. Quoted in Bullock, "Papers of Thomas Jefferson," p. 279.

death, we . . . find this grandson interposing himself, as far as possible, between his grandfather and his financial troubles, and trying to shield him, at least during his life, from the financial ruin which the circumstances of his situation made unavoidable.⁸

Thomas Jefferson Randolph, therefore, as a matter of course was given the important responsibility of guarding the papers of his illustrious grandfather.

In 1829, two important steps were taken under Randolph's supervision. The Library of Congress acquired, in addition to printed books, several bound volumes and bundles of manuscripts concerned chiefly with Virginia history. These items included the records of the Virginia Company of London (1619–24), materials relating to the General Assembly, and other colonial records, as well as notes and commentaries on such subjects as history, philosophy, and the law.⁹ In addition, Randolph prepared and edited four volumes entitled *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*,¹⁰ which were to be only the first of several attempts to replicate, with varying degrees of success, the correspondence of the third President.

The publication of Randolph's work led Henry Lee (1787–1837) to revive the long-standing feud between his father, Henry ("Light-Horse Harry") Lee (1756–1818), and Jefferson. In 1794, Virginia Governor Lee had passed secondhand gossip on to Washington about the President's advisers and pro-British sentiments which purportedly had been expressed at Jefferson's dinner table; and, in 1796, Lee told Washington that Jefferson was involved in intrigue against his administration.¹¹ Jefferson's correspondence clearly indicates that he knew of and resented Lee's machinations. In 1832 Light-Horse Harry's son, Henry Lee, proceeded to publish the avowedly partisan *Observations on the Writings of Thomas Jefferson*,¹² which did little to remove the stain from his father's escutcheon.

The vivid partisanship which thus enveloped the first publication of Jefferson's correspondence led Thomas Jefferson Randolph to permit the political economist and author George Tucker (1775–1861) to see "all the letters written" by Jefferson so that he could prepare an impartial rebuttal to Lee's work. As a youth, Tucker had been sent from his native Bermuda to the care of his distant relative, St. George Tucker (1752–1829), who had succeeded Jefferson's mentor, George Wythe, as professor of law at the College of William and Mary. The young man had, therefore, come to maturity among the leading Antifederalists in the Jefferson circle. In spite of this pro-Jeffersonian background, Tucker performed extensive independent research, held many conferences with James Madison, and used a "selection of such letters and papers, never before published, as were thought to throw light on Mr. Jefferson's character."¹³ The result of Tucker's research was *The Life of Thomas*

⁸ Sarah N. Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson* (1871; 3d ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 314.

⁹ *Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1901* (Washington, 1901), p. 335; *Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1918), pp. 504–5. These two listings include materials from both the 1815 and the 1829 acquisitions.

¹⁰ Published by F. Carr and Co., Charlottesville, 1829.

¹¹ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 3, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), pp. 269–70. The rumor was revived in 1797; *ibid.*, p. 309.

¹² Published by C. DeBahr, New York, 1832.

¹³ George Tucker, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea Blanchard, 1837), vol. 1, p. xv. See the discussion of Tucker in *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. *Tucker, George*. In his preface, Tucker states that Randolph allowed him "access to all the letters written" by Jefferson and that Nicholas P. Trist, who had married Randolph's sister, made the selection mentioned in the text. W. C. Ford ("Jefferson Papers," p. 4) suggests that Trist's involvement with Jeffersonian manuscripts may imply a "possible division of the papers within the family." However, there is no definitive evidence that this group of papers were returned either to the Randolphs or the Trists, or remained in Tucker's hands.

Jefferson, a remarkably impartial and fairly successful contribution to early American history.

From 1837 until the sale of the Jefferson papers to federal government in 1848, no one is known to have made use of the manuscripts. In a letter which Thomas Jefferson Randolph wrote to Frederick Augustus Hall Muhlenberg of Franklin College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on September 27, 1846, he explained the reason for declining requests to examine the papers:

You are perhaps not aware that Mr Jeffersons estate was greatly embarrassed under the extreme depression of the period of its sale fell far short of the payment of his debts. These debts have all been discharged by myself and the sale of his M.S.S. afford the only hope I have to protect my family from the effect of an act of filial duty. Many applications are made for copies of letters; to comply would greatly impair their value and I have felt myself reluctantly compelled to decline a compliance. My contemplation is to dispose of the whole in mass where the[y] would be accessible to every one.¹⁴

Randolph kept the Jefferson collection intact because he was aware of contemporaneous sales of the George Washington papers (1834) and the James Madison papers (1837) to the government. Later criticism of the incompleteness of the papers Mrs. Madison had sold to the government led Secretary of State James Buchanan to admonish Randolph to include both public and private papers in the 1848 sale.¹⁵ In due course, the appropriation act of August 12, 1848, providing for the civil and diplomatic expenses of the government for the fiscal year 1849, contained the following item:

