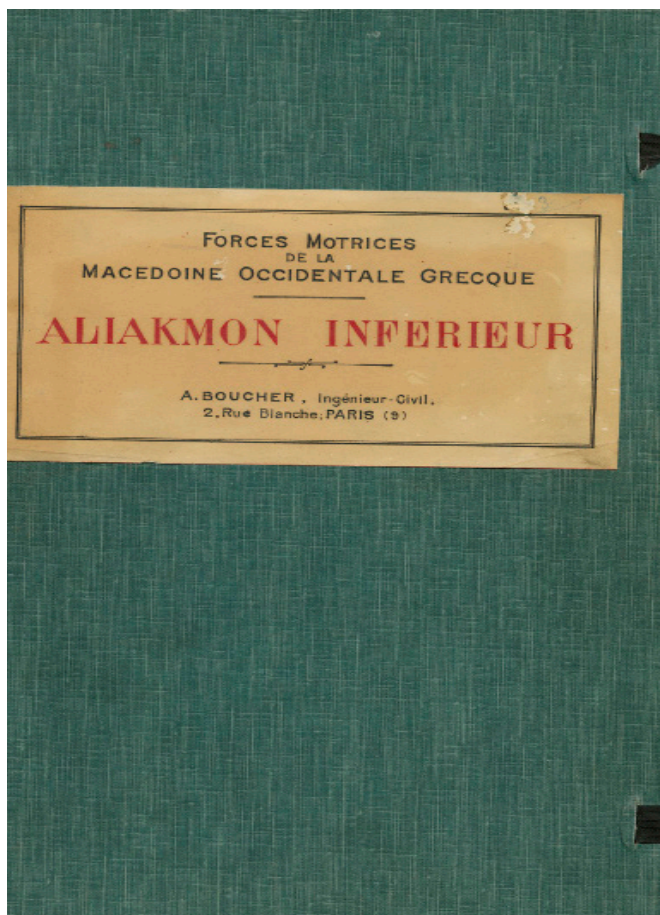


The case of White Anthrax Archive

Report of the Historical Archive of National Bank of Greece, Athens, 2024



About the Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece (HA/NBG)

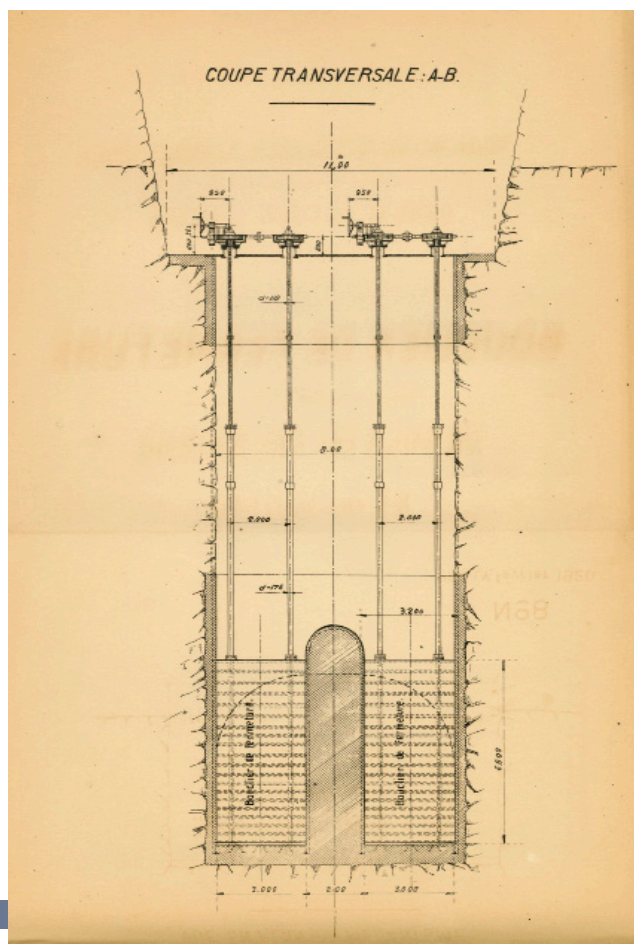
The Historical Archive of National Bank of Greece (HA/NBG) was set up with the purpose of preserving and displaying archival material of the National Bank of Greece deemed to be of historical importance. Most of the key moments in the economic history of the Greek nation, as well as important events in the political, cultural, and social history of the country, are reflected in the archival material of NBG.

