

PRELIMINARY REPORT

ON

PROPOSED CONSERVATION TREATMENT

FOR THE

FALKLAND ISLAND ARCHIVES

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Background
- 3. Present Condition of the Archives
- 4. The Registrar's Office
- 5. Recommendations
- 6. Synopsis
- 7. Costing
- 8. Funding
- 9. Methods of alternative conservation

Jane Cameron  
Conservation Section  
Bodleian Library  
Oxford.

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C O N T E N T S

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Present Condition of the Archives
4. The Registrar's Office
5. Recommendations
6. Synopsis
7. Costing
8. Funding
9. Addendum: an alternative recommendation

1. INTRODUCTION

I visited the Falkland Islands during the months of February and March 1983, and while I was there I had the opportunity to carry out a brief preliminary survey of the condition of:

1. The material kept in the Government Archives in Stanley.
2. Registers, Leases, and Crown Grants kept in the Registrar's office in the Town Hall.

I undertook this survey with a view to making recommendations for a basic programme of conservation work, consisting primarily of first-aid treatment for the more seriously damaged and heavily used items and a boxing and storage programme for the remainder of the material.

The worst of the damage arises from two main causes:

1. Serious fires, in the Town Hall in 1944 and in the Secretariat in 1959, resulted in the loss of much archival material and severe fire and water damage to a proportion of what remained.
2. Thoughtless binding and storage practice over the years, which has resulted in, among other things, extensive edge damage to a large proportion of material.

2. BACKGROUND.

In 1977 an archivist named Daphne Gifford was sent to the Falkland Islands for two years on secondment from the Public Record Office in London. At the end of her time there she wrote a report which I found extremely helpful. Her brief was 'to collate, catalogue and research the Archives' and her report contains many references to the poor physical condition of much of the material, and some recommendations as to provision for conservation work in the future.

One of her suggestions was that 'an experienced repairer be seconded to the Falkland Islands to undertake conservation work on the Archives'. While she was in the islands a conservator named Guy Petherbridge spent three months there repairing the most severely damaged material. The Overseas Development Ministry made available 'a considerable sum of money for the purchase of essential equipment', and a small workshop was provided. As Mr. Petherbridge was in the islands for such a short time the amount he was able to accomplish was limited and consisted mainly in repairing four of the more badly damaged volumes in the Archives. However, since this time nothing more has been done.

It appears that the Archives did not suffer from damage as a result of the Argentine invasion.

As a conservator of library materials, I knew a little about the situation from conversations with Mr. Petherbridge and a short correspondence with Daphne Gifford and when I learned that I would be visiting the islands on holiday early in 1983 I contacted Mr. Longstaff of the O.D.A. in London to find out if there was any possibility of funds becoming available in the future to continue the work begun by Mr. Petherbridge.

I stressed that I knew very little about the present condition of the Archives and did not know whether I would have the opportunity to visit them while in the islands, so Mr. Longstaff suggested that I should simply look at the Archives if I could and write a brief report in an entirely unofficial capacity. The O.D.A. would then consider whether funds might be made available.

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When I arrived in Stanley I explained the position to the Honorary Archivist, Sydney Miller, who gave me every assistance, making Daphne Gifford's report available and allowing me access to examine the Archives.

### 3. PRESENT CONDITION OF THE ARCHIVES

At present the archives are stored on the first floor of a small building on the waterfront in Stanley (1) \*, in a locked area which was partitioned off for the purpose. The fire-risk to the Archives in this location is probably fairly high. Although the ground floor of the building in which they are housed is of brick, the first floor on which the Archives are located is built of timber, lined with hardboard and chipboard. The ground floor is used as offices by the British Antarctic Survey and the Falkland Islands Government Air Service, and the loft above the archives is used by the Army as a store room and possibly also as a tea-break shelter. Certainly there are soldiers passing in and out continually, and I would think the chances of improperly extinguished cigarettes were considerable. The buildings on either side are used as stores and vehicle maintenance depots. There may possibly be quantities of flammable material in close proximity to the archives. They should not be left in this location any longer than necessary.

Conditions in the actual storage area, although not ideal, are relatively good. Humidity is fairly high (mainly in the 70s and 80s during my visit), and air movement is minimal, but the temperatures appear to be low enough to have inhibited the growth of mould. They reached a maximum of 15°C when monitored over a period of two weeks in March. Fortunately there is no heating in the area. However, the temperature and humidity do fluctuate according to the weather to a degree which is harmful to the materials; they should be in a far more stable environment. The area is windowless so that the archives are protected from light damage, and it is easy to keep clean. The material is stored on six rows of Dexion metal shelving, which should serve to inhibit the fire risk.

\* See accompanying volume for photographs and sketch plan. (Numbers in brackets in the text will refer to photographs in this volume).

The material not affected by fire and water damage is in a remarkably good state of preservation chemically speaking; almost undoubtedly due to the unpolluted air in the Islands. I tested for acid degradation samples of the kind of paper dating from 50 and 60 years ago, which in England one would certainly have expected to be in a deteriorated state, but none had a pH lower than 5.5 and most registered at least 6.0, which for inexpensive paper of that age is unusually high. This makes one very optimistic about the long-term survival of the material, if it is correctly stored and handled in the future.

However, the physical condition of most of the material is not good. Many letters are bound into massive guardbooks (2) which are far too large to use without damaging the contents. Boards have warped and broken, bindings have sagged and split under the weight of their contents (3), and leather straps intended to hold the volume closed at the fore-edge have torn into and badly damaged many items (4). Hundreds of letters inserted loose into volumes have slipped out and become torn (5). These guardbooks should at the very least be stored horizontally in boxes until further conservation treatment is available.

In addition to these problems there are many fire-damaged volumes, some of which have lost their bindings completely. They are blackened and brittle where they were burnt at the edges (6), and must not be handled in their present state, or they will suffer further loss of text. Daphne Gifford says of these volumes 'They are in no condition to be consulted ... and should not be made available to anyone until they have been repaired'.

Most of the unbound material deposited on the shelves has no protection of any kind and is suffering. (7). This includes copies of periodicals (8) and Public Works Department maps and plans (9) which have been damaged by this treatment. A suitcase of what I concluded to be privately donated material was filled with torn and crumpled documents. There are no boxes available in which these items could be stored.

#### 4. THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

The situation in the Registrar's Office calls for more urgent attention; partly because most of the documents are far more damaged than the material in the Archives, and partly because they are of necessity in constant use.

There are volumes of Leases and Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths dating back to 1846; some of them in an extremely fragile state. Bindings have disintegrated (11), fire damage has embrittled paper (12-14) and much handling and inadequate storage have aggravated a situation in which considerable losses have already occurred (15). Repairs with pressure-sensitive tape have discoloured and further damaged some documents (16,17).

Another major problem in the Registry is posed by the fire-damaged parchment Crown Grants. Daphne Gifford says that these are 'irreplaceable records of particular importance and ought not to be handled in their present state'. The bindings of these volumes were entirely destroyed by fire and the dramatically distorted and embrittled leaves (18-20) have no protection of any kind (21,22). In some cases they are virtually unreadable (23), but it should be possible, with great care, to restore a number of them to something like their original condition. However, such work would be extremely time-consuming.

I had no opportunity to visit the ecclesiastical archives or those of the Falkland Islands Company, but undoubtedly they also contain much unique material which should be preserved.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Daphne Gifford said in her report that 'the assignment to the Archives of a repairer for a period of two years in the Falklands seems at present to be the only possible solution to the repair problem in the long term'. I would agree with this assessment of the situation. While there is probably enough material in need of repair and protection to occupy the entire working life of one conservator, obviously financial constraints make the establishment of a permanent position unlikely. I would recommend a period of two years as the minimum period necessary for the achievement of worthwhile results. During this time a boxing programme could be carried out, so that at least the material would have some kind of protection, and the badly damaged and irreplaceable items given the conservation treatment necessary to ensure their survival. There is certainly some urgency here. Losses occur almost daily to documents in the Registrar's Office. These are unavoidable in the present situation. It would certainly be a great help to the staff there if the material which is so badly damaged and difficult to handle could be microfilmed or reproduced in some other way, so that original copies need not be used. Indeed, this measure may be essential to the survival of these records. To quote Daphne

Gifford again 'In an archives repository almost nothing is replaceable ... for practical purposes. ... the Falkland Island Archives available for Falklanders and others to consult are irreplaceable. Some of the material ... is unique'.

In the long term one would hope to see the Archives housed in a stone building in which it would be possible to maintain a stable environment for them with minimal fire risk. This building might also house the Museum and the Library, which have similar environmental and security requirements. At present the Library uses space in the Town Hall badly needed for other purposes, and the Museum has no home at all since the Army took over the space which once housed it in the Falkland Islands Company Buildings in Crozier Place.

Eventually, since it would be hard to justify financially a full-time archivist, a salaried post could perhaps be established combining the offices of archivist, librarian and museum curator, so that all the collections could have some kind of continuous supervision and care.

It should also be one of the aims of a conservator working in the Islands to train someone locally to carry out urgent repair work and, in the future, exercise preventative care over the collections.

In conclusion, to quote Daphne Gifford once more, 'The Falkland Island Archives are part of the heritage of the Islands and they should be available for Falklanders to consult, as well as for others who may come some distance to see unique material .... There is no point in keeping archives if they are not to be used ... and there is a real need for records to be available to members of the public for research purposes'.

The archives in a community such as the Falkland Islands should be, and can be, an educational and cultural asset of enormous value. The collections should continue to be built up and the repository be able to provide a safe home, not only for government records, but for the wealth of material at present in private hands which would undoubtedly be willingly donated if care for it could be assured.



6. SYNOPSIS

I spent two months in the Falkland Islands early in 1983, and had the opportunity to visit the Falkland Islands Archives and the Registrar's Office in Stanley to look at the material stored there, with a view to recommending conservation measures.

It is clear that unless some action is taken as a matter of urgency, much unique material will be lost altogether. Two serious fires, one in the Town Hall in 1944 and one in the Secretariat in 1959, have left many volumes of documents in a fragile state. This applies particularly to the irreplaceable and severely fire-damaged parchment Crown Grants in the Registrar's Office, and to many of the Registers which are so badly damaged that each time they are handled (and some are used almost on a daily basis) serious losses are occurring.

In the Archives thoughtless binding practice and inadequate storage have also resulted in much badly damaged material, which cannot be used until it has been repaired.

