

Teaching with Documents, and Documents, and More Documents: The National Archives Digital Partnerships

Lee Ann Potter

What if...

...you were teaching a lesson on the French Revolution, and rather than assigning your students to read a section in their textbook on the subject, they could read Thomas Jefferson's letter to John Jay describing what he witnessed in Paris during early July 1789, including the storming of the Bastille?

...you were teaching a unit on ratification, and rather than asking your students to simply read Article V of the U.S. Constitution, you could invite them to study the documents that detail the ratification of Amendments 11-27, and see for themselves how the process actually works?

...you were teaching a lesson about the assassination of President Lincoln, and rather than telling your students about conspiracy theories, they could read the actual correspondence received and sent by the military commission investigating the assassination; summaries of evidence of possible use in the trial; proceedings of and exhibits used in the court martial; and a record of the trial published in the newspaper the *Daily National Intelligencer*?

Well, they can!

New Online Resources

For decades, the Papers of the Continental Congress, documents that detail the ratification of Amendments 11–27, and the Lincoln Assassination Papers have been in the holdings of the National Archives and available to researchers on microfilm. But now, due to a new partnership with Footnote.com, all of these documents and thousands more are available online free of charge. Millions more are available through a paid subscription. A partial list of the available collections is included in the sidebar to this article, and a complete list is online at www.footnote.com/documents.

And the partnership with footnote.com is just the beginning.

In recent years, the National Archives has entered into similar partnerships with Google, Amazon, and the Generations Network (ancestry.com) to make a significant portion of the billions of permanently valuable federal records held by the agency available online.

The Google partnership has focused on audiovisual materials. An index page available at video.google.com/nara.html, serves as a gateway to streaming video of hundreds of films in the holdings of the National Archives created by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Department

of the Interior, and the Office of War Information. Films with titles such as *American Army Women Serving on All Fronts*, 1944; *Japanese Sign Final Surrender*, 1945; *The John Glenn Story*, 1963; and *The Eagle Has Landed*, 1969, can be viewed online or downloaded to a portable device. In addition to being available through google.com, they are also available through the Archival Research Catalog on the National Archives website at www.archives.gov/research/arc. Simply conduct a digital copies search on the keyword “Google” for a complete list of available titles and links to the footage.

The partnership with Amazon makes available DVDs on demand. A search on the phrase “National Archives and Records Administration” under “movies & TV” on the www.amazon.com website will generate a list of more than 1,700 titles that are available for purchase. Included among them are *West Berlin*, 1961; *UFO—Friend Or Fantasy?*, 1966; *Body of Iron*, *Soul of Fire: The Stature of Liberty*, 1986; *Reagan's Mission*, 1987; and more. You can preview brief segments of all of these films by conducting a digital copies search on the keyword “Amazon” through the Archival Research Catalog on the National Archives website at www.archives.gov/research/arc.

The partnership with the Generations Network features records of particular interest to genealogists. All of the federal census schedules from 1790 to 1930, World War I draft registration cards, ships' passenger lists, naturaliza-

continued on page 112

Image Information

Collection Title: Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 1763-1826
 Publication Title: P. Continental Congress
 Item Number: 87
 Publication Number: 1
 Item Description: 1
 Thomas Jefferson, 1
 Item Title: Ltrs from Thomas Jefferson, 1763-1826
 Volume Number: 2
 Volume Title: Vol 2
 Page: 532
 Subject: ALGIERS
 Subject: ARMY, FRI
 Subject: ARTOIS, C
 Subject: BAILLY, JE
 Subject: BARENTIN
 Subject: BOURBOU
 Subject: BREAU
 Subject: BRETEUIL
 Subject: BROGLIE
 Date: 19 Jul 1789
 Abstract: Jefferson, J. Jay. 12 p.
 Roll Number: 115

Flag for review

About This Title

Official records of the colonies and the First Continental Congress (1774) addressed by the British. The Continental Congress created the Declaration of Independence and the government. The Confederation (1776-1787) was a loose confederation of independent states, and represented the new nation, as founding fathers.

