

[L. & M.]
[D, 000-8-8-96.]

Local & Munl. (1895.) Department.

MISCELLANEOUS.

G.O., No. 179 L.

DATED 29th January 1895.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Destruction of Records.

Informing, with remarks, the Public Department that most of the suggestions, made by the Acting Superintendent of the General Records have already been adopted in the Local and Municipal Department.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

[7]

Miscellaneous.

LOCAL AND MUNICIPAL DEPT.	
G.O., DATED	29-1-95
No.	1792

INDEXED.

When given for copying.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Destruction of Records

Informing with remarks, the Public Deptt. that most of the suggestions made by the Adg. Supdt. of the General Records have already been adopted in the L. & M. Deptt.

READ AGAIN ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, DATED
189 No. MISCELLANEOUS.

ENCLOSURES.

CURRENT No.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

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BACK PAPER, No.

OF 189

FURTHER PAPER, No.

OF 189

Local & Municipal Dept.
PR. CURRENT No. 262

From

The Public Dept.

No. 2

Dated 4-1-94

Referring for remarks report of
the H. Supt. General Records
reg. the destruction of records.

(with order)

To

The Public Department.

1/10
25/1/95

C.S.
This

Order 29-1-95 No. 179

There is no distinction
in the Local and Municipal
Department between miscellaneous
papers of the ordinary series and
those of the routine series, as in
the Public and other Departments
of the Chief Secretariat, and there
is no need for this, as the existing
rules of this Department provide
for the destruction of all useless
papers under all heads after a
certain number of years. The other
suggestions made by the Acting
Superintendent of the General Records
appear to be unobjectionable and
most of them have already been
adopted in this Department.

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READ AGAIN ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, DATED
189 , No. , MISCELLANEOUS.

FURTHER PAPER, No.

OF 189

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LETTER—from

MR. J. T. COOMBES,
Ag. Superintendent, General Records.

To

THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF
FORT St. GEORGE.

SIR,

With reference to G.O., dated 29th August 1894, No. 426, regarding the destruction of records, I beg to submit the following report.

2. Several attempts were made from time to time in view to eliminate the useless portion of the records of the General Record Department. The first of them was in 1837, when Mr. George Garrow was appointed for the purpose. His examination, however, was confined to a portion of the records of a single department of certain periods and the result of his examination is not fully recorded—*vide* paragraph 6 of Talboys Wheeler's Hand-book to the Madras Records. The subject was again noticed

G.O., dated 28th April 1858, No. 496. by Government in E.M.C., dated 21st April 1854, No. 381, but it was not till four years after that Mr. Hudleston was appointed to the duty. This officer, however, had other special duties to attend to, which hardly left him any time for the examination of records and was consequently permitted to carry it on as he had leisure for it. So far as the weeding of the records was concerned Mr. Hudleston hardly did

G.O., dated 14th August 1853, No. 1014. anything. The next attempt in the same direction was in 1860 when Mr. Wheeler was appointed for the purpose—*vide* G.O., dated 26th May 1860, No. 768. He made a thorough examination of the records and embodied the result of his labours in his valuable report known as the Hand-book to the Madras Records. In paragraphs 202 to 207 of that report he described and classed several old documents as "rubbish", which were all destroyed under his own supervision—*vide* G.O., dated 26th January 1861, No. 123. A weeding of the useless books and papers was made in 1875 when

G.O., dated 22nd December 1888, R. No. 1060. a lot of them were sent to Messrs. Franck and Co. to be sold by public auction. " " 18th February 1889, R. No. 178. Again in 1888 and 1889, Mr. R. C. C. Carr and subsequently Mr. A. Butterworth

were placed on special duty in the General Record Department at the time of the removal of the department to the present building. A large quantity of superfluous books, pamphlets and maps and even some spare copies of Proceedings which accumulated here were got rid of under the orders of the Chief Secretary, some by distribution to other offices, some by sale in auction, and others by destruction.