It is recommended:

1. That an experienced conservator should visit the Falkland Islands, preferably for a period of two years. This is the minimum period in which really worthwhile results could be obtained.
2. That while in the Islands the conservator should repair the more severely damaged material and carry out a boxing and protection programme for the remainder.
3. That the conservator should train someone locally to carry out any urgent repairs which may be needed in the future, and to exercise preventative care over the collections.
4. That the conservator should initiate a microfilming programme as a means of preventing the destruction, through over-handling, of unique documents in the Registrar's Office.

## 7. COSTING

It is not possible to give very specific estimates at this stage but likely maximum limits of expenditure can be indicated. These can be broken down into three major areas with the possibility of a fourth.

### 1. The salary of the Conservator

A conservator in the United Kingdom could expect to receive a salary of somewhere between £8,000 - £10,000 p.a., at the level of responsibility involved here. That is in sole charge:

- a) of the establishment of a conservation workshop.
- b) of formulating conservation policies for a small repository and
- c) of training an assistant.

Over a period of two years therefore, the maximum expenditure would be £20,000, if these rates of pay were applicable. However, there may be factors which would modify this figure, and should be taken into account - such as possible housing arrangements and rules about local rates of pay.

### 2. General materials and equipment - including boards and papers, chemicals and small tools.

I would estimate that the expenditure of a maximum of £5,000 would be sufficient to ensure a supply of general materials and equipment over a two year period of continuous conservation work, and to leave a small reserve to deal with future contingencies.

Certain items, such as laboratory glassware and a range of chemicals, may be available through the Senior School.

### 3. Major items of equipment

Items in this category normally found in a workshop, would include a book-press, a laminating press, a fume hood for working with chemicals, a fumigation chamber, a light box, a card creaser, a paper trimmer and a board chopper.

Guy Petherbridge took a laminating press out with him, which could probably double as a book press; the Senior School almost certainly has a fume hood which could probably be used out of school hours; the fumigation chamber and light box could be made locally, and a card creaser could probably be improvised.

The only absolutely necessary purchase in this country would be a board chopper, without which a boxing programme would be virtually impossible. Depending on the size this would cost something in the region of £3,000, including VAT, but the freight costs might be considerable.

Another £500 should possibly be allowed for locally manufactured equipment.

4. Microfilm equipment

This kind of work does not normally come under the auspices of a conservation department. In this case, however, a microfilming programme is probably essential to the survival of some of the records in the Registrar's Office and should, therefore, be encouraged if not actually organised and financed.

As microfilming facilities would greatly ease the work of the staff in the Registrar's Office, and doubtless in other Government Departments, it should probably be the financial responsibility of the Government. Further discussion should take place on this matter before financial estimates are drawn up, because of the enormously wide range of equipment available to suit differing needs.

However, initial enquiries indicate that suitable equipment for this situation, including camera, processor, readers/reader printers and storage facilities, would cost in the region of £10,000 (not including materials or freight charges).

8. FUNDING

Possible sources include the Overseas Development Administration, the Falkland Islands Government and the United Kingdom Falkland Islands Trust.

9. ADDENDUM

In her report of 1979 Daphne Gifford described how she had investigated various alternative solutions to the problem of conserving the archives, and had eventually come to the conclusion that the only possible solution at the time was that an experienced repairer should be sent out from England for a period of two years.

As my stay in the islands was short, and I had no time to assess the situation in depth, I have relied on her report for guidance, when making my recommendations.

The other two options that she considered were:

1. That the fire damaged leases and Crown Grants should be returned to England for repair. Although this material does need urgent attention, there would almost certainly be great difficulty in finding a workshop to take on a conservation job of this magnitude. Even if one were found, this could only be a partial solution to the problems, as there is so much other material in need of attention. It may also be the case that as there are no copies of many of these documents, it would not be possible to remove them from the Registrar's office for an extended period of time.

2. That someone from the islands should be sent to England for training in conservation work. During the time that Daphne Gifford was in the Falklands no one could be found who was willing to undertake this training, but it has been suggested that the possibility should now be re-considered. If someone suitable could be found, a training period of at least a year in an institution in England would be recommended. If the trainee were able to bring with them material from the archives in Stanley, the training could be more specifically aimed at the sort of problems with which they would have to deal. The training could perhaps be undertaken in two sections, so that the initial period of work on the archives could be followed by a further six months of training, once the trainee had had the opportunity to become familiar with the problems involved.

The minimum one-year training period is advised because of the wide range of problems presented by the archives, and because the conservator will have no one to turn to for advice, but will have to rely entirely upon his own experience.

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Opportunities for training in Britain are limited at present, mainly due to the fact that most conservation workshops are too short of staff, space and funds to be able to take on trainees. However, there are three main possible alternatives.

1. Camberwell School of Art and Crafts run a two year course leading to a diploma in Paper Conservation - this would include parchment - and a further two year course leading to a Higher Diploma. Although a thorough grounding in the craft is obviously desirable, if the trainee has only limited time at his disposal, it may be more beneficial for him to be trained in workshop practice from the beginning.

Tuition fees for overseas students:

Diploma course £1,945 per academic year

Higher Diploma course £3,400 per academic year

If certain residence qualifications in the U.K. are met (three years immediately preceding course, or one year (with parents) if aged under 21 when course begins) fees are lower as follows:

Diploma course £286 per academic year

Higher Diploma course £480 per academic year

Living expenses would have to be found in addition to the tuition fees.

2. The Society of Archivists runs a two year in-service training scheme leading to a certificate of competency in archive conservation. The scheme requires that the trainee be based at a record office which provides a minimum wage, and in addition to training in the 'parent' office 26 weeks are spent acquiring a range of skills at other record offices around the country. In the case of a Falkland Islander it is likely that F.I.G. (or a sponsoring body) would have to arrange to pay the training wage through the record office used as a base in this country. There is no set time for joining the scheme, but the trainee must have completed two years of training before sitting the test for the certificate which is set in May, therefore April - May would be the best time to begin.

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The Society of Archivists scheme should give a good grounding in workshop practice and experience of a wide range of problems in archival conservation. From this point of view it would be extremely relevant for a Falkland Island trainee. A disadvantage when compared to the Camberwell training is that there would not be the opportunity for formal teaching of subjects such as conservation science, so that the trainee would need to be sufficiently motivated to do the necessary background reading unsupervised.

The cost would include the training wage, which in this case would effectively have to be a living wage, and nominal sums charged for registration on the scheme and the 26 weeks training in outside workshops. It may be possible that the 'parent' office would require additional compensation for training someone from overseas.

3. If a training period of less than two years is envisaged a more informal training arrangement might be organised through the British Library. They have no formal scheme at present as a certain amount of re-organisation has just taken place, although they may be setting one up. I understand however that it may be possible to arrange through them for a trainee to spend perhaps three months at the India Office, three months at the Public Record Office; and three to six months at a local record office. Most British Library trainees from overseas are referred by Unesco or the British Council, and the request would have to come formally from F.I.G. As far as can be ascertained no charges have been established for this training as yet.

If someone is to be sent to England for training two further points should be borne in mind:

1. Whether a permanent post for a conservator is to be established in the Islands. If such a post is not considered financially viable on a long-term basis then perhaps the establishment of a combined post should be considered such as the one mentioned on page six of this report, combining supervision of the library, museum, and archives.

2. If it is likely to be two or three years before the fragile manuscript material in the Registrars Office can undergo conservation treatment then it should be microfilmed if possible and properly stored as a matter of urgency.

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Generally speaking the person chosen for training should

1. have a good balance of academic and manual skills, preferably with a basic knowledge of chemistry.
2. have a good eye for colour and proportion.
3. be happy working alone and have the patience to carry out work in which progress can be slow.
4. be able to use their own initiative.
5. have an enquiring mind.
6. have an appreciation of the historical aspect of the work and a commitment to it.

It is important that the right person be chosen for the work. Much damage could be done by someone insufficiently trained or motivated.

#### Funding

Possible sources of sponsorship for training in conservation in this country would include the O.D.A. and the British Council.

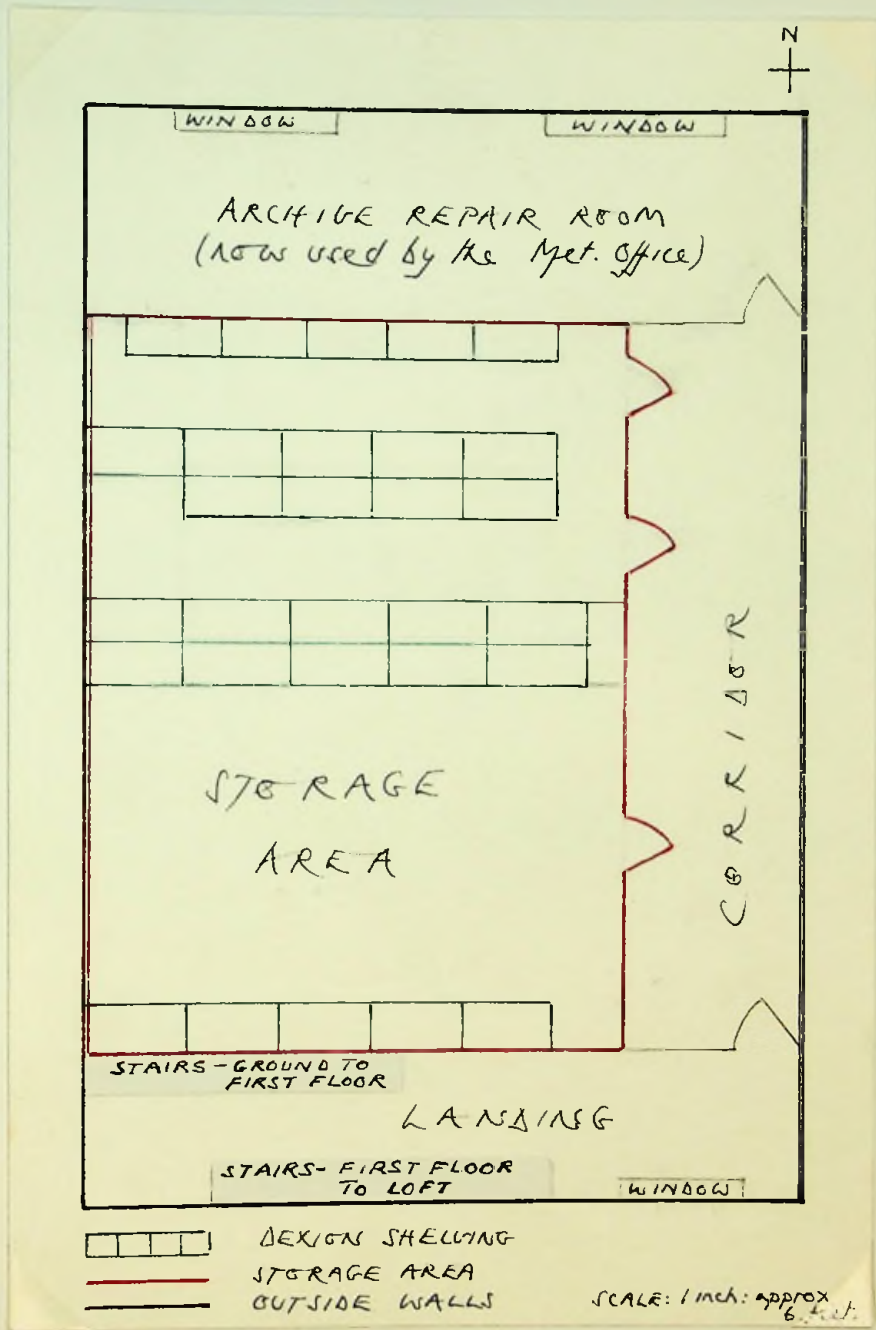
PHOTOGRAPHS

illustrating a preliminary report on proposed  
conservation treatment for the  
Falkland Island Archives

