



THE ARCHIVES OF THE HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICE OF THE FRENCH NAVY.

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(Translation from the French text).

THE Archives of the Hydrographic Service of the French Navy may be said to be amongst the most important in existence on account of the high value and great number of documents contained therein; these characteristics are due to the fact that the collection was commenced more than two centuries ago.

We give below a few general notes as to their composition and at the same time call attention to the more important documents which are preserved therein. It would be impossible to mention, in a short article, all the documents of interest but this concise account will suffice, however, to indicate to those who are engaged in research whether it is worth their while to examine these Archives.

The Ordinance dated 19th November 1720, which created the "DÉPÔT DES CARTES, PLANS, JOURNAUX ET MÉMOIRES RELATIFS A LA NAVIGATION", provided that all plans *etc.* should be collected and deposited "in one dépôt". Up till then these had been kept mixed up with other Naval documents. The CHEVALIER DE LUYNES, Commandant of the "Compagnie des gardes du Pavillon-Amiral" was appointed, by an Ordinance dated 20th November 1720, to be responsible for the charge thereof.

Documents soon began to accumulate at the "Dépôt"; they were so numerous and so interesting that as early as 1741, according to the *Histoire de l'Académie* "the Dépôt was considered to be a treasury". In 1751 all navigational journals, which had been collected at the various ports, were deposited therein and in 1755 the Minister of Marine acquired for the "Dépôt" the Astronomical and Geographical library collected by the celebrated scientist GUILLAUME DE L'ISLE.

In 1763 all the documents were taken to Versailles where they were stored in the "Hôtel de la Guerre" — they had been kept previously in one of the halls of the "Pavillon des Petits Pères" in Paris. In 1775 they were brought back again to Paris and deposited in some rooms of the Royal Priory of St. Louis de la Culture, which is now the Lycée Charlemagne.

On 21st April 1780 the King issued orders for the establishment of a Commission to proceed to Lorient, make an inventory of the charts, plans and journals belonging to the (French) East India Company's Marine and to transfer them all to the "Dépôt". These documents, in six packing-cases, reached Paris on 10th September 1780.

In 1781 the Minister of Marine decided to establish at Versailles a "Dépôt of Plans and Fortifications of the Colonies" in which should be collected plans, charts, memoranda etc. dealing with the defence, topography etc. of the Colonies.

All such documents which were at the naval "Dépôt" were transferred and they, together with all the other documents, were placed under the official charge of the "Inspecteur du Dépôt de la Marine".

At the beginning of 1792 this colonial "Dépôt" was merged into the naval "Dépôt" and an inventory of the documents handed over was made; however, the actual transfer was not completed until 1796. Meanwhile an Ordinance of the Committee of Public Safety, dated 20th Prairial, Year II (1794), created a "Land and Sea War Dépôt" which united the "Dépôts" of the Ministries of Marine and War which latter was at 17 Place des Piques (Place Vendôme). This united "Dépôt" lasted only till 29th Thermidor, Year III (1795) when the naval documents were once more housed separately, this time at 11 rue de la Place Vendôme, the D'EGMONT-PIGNATELLI mansion, and the naval "Dépôt" became autonomous again.

On 19th Fructidor of the same year the Committee of Public Safety decided that all astronomical works should be handed over to the "Bureau des Longitudes" but as a *quid pro quo* the "Dépôt" was to receive "all works dealing with navigation, geography, ship-building and arts and sciences which concern the Navy" which were in the various other "Dépôts" and which were found amongst the books seized from the "émigrés". All the memoranda, books, instruments, models, charts, plans and other material related to naval subjects which were in the Museum of Versailles were likewise handed over to it. It is probable that these last originally belonged to the King's library.

On 15th Nivôse, Year VIII, an ordinance issued by the Consuls re-attached the Colonial "Dépôt" to that of Colonial Fortifications and all the relevant documents were taken from the Naval "Dépôt".

Up till now an *Ingénieur Hydrographe* (BUACHE) had sole charge of the Archives, with the title of "Custodian", under the orders of the "Inspecteur Général" of the "Dépôt", but during the following year a "Sub-custodian" (BEAUTEmps-BEAUPRÉ) was appointed.

In 1808 the Minister of Marine issued orders to the "Dépôt" to hand over to the different Divisions of his Ministry any papers, seized from "émigrés" and from the Institutes which had been suppressed, which might be useful in office and, likewise, to send back to the "Archives de la Marine", at Versailles, any other papers which it might appear to be unnecessary to retain in Paris.