About This Document

532

Dear Sir

Paris July 19. 1789.

I am become very uneasy lest you should have adopted some channel for the conveyance of your letters to me which is unfaithful. I have none from you of later date than Nov. 25. 1788. and of consequence no acknowledgement of the receipt of any of mine since that of Aug. 11. 1788 since that period I have written to you of the following dates. 1788. Aug. 20. Sep. 3. 5. 24. Nov. 14. 19. 29. 1789. Jan. 11. 14. 21. Feb. 1. 12. 14. 15. May. 9. 11. 12. Jun. 17. 24. 29. I know through another person that you have received mine of Nov. 29. & that you have written an answer; but I have never received the answer, and it is this which suggests to me the fear of some general source of miscarriage.

The capture of three French merchant ships by the Algerines under different pretences, has produced great sensation in the courts of this country, and some in it's government. They have ordered some frigates to be armed at Toulon to punish ^{them}. There is a possibility that this circumstance, if not too soon set to rights by the Algerines, may furnish occasion to the States general, when they shall have leisure to attend to matters of this kind, to review any future tributary treaty with them. These pirates respect still less their treaty with Spain, and treat the Spaniards with an insolence greater than was used before the treaty.

The scarcity of bread begins to lessen in the Southern parts of France where the harvest is commenced. here it is still threatening

J. Jay. because

Close Filmstrip



ss - Papers » Ltrs from Thomas Jefferson » Volume 2 (Vol 2) » Page 532

August 24, 1920.

Honorable Bainbridge Colby, Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Find enclosed certificate of ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, accompanied by resolution and transcript of the Journals of the two houses of the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee.

Very respectfully,

A. H. Roberts
Governor.

*ack. 4/20/20
file*

Found in: Ratified Amendments to the US Constitution > XIX, Women's Right to Vote, 1920 > Tennessee > Page 3

Copyright © 2008 Ebalto, All Rights Reserved.

About This Document

Contributed By
The National Archives

Image Information

Publication Number: M538
Publication Title: Ratified Amendments XI-XXVII of the U. S. Constitution
Publisher: NARA
Amendment Number Year: XIX,
Women's Right to Vote, 1920
Ratification Year: 1920
Description: Amendment XIX,
Women's Right to Vote
State: Tennessee
Page 3

Flag for review

About This Title

After the US Bill of Rights was created in 1791, only seventeen amendments have been added to the US Constitution. Under each title in this publication are documents provided by the states that ratified a particular amendment. Some of the best-known constitutional amendments include the abolition of slavery (13th amendment), voting rights for women (19th), prohibition (18th), and its repeal (21st). Explore the process by viewing each amendment and then see how each state ratified it.

Learn more...

You might also like...

Annotations

Comments

Rev. Peter Laganhan

a witness called for the accused,
Mary E. Surratt, being duly sworn,
testifies as follows:

By Mr. O'Keefe

Q. State to the Court where you reside, and what is your occupation?

A. I reside in Charles County, Maryland, near a village called Beantown, I am a Catholic Priest.

Q. Are you acquainted with the prisoner at the bar, Mary E. Surratt?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you recognize her now?

[Mary E. Surratt stood up for identification.]

A. I recognize her.

2076

Found in: Lincoln Assassination Papers > Proceedings of the Court-Martial May 26-29, 1865 > Page 9

About This Document

Contributed By
The National Archives

Image Information

Publication Number: M599
Publication Title: Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln
Publisher: NARA
Document Description: Proceedings of the Court-Martial May 26-29, 1865
Page 9

Flag for review

About This Title

These records relate to the investigation of persons suspected involvement in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (April 14, 1865). They contain copies of correspondence received and sent by the military commission investigating the assassination; summaries of evidence of possible use in the trial; proceeds of and exhibits used in the court martial (May 9-June 29, 1865); and a record of the trial published in the newspaper Daily National Intelligencer (May 16-June 30, 1865).