PART I : The Archives

PART II : The Registrar's Office





SKETCH PLAN OF ARCHIVE STORAGE AREA



1. THE BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THE ARCHIVES PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE NORTH WEST. THE TWO WINDOWS ON THE SECOND FLOOR ARE THOSE OF THE ARCHIVE REPAIR ROOM.



2. MASSIVE GUARDBOOKS , WHICH ARE FAR TOO LARGE TO BE  
USED WITHOUT RISKING DAMAGE TO THE CONTENTS .



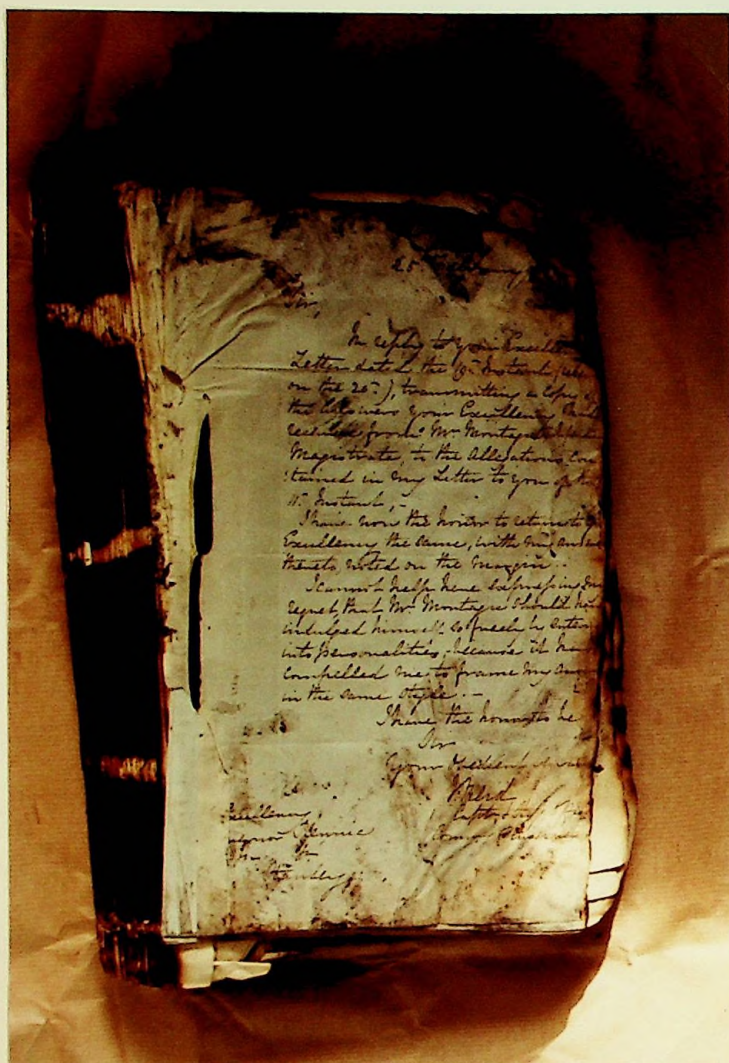
3. GUARDBOOK DISINTEGRATING UNDER THE PRESSURE OF ITS CONTENTS.



4. THE SAME VOLUME SHOWING HOW THE LEATHER STRAP  
IS CAUSING SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE DOCUMENTS.



5. LOOSE ITEMS PROTRUDING FROM THIS VOLUME HAVE BECOME CRUMPLED AND TORN. THE BOARDS OF THE BINDING HAVE WARPED AND BROKEN. NOTE THE VOLUMES ON EITHER SIDE. THE WEIGHT OF THEIR CONTENTS HAS CAUSED THE SPINES TO BECOME CONCAVE.



6. A FIRE DAMAGED VOLUME WHICH HAS LOST ITS BINDING.  
THE EDGES OF THE LEAVES ARE BLACKENED AND BRITTLE  
WITH SOME LOSS OF TEXT.