The Historical Archive participated in the annual APE 2024 Digitisation Grant competition and received the grant with the project “An Initiative for Clean Energy by the National Bank of Greece in the First Half of the 20th Century: The Case of the White Anthrax Archive.”

The Archival unit “White Anthrax”

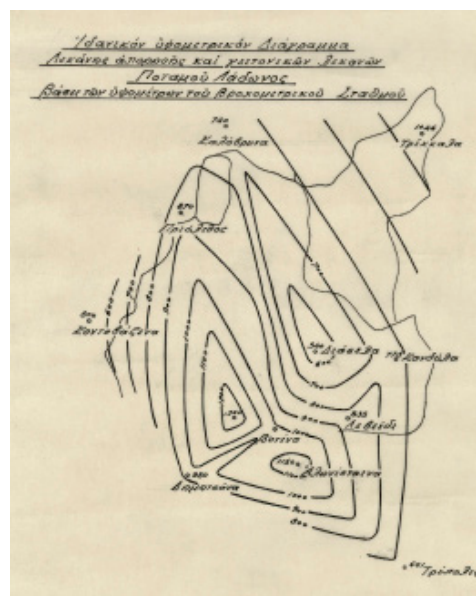
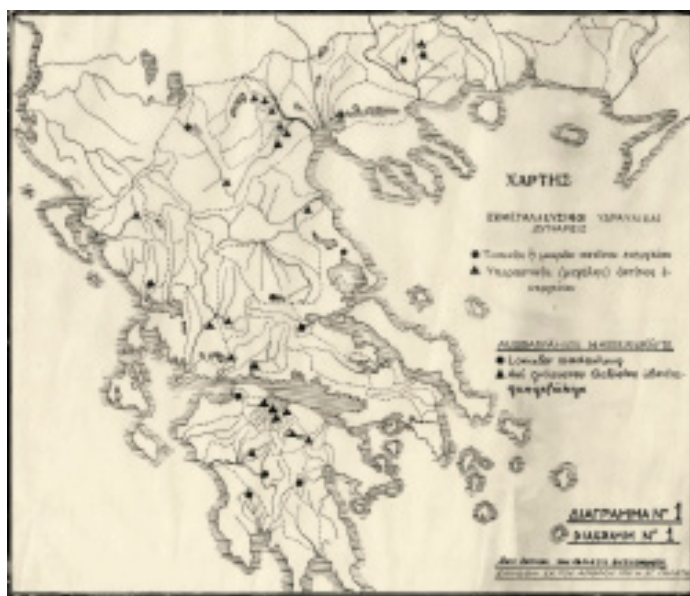
“White Anthrax” is a term used to refer to water and waterfalls as a source of electricity during the 20th century. This archival unit consists of a variety of documents related to all stages of the bank’s participation in initiatives and research on the exploitation of hydroelectricity in Greece.

The archive (FO1SE37SS1) is part of NBG’s Technical Services Department archive and consists of 172 document files and 18 books, covering the period from 1906 to 1947. It includes, among others, studies on the hydroelectric capacity of rivers in central

