

INVENTORY DESCRIPTION

Great Britain. Audit Office.

Claims, American Loyalists : Series I (AO 12) :
1776-1831.

NO. 14 GREAT BRITAIN: Public Record Office, A.O. 12, Claims, American
A.O. 12 Loyalists - Series I

Transcripts, 1775-1831. 7.2 m. Microfilm, 1776-1831.
30 reels, B-1154 to B-1183. Finding Aid Nos. 90 and
250.

Audit Office 12 consists of 146 volumes which contain the first series of papers relating to the claims for compensation submitted by persons who alleged that they had suffered losses during the American War of Independence because of their loyalty to the British Crown. The Peace Treaty of 1783, by which the war was concluded, provided for payment of these claims by the U.S.A. Infractions of the treaty, however, led to many delays and subsequent negotiations before a new Treaty of Amity was signed in 1794. Between 1784 and 1794 the British government paid many pensions and compensations to Loyalists by authority of a series of Acts of Parliament, beginning with Stat. 23 Geo III, c. 80.

In 1794 the new treaty made arrangements for the settlement of all debts due to British subjects prior to 1783 and for the appointment of a joint Commission to carry out the terms of the agreement, but the American Commissioners seceded in 1799. A new convention was signed in 1802, which provided for the mutual payment of claims by British and the U.S.A., and Commissioners to implement the convention were appointed by Stat. 43 Geo. III, c. 39. Under this Act, claims to the value of almost £5 million were considered. Of these, claims amounting to £1,420,000 were approved and a fund of £659,493 was divided on a pro rata basis between the successful claimants. The transcripts are also available on 16 mm microfilm (reels C-12903 to C-12905).

The Public Archives of Canada has microfilmed all the volumes in this class, which contains the records of the Commission. These include:

Volumes 1-56, "Evidence". Reels B-1155 to B-1163.

The entry books containing the evidence of witnesses at each hearing, preceded by a copy of the claimant's memorial and schedule of losses. The volumes are arranged alphabetically according to the State in which the loss occurred. Within the volumes the arrangement is chronological according to the dates of the hearings. Each volume contains an index to the claims in it.

Volumes 57-70, "Decisions". Reels B-1168 to B-1170.

Books providing a short summary of the Commissioners' findings on each claim based on the hearings recorded in the volumes of evidence above. Each volume contains an index to its claims.

Volumes 71-93, "Examinations, Army and Navy". Reels B-1170 to B-1176.

Those claims concerned with losses sustained through furnishing supplies to the British Army and Navy during the war. Volume 93 provides the index to the claims in the preceding six volumes.

Volumes 91-146, "Various". Reels B-1176 to B-1183.

A heterogeneous mixture of material which includes volumes containing further matter belonging to the three categories above, as well as to such others as new claims, claims withdrawn, debts due to Loyalists, the Commissioners' reports, minute books, account books, contingent expenses, indexes and lists, confiscation laws of the States, secretary's letters, other letters and letterbooks, and statements to the House of Commons. Many of these volumes are indexed and those that are may be identified in Finding Aid 250.

Though all the books extant have been microfilmed, it should be noted that the room in Somerset House in which the books and papers of the Commission were deposited when the Commission was wound up, was broken into and many papers and books carried off. Fourteen books are known to be missing from the Public Record Office's collection, and consequently from the Public Archives of Canada's copies.

In addition to the otherwise complete series on microfilm, the Public Archives of Canada has a number of volumes which have also been transcribed; these can be identified in the combined descriptive shelf and microfilm conversion list in Finding Aid 250. Notable among the transcribed items are all the volumes of evidence and decisions relating to the Connecticut claims, and volume 109 which contains the reports and statements of the Commissioners. The register in the centre of volume 109 is said to contain the names of all claimants. These are alphabetically arranged in a tabular statement which gives the number of the successful claimant's certificate, the province of loss, the amount of the claim, the sum columns originally allowed, and the revised allowance, as well as ten other columns of information. At the end of each letter of the alphabet are the claims which were disallowed, and those examined in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Canada.

The accounts of the payments of pensions, etc., are preserved in A.O. 1, Declared Accounts, above. Papers supporting the claims are in A.O. 13, Claims, American Loyalists - Series II, following. Other records of the Commissioners are described in Treasury 50 (q.v.)

Finding Aid 90 contains the shelf list of Audit Office material on microfilm at the Public Archives of Canada. Finding Aid 250 contains a consolidated shelf and microfilm conversion list, and also provides tables of contents for volumes 1, 2, 109, 123 and 124 and an alphabetical index to the claims deriving from Connecticut. This last gives cross reference to volumes 1, 2 and 57 as well as to A.O. 13, volume 76, and may serve as a model from which the typical arrangement of the material relating to the claims in A.O. 12 and A.O. 13 (q.v) can easily be seen and understood. An alphabetical index of all claimants, which was compiled for B.F. Stevens, has been microfilmed on reel B-1154, and is also available as a separate bound volume in Finding Aid 250.

Of the published aids mentioned in the MG 14 Introduction, those applicable to this class are the Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office, II; Lists of the Records of The Treasury, The Paymaster General's Office, The Exchequer and Audit Department and The Board of Trade, to 1837, preserved in the Public Record Office, no. XLVI; and Guide to the Materials in London Archives for the History of the United States since 1783, by C.O. Paullin and F.L. Paxson. Paullin and Paxson, it should be noted, refer to this class by its former number, which was A.O. 3. As explained in the MG 14 Introduction and in Finding Aid 250, the 1904 Report of the Ontario Archives can be used as an index to the claims in this class.

Because of the heavy interlibrary loan demand for the Stevens Index and the register of claims in volume 109, these two items, together with the A.O. 12 list in List no. XLVI and the equivalent index and list for A.O. 13, have been microfilmed and are available on reel C-9821. Volume 109 has been filmed from the transcript copy, which is very much more legible than the original. When, therefore, the original is particularly required, it should be specifically requested.

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B. Driscoll

B.R.A.M. Section