For paying to Thomas Jefferson Randolph, executor of Thomas Jefferson, deceased, the sum of twenty thousand dollars, for all the papers and manuscripts of the said Thomas Jefferson: *Provided*, That said T.J. Randolph shall deposit all the said papers and manuscripts of a public nature in the State Department, and execute a conveyance thereof to the United States.¹⁶

The papers were deposited by Randolph at the Department of State for examination, in order that the private papers might be separated from the public and returned to the family. Shortly thereafter, in 1850, Randolph wrote a particularly informative description of the state of his grandfather's papers at the time of their sale to the federal government in 1848:

The letters written by Mr. Jefferson are all arranged together in chronological order. The papers, documents, official correspondence, notes of transactions while Secretary of State to Gen Washington, are bound in three volumes of marbled paper, marked A. B. C.: The letters received are in three series alphabetically arranged—The first, received during his residence in Paris; the second, during his residence in Philadelphia as Secretary of State, Vice President and President at Washington; the third after his return home.

These are contained in paper boxes, open at top and back, the width and breadth of letter paper folded lengthwise; the name of the writer and date endorsed across the end, added to

¹⁴ T. J. Randolph to F. A. H. Muhlenberg, September 27, 1846; Muhlenberg Family Papers, Manuscript Division, LC.

¹⁵ This is specifically noted in T. J. Randolph's letter of August 6, 1850, to H. A. Washington, in the Tucker-Coleman Papers, College of William and Mary—hereafter cited as TCP. Microfilm copy in Henry A. Washington Collection, Manuscript Division, LC. The point is also repeated in Randolph's letter, receipt stamped October 30, 1869; Misc. Letters, October 1869, Part II, Department of State records, National Archives and Records Service. The department's records will be hereafter cited as R.G. 59, NA.

¹⁶ 9 Stat. L. 284. Secretary of State James Buchanan's letter of acceptance to T. J. Randolph, dated at the Department of State, October 30, 1848, was acquired in 1971 and added to the Buchanan Collection. Fair copy in Domestic Letters, vol. 51, p. 37, R.G. 59, NA. The letter concludes: "Your wish in regard to a return of such of the papers as are of a private nature, shall receive proper attention, as far as this Department is concerned."

these are packages with the contents endorsed on the wrapper. There is also an index containing some 40,000 entries of letters written and received, partly in a bound volume and continuing on loose sheets stitched together. The arrangements for reference is very convenient and it would be desirable to preserve it. . . . His private family letters were in three square boxes and not intended to be sold, but the Secretary of State Mr. Buchanan expressed a doubt as to the law and advised their deposit. . . . These I wish to reclaim as of no public value and interesting only his family.¹⁷

In 1850, however, few could have predicted that Henry A. Washington, based in Williamsburg, would rapidly go through the estimated 40,000 letters in his search for items suitable for a congressionally sponsored publication; that he would arbitrarily divide the Jeffersonian manuscripts into five series; that the personal papers would remain unexamined until 1871; that the federal government would fail to purchase thousands of manuscripts offered to it by other descendants at bargain prices; that there would be a reappearance in 1897 of enough Jeffersonian manuscripts to fill nineteen additional volumes;¹⁸ that major segments of Jefferson's papers would be added to the Library of Congress's collections as late as 1922; or that definitive publication of the third President's outgoing and incoming correspondence would not commence until 1950. Randolph's 1850 letter, therefore, takes on retrospective importance in confirmation of the archival integrity Jefferson maintained throughout his lifetime in the control of his priceless collection of manuscripts. It was this integrity which was to desert the collection, for a variety of reasons, for over a century after its receipt in the Department of State by Secretary James Buchanan.

On March 6, 1850, Virginia Congressman James Murray Mason, of the Joint Committee on the Library, asked Henry Augustine Washington, of the College of William and Mary, to edit the papers of Thomas Jefferson for publication by the government. As a grandson of George Mason, Congressman Mason believed that it is of great importance to Virginia that this duty should be performed by one of her own citizens whose integrity & capacity may be relied on, that no injustice shall be done to the fame of Mr Jefferson.¹⁹

The Mason letter clearly indicates that only material deemed of a "public" nature was to be selected. Further, "It is not expected or desired that any *editorial* matter should be incorporated." On July 19, 1850, Professor Washington had the Jefferson papers delivered to him in a room set aside for him in the Department of State, where he worked on them for fifty-nine days at \$8.00 per day.²⁰ However, the most singular point of agreement, which was arrived at after some uneasiness on the part of the Joint Committee on the Library, was the removal of the Jefferson manuscripts from the District of Columbia to Williamsburg.²¹ Washington was determined to maintain his full schedule of academic duties at the College of William and Mary, and by late autumn of 1850 he had persuaded the committee members to agree to the mass removal.²²

Once the papers were in Williamsburg, Washington speedily set to work copying and collating the material. Between October 1850 and August 1854, he worked 464

¹⁷ T. J. Randolph to H. A. Washington, August 6, 1850; TCP.

¹⁸ Thereupon designated Series 6 in the records of the Bureau of Rolls and Library; see deed of transfer to LC, dated July 25, 1904, R.G. 59, NA.