7. UNPROTECTED MATERIAL ON SHELVES

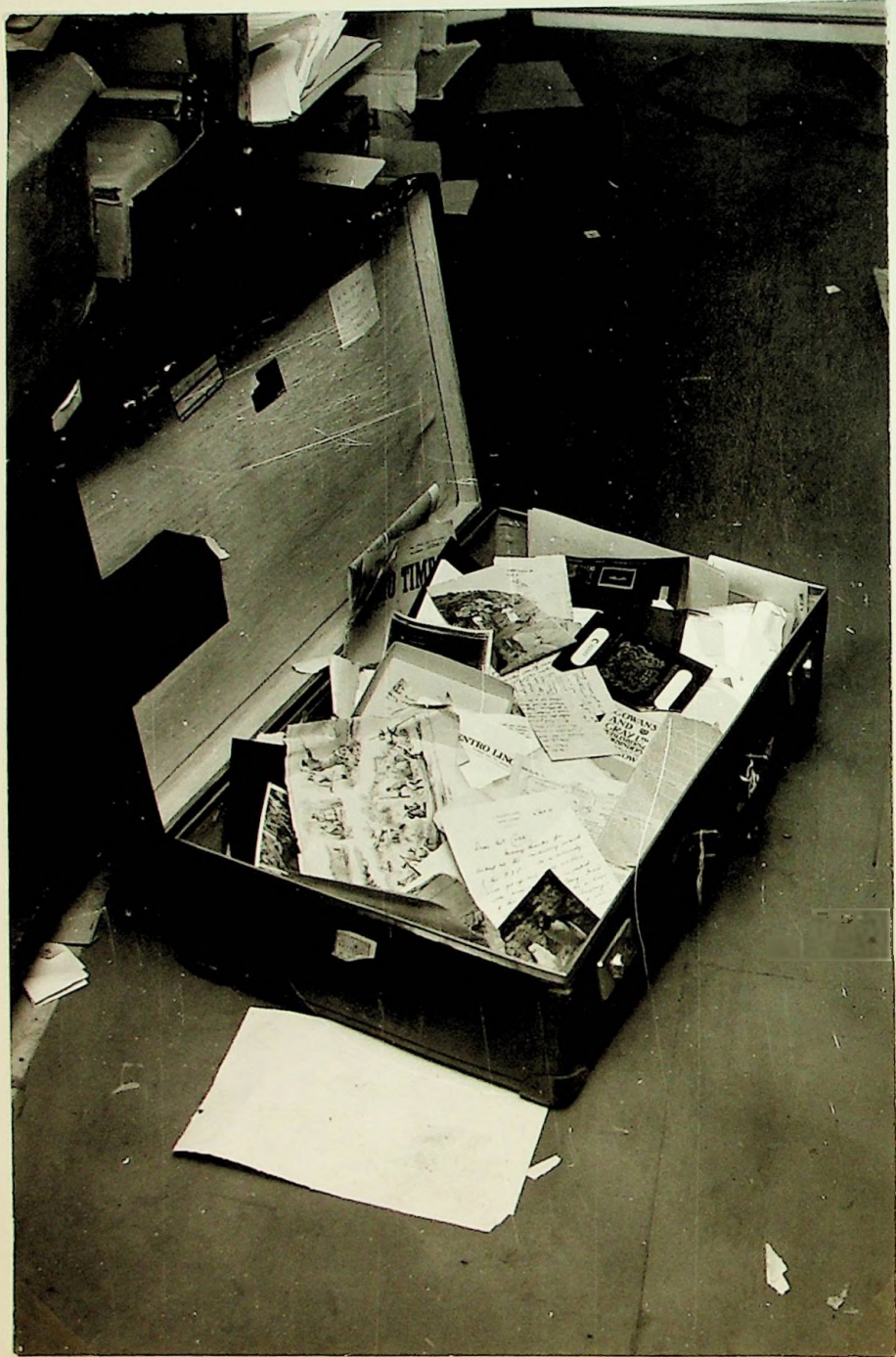




8. PILES OF UNPROTECTED PERIODICALS



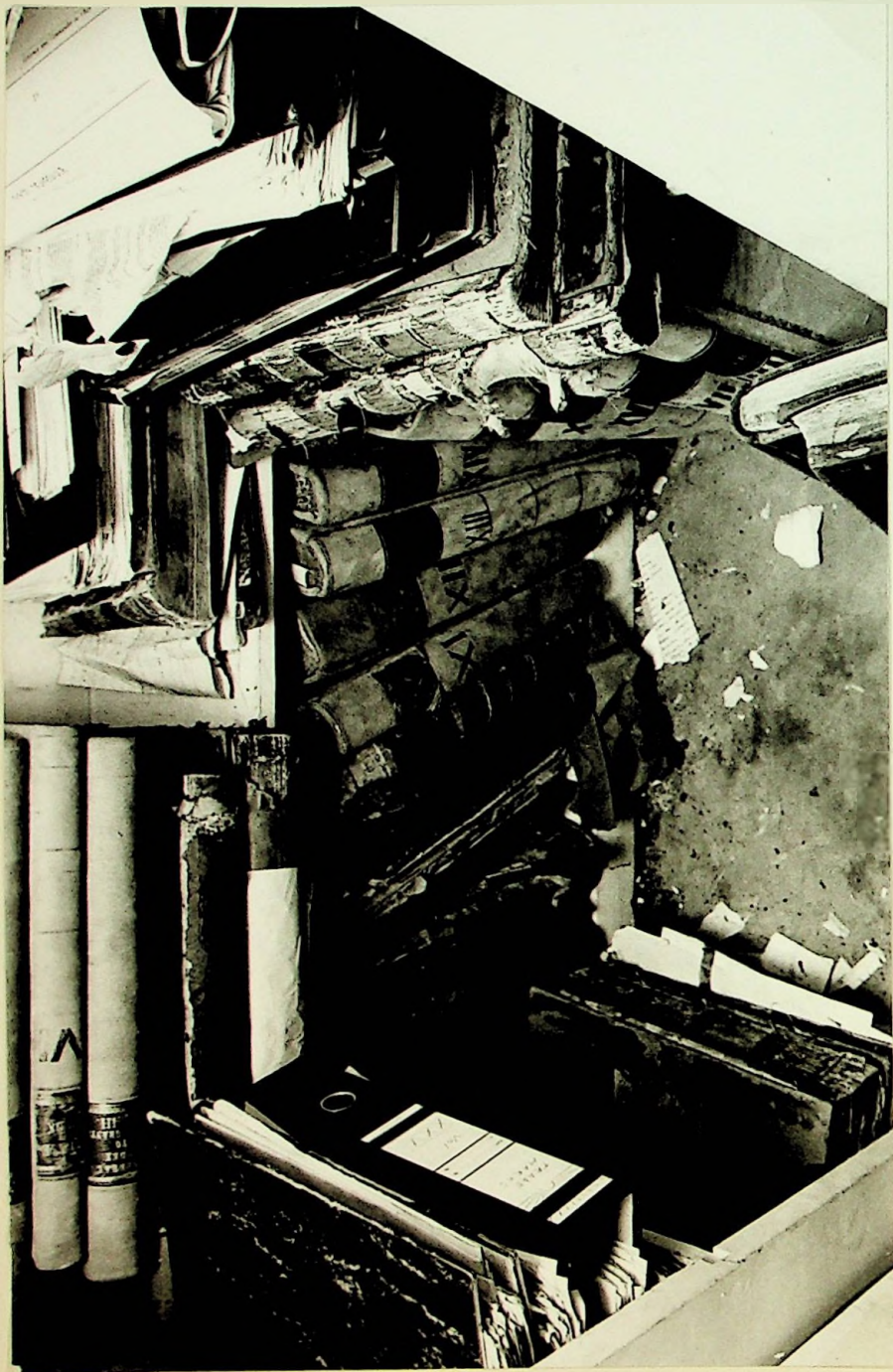
9. MAPS AND PLANS FROM THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT SUFFERING DAMAGE AS A RESULT OF PRESENT INADEQUATE STORAGE. FLAT STORAGE IN A PLAN CHEST WOULD BE PREFERABLE IF ONE WERE AVAILABLE.



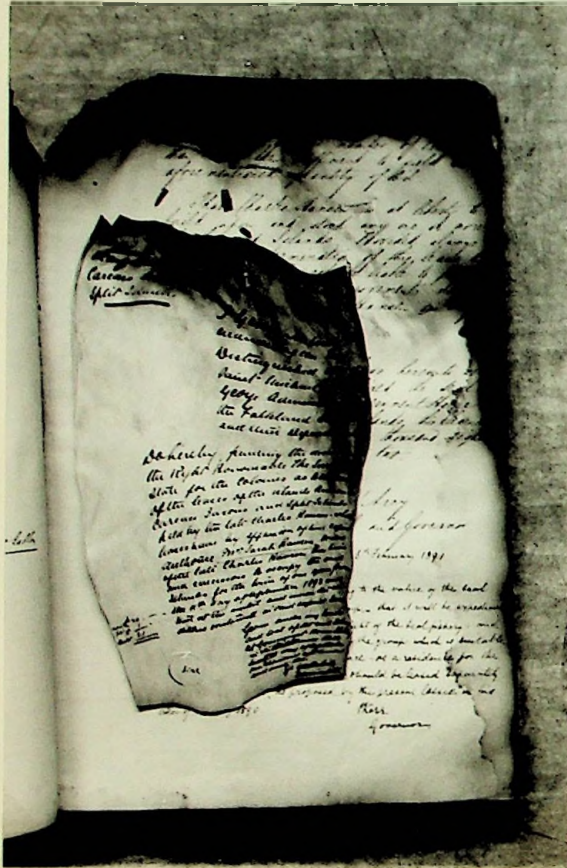
10. A SUITCASE OF PRIVATELY DEPOSITED MATERIAL WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO SUFFER DAMAGE UNLESSS BOUND OR BOXED.

PART 11

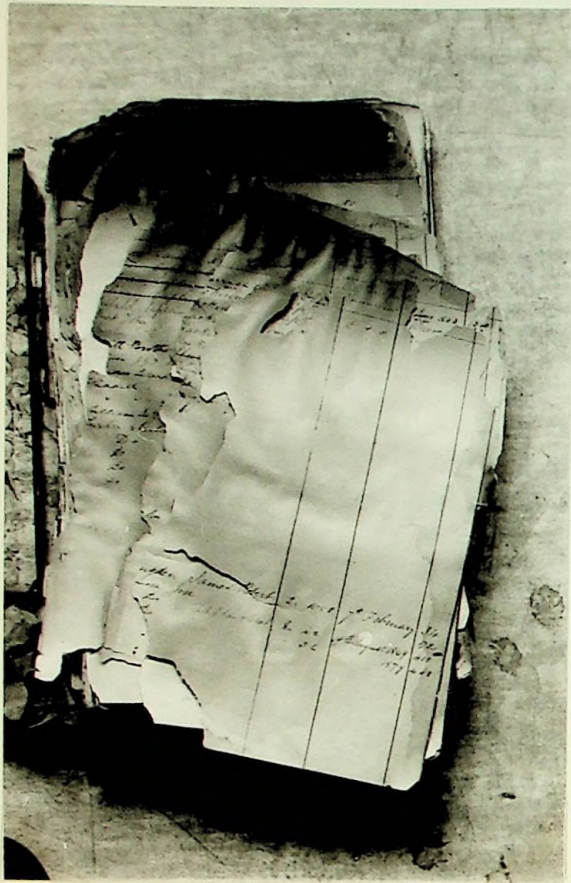
THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE



11. VOLUMES WITH DISINTEGRATING BINDINGS , IN SOME CASES THE RESULT OF FIRE DAMAGE. NOTICE THE FRAGMENTS OF TEXT ON THE FLOOR.



12. FIRE DAMAGED PAPER AND PARCHMENT. NOTE DISTORTION OF PARCHMENT AND WATER STAINS ON PAPER.

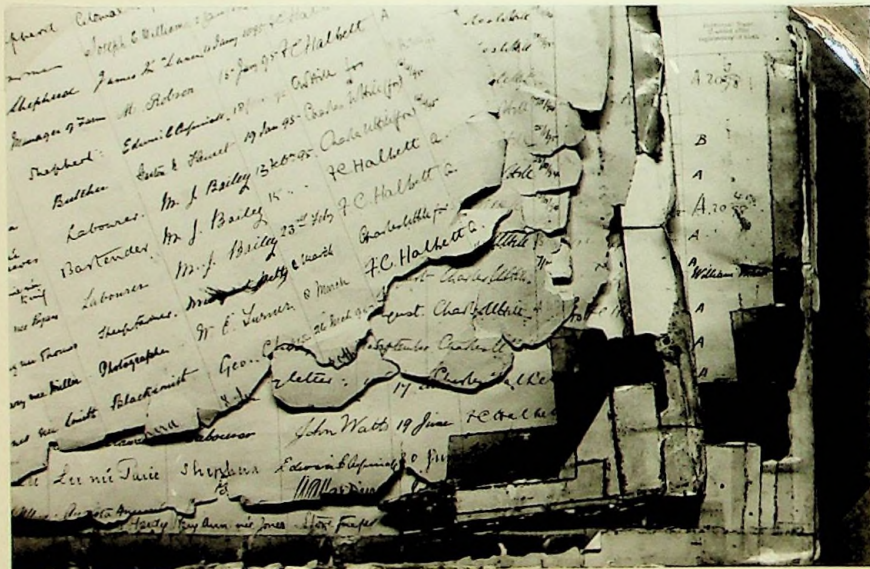
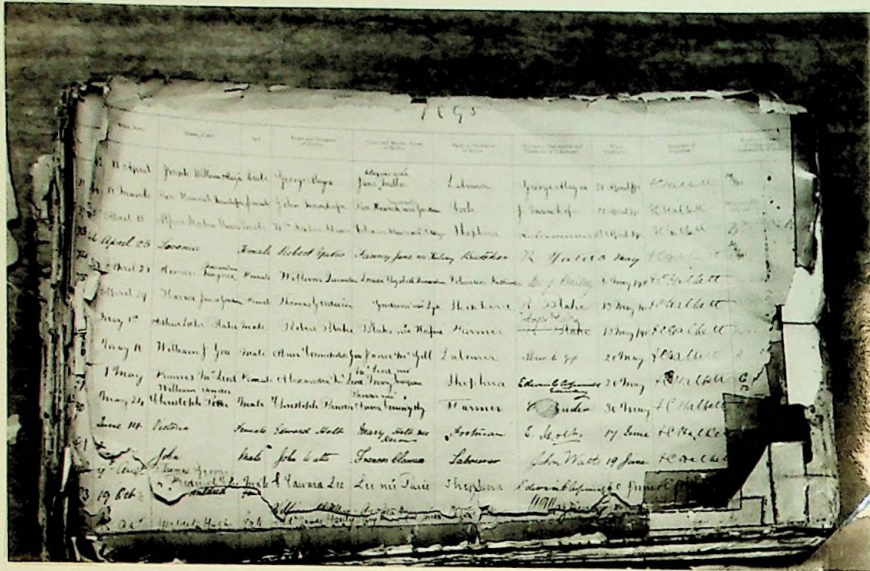


13,14. A FIRE DAMAGED VOLUME IN WHICH EMBRITTELEMENT HAS CAUSED LOSS OF TEXT.