3. Thus it will be observed that a great deal has already been effected towards the elimination of useless and superfluous records in the Record Department. In fact all the records from the earliest date down to the date of the introduction of printing need not be interfered with as they were reported upon by Mr. Wheeler and most of the useless ones destroyed. The work done by Messrs. Carr and Butterworth renders unnecessary any examination of the books, pamphlets and maps lodged in the Record Department, though some have been subsequently transferred from the libraries of the Chief and Public Works Secretariats to this department, the sifting of which can well be taken up with the work now being done in connection with the Chief Secretariat library. In these circumstances I submit that it will do at present to confine attention to the records of the several departments from about 1857 when printing was

resorted to, and eliminate therefrom, as described in the succeeding paragraphs, such as are unnecessary for future reference in order to make room for the growing annual additions from the several Secretariat departments. I would concurrently with the above proposal submit that some plan should be devised by which the current reference department of each Secretariat should itself undertake the work of clearing out the useless records so that on their transfer to the General Record Department at the end of the seventh year they could be stowed away without further disturbance. By this arrangement the present delegation of officers for special duty in the Record Department from time to time will be obviated.

4. The records from about 1857 to 1885 at present lodged in the General Record Department have been transferred by, and appertain to, the Departments and Secretariats specified below:—

Public.	} Chief Secretariat.
Judicial.	
Financial.	
Political.	
Marine.	
Educational.	
Ecclesiastical.	
Legislative.	} Revenue Secretariat.
Local and Municipal.	
Revenue.	
Pension.	} Military Secretariat.
Famine.	
Military.	} Public Works Secretariat.
Public Works including Irrigation, Railway and Chief Engineer's Departments.	

The records lodged are of various descriptions and may be brought under one of the following classes:—

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Printed volumes. | (4) Bundles of Proceedings. |
| (2) Manuscript volumes. | (5) „ of other papers. |
| (3) File books. | |

Under Class (1) may be shown the monthly and quarterly volumes of Proceedings of the several departments including the Forest Proceedings volumes, indexes, tables of contents, volumes of the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, volumes of the Abstract Proceedings of the Legislative Council, volumes of Despatches to the Secretary of State, Press Lists of Ancient Records, &c.

Under Class (2) may be shown the receipt, despatch and circulation registers including diary registers and key books of the Public Works Department, the registers of Parliamentary papers and Blue books with indexes, general registers of records, &c.

Under Class (3) will come the files of despatches from the Secretary of State, of telegrams, of memoranda, of demi-officials, of office orders and of pay abstracts and acquittance rolls, &c.

Under Class (4) may be mentioned the bundles of printed orders, their originals, originals of those not printed in the ordinary and routine series, of petition records, of Famine Proceedings, Proceedings of the Irrigation, Railway, and Chief Engineer's Departments, &c.

Under Class (5) will come the bundles of Legislative Bills, of despatches, of lodged currents, of official memoranda, of office-notes, of Government of India Proceedings and of Board's Proceedings, &c.

5. The true test for the preservation of a record is its demand for future reference, and accordingly the less the chances of a record being required for future reference the greater the element of safety in its elimination. It is, therefore, submitted that the propriety of any proposal on the subject should be judged with reference to the above fact.

Of the five classes of records referred to in the foregoing paragraph, the first includes some of the most standing records required for permanent use, such as the Government Proceedings volumes. These are now consulted for easy reference and when neither the original nor a copy is available, but may be required for centuries, and, as a reprint of them will always cost much, I submit that, exclusive of one complete set for reference, four other sets may with advantage be preserved, the remainder, if any, being destroyed. As the Chief Secretary decided that three copies of Blue books which are strictly records of the Home Government should be preserved, I trust that the above proposal to retain five copies of the Proceedings volumes forming the permanent records of this Government will not be considered too liberal. The indexes and tables of contents come next in the order of importance, the former being more useful. They have constantly to be referred to in tracing proceedings and are therefore likely to become mutilated after a few years. Of the indexes, one set for use and four for stock, and of the tables one for use and three for stock, may be preserved. As regards the volumes of Board's Proceedings, two copies are at present lodged in the Record Department—one received from the Public Department and the other from the Revenue. It is submitted that both sets may be retained, especially under recent orders of the Chief Secretary all the spare copies of the Board's Proceedings have either been destroyed or transferred to the Board of Revenue. Of the volumes of Abstract Proceedings of Legislative Council, hardly more than six sets need be preserved in the Record Department as they are all notified in the Gazette and published in book form. As regards the volumes of Despatches to England, maintenance of them separately has been discontinued in the Chief Secretariat since 1877, they being since embodied in the Proceedings volumes in their proper place. Though the other Secretariats have continued to maintain them separately, it is a question for consideration whether the procedure in the Chief Secretariat cannot be followed also by them, whereby some room can be saved. So far as the volumes exist, one set may be preserved for reference when any individual spare copies are not available. As to the Press Lists of Ancient Records that are under preparation, perhaps six copies may do for permanent deposit here, but consideration of this may be deferred till the work is finished.

