VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2024 Annual Report

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



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We appreciate the contributions of these former staff members:

Craig Farnham
Claire Gilbertson
Teresa Teixeira Greene
Tori Hart
Scott Sorrell
Marjorie Strong
Juls Sundberg

The Vermont Historical Society was chartered in 1838 by an act of the Vermont Legislature.
It is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization, governed by a board of trustees.

THANK YOU to all our volunteers, who generously donated amazing amounts of time, talent, and energy to the Vermont Historical Society. Because of you, we have the impact and outreach of an organization twice our size.

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President's Report - Jan Albers

In my first letter as president, I welcome you to our Annual Report, and I am happy to tell you that we have met and surpassed our goals this year. I offer thanks to my esteemed predecessor in the role, Crocker Bennett, for his help in showing me the ropes since my election last October.

This was a strategic planning year for the Vermont Historical Society. Planning years (one in every five) entail a lot of work, but they are exciting and inspirational. Taking our previous plan, covering 2019-2024, as the basis for revisions, board members interviewed stakeholders, Steve Perkins and the staff brainstormed, and we all attended a board planning retreat. Our new strategic plan, covering 2024-2029, was approved in February and can be read on the VHS website. I came out of the process with a renewed belief that VHS is one of the greatest state historical societies in America — small but mighty.

The past year has not been without challenges. In Vermont, the Covid years seem to have given way to an era of annual "hundred year" floods, closing our Vermont History Museum in Montpelier for three months. Executive Director Stephen Perkins and the staff did an exemplary job of leading us through it all.

I am always amazed by how our brave little staff moves mountains. In addition to restoring operations, they managed to carry out their parts of the mission. Outreach continued via member publications and our many online venues. Books were catalogued, collections were preserved and refined, the buildings were maintained, digital services broadened our reach, and events were held for old and new friends.

Our latest exhibit, For the Love of Vermont: The Lyman Orton Collection, provides a public peek at 81 Vermont paintings from a premiere private collection. The opening on June 27 was a great success, with 115 people crowding the galleries. It will be on display until the end of December.

Vermont History Day came back to pre-Covid levels on April 6, with 300 kids packing the Davis Center at UVM. Director Eileen Corcoran and her team pulled off this logistical maze with great finesse. It is hard to know who enjoyed it more—the students or the judges. We often hear about a school's athletes, but as a former (and present) history nerd, I am touched by students who have caught the history research bug. They jump for joy when they get prizes, too. We sent 45 deserving winners to the National History Day in Maryland, where they appeared on CBS Sunday Morning!

One of the year's highlights was our Vermont Eats dinner, this time featuring the history, food, and culture of Burlington's Jewish community at the Ohavi Zedek Synagogue in the Old North End. Emily Lev, our new Director of Stewardship and Public Relations, and Eileen Corcoran, worked with the Synagogue and members of the Lost Mural Project, who have preserved a work of early-20th C. Jewish art that is housed there. Over 100 people came to the dinner, cooked by Ohavi Zedek volunteers. We learned about Jewish immigration to Vermont and the Lost Mural while enjoying music and delicious food. The program even included many wonderful recipes.

VHS publications have had a very successful year, with the launch of Mercedes de Guardiola's book *Vermont for the Vermonters: The History of*



Our VHS family lost one of its most valued members on March 7, with the passing of Sarah Dopp of South Burlington. She inherited her interest in history, and her devotion to the VHS, from her parents, throwing herself into a great swath of activities here from the late-1970s until the time of her death. Sarah loved history, lifelong learning, sharing stories, and gifting meaningful family heirlooms to our collections. She served in a variety of roles on the board, as a committee chair, officer, and president over 32 years, from 1990 onward. In 2022, we gave her the rare honor of making her a lifetime trustee. In being always around and eager to help wherever she was needed, she came to be a part of the history of the VHS itself. It is hard to imagine Sarah not being here, and yet that is what we must do now. She will be here as long as there are people who knew her and all she meant to us.

Eugenics in the Green Mountain State. This favorably reviewed book has already sold over 500 copies.

History is always happening, and the Covid epidemic changed us all forever. Amanda Gustin, Director of Collections and Access, is determined that those experiences are not lost. She is leading an in-house oral history project that will create a moving permanent record of what real Vermonters went through in those stressful times. The Vermont Folklife Center is partnering with us in recording interviews of Vermonters from around the state. Expect the book in March 2025.

The VHS continues to enjoy solid finances this year. The three months of programming income we lost due to the flooding was largely made up by our great success in procuring grants. Jennifer Blair, Director of Finance and Operations, has done a wonderful job of transitioning the institution to updated, more user-friendly software and continues to add other improvements.

If this letter is long, it's because of all we have accomplished in the past year, despite the floods. I want to commend Steve Perkins for his exemplary leadership, the board for their wise guidance, and the staff for stepping up and keeping everything going forward. We are always grateful to the Governor and Legislature, whose financial support for Vermont history is substantial and unwavering. And we couldn't do any of it without our devoted members, patrons, donors, and visitors. Vermont history is for everyone. Thanks to all of you for being a part of this special organization.

Best wishes to all of you,
Jan Albers, President



Director's Report - Steve Perkins

July 2023 started out with great promise. A sunny and pleasant July 3rd celebration brought hundreds of visitors to the Vermont History Museum to kick off our exhibition season. A fascinating exhibit, inspired by graphic novels, told the story of Calvin Coolidge's life and career in celebration of the 100th anniversary of his inauguration as President of the United States. Plans were afoot to upgrade the Civil War gallery, and new staff were just settling into their roles.