¹⁹ J. M. Mason to H. A. Washington, March 6, 1850; TCP.

²⁰ Joint Committee on the Library, Account Book with the Library, p. 52; LC Archives.

²¹ H. A. Washington to his father, Lawrence Washington, September 11, 1850; H. A. Washington Collection, Manuscript Division, LC.

²² H. A. Washington, undated draft memorandum, probably July 1850; TCP.

days and 2 hours at \$6.00 per day, as well as 16 days (at \$8.00 per day) in New York City editing the papers at the office of the publishers, Taylor & Maury.²³ At this time, the professor had an even more surprising innovation to suggest:

In this connection, I take the liberty of making a suggestion which, if adopted, will greatly diminish the expenses attending the publication of the Jefferson papers. Many of the papers are not *originals*, but *press copies & manuscript copies*, carefully preserved by Mr. Jefferson. There is a large mass of this description of papers the expense of copying [which] would be considerable—My suggestion is that [the] Editor be permitted to entrust these *copies* to the printer—This will save much expense and such being the case, why make copies from copies? . . . It is not proposed that, in any case, an *original* paper shall pass from the hands of the Editor.²⁴

Although the Library Committee did not permit Washington to send the letterpress copies to the printer, he nonetheless left his mark on the letterpress and polygraph copies, often important and unique copies rather than secondary versions. Years later, Librarian of Congress Ainsworth Rand Spofford reported to the Library Committee that Professor Washington was guilty of “inaccuracies, omissions, garbled extracts and evident tampering with letters, mss., and material in his hands.”²⁵ A twentieth-century editor has also commented:

Here and elsewhere in this and other press copies by T J, someone in the 19th century, probably employing a sharp steel pen, traced over the faint and fading lines. The motive was laudable, but the execution was often demonstrably faulty. . . . H. A. Washington was one of those who was responsible for retracing faded parts of press copies.²⁶

Working with all possible speed, and in response to pressing reminders from the Joint Committee on the library,²⁷ Washington finished the editing by 1853; the nine volumes of *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* were published in 1853–54. In addition to editing Jefferson’s papers for publication, however, Washington had also agreed “to select all papers worthy of preservation among the National Archives [at the State Department], & arrange & index the same.”²⁸ On December 31, 1853, Assistant Librarian of Congress Edward Stelle wrote to inquire in behalf of the joint committee as to the length, duration, and cost of the publishing project.²⁹ Washington temporized on the exact length, number of volumes, and possible costs of the publication of the letters and then summed up his work on selecting and binding the papers for preservation:

And, in discharge of . . . my duty, some one hundred & twenty five volumes of Manuscripts have been selected, arranged, indexed, & are now ready for the hands of the binder—leaving in my possession a mass of refuse matter nearly twice as large as that which has been selected

²³ Joint Committee Account Book with Library, pp. 52 and 58; LC Archives.

²⁴ H. A. Washington to Library Committee, undated memorandum; TCP. A later two-page, undated (ca. 1854) memorandum in the same collection indicates that the committee had rejected the sending of letterpress copies to the printer. Washington nonetheless had marked up a portion of the press and polygraph copies to render them more legible to his copyists.

²⁵ Extracts, Minutes of the Joint Committee, March 8, 1888, p. 250; LC Archives. See also the undated, four-page report in Spofford’s correspondence folder, LC Archives.

²⁶ Boyd, ed., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, p. 288 n. In discussing the manuscript description of Jefferson’s tour through Holland (*ibid.*, vol. 13, pp. 33–35), Boyd notes that “portions of MS have been marked or crossed out by H. A. Washington, who used the original for printer’s copy and indicated on it his directions to the compositor, a fact which may explain why a part of the MS is missing.” The extensive footnotes detail Washington’s many changes, emendations, and omissions.

²⁷ See 1852, 1853, and 1854 correspondence to H. A. Washington; TCP.

²⁸ H. A. Washington to James A. Pearce, June 30, 1854; TCP.

²⁹ Librarian’s Letterbook, December 31, 1853; LC Archives. Another copy is in TCP. Similar inquiries were directed to all editors of such projects.

[i.e., “public” papers] for preservation among the National Archives, & which will be placed at the disposal of the Library Committee.³⁰

It should be noted that the 125 volumes cited in January 1854 grew to 134 volumes by late June, and to 137 volumes, including the index, by early September. On June 30, 1854, Washington wrote to the joint committee chairman, James Pearce:

The whole mass of the manuscript, which I received from the State department, has been carefully examined by me, & *every thing* deemed worthy of preservation, has been selected, & . . . digested, arranged & indexed. . . . The manuscripts selected for preservation from the general Mass amount to one hundred & thirty four volumes, which are now in the hands of the binder under authority received from you, & which will be, when bound, returned to the Archive office, together with the General Index to the whole. The refuse matter, constituting a mass considerably larger than the selected matter, has already been deposited in the State Department in the same condition in which it was received by me.³¹

On June 27, 1854, therefore, S. Le Camp, a Washington binder, acknowledged the receipt of “one hundred & thirty four volumes of the Jefferson manuscripts, together with an Index to the same,” from Professor Washington.³² The next day, George Chipman of the Roll Office in the Department of State, received from the professor “three boxes containing all the Jefferson Papers, received by him from this Dept. except that portion of the same now in the hands of the binder.”³³ What was not apparent at this time, however, was that a number of Jeffersonian items may have remained in the hands of Professor and Mrs. Washington; this would be suspected only in 1912, when William K. Bixby purchased 2,500 items of Jefferson correspondence from a descendant of the two editors, George Tucker and Henry A. Washington, a purchase to be discussed later.