In Class (2) there are some records which are very useful, such as receipt books, while others such as circulation registers may be got rid of. The value of the receipt registers consists in their utility in facilitating the trace of Government Orders on currents or letters received when the latter alone, as is often done by subordinate officers, are referred to. They are therefore worthy of preservation. The Public Works Department maintain two registers for noting the receipt of currents and marking disposals thereon, while other departments maintain only one. In one of them, however, the currents are classified under certain heads, but it is a question for consideration whether the utility of this overweighs the convenience and simplicity of maintaining one register whereby some saving of space could also be effected. The circulation and despatch registers as maintained in these days are of hardly any use after the purposes for which they are kept have been served and may therefore be destroyed. The registers of Parliamentary papers and Blue books should for obvious reasons be preserved as they form the tables and indexes of those records. They are at present in manuscript and I think they may be printed, supplements being added once in every two years. The different kinds of records of each Secretariat are noted in detail in a general register which thus forms an epitome of them. These are very useful records, but some of them are decaying by age and a few entries therein have to be brought up for some years. I think it will do to replace them by new volumes completing the entries up to date.

The records comprised in Class (3) are generally of an unimportant character and their destruction must only be a matter of time, except perhaps in the case of the Secretary of State's despatch files. There are these files regularly from very early times

and all the departments maintain them. To break them up will involve a lot of time and trouble inasmuch as they will have to be enclosed in the originals of the Proceedings disposing of them. For these reasons, I think they may be preserved. Files of telegrams pertaining to the Public Department are lodged at present here up to 1874 and there are also some of these files received from the other departments. They were of ephemeral use and may now be destroyed. In the case of the official memoranda, demi-official and office order files, it is possible that some important papers may be found among them which were not regularly brought on record, as also papers which may be closely connected with any Government Order or were issued preparatory to the passing of any Government Order which were not added to the originals of the orders concerned. With the exception of such papers, the files may be destroyed. As to the files of pay abstracts and acquittance rolls, their value diminishes with years, and, leaving a margin of 50 years for the purpose of verifying the services of any employé, those prior to that period may be got rid of.

The records included in Class (4) form the disposals of Government on "currents" or letters received which are therefore the records proper; they are constantly required for reference. Where Proceedings are printed there is record of them at present in two or rather three forms. There are spare copies which are commonly taken out for reference. Then there are originals in manuscripts which are consulted in view to examine the remarks, if any, made by the Members of Government or for any statements or appendices which might not have been printed or for the purpose of tracing the former and further papers which are invariably noted on the back and on the face of the covering sheets. There are besides the volumes of printed Proceedings adverted to in Class (1). As regards spare copies of Government Orders, as a rule six of them will do in the Record Office provided that, when they contain any rules or notifications, on account of which they are likely to be required more often for reference, a dozen may be retained and the surplus copies may be destroyed. As regards originals, where they are wholly printed and when they do not contain any important minutes by the Members of Government or notes by the Secretaries, they may well be destroyed. This will effect a good deal of saving of accommodation in the Record Office. Sometimes in an original there are bulky enclosures which are probably replies on a general subject and are referred to or are abstracted in the printed Government Order or there may be cumbersome statements and reports which are all in print. All these could be well destroyed. But knowing as I do how useful the conventional "back" and "further" entries are in those originals in finding out the connected correspondence which it is sometimes very difficult to trace in the indexes, I would strongly recommend that when an original is destroyed a copy should be substituted with all those entries. An elimination of the useless papers on the lines suggested above will, no doubt, materially reduce the size of the present bundles. I would also suggest that manuscript originals—they may be clubbed together so as to form only one set. This can easily be done. A material reduction can also be made in the miscellaneous set. Prior to the introduction of Dr. Maclean's rules on the subject in the Chief Secretariat there was no distinction between the miscellaneous papers in the ordinary series and those in the routine series. Both were shown in one series. While the lodged papers were also included in them. These "lodged" papers can well be got rid of as also papers of a routine nature. The present routine series papers are not indexed and indicate records not required for future reference. The above remark is applicable to the records of all the departments, though in the other Secretariats the distinction between the miscellaneous papers in the ordinary series and those in the routine series is not observed. This, however, seems to deserve consideration in all the Secretariat Departments, as such a classification will facilitate work at the time of destruction.