Article 6 of the Ordinance of 6th June 1814 stipulated that : — *The senior Ingénieur Hydrographe en Chef shall hold the title of Custodian, he shall be responsible for everything in connection with the preservation of the papers, charts, plans, and instruments.* Article 7 states : *The second Ingénieur en Chef shall hold the title of Assistant Custodian.*

In 1817, at the time of the removal of the "Dépôt" to its present offices in the rue de l'Université, the archives were moved also, but the available space was very small at that time and they were heaped together it being impossible to classify them, but this had never been attempted, so far.

In 1827, Monsieur PARIZOT, a retired Lieutenant, requested the Minister to allow him access not only to the Naval Archives but also to those of the "Dépôt" and those which were still at Versailles and which were under the charge of the "Inspecteur" of the "Dépôt", for the purpose of drawing up historical Memoirs of the French Navy. This request was granted and a "Historical Section" was erected at the Naval "Dépôt". Shortly afterwards another historian, Monsieur JAL, was attached to the Section and in 1840 Monsieur CHASSERIAU was appointed *vice* PARIZOT, deceased.

A decree issued in 1847 raised the Custodian to "Head of the Dépôt" but this was merely a title. At this period an *Ingénieur Hydrographe*, Monsieur GRESSIER, began the classification of the Archives. He should have retired during the following year but, at his request, he was retained on the Active-list, as supernumerary, in order to continue this work which was enormous for it included the classification and evaluation of all the scientific and cartographic documents of the "Dépôt" of which a few, however, had been partially catalogued.

The documents included : —

1. — *The collections of engraved charts, both French and foreign, and of manuscript charts. These should provide information on the subject of every chart which has been made or published either in France or abroad. This section contains 217 portfolios or cases of charts and 98 portfolios of maps.*

2. — *Documents, journals, original charts etc. of the surveying expeditions of Ingénieurs hydrographes and Naval Officers.*

3. — *Documents, memoranda and hydrographic, nautical or scientific notes emanating from the old publications of the Dépôt and those which are coming in daily; these are contained in 481 portfolios.*

Nevertheless, GRESSIER undertook this work. In 1860, when the post of "Custodian", which he held, was abolished, the inventory of the engraved and manuscript charts, minutes, memoranda, sailing directions and documents had been completed; it was contained in 16 folio volumes. It was then proposed to make a systematic classification in the following manner : Series A : *Modern hydrography*, comprising all documents of later date than 1820. Series B : *General hydrography*, before 1820. Series C : *Geographic and Archeological documents* to be returned to the Library. Besides these, the originals of charts and plans published by the Dépôt were to form a separate Section ; the corresponding engraved charts would be classified chronologically and bound in Atlases.

In 1860 the Archives Office was attached to the General Hydrographic Section which had just been created ; by the Decree of 27th October the Ingénieur en Chef was made responsible therefor. Captain LEPS was attached to the "Dépôt" in 1856 to aid GRESSIER in the classification of the documents known as the "petites archives" which consisted of the above mentioned Series B ; he continued this work until 1873.

In 1867 a Ministerial order was issued to the effect that all historical documents in the Dépôt were to be handed to the Archives of the Ministry of Marine and after examination of the contents of the portfolios 2,900 documents were extracted. These were crossed out, in red, from the lists on the portfolios and from the catalogues.

The present condition of the Archives is as follows : —

The Field Books and records of hydrographic expeditions since about 1800, together with the originals and tracings made for the purpose of publishing the charts resulting from these expeditions,

have been collected under the title of "Expeditionary Archives". The Field Books or records were divided into seven geographical divisions; they are either bound in volumes or kept in portfolios. The original charts and tracings are kept in covers and are divided into three divisions.

In this section there will be found also : —

One division consisting of maps (amongst which are some engraved maps); one division of Chart Atlases and Atlases of Maps, including a few manuscript charts and, finally — one division in which are engravings, mechanical, battle and manœuvre plans, *etc.*

The Field Books of the French coasts form one of the seven divisions and are catalogued separately (the catalogue, which is in one volume, of the "Expeditionary Archives" is entitled "Catalogue of the Portfolios" though it includes the Field Books). The originals of the French Coasts form one of the three divisions.