The selection of the private papers from the unbound manuscripts was apparently overlooked at the State Department until 1869, when Thomas Jefferson Randolph wrote to complain to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish:

Prior to the late rebellion I sold to the government, the letters and papers of President Jefferson. . . . On the delivery of those papers, Mr. Buchanan, then Secretary of State, required me to deliver his whole papers public and private: those which came under the purview of the act [August 12, 1848] and those which did not; submitting to a committee (I think the Library committee) to determine.

Mr. Buchanan after the delivery gave himself no further concern about it. It became impossible to get the committee to act, thus I lost private family papers of no use to any save Mr Jeffersons family, and obviously not included in the terms of the act. These if my memory does not deceive were contained in three square pine boxes marked private papers.

These papers I desire to reclaim and you sir would lay me under great obligation could you facilitate this object.³⁴

Secretary Fish replied to Randolph on November 2, 1869, that the act of August 12, 1848, appeared to him “ambiguous” and also that an examination of the department’s records disclosed nothing “to show Mr. Buchanan ever contemplated the return of any portion of the papers.”³⁵ Fish closed by saying he had no legal authority to act, and that only Congress could effect such a restitution.

³⁰ H. A. Washington to Edward Stelle, January 2, 1854; TCP.

³¹ H. A. Washington to Pearce, June 30, 1854; TCP. See also the Joint Committee Account Book with the Library, pp. 52–58; LC Archives.

³² S. Le Camp, signed receipt, June 27, 1854; TCP.

³³ George Chipman, signed receipt, June 28, 1854; TCP.

³⁴ T. J. Randolph to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, receipt stamped October 30, 1869; Miscellaneous Letters, October 1869, Part II, R.G. 59, NA.

³⁵ Fish to T. J. Randolph, November 2, 1869; Domestic Letters, vol. 82, pp. 277–80, R.G. 59, NA.

The Joint Committee on the Library proved to be somewhat less dilatory, and on December 13, 1869, voted to request that the secretary of state transmit the “three boxes of private papers” to the librarian of Congress for his inspection.³⁶ Under congressional pressure, Secretary Fish wrote to the chairman of the joint committee, Senator Alexander G. Cattel, on December 22, 1869, a letter which was more forthright than his earlier reply to Randolph’s plea for restitution.

There are preserved in this Department three boxes, two of which are marked “Jefferson’s Manuscripts—Refuse” and one “Jefferson’s Manuscripts,” which boxes contain bundles of papers, a number of which are labelled “Private—Examined.” Some are the letters addressed to private individuals and others are of a miscellaneous character. . . . The fact that these boxes of papers are not entered in the list of archives in the Department printed in 1855, it seemed not unlikely that the Committee on the Library intended to recommend the restitution of them to Mr. Randolph, but that the matter had been overlooked. At all events, for the last Eight years, copies of papers in the regular five series have been called for by historians and others, but those in boxes not at all.³⁷

Fish thereupon stated that he would deliver the three boxes to Spofford or one of his agents if they bore the chairman’s “official order therefor.” The 137 bound quarto volumes remained in the State Department.

On February 17, 1870, the committee resolved that after Librarian Spofford’s examination of the papers he be “authorized to return to the executor of Thomas Jefferson such of the papers of the said Jefferson as upon examination shall be deemed of a private character.”³⁸ In spite of the allegedly disorganized condition of the joint committee in the 1870–71 period,³⁹ the papers adjudged private by Spofford were sent to the family. Sarah N. Randolph was able, therefore, to write in June 1871: “Jefferson’s executor having a few months ago recovered from the United States Government his family letters and private papers which had been exempted from the sale of his public manuscripts.” She could print letters never before published.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the 1870–71 selection of public and private papers was inconsistent: Spofford himself explained that those “papers which were unquestionably private” were returned to the heirs, but those “of a public nature, or partly public and partly private,” were retained by the government.⁴¹ The basic fallacy, of course, was the attempt to categorize given letters. If there is such a thing as an average Jefferson letter, it might touch upon such disparate subjects as crops, politics, violins, astronomy, diplomacy, and wines. In retrospect, it can be seen that any attempt to classify an entire letter was foredoomed to failure.