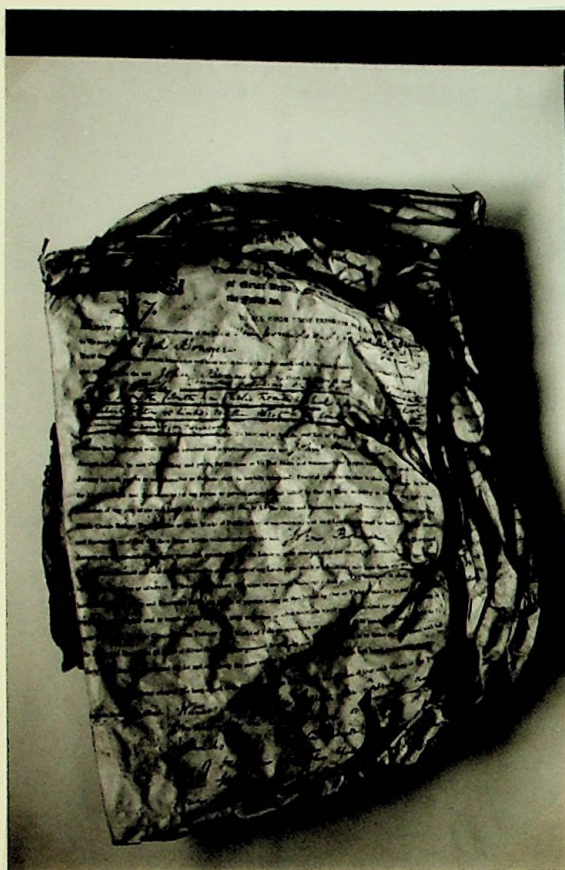


15. HEAVILY USED VOLUME ON WHICH THE BINDING HAS  
DISINTEGRATED AND EXTENSIVE LOSS OF TEXT HAS  
OCCURRED.

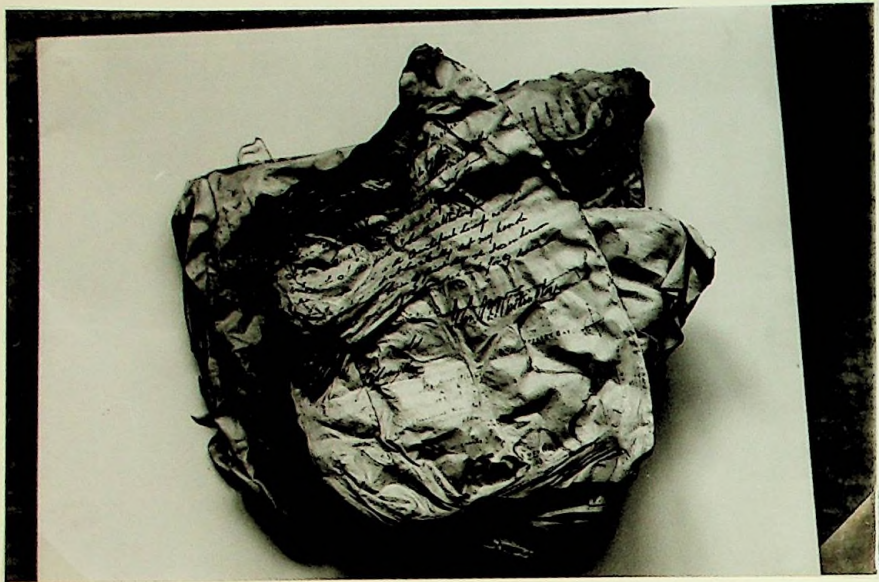




16,17. PRESSURE SENSITIVE TAPE ON UPPER AND LOWER RIGHT CORNERS DISCOLOURING AND CAUSING FURTHER DAMAGE TO AN ALREADY FRAGILE VOLUME. NOTE LARGE AREAS OF MISSING TEXT.



18. FOLIOS OF PARCHMENT EMBRITTLED AND DISTORTED AS A  
RESULT OF FIRE DAMAGE.



19, 20. FIRE DAMAGED PARCHMENT.



21. FIRE DAMAGED PARCHMENT STORED WITHOUT PROTECTION.



22. FIRE DAMAGED PARCHMENT ON THE FLOOR OF A STORE  
CUPBOARD. THERE ARE NO STORAGE FACILITIES AVAILABLE  
FOR THIS FRAGILE MATERIAL.



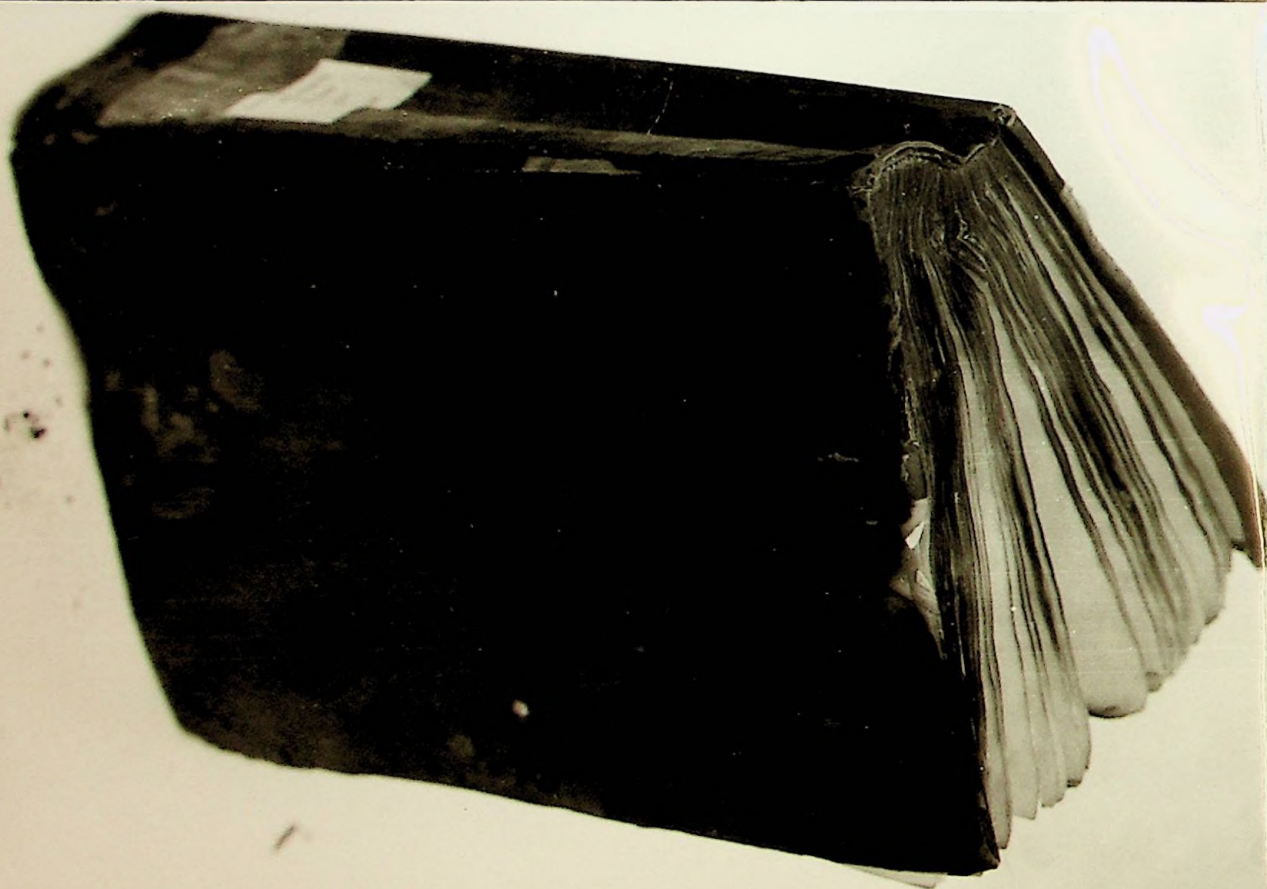
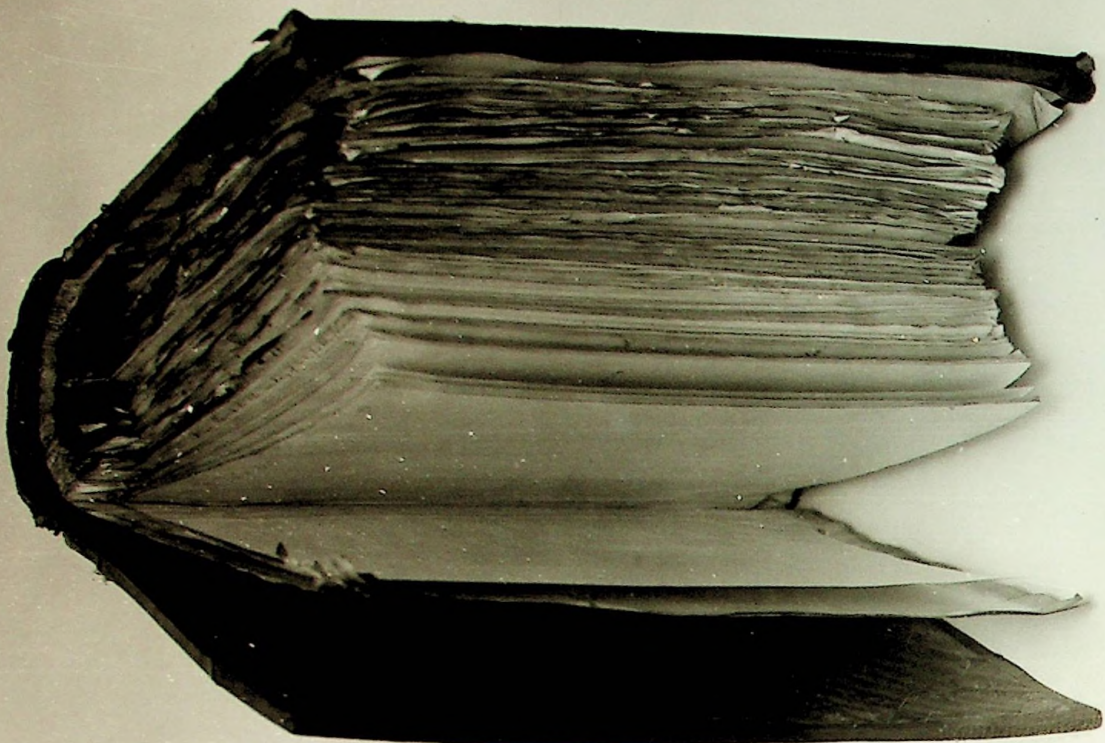
23. A PARCHMENT CROWN GRANT RENDERED ALMOST ILLEGIBLE  
BY FIRE DAMAGE.