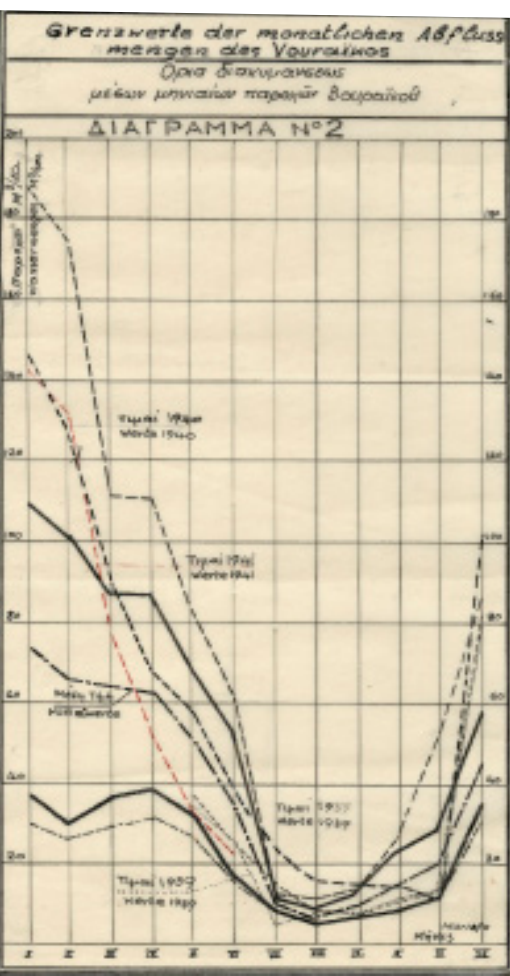


Figures 1a & 1b. Cover and cross section from A. Boucher. Forces Motrices de la Macédoine Occidentale Grecque. Aliakmon Inferieur. (Driving forces of Greek Western Macedonia. Lower Aliakmon). Prilly. Feb. 1920.

and northern Greece, documents related to general hydroelectric research, manuscripts, and official reports covering a wide range of topics related to energy sources, power production, transmission, distribution, and consumption. It also includes articles written by scientists and experts working for the Committee for the Study of Energy Sources of Greece—an NBG initiative for researching the utilization of domestic energy sources, particularly hydropower and lignite. Additionally, it contains publications in the national press, reports on the devel-



Figures 2a & 2b. Map of Greece indicating “expandable hydropower” and elevation chart diagram of river Ladonas’ watersheds and basins based on the altitudes of the rain gauge station. Figure 3. Variation limits of average monthly water supply (1939-1940), diagram.



opment of hydropower generation internationally, records and data on the industrialization of Greece, and studies on the potential uses of electric power for urban infrastructure, transport, and more.

As part of the archive and arranged in the form of a collection (CO12), a subseries (CO12SE1SS1) of plans, maps, and technical drawings of the “White Anthrax” archive forms a set of 586 items and consists of archival records of unique historical interest.

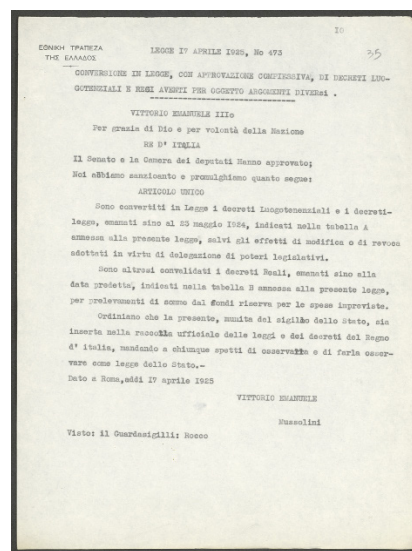
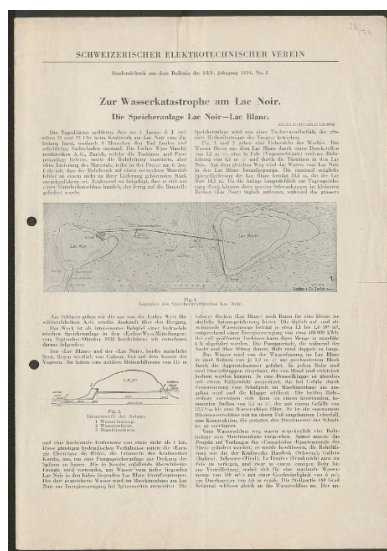
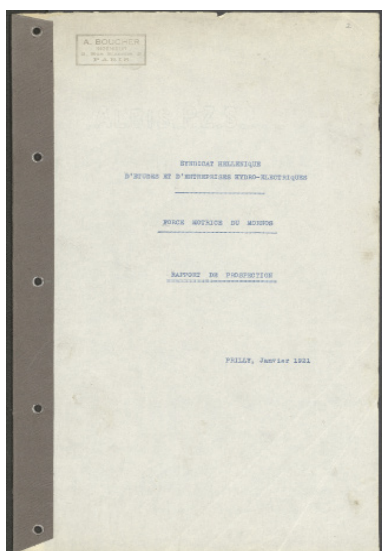
The collection includes a wide range of technical drawings and plans, such as different kinds of maps and cartographic resources of Greece and its regions (geological, topographic, and forest maps); bathymetric maps with indications and data on the shape, elevation, and depth of lakes and rivers; maps and plans showing transportation—rail and road—networks; technical and engineering designs and blueprints of dams, retaining structures, and other constructions related to hydroelectric units; as well as diagrams, charts with hydrological study data, and tables with information on electricity consumption in urban centers,

power plant production across the country, and comparative energy consumption by region.