Class (5) includes all the miscellaneous papers not covered by the preceding class some of which are now and then required for reference. In the case of the Legislative Bills and the Despatches from and to the Secretary of State, I would recommend six copies of each of them being preserved, with the proviso even here that in the case of despatches laying down any important rule another six copies be kept. As regards office notes and memoranda, only such as are important need be preserved, the

rest being destroyed, and the papers to be preserved being as far as possible attached to the connected orders. The necessity of hereafter transferring these papers of transitory use to the Record Department seems to be doubtful and some arrangement in the several Secretariat Departments by which these records could be done away with without having to be transferred to the Record Department seems to deserve consideration. Lodged papers, as has already been suggested, need not be preserved. As regards spare copies of Board's Proceedings, there were several accumulations of them some time back which, under the orders of the Chief Secretary, have all been either retransferred to the Board or destroyed as there are volumes of the Proceedings for reference here and copies could always be easily procured from that office. Finally, there remains the question of the disposal of the Government of India Proceedings, of which there are heaps of copies received from the several departments. These copies are now and then called for and will not be easily procurable when destroyed. I therefore submit that three copies of each arranged according to date and departments be preserved and the rest destroyed. It may be stated generally that spare copies of Proceedings of the subordinate officers need not be preserved as they can always be obtained from them except in the case of High Court circulars of which a file is maintained in the Reference Department.

6. I have endeavoured in the foregoing paragraphs to point out what records in the General Record Department might with advantage be destroyed. The suggestions, of course, are very general and for obvious reasons each department must have its own special rules. To make, however, the proposed weeding a final and successful attempt two things are necessary. First, it must be laid down as a rule that no "rubbish" should be thrown into the Record Department, as is too often done now, and nothing should be sent unless through some responsible officer who must see that what is sent is for permanent deposit. Second, as regards the records hereafter to be transferred to the Record Office, the task of eliminating therefrom the useless portion should every year be undertaken by the responsible officers concerned. Some subject to such rules as may be laid down by the responsible officers of the Local and Municipal Department rules on the subject have already been framed in the office-note of the and probably under an arrangement such as that described in the office-note of the Examiner, Public Works, dated 12th August 1892, No. 685 C., recorded in G.O., dated 25th August 1892, No. 2365 W., may render the work easy.

7. The above proposals will involve the maintenance of a special establishment for some time longer, but it is believed that they, while at once tending towards the elimination of a lot of superfluous and worthless papers and the provision of greater accommodation for the incoming records, will also result in the long run in economy, as the necessity for deputing officers from time to time will once for all be obviated.

8. I would take this opportunity to urge the desirability of taking action in the matter without much delay, as, in spite of the increased accommodation afforded so lately as in 1889, the department is full now, and the records of the several Secretariat Departments now being, and that will be, transferred hereafter will be exposed to the damages likely to be caused by being on the floor.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) J. T. COOMBES,
Ag. Supt., General Records.

FORT ST. GEORGE,
28th September 1894.

Referred to the Revenue, Public Works and Local and Municipal Departments for remarks.

for Chief Secretary.

To the Revenue Department.
" Public Works Department.
" Local and Municipal Department.

Local & Municipal Dept.
 PR. CURRENT No. 264

From
 The Public Dept.

No. 2

Dated 4-1-94

Referring for remarks report of
 the H. Supt. General Records
 reg. the destruction of records.

(with order) To
 The Public Department.
 PAB
 25/1/95

CS
 This Order 29-1-95 No. 179
 There is no distinction
 in the Local and Municipal
 Department between Miscellaneous
 papers of the ordinary series and
 those of the routine series, as in
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READ AGAIN G.O., No.
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STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

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