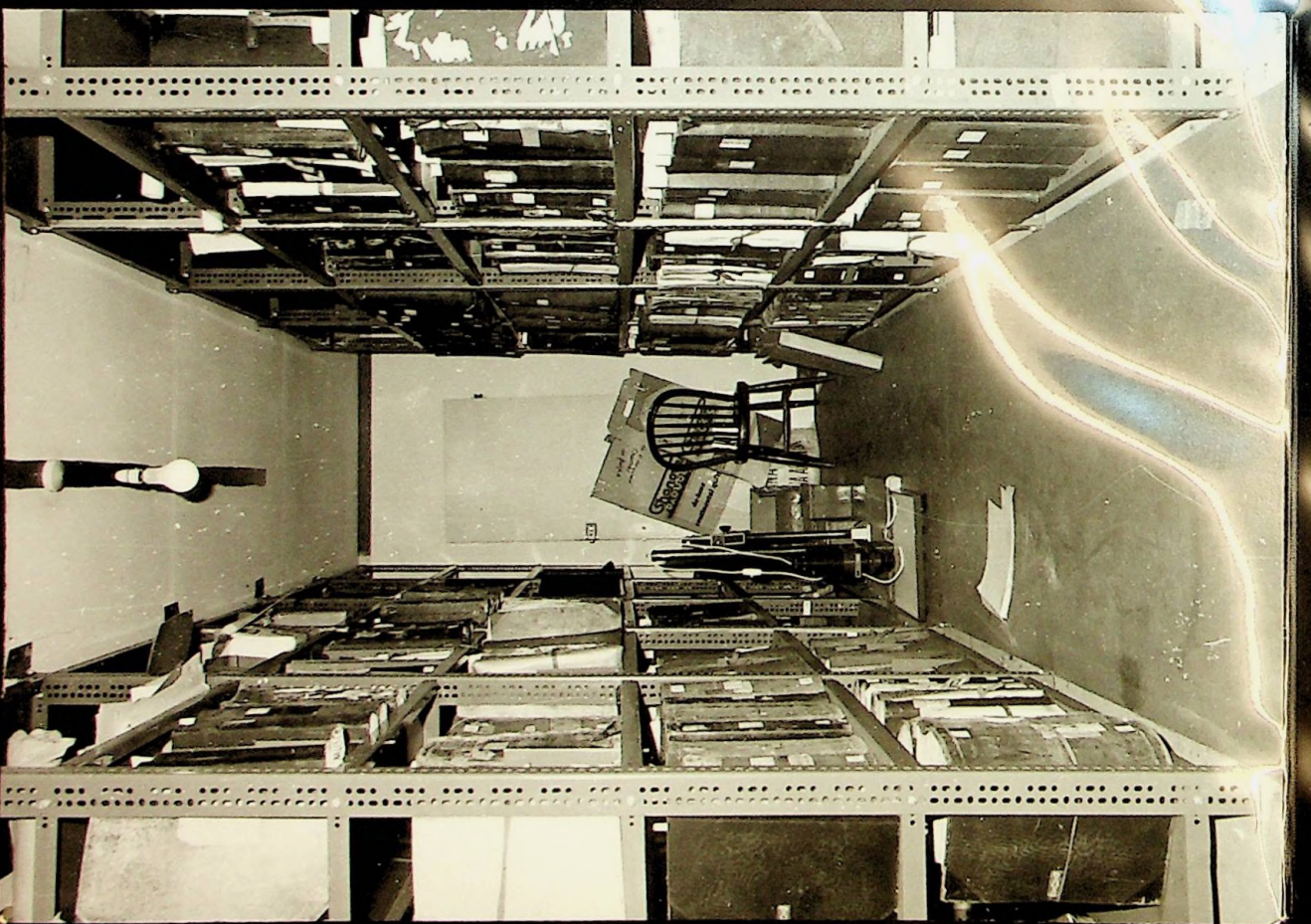


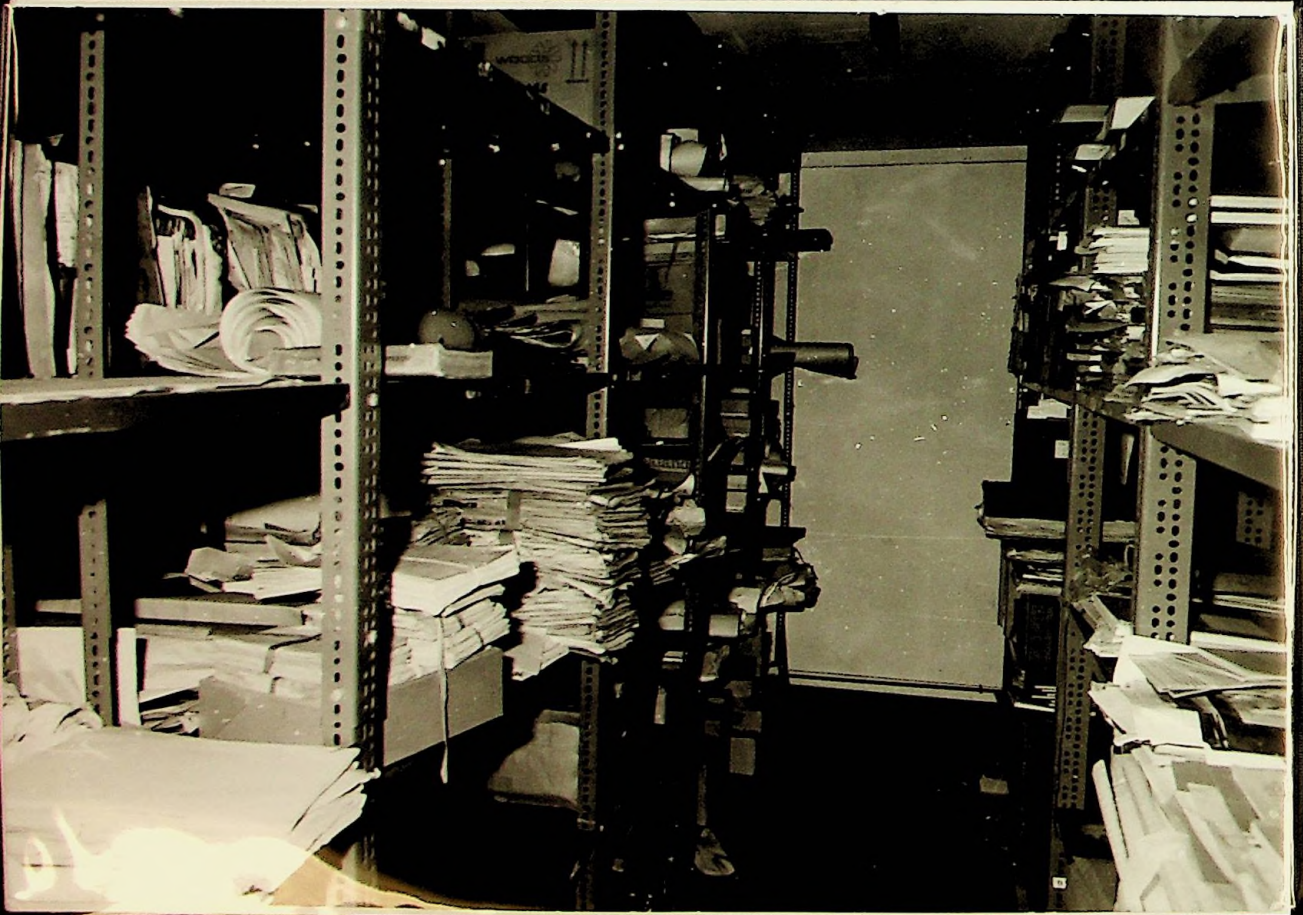
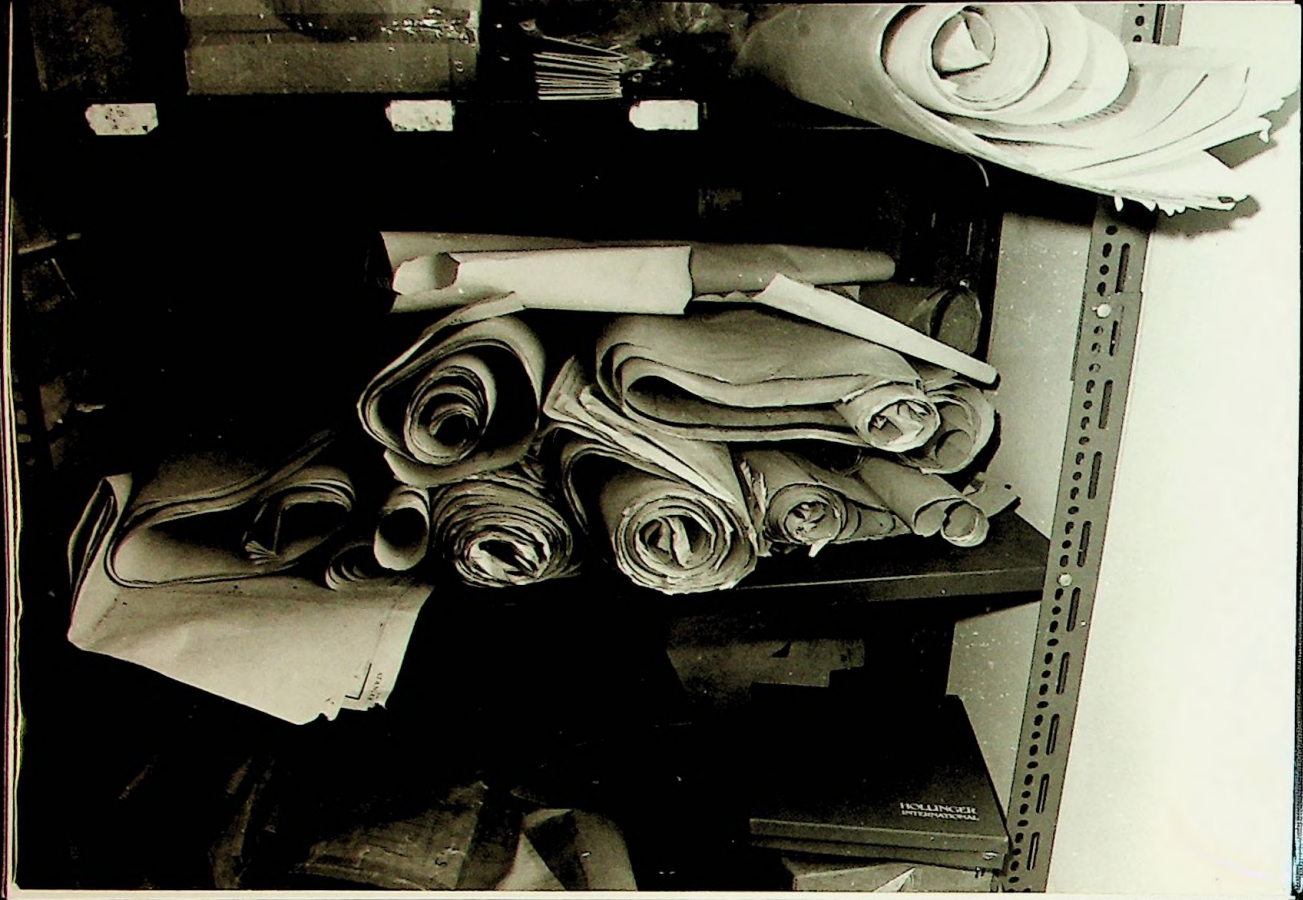