Thomas Jefferson Randolph died on October 8, 1875, and papers in his possession passed to his daughter under a general bequest. At this point, tribute should be paid to the careful stewardship of Jefferson’s papers which had been the hallmark of Randolph’s life from 1826 to his death; his 1829 publication of the *Memoir*; the sale to the Library of Congress in the same year of an irreplaceable

³⁶ Extracts, Minutes of the Joint Committee, p. 41; LC Archives.

³⁷ Reports from the Secretary to the President and the Congress, vol. 15, pp. 215–16, R.G. 59 NA.

³⁸ Extracts, Minutes of the Joint Committee, p. 42; LC Archives. Spofford was paid \$6 per day for his work.

³⁹ On April 11, 1871, L. M. Morrill, a member of the committee, wrote to Mrs. M. C. Sparks, a legatee of the Jared Sparks papers, that “considering the un-organized condition of the Library Committee,” they would be obliged to refuse the offer of the Sparks manuscripts; Librarian’s Letterbook, LC Archives.

⁴⁰ Sarah N. Randolph, *Domestic Life*, p. vii.

⁴¹ Ainsworth R. Spofford to Secretary of State John Sherman, December 29, 1897; John Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, LC.

group of early Virginia documents; his positive reaction to Henry Lee's partisan work in seeking out George Tucker to write a new and impartial book on his grandfather; his care of the manuscripts until the sale to the government in 1848; and, finally, his valiant attempt in 1850 to convince Professor Washington to honor Jefferson's original intentions in the preservation of his priceless collection.

On February 23, 1888, Congressman Daniel W. Voorhees called the attention of the joint committee to the application of Sarah N. Randolph of Baltimore to reedit the works of Jefferson, which she said were improperly edited and, in their published form, "very inaccurate."⁴² The committee thereupon invited Miss Randolph to appear on March 1, 1888. The witness cited numerous errors in Professor Washington's nine volumes, including omissions, inaccuracies, neglect, and ignorance, not to mention "tampering" with the manuscripts. In addition to preparing a new, correct, and thorough edition, Miss Randolph proposed to include documents in her family's possession which would "throw much light upon the private and public life of the great statesman, and present him in many phases of life, heretofore unknown and therefore all the more interesting to the world."⁴³ After the interested committee heard Miss Randolph's presentation, it directed Librarian Spofford to report to the committee at their next meeting.

For his report at the March 8, 1888, meeting, Spofford prepared a four-page memorandum which largely supported Miss Randolph's contentions of the shortcomings of Professor Washington's work. Additionally, Spofford pointed out that the original letterpress copies "are gradually fading, and may hereafter become indecipherable."⁴⁴ Spofford's most devastating criticism was reserved for his summation:

The deficiencies of this edition are so great as to impair, and in some cases to destroy its value as an index to true opinions of Mr. Jefferson, and to his relation to the men and events of his time. . . . The fact remains that the writings of one of the foremost statesmen in American history have been given to the world in a most incomplete form, omitting far more than they contain.

After hearing Spofford's sobering report, the joint committee appeared to be convinced of the necessity of a new edition of Jefferson's writings to be prepared by Miss Randolph under Spofford's general direction.⁴⁵ On April 26, 1888, and again on January 29, 1889, the joint committee came out in favor of sponsoring a new and comprehensive edition of Jefferson's "correspondence sent and received," for preparation of which Miss Randolph was to receive \$2,500 a year.⁴⁶ However, by 1889 the committee was also considering the purchase of the papers in Miss Randolph's possession, none of which were duplicated in the State Department collection. The debate in Congress over the purchase continued for several years and in the meantime the editorial project was shunted aside. Sarah Randolph died on April 25, 1892, leaving the papers to her sister, Caroline Ramsey Randolph.⁴⁷ The joint committee had recognized the value of reuniting the public and private collections of Jeffer-

⁴² Extracts, Minutes of the Joint Committee, p. 250; LC Archives.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁴⁴ Undated, unsigned report in Spofford's correspondence folder, LC Archives.

⁴⁵ Extracts, Minutes of the Joint Committee, p. 259; LC Archives.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 267, 281.

⁴⁷ Bullock, "Papers of Thomas Jefferson," p. 283. Although Mrs. Bullock calls her "Carolina," she is identified as "Caroline" in *The Randolphs of Virginia*, William Randolph and Mary Isham, comps. (Chicago: privately printed, 1937), entry 211478.

sonian correspondence, but it was unable to persuade Congress, and an outstanding opportunity to correct a failure of the previous generation was lost.⁴⁸

In 1897, some twenty-six years after the return of the private papers to the Randolphs, those papers which had been retained by the government in 1871 came to light again during the move from the Capitol of the Library of Congress to its new building across the street. As Spofford explained in his letter of transmittal, December 29, 1897, to Secretary of State John Sherman:

These valuable papers have just been discovered by me in the clearance effected of a room next to the Congressional Library in the Capitol, in which have been piled for many years (it being the only place under lock and key) the accumulations of manuscripts, rare books, etc. which could not be protected in the library proper.