Next come all the documents — correspondence, memoirs and manuscripts — from the earliest times, which are collected under the title of "General Archives". Other such documents are always being added to this collection; the correspondence and memoranda classified by GRESSIER from 1848 to 1860 have been included and placed in the portfolios which were partially emptied at the time of the transfer of documents to the Ministry of Marine in 1867 when, in addition, many complete portfolios were likewise extracted and sent to the National Archives.

At the present time there are six series of folio volumes. The first series includes groups numbered from 1 to 120; in some of the groups the numbers of the volumes are repeated and these are distinguished by a second number (*e. g.* 3²) so that the number of volumes exceeds 120. Again, all the documents have not been bound, some of them remain in portfolios which, however, are numbered as volumes. Group N^o 111 forms a separate unit and consists of 53 volumes numbered 111¹ to 111^{XXXVI} (several of the volumes have the same number), containing the documents dealing with the administration and the correspondence of the Naval Dépôt from 1643 to 1835 (the collection is very incomplete between 1800 and 1835). The volumes N^{os} 1 to 110 have a red label and N^{os} 112 to 120 a green label.

The red and green label volumes are grouped as follows : —

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| 1 to 2 ² - General Hydrography. | Red. |
| 3 to 3 ¹¹ - Nautical astronomy, instruments,
variation, meteorology. | Red. |

4 to 4 ⁷	-	Latitudes and longitudes.	Red.
5 to 103	-	Groups divided geographically	d°
104 & 105	-	Circumnavigatory expeditions.	d°
106	-	Tides and currents.	d°
107	-	Lighthouses	d°
108	-	Sailing Directions.	d°
109	-	Signals and naval tactics.	d°
110	-	Geography, old documents	d°
112	-	Memoirs of Monsieur de Rossel.	Green.
113	-	Manuscripts of Monsieur Buache.	d°
114	-	d° Monsieur de Chabert.	d°
115	-	d° Monsieur de l'Isle.	d°
116	-	d° Monsieur de Fleurieu.	d°
117	-	d° Monsieur de Chastenet de Puységur.	d°
118	-	d° Monsieur de Montgiry.	d°
119	-	d° Monsieur de Kersaint.	d°
120	-	d° Monsieur de Givry.	d°

The second series consists of one volume of documents dealing with the "Ecoles d'Hydrographie" (Schools of Navigation) from 1789 to 1794.

The third series consists of four volumes containing memoranda and documents dealing with Topography and the Art of War.

The fourth series consists of eleven volumes containing foreign newspapers, 1792 to 1794.

The fifth series consists of four volumes of miscellaneous papers.

The sixth series consists of 24 volumes of catalogues and inventories.

The volumes in these last five series have blue labels.

There is a catalogue, in two volumes, of the red label groups and another, likewise in two volumes, of the portfolios made up by GRESSIER of the green label groups and the blue label series. As was mentioned above, the documents (green and blue labels) were either sent to the Ministry of Marine (these are crossed out in red ink) or divided amongst the volumes of the red label groups.

In addition there is an alphabetical index of all these documents, but this was drawn up by GRESSIER and indicates the arrangement according to his portfolios; it is no longer up to date.

The General Archives include also the charts, these are divided up into 222 portfolios in which will be found all the geographic,

hydrographic and other maps and charts both ancient and modern, classified geographically and according to date. Hydrographic charts of all nations — except France — are inserted therein, as are foreign maps, when they are cancelled. The foreign charts which are in use form separate collections classified, in covers, in accordance with the national catalogues.

The French charts, from the very earliest, form a separate collection.

Amongst the most remarkable of the ancient documents are the manuscript and engraved maps. Included in their number is the Map of the World of the Portuguese, CANEIRO (1502), which is known throughout the world; maps of the French coasts dating from 1627; maps of the Mediterranean, of which the oldest is dated 1530; those of the North coast of Africa (Egypt and Tripoli) of 1680, of Tunis and Marocco of 1660. The following of the Portuguese maps deserve to be mentioned: — those of DIEGO MONTIEREZ, ISSO and TEXEIRA of 1573; — of the Dutch: — those of JAN DIRCKS, 1599, and of STIERMANN, 1614; — of the Spanish: — those of JUAN BISENTE, 1696, and of DON ANTONIO DE MARES, 1749.