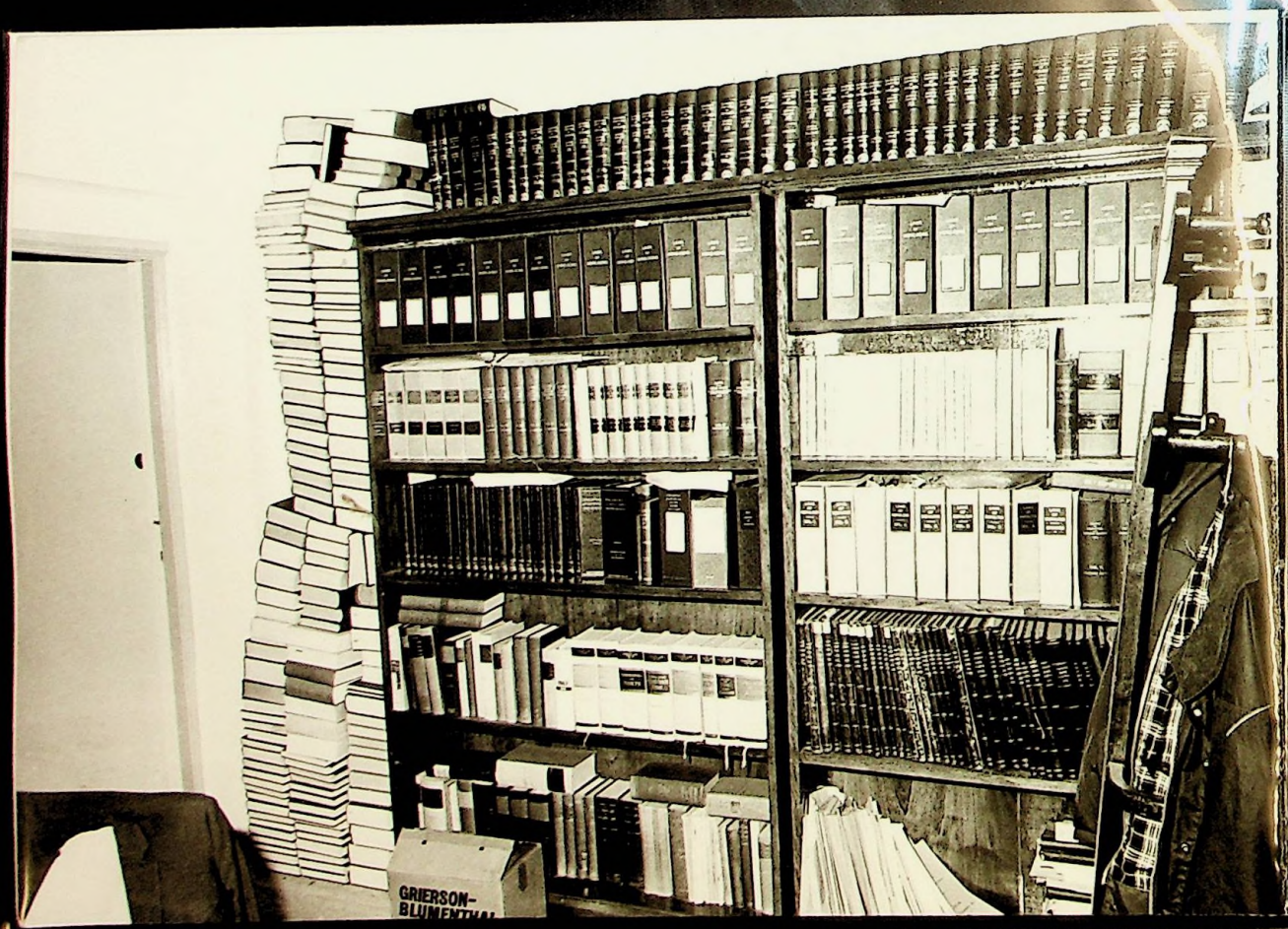


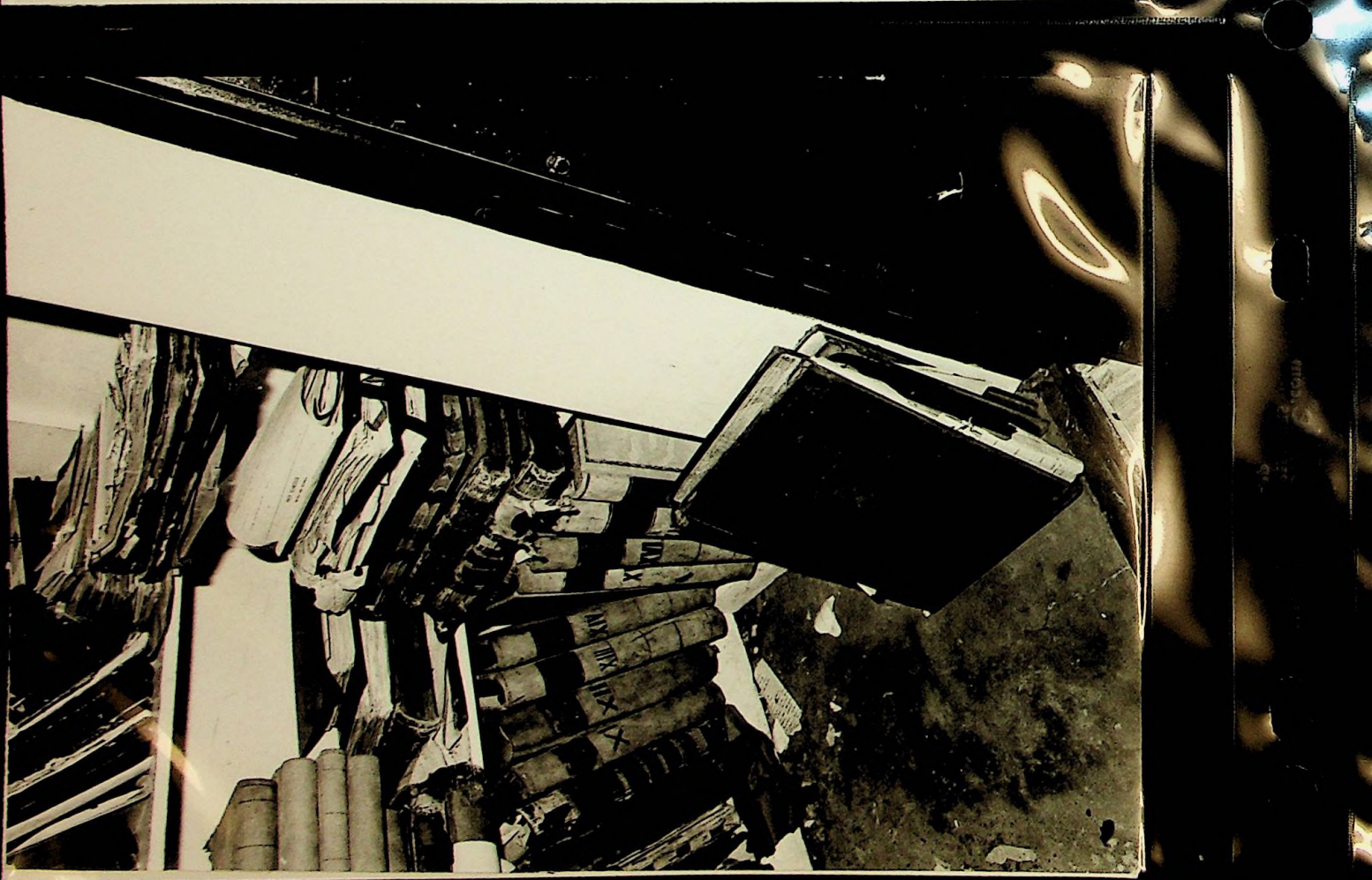
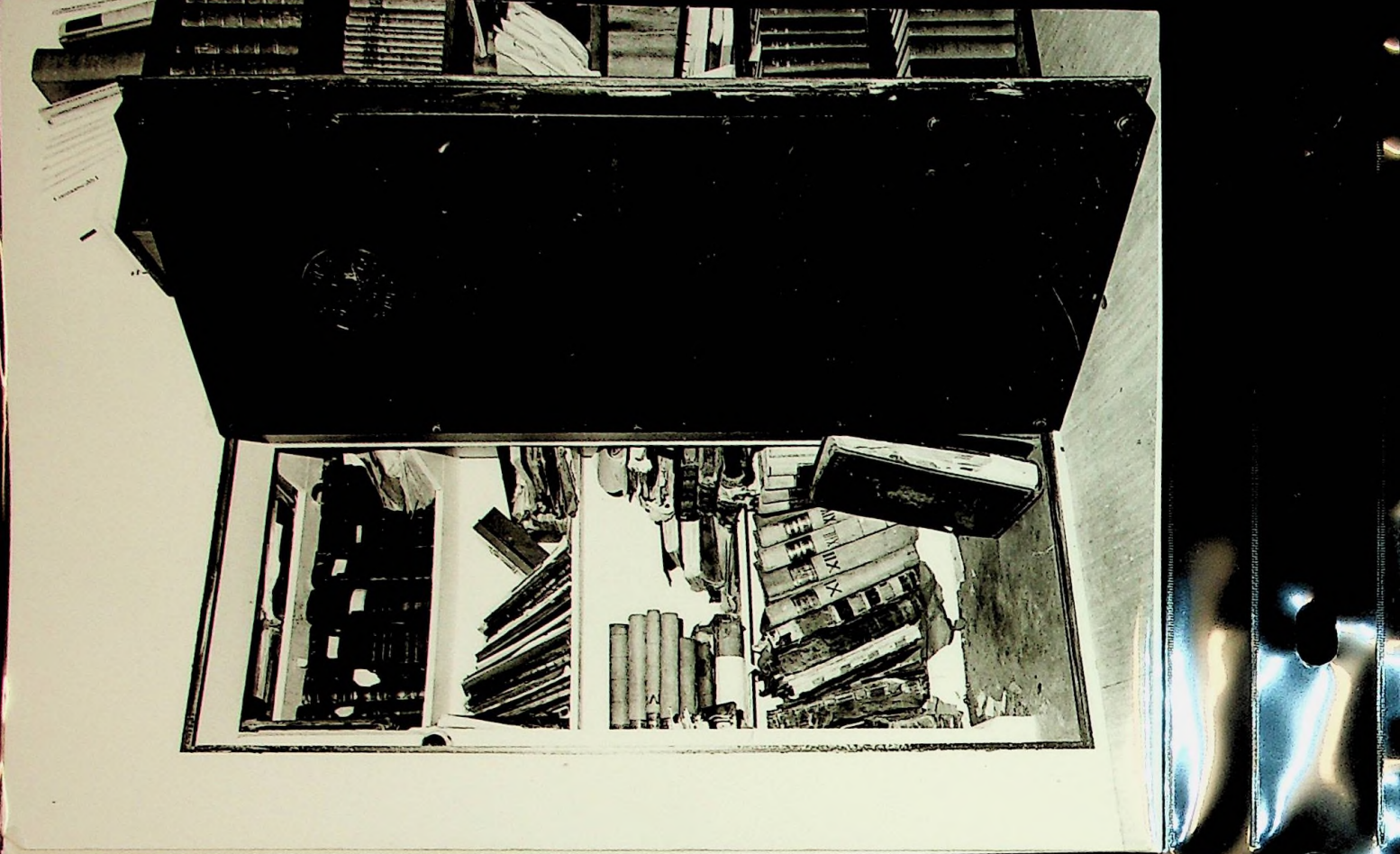
THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
MICHIGAN  
LIBRARY