These Jefferson papers were sent to the Joint Committee on the Library, with others, upon an application of the heirs to have returned to them the papers of a private nature, which had been in possession of the government pending the selection of material to be published. An examination of all the papers resulted in the return by the Committee of a selection of the papers which were unquestionably private, to Miss Sarah N. Randolph, representing the heirs, leaving all which were of a public nature, or partly public and partly private, in the hands of the Committee.

This deposit, with multitudes of others, was completely overlooked by me in the multiplicity of increasing cares and labors pressing upon the librarian in the Copyright Bureau and the Library proper, and their discovery, after so many years, enables me to perform a most gratifying though tardy act of justice in restoring them to the Department. They are believed to be wholly intact.⁴⁹

The material was added to the Jefferson holdings of the Bureau of Rolls and Library at the Department of State, which, according to an undated holograph list, already included:

	Case No. 18	Jefferson Papers	
1st Series		letters from Jefferson	14 vols 4 ^o
2d "		" rec'd by Jefferson	91 " "
3d "		Treasury, War & Navy letters	11 " "
4th "		Letters & notes Rec'd while Sec'y of State	3 " "
5th "		Miscellaneous	16 " "
1st "		Index to names	1 " "
2d, 3d, 4th & 5th series		Index to names	1 " "
Canons of etiquette with letter of Rufus King to Madison enclosed in Book cover			
Letters to Jefferson concerning his administration		Package loose papers	
Letters of Jefferson from Paris during 1786—1787—1788		Bundle of papers	
Diary of Thomas Jefferson 1783 (Small 12 ^{mo} calf binding) in envelope			
Design of a monument to Jefferson			
Batture case—pamphlet with written notes by Jefferson ⁵⁰			

This is the sole characterization of the five, bound series as designated by Henry A. Washington in 1854. The list is also important for noting the existence of a number of "loose" and unbound items.

The material sent from the Library of Congress in December 1897 was bound in nineteen additional volumes and formed a sixth series of Jefferson papers.⁵¹ By an

⁴⁸ A description of the material offered to the Congress appears in W. C. Ford, "Jefferson Papers," p. 7, note 3. See also Joint Committee on the Library, Report to accompany S. 4087, 51st Cong., 1 sess, 1890, S. Report 1365.

⁴⁹ Spofford to Sherman, December 29, 1897; John Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, LC. Quoted only in part in *Calendar of Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Rolls and Library, Bulletin no. 10 (Washington, 1903), p. 111.

⁵⁰ Folder, "Old Lists of Department's Papers," p. 16; Bureau of Rolls and Library, R.G. 59, NA.

⁵¹ Transmittal letter, Department of State to LC, July 25, 1904; Bureau of Rolls and Library, Letters, vol. 40, p. 89, R.G. 59, NA.

act of Congress of February 25, 1903, however, heads of government agencies were authorized to turn over to the Library of Congress "books, maps, or other material" no longer needed in the conduct of their business. The Jefferson papers formed one of the first groups to be transferred in accordance with this act, following an Executive Order of March 9, 1903. The library received them on July 25, 1904. The Department of State retained two groups of Jeffersonian letters: transcripts of his Parisian letters, May 11, 1785—August 6, 1787; and his official letters as minister to France, to Congress, and to John Jay, secretary for foreign affairs.⁵² In addition to the six series of bound papers, the Library of Congress received:⁵³

The Virginia Almanack for the year 1773, Containing Memoranda in Jefferson's handwriting relating to money matters.
Letters to Jefferson, 1801-1804. 32 unbound mounted sheets.
Design of a Monument to Jefferson by Larkin G. Meade, 1878.

Altogether, more than fifty-five years had elapsed before all the manuscripts obtained from Thomas Jefferson Randolph were reassembled in one place. The government had preserved all that had come to it, but its custody up to that time had been marked by apparent confusion and seeming neglect.

It should be noted in passing that, in 1916, Worthington C. Ford wrote that an additional group of Jefferson manuscripts was found "in 1906, or 1907" in Spofford's office.⁵⁴ This is probably an incorrect assertion because such a discovery would have been reported in the librarian's letterbook and in other appropriate records. No such proof has been located. It is more likely that Ford misconstrued the nature of a number of groups of unbound Jefferson items either in the Bureau of Rolls and Library or in the Library of Congress. We have previously noted the number of loose Jeffersonian items listed in the holdings of the State Department and in the transfer to the Library of Congress.⁵⁵ There is no conclusive proof of an additional discovery in 1907 of "upwards of two thousand pieces," in addition to the large group found in 1897 by Spofford.

Helen Duprey Bullock has covered in some detail the fortunes of the private papers returned to the Randolph family. Caroline R. Randolph inherited the papers of her sister Sarah in 1892, and in 1898 Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, a great-grandson of Thomas Jefferson, purchased from Caroline R. Randolph approximately 7,000 items, which he presented to the Massachusetts Historical Society in June of that year. A selection from these papers was printed in the society's *Collections*.⁵⁶ After the death of Caroline Randolph in 1902, her remaining papers were bequeathed to three nieces, Mrs. William Mann Randolph, Cornelia J. Taylor, and Eliza Ruffin. Most of the papers owned by Mrs. Randolph were lost in a

⁵² Bureau of Rolls and Library, Letters, vol. 39, pp. 231, 233, R.G. 59, NA. These items now form part of the Papers of the Continental Congress, R.G. 360, NA.

