

CLASS E

INTRODUCTION

Class E contains records of the executive department of government as it has been organized under the traditional principle of a three-fold separation of powers. The class is subdivided into five parts: Part 1, Executive Department Journals; Part 2, Governor's Letterbooks and Papers; Part 3, Secretary's Journals and Papers; Part 4, Proceedings of Extraordinary Executive Bodies; and Part X, Miscellany. The division into parts is based on a distribution of the executive function among the various officers and bodies that have carried on the work of the department from time to time.

Part 1 contains the journals that have recorded the day by day exercise of the executive authority. These were kept in the form of large manuscript ledgers and in only a few cases have they been printed at a later time. In the colonial period they took the form of a record of the Governor and Council sitting in an executive capacity and contain a breadth of information due to the general advisory and limiting capacity of the Council. Organically the Governor and Council of the colonial period represented a fusion of the functions of the executive, legislative and judicial powers. Usually the record of these different functions was segregated in separate journals. In some cases, however, the union of functions is demonstrated by the interspersion of records of the executive, the legislative and, even at times, the judicial functions on pages of the same ledger. Such cases offer a practical problem in the classed arrangement scheme and necessitate a combination reel symbol E.1 and A.1 a, and/or F.1. In some cases during the transition period from colony to state this body continued as a Provincial Council.

In most of the states after independence the Council lost its significance as an integral part of the executive organ and became a perfunctory body. In accord with the Revolutionary distrust of the colonial Governor, the framework of government provided in the first state constitutions placed a predominance of authority on the legislature by conferring much of the traditional executive power upon that organ. Gradually, a balance of power was attained and an independent executive department with a responsible head freed from legislative control evolved.

In some of the New England states, however, a virile Council was carried over into statehood and continued to play an important role as an organ of administration as that fourth function of government began to develop and expand. Likewise, during the first stage of the government of the western territories, before provision was made for an elective legislative assembly, a union of legislative, judicial and executive powers was vested in an appointive Governor and Judges. Their journals also show that certain administrative duties were conferred upon and exercised by them.

Part 1 of Class E affords a series where the records of all of the incidents of the executive authority were kept in a general ledger.