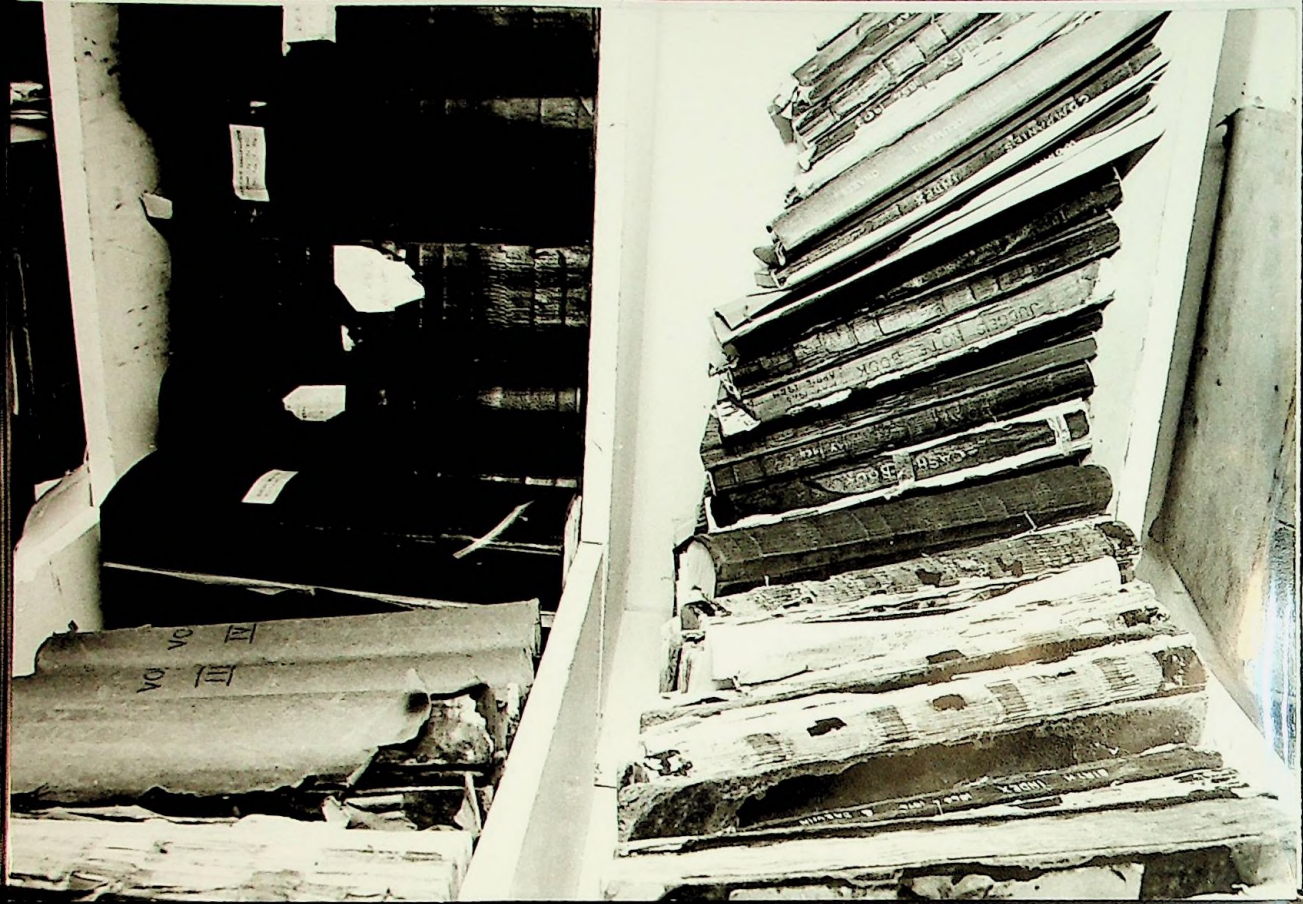




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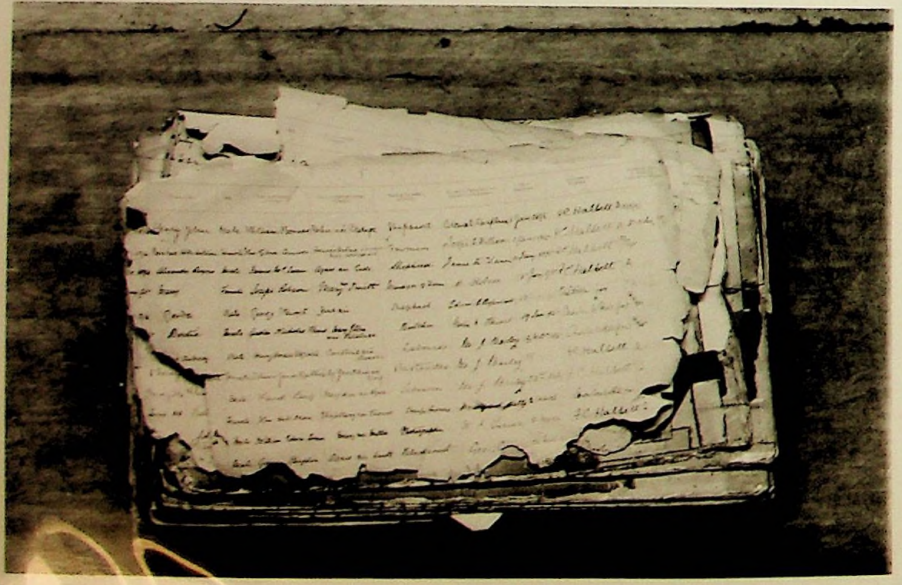










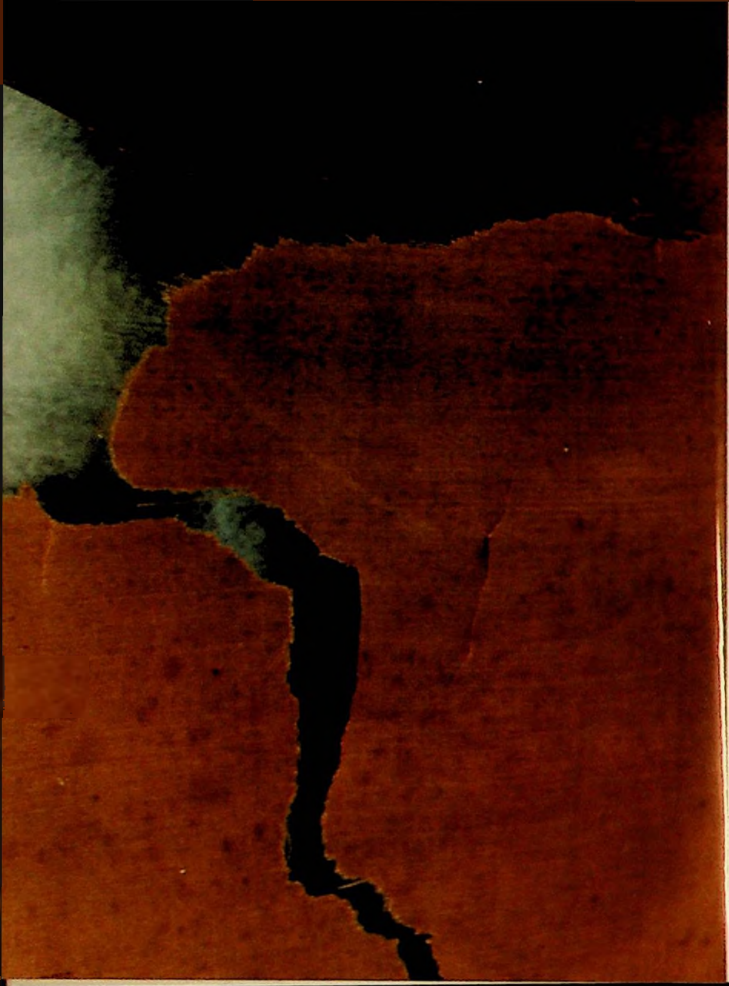


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DUPONT PAPER

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