⁵³ Transmittal letter, Department of State to LC, July 25, 1904; Bureau of Rolls and Library, Letters, vol. 40, p. 89, R.G. 59, NA.

⁵⁴ W. C. Ford, "Jefferson Papers," p. 7.

⁵⁵ A number of miscellaneous groups of Jefferson material are mentioned in the *Calendar*, Bureau of Rolls and Library, Bulletin no. 10, p. iii. In addition, the presence of various types of Jefferson "papers" is noted in the several undated lists of material in the custody of the Bureau of Rolls and Library for the period antedating 1897; R.G. 59, NA. While none of these lists are conclusive, they indicate that the existence of unbound Jefferson material was known to Ford and his contemporaries.

⁵⁶ *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Seventh Series (Boston, 1900), vol. 1.

fire, and after Miss Ruffin's death in 1904 her portion was divided between the two survivors. After the death of Miss Taylor, her nieces Olivia and Margaret Taylor inherited her share of the papers and transferred them, along with many papers of the Randolph family at Edgehill, to the University of Virginia.⁵⁷

Following in his father's footsteps, Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, Jr., in 1911 located and purchased from Mrs. William Mann Randolph and Cornelia J. Taylor a large group of Jefferson's architectural drawings for Monticello; these he similarly deposited in the Massachusetts Historical Society. The drawings were subsequently printed in 1916.⁵⁸

As heir of Caroline R. Randolph, Wilson Cary Nicholas Randolph gave sixty-two of Jefferson's sketches and plans for its original buildings to the University of Virginia; and upon her husband's death in 1907, Mrs. Randolph presented 181 drafts of letters by Jefferson concerning the University of Virginia to the Library of Congress.⁵⁹

A final outstanding private purchase of Jeffersonian letters took place in 1912. The prominent St. Louis collector William K. Bixby acquired 2,500 pieces from George P. Coleman of Williamsburg and Richmond, whose ancestor, George Tucker, had edited the *Life of Jefferson* noted above. Coleman's mother had married Henry A. Washington and, after his death in 1858, Charles W. Coleman. It appears probable that the Jefferson material in the Coleman collection came from the papers of the two editors, Tucker and Washington. Wishing to share his collection with the public, Bixby distributed more than 500 Jeffersonian items to forty-six individuals and repositories, and 1,100 he presented to the Missouri Historical Society. A selection of these he printed in 1916,⁶⁰ and the Missouri Historical Society has since printed another collection.⁶¹ Also in 1912, the Library of Congress acquired 131 "inedited" letters at a sale in Philadelphia.⁶²

In 1917 the library acquired an important group of about three hundred Jefferson letters dating from 1774 to 1826, most of which were addressed to Thomas Mann Randolph, together with several bound volumes and miscellaneous papers.⁶³ The materials included Jefferson's memorandum book and diary (1779–82), two of his commonplace books, notes on religion, verses in Greek, Latin, and English, copies of early legal instruments and precedents, a holograph library catalog listing the books Jefferson had accumulated after the sale of his first library to the government, and an annotated copy of the 1801 edition of the manual of parliamentary practice for the use of the United States Senate.⁶⁴ These Randolph family papers no longer constitute a separate group: the Jefferson-Thomas Mann Randolph corre-

⁵⁷ Bullock, "Papers of Thomas Jefferson," p. 283. The Edgehill-Randolph Papers were deposited in the University of Virginia in April 1942 and were purchased from the two sisters in September 1943.

⁵⁸ Fiske Kimball, ed., *Thomas Jefferson, Architect* (Boston: privately printed, 1916).

⁵⁹ Memorandum by W. C. N. Randolph, April 2, 1898; University of Virginia files. Mrs. Randolph's gift to the library; *Report of the Librarian of Congress . . . for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1907* (Washington, 1907), p. 135.

⁶⁰ *Thomas Jefferson Correspondence, Printed from the Originals in the Collections of William K. Bixby* (Boston: privately printed, 1916).

⁶¹ "Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson," in Missouri Historical Society, *Glimpses of the Past* 3 (April-June 1936): 77-133.

⁶² *Report of the Librarian of Congress . . . for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1912* (Washington, 1912), p. 38.

⁶³ From Henry Burke, Alexandria, Virginia, acting in behalf of himself and other heirs; Manuscript Division files, LC.

⁶⁴ *Report of the Librarian of Congress . . . for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1918* (Washington, 1918), pp. 33-34; and Manuscript Division files, LC.

spondence has been chronologically interfiled in the Jefferson Papers; the other types of material are now in the Jefferson Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, and follow the main correspondence series in the Manuscript Division's Jefferson Papers.

