

## Colonial and State Records <sup>[1]</sup>

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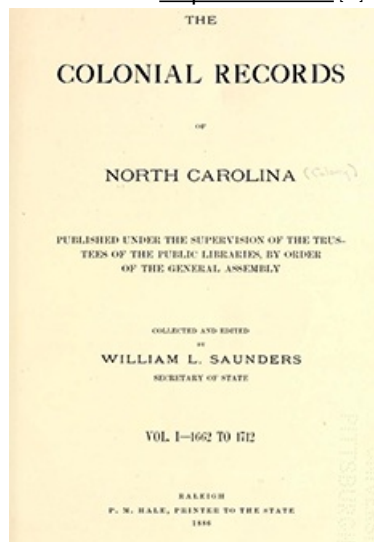
by Robert J. Cain, 2006



Portrait of William Laurence Saunders. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

<sup>[2]</sup>The basic documents of North Carolina's history from 1662 to 1790 were reproduced in two state-sponsored publications, the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* and the *State Records of North Carolina* <sup>[3]</sup>. The *Colonial Records*, issued in ten volumes from 1886 to 1890, was edited by William L. Saunders <sup>[4]</sup>, Confederate veteran, reputed leader of the Ku Klux Klan <sup>[5]</sup>, and secretary of state <sup>[6]</sup> of North Carolina from 1879 to 1891. It contains copies of documents located both in the state and in England. Saunders kept numerous documents in his office, as the secretary of state was then responsible for safekeeping the records of the General Assembly <sup>[7]</sup> and other government units. Some records were located in the courthouses of older counties such as Perquimans <sup>[8]</sup> and Chowan <sup>[9]</sup>. Original documents in England were housed mostly in the Public Record Office in London and were transcribed under the direction of W. Noel Sainsbury, keeper of the records and an editor of the documentary series *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial* <sup>[10]</sup>.

The documents included in the *State Records*, published in 16 volumes between 1895 and 1905, were compiled and edited by Walter Clark <sup>[11]</sup>, justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court <sup>[12]</sup>. Many of them were in state offices, and Clark



Title page of The Colonial Records of North Carolina, 1886. Image

traveled outside North Carolina to Pennsylvania, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C., in search of others. As in the case of the *Colonial Records*, repositories in England, particularly the Public Record Office, furnished a number of important documents. Stephen B. Weeks <sup>[14]</sup>, a former professor at Trinity College <sup>[15]</sup> and collaborator with Clark in the collection of material to be printed, prepared a four-volume index to both series, which was published between 1909 and 1914.

<sup>[13]</sup>Legislative authorization for publication of the records had come in 1881 in the form of a resolution prepared by Saunders and endorsed by Governor Thomas J. Jarvis <sup>[16]</sup>. The resolution permitted the publication of documents dated to 1 Jan.

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1781 "belonging to the state of North Carolina" and entrusted the task to the trustees of the State Library [17], two of whose three members were Saunders and Jarvis. In 1883 another resolution allowed the procurement and publication of any documents of the colonial era that were "missing from the archives of the state." In 1895 and 1901 the General Assembly extended the terminal date for published material from 1781 to 1790 and 1791, respectively.

Publication [18] of the 28,840 pages comprising the multiple volumes of these records for the first time permitted the critical writing of the early history of the state, and the series remains as an indispensable source for any serious scholarship of the period before 1790. The first volume of the Colonial Records of North Carolina [Second Series] [19] appeared in 1963, and a second major effort to collect copies of North Carolina-related documents in British repositories took place from 1969 to 1993. Both of the more recent efforts constitute the Colonial Records Project of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History [20].

### Additional Resources:

"An Act to Authorize the Trustees of Public Library to Publish Certain Public Records, &c, for the Use of the Library. *Laws and resolutions of the State of North Carolina, passed by the General Assembly at its session of 1881*. Raleigh [N.C.]: Ashe and Gatling. 1881. p.143. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/laws-and-resolutions-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-passed-by-the-general-assembly-at-its-session-1881/3889515?item=3898672> [21] (accessed October 31, 2012).

"Colonial and State Records of North Carolina: CSR Home." Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/> [22] (accessed October 31, 2012).

Erin. "More Colonial Records of North Carolina at GHL." *Government and Heritage Library Blog* (blog). Jan 24th, 2011 <http://statelibrarync.org/news/2011/01/more-colonial-records-of-north-carolina-at-ghl/> [23] (accessed October 31, 2012).

*Colonial Records of North Carolina* and the *State Records of North Carolina* at Archive.org: <https://archive.org/search.php?query=%22Colonial%20Records%20of%20North%20Carolina%22> [3] (accessed October 31, 2012).

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"Portrait, Accession # H.1964.123.24 [2]." 1870-1900. North Carolina Museum of History.

Saunders, William Laurence, editor. *The colonial records of North Carolina* Raleigh [N.C.]: P.M. Hale. 1886. <https://archive.org/details/colonialrecordsof01nort> [13] (accessed October 31, 2012).

### Subjects:

American Revolution (1763-1789) [24]

Colonial period (1600-1763) [25]

Gilded Age (1876-1900) [26]

Governmental programs [27]

Literature [28]

N.C. Industrial Revolution (1900-1929) [29]

Politics and government [30]

### Authors:

Cain, Robert J. [31]

### From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. [32]

1 January 2006 | Cain, Robert J.

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