This unit is of particular interest to historians of energy and financial history, as it highlights the paramount importance of the National Bank of Greece in developing energy infrastructures.

Work undertaken

As soon as the grant was announced, the material of the CO12SE1SS1 collection—including plans, maps, and technical drawings of the White Anthrax—was transferred to the Conservation Department. The condition of the items was assessed, and necessary conservation work began. The archival documents and books were also inspected and found to be in very good condition, requiring no further treatment.



All collection items were either folded or rolled up, with transparent paper being a common element in most of them. The paper had weakened, resulting in tears and loss of smaller or larger sections. It had also lost its moisture. Therefore, the conservation process entailed stabilizing and reinforcing the items where needed. Mechanical cleaning was carried out throughout the collection. All items were safely repositioned in their original acid-free boxes and transferred to the Digitisation Department.

Additionally, all necessary actions were taken to recruit an archivist who would work exclusively on the project in close collaboration with our digitisation team. The incoming archivist was initially trained by both our digitisation and archival teams, after which the scanning process and necessary documentation began.

Before scanning and documenting, our archival team conducted a detailed inspection of the documents to ensure they were ready for digitisation and to determine the metadata to be documented in our Archival Management System.

More specifically, the existing records in our Archival Management System were enriched according to the archival unit's level of description. The folders containing archival material had previously been catalogued with only basic information regarding date, content, and provenance. Our main objective was to enhance the documentation in terms of scope and content (subjects, topics, key terms, and functions), physical characteristics, and specific chronological details.

Material available to the APE users

Upon project completion, finding aids for the archival unit were added to the portal, with digitised plans, maps, and technical drawings linked to them.

The archival material (documents and books) was enriched at the folder level, while the collection (drawings, maps, and plans) was enriched at the item level.

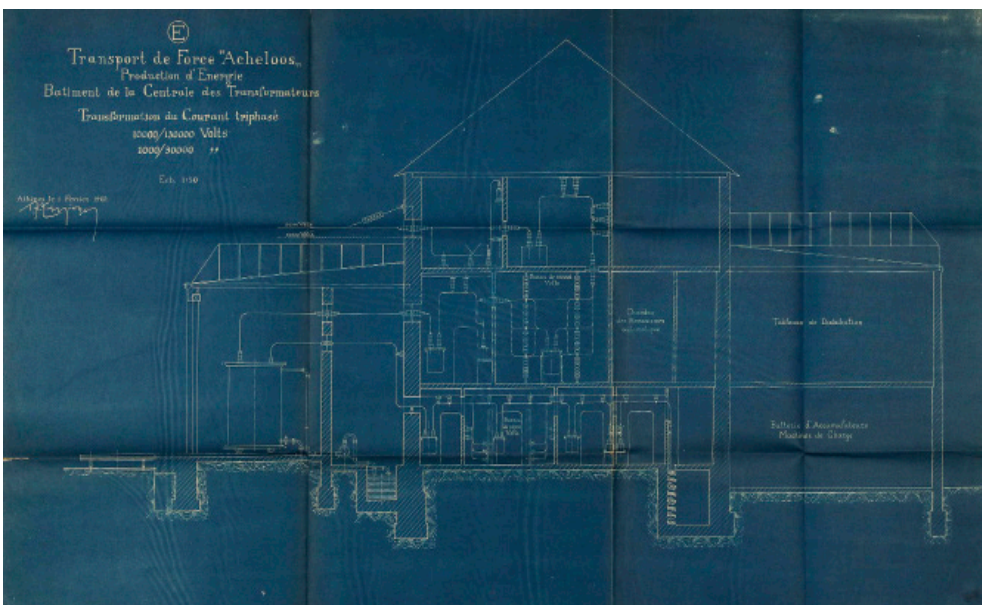


Figure 5. Force transport of river Acheloos. Power generation building – power plant transformers. Three-phase current transformation. Athens, February 1, 1922. Item included in the archival material, documented at folder level.