In these Archives may be found nearly all the documents of the first explorers of Canada. LA SALLE, FRANQUELIN, and others and also those of the great voyages of circumnavigation and of discovery such as d'ENTRECASTEAUX's expedition when searching for LA PÉROUSE (1791-1793), those of BAUDIN to the South Seas (1800-1802), of LOUIS DE FREYCINET round the world (1817-1820), of DUMONT D'URVILLE in the "Astrolabe" (1827-1829) and with the "Astrolabe" and "Zélée" (1837-1839), of LAPLACE (1830-1832 and 1837-1839), of DUPETIT-THOUARS (1836-1839), of VAILLANT (1836-1837) and of BÉRARD (1842-1846).

Various log books, of which some of the most ancient are over two centuries old, may be mentioned; *e. g.*: —

Voyage to the West Indies (1659); voyage to the Indian Sea (1666); voyage to Mexico (1669); voyage to Newfoundland (1676); voyage to the North American coast (1678); voyage to the South American coast (1680); voyage in the Mediterranean (1680); voyage to China (1682); voyage to Louisiana (1684); voyage to the South Sea (Pacific) (1684); voyage to the West coast of Africa (1685); voyage in the Baltic (1694).

Attention is called to the manuscripts of the Astronomer DE L'ISLE, of BUACHE, DE FLEURIEU, DE ROSSEL *etc.*

The General Archives contain also a complete collection of all French charts published since the beginning of the 18th century up to the present time, likewise of nearly all foreign charts. Finally, they include the majority of the publications issued by the Ministries of War, of the Colonies, of the Interior and of Public Works.

LIBRARY.

The Library of the "Service Hydrographique" was founded in 1795 when a Order of the Committee of Public Safety (29th Thermidor, Year III) authorised Monsieur BUACHE, *Ingénieur hydrographe*, to draw from the various other Dépôts in order to form a Library for the Naval and Colonial Dépôt of Charts and Plans.

Thereafter great care was taken to increase it rapidly. Monsieur BRUIX, Minister of Marine wrote on 20th Pluviôse, Year VII, to Monsieur DE ROSILY, Director and Inspector General of the Dépôt, in the following terms : — « The intention of the *Directoire Exécutif* being to maintain the existing library at the Naval Dépôt of Charts and Plans and to make it, as far as possible, the only establishment of its kind, I have given orders to the effect that everything which should be therein should be sent to you. I have also recommended that you be provided with two copies of all laws and orders relating to the Naval Service in order that the digests, which should be made for the Library of the Dépôt, should not be incomplete. » When, in 1843, the 5th and last volume of the "General Catalogue of the Books in the various Libraries of the Navy" was issued, of the 17,000 items enumerated the Dépôt Library alone had 8,000 representing a total of 20,000 volumes. At the present time it has about 60,000 volumes.

Besides the principal works, the manuscripts, charts and atlases of charts and maps contained therein and which form a collection of the highest value, there will be found also a great quantity of documents which owe their value to their rarity or to their scientific worth. The Library of the "Service Hydrographique" differs from that of the Ministry of Marine in that it is specialised in the subjects which directly interest the Service, whereas the latter Library has a great diversity of works dealing with every branch of human knowledge. The former contains, almost exclusively, collections and works dealing with navigation, general astronomy, nautical astronomy, physical and mathematical science, hydrography, geodesy, meteorology, geography, voyages, exploration *etc.*

The new books and French and foreign journals and periodicals which are bought by, presented to, or are received in exchange by the Library, keep the personnel informed of the progress in geography and science

Well arranged in four large halls provided with glass-fronted book-cases and with galleries, it offers full facilities for work and research and readers have at their disposal a double catalogue, one arranged alphabetically and the other according to subjects. Visitors not belonging to the French Navy may be admitted by special authorisation from the Minister of Marine.

Nearly every one of the volumes in the Library is bound.

The manuscripts, which number 398, are filed separately and have a catalogue of their own.

The Archives of the "Service Hydrographique" contained at one time some documents which were transferred to the National Archives where they may still be consulted. They are as follows : —

(1) The navigational journals. These are divided into two main divisions — those dating from before 1800 and those since 1800. The former are subdivided into more than 32 and the latter into 9 geographical subdivisions. The second division has also separate subdivisions for *auxiliary steam* and *full powered steam ships*.

(2) The portfolios containing the original draft documents of the great voyages of discovery (BOUGAINVILLE, LA PÉROUSE, D'ENTRECASTEAUX, and others), as well as those of the more recent hydrographic surveys.

(3) The manuscripts of early hydrographic surveyors such as BELLIN and DE L'ISLE ; and

(4) atlases of early foreign charts and maps.