Also in 1917, the library received from Colonel Jefferson Kean three Jefferson memorandum books of household and legal matters, 1768–70.⁶⁵ Bullock has noted the location of all the Jefferson account books, and photostatic sets of the entire group are available to scholars in the University of Virginia and in the Library of Congress.⁶⁶

Some eighteen years after the large transfer of 1904, the Department of State on January 4, 1922, transferred in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 3594, dated December 19, 1921, Jefferson's annotated rough draft of the Declaration of Independence; his directions for his epitaph and gravestone; and a letter, dated September 16, 1825, concerning the Graff House in which he composed the Declaration.⁶⁷

Of these, the treasure was the rough draft. Its history belied its incomparable importance in national life. Even the hard-pressed Professor Washington, in an undated draft memorandum (probably mid-July 1850), was struck by the poor condition of the document which had come with the papers Thomas Jefferson Randolph sold to the government in 1848:

Many of the papers are very valuable & should be by all means be carefully preserved. Among them is the original draught Declaration of Independence as reported by Mr. J. to the Committee appointed to prepare a Declaration, with interlineations by Mr. Adams & Dr. Franklin in their own handwriting. . . . The original rough Draught of the Del. of In. to which I have alluded, is in a very frail state—Since Step[s] should be taken for its preservation without delay—I believe that the draught of the Declaration should be joined together if the Committee so desires.⁶⁸

According to a January 1922 report on the condition of the rough draft after its arrival in the library, the document had been "slightly repaired" and joined together while in the State Department's custody.⁶⁹ Additionally, as Julian Boyd has pointed out, the rough draft has been subjected to facsimile reproduction sev-

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Bullock, "Papers of Thomas Jefferson," p. 280 n. The locations of the Jefferson account books are as follows:

1767–70	Library of Congress [LC]
1771	Massachusetts Historical Society [MHS]
1772	MHS
1773	LC
1774	MHS
1775	Huntington
1776–78	MHS
1779–82	LC
1783–90	MHS
1791–1803	New York Public Library
1804–08	New-York Historical Society [NYHS]
1809–20	NYHS
1821–16	NYHS

The Massachusetts Historical Society also holds fourteen miscellaneous papers, of various dates between 1799 and 1816, with an index. Photostatic sets of all of the books are at the Library of Congress and the University of Virginia.

⁶⁷ Three receipts signed by Charles Moore, January 4, 1922; Manuscript Division files, LC.

⁶⁸ H. A. Washington, to Library Committee, probably mid-July 1850; TCP.

⁶⁹ John C. Fitzpatrick, "Condition of Thomas Jefferson's Original Draft of the *Declaration of Independence*," January 1922; Manuscript Division files, LC.

eral times.⁷⁰ The Manuscript Division holds at least five examples of such copies taken from the rough draft while it was in the custody of the State Department.⁷¹ Since its arrival in the library, the document has undergone additional preservation measures and has frequently been on display in the library's main building.

The last important group of Jeffersonian manuscripts was transferred from the Department of State to the library on August 30, 1922. This group of letters and papers pertaining to the establishment of the District of Columbia was an artificial collection created by the department from the manuscript collections of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and others. The ten bound-volumes of material also include the letters and papers of such figures as Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, and Andrew Ellicott, and covered the period 1790–1816. Manuscripts in this grouping belonging to presidential collections in the Manuscript Division have been restored to their respective collections. The Jefferson material has not been chronologically interfiled in the Jefferson Papers, but remains a separate District of Columbia series which follows the main chronological series in the collection. The library has since acquired other Jefferson items as additions to the Jefferson Papers and other collections, or as separate purchases or gifts.⁷² These, with the scattered holdings among what Henry Randall called a "multitude of inheritors,"⁷³ complete the record of the collection Thomas Jefferson bequeathed to Thomas Jefferson Randolph in 1826.

From the four series of published writings of Jefferson, edited in sequence by Randolph, Henry A. Washington, Paul Leicester Ford, and A. A. Lipscomb and A. E. Bergh, much of the public and some of the private life of the man was revealed. However, it was not until 1950 that the authoritative edition, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, was started, under the editorship of Julian Parks Boyd; this will appear in a projected series of forty to fifty volumes.⁷⁴ Thus, for the first time, scholars will be able to read most of Jefferson's incoming and outgoing correspondence in letterpress form. The Boyd volumes will attempt, in printed form, to restore the Jefferson papers to the archival care and historiographical thoroughness which they possessed when Jefferson bequeathed them to his favorite grandson.

⁷⁰ Julian P. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text as Shown in Facsimiles of Various Drafts by Its Author, Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 41.

⁷¹ The 1860, 1869, 1876, 1887, and 1905(?) examples are in the Facsimile Collection, Manuscript Division, LC.

⁷² See subsequent annual reports of the Librarian of Congress; *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*; and *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*.

⁷³ Randall, *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. vii.

⁷⁴ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. xiv. The project was originally supported, starting in 1943, by the Trustees of Princeton University and the New York Times Company. At the present time it is sponsored by Princeton University under grants from the New York Times Company and the Ford Foundation, and with the assistance of the National Historical Publications Commission.