The descriptive information is provided in Greek, though some documents—mainly surveys—are also available in English, French, German, and Italian. In such cases, the descriptive data were translated into Greek. Regarding the scanning process, 95 document folders and 16 books produced 13,050 and 1,057 digital files, respectively, which are linked to our Archival Management System. Additionally, 586 collection items produced 722 digital files, which are available to the public via APE.

Project challenges

Throughout the course of the project, we encountered several challenges. First, we needed to determine how to safely handle the architectural drawings during digitisation without damaging the fragile paper. This was particularly demanding as the paper had become brittle due to moisture loss, and all drawings were rolled up, making the flattening process difficult.

Additionally, the Digitisation and Microphotography Department is equipped with three specialized large-scale scanners, ranging from A1 size to 2A0. However, one of these scanners is located in another building, requiring us to ensure the safe transportation of the largest drawings between buildings.

Another challenge was that the HA/NBG Archival Management System generates data exports in XML format, which unfortunately did not meet APE's requirements. As a result, we had to collaborate with the APE IT team to convert the data to the appropriate schema.

Finally, making the scanned images of the collection accessible to the public posed another challenge, as our Archival Management System does not provide direct links to images when exporting metadata as XML files. To address this, we converted the digital images to a lower

resolution (96 dpi), uploaded them to our website, and manually added each web link to the corresponding record.

Next steps

Having successfully met our commitment to APE within the agreed timeline, we are now focused on completing the digitisation and documentation of the “White Anthrax” archive. Only a portion of the archival material remains to be processed, and we aim to finalize this work in the coming months.

Our goal is to provide APE with the complete “White Anthrax” metadata and ensure its availability to the public.

In the future, we plan to provide APE with additional records from various archival units, contributing to the global sharing of information related to European history.

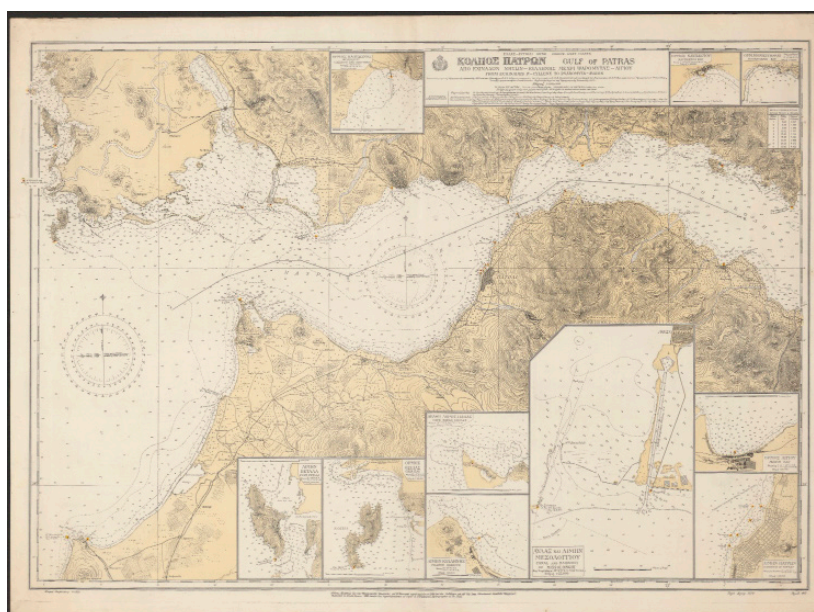


Figure 6. Bathymetric map, depicting the Gulf of Patras, included in the White Anthrax collection, documented at item level.

The APE experience

The implementation of this project provided HA/NBG with the opportunity to effectively preserve and promote valuable archival material through digitisation and its inclusion in the Archives Portal Europe, thereby enhancing access for the research community.

Beyond digitisation, our collaboration with APE was productive and harmonious, allowing us to showcase part of our valuable archival material on a European platform with significant potential for future expansion.