Learn more...

You might also like...

Annotations (4)

www.footnote.com

Digital images of the following records from the holdings of the National Archives, and thousands more, are now available for free at www.footnote.com.

- Records Relating to the Various Cases Involving the Spanish Schooner *Amistad*
- Records from the Constitutional Convention of 1787
- The Papers of the Continental Congress
- The Records of the General Court Martial of Gen. George A. Custer, 1867
- Domestic Letters of the Department of State, 1784–1906
- Foreign Letters of the Continental Congress and Department of State, 1785–1790
- Copybooks of George Washington's Correspondence with Secretaries of State, 1789–1796
- Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln
- Records of Project Blue Book-UFO Investigations, 1947–1969
- Records of Ratified Amendments XI–XXVII of the U.S. Constitution

tion records, and more are now available. Access to most of these materials is restricted to individuals or institutions with paid subscriptions to www.ancestry.com—but the opportunities to connect students to the past, by allowing them to find documentation on their ancestors or members of their community, are unprecedented—and you might find that your local library has a subscription!

Digitization Partnerships


The decision to enter into these digitization partnerships was motivated by the National Archives' desire to increase access to the records of the federal government and the agency's commitment to ensuring the continued preservation of the original records. To date, these partnerships have resulted in the digitization of nearly 100 million pages of material from the holdings, and more materials are being added every day.

All of these partnership agreements are non-exclusive and all must provide some sort of free access. Currently, access to all of the records on ancestry.com and footnote.com is free in the reading rooms of all National Archives facilities across the country. Also, partners are required to donate to the National Archives a complete set of the digital images with required metadata, and five years after the records are made available on the partner's website, the National Archives may use them in any way. These requirements reflect the agency's commitment to long-term digital access.

Future Approaches to "Teaching with Documents"

Since the late 1970s, education special-

ists at the National Archives have been working in partnership with NCSS to feature "Teaching with Documents" articles in *Social Education*. Typically, the articles feature a single document, carefully selected to provide students with a tangible link to the past, a background essay, and suggested teaching activities intended to encourage document analysis and critical thinking. Often, the teaching activities encourage additional research—but until now, the articles have not been able to suggest that students conduct further research into related original records. They simply were not readily available. But many of them are now. So, be on the lookout in future "Teaching with Documents" articles for more suggestions for student research assignments utilizing these newly digitized collections. And check out the "Member Discoveries" section of www.footnote.com. Periodically, National Archives education team members will highlight documents that we think would be of great interest to teachers and students. The three documents featured in this article are the first "spotlights" we have created under our team's member name "NationalArchivesEducation."

For more information about NARA's Digitization Strategy and Digitization Partnerships, visit www.archives.gov/digitization. 

LEE ANN POTTER is the director of Education and Volunteer Programs at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., and serves as the editor for "Teaching with Documents," a regular department of Social Education. You can reproduce the images that accompany this article in any quantity.

Note about the Featured Documents

Image #1: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/259024] First page of a 12-page letter from Thomas Jefferson in which he described what he witnessed in Paris during the first days of the French Revolution, July 19, 1789. From National Archives Microfilm Publication M247, *Papers of the Continental Congress 1774–1789*, Letters Received from Thomas Jefferson, page 532.

Image #2: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/6577775/] Letter from the Governor of Tennessee to the Secretary of State transmitting Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, August 24, 1920. From National Archives Microfilm

Publication M1518, *Ratified Amendments XI–XXVII for the U.S. Constitution*, Amendment XIX, Women's Right to Vote, Tennessee, Page 3.

Image #3: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/6390472/#6390478]

First page of the testimony presented by Rev. Peter Lanihan, who was called as a witness for the accused Mary Surratt during the proceedings of the Court-Martial May 26–29, 1865. From National Archives Microfilm Publication M599, *Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln*, page 9.