One week later, our operations were upended and our communities of Barre and Montpelier devastated by flooding. Thanks to lessons learned after the 1992 Montpelier flood, the Vermont Historical Society's collections remained safe, secure, and dry in the hillside Vermont History Center. Water came perilously close to reaching the raised, first-floor location of the Vermont History Museum before receding. The damage to the Pavilion Building was profound, and though the museum contents were safe, our public face remained closed throughout the summer and fall tourist season. Images of our building with plastic sheeting, pump hoses, and temporary air ducts were flashed around the country leading to calls and notes of support from Vermonters and museum colleagues from around the world. As an organization, we weathered the storm and continued to provide the content, advice, and support our public and peers expected. In this report, you will see a large earned-revenue shortfall due to the museum closure during peak tourist season, and we thank all of you who increased your philanthropic support to help bridge this gap.

Throughout the remaining months of 2023, staff, board members, donors, and community members spent time reflecting on Vermont Historical Society's strengths, accomplishments, and opportunities for growth in formulating a new five-year strategic plan. As part of this process, the board gave some serious thought to the mission of our organization and decided to rephrase the basis of our work in a way that makes our impact statement the first idea we present: Vermont Historical Society believes understanding the past changes lives and builds better communities.

We crafted a plan that continues much of the good work we have been doing for almost a decade and adds strategies asked for by our patrons and our field and necessitated by the changing world around us. Our goals look outward in meeting people where they are, supporting communities of learners, inspiring students and the next generation of historians, and assisting our colleagues in local societies throughout the state. Internally we look forward to breaking down barriers to access our incredible holdings and making our physical locations exciting, beautiful, and easy to navigate. I encourage you to visit our website and read the summary plan for yourself. How do you want to be involved?

None of this could be possible without our engaged board and our hardworking and committed staff. Thank you all for your ongoing support – this past year was trying, but, with your help, we proved our resilience. With your continued engagement and participation, I look forward to great things to come.

Steve Perkins, Executive Director

FY 2024 Unaudited

VHS FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Statement of Activities

Revenue

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Contributions and Bequests	452,759	363,297
State Appropriation	1,103,192	1,540,582
Investment Income	207,986	346,795
Admissions, Fees and Earned Income	76,365	42,576
VT History Bookstore Sales	38,259	41,094
State and Federal Grants	243,191	293,830
Other Revenue	190,552	181,954
TOTAL REVENUE	**2,121,752**	**2,810,128**

Expenses

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Public Programs	614,535	518,914
Collections	503,985	845,200
Membership	180,753	31,009
Museum	424,248	279,238
Administration & Finance	500,033	309,884
Development	157,468	400,364
VT History Bookstore/Guest Services Museum	52,285	46,292
TOTAL EXPENSES	**2,362,601**	**2,430,901**

Depreciation of capital assets allocated across expense lines. Total depreciation for FY23 was $268,374 and for FY24 was $262,000.

Balance Sheet

Assets

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Cash	917, 251	788,120
Other Current Assets	467.399	324,607
Investments	2,572,314	2,732,486
Property Plant and Equipment	5,884,850	6,100,602
Other Assets	862,723	781,054
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	**10,704,537**	**10,726,869**

Liabilities

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Accounts Payable	22,097	97,811
Short-term Liabilities	695,817	210,996
Mortgage Payable	977,594	930,477
Right-of-use Liability	813,228	663,228
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**2,462,541**	**1,902,512**

Net Assets

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Beginning Net Assets	8,284,284	8,241,996
Change in Net Assets	-42,288	582,361
ENDING NET ASSETS	**10,704,537**	**10,726,869**

FY24 Charitable Contributions in Action

Goal One:

Provide Vermonters and Vermonters-at-heart the resources to access Vermont's rich historical collections from anywhere in the world.

In FY24, we completed construction of our open storage Research and Exhibition Gallery and began installation, with plans to finish installation by October. We continued to pursue funding to create a statewide digital platform. We continued high-quality service to all those searching our library and collections.

10,867 museum objects online for public research





3,946 items in Digital Vermont

Research and Exhibition Gallery 25% installed



The VHS is a wonderful and important resource for the greater Vermont community. The staff are genuinely enthusiastic in support of their mission and friendly and helpful in their customer service. Thank you!
-Library researcher on Square



VHS Website: 126,566 Users in FY24

Early Days of Radio	Digital Vermont	The Flood of '27	Museum Catalog	Vermont History Museum
4,491	14,942	4,375	2,378	7,492





VHS is planning and seeking funding for a statewide collections platform.

The staff and resources of the Vermont Historical Society have been invaluable to me in researching and writing about a unique aspect of Vermont's history.
-VHS member Bill Harding

<u>Strategy One Supporters in FY24:</u>

Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Institute of Museum & Library Services, John M. Bissell Foundation, National Historical Publications & Records Commission, and generous individual donors.

FY24 Charitable Contributions in Action

Goal Two:

Recognize and support local history efforts; understanding that local societies are an integral part of sharing and preserving Vermont's story.

Our ongoing partnership with Vermont's 190 local historical societies and museums included a robust Spring Workshop, grants to support recognition of the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and frequent advice, support, and news.

244 participants in roundtables & workshops

26 LLHSM E Newsletters

39 site visits and virtual advice



250th Anniversary of the US

Grants for Local Historical Societies and Museums are intended to provide support for local communities to celebrate the Semiquincentennial. Twenty-one $1000 grants have been awarded.



" I really appreciate how approachable VHS is. You are always willing to come and help or provide answers."
-LLHSM survey feedback



Local History Gallery:
Middletown Springs Historical Society presents *Fancy Goods* & St. Johnsbury History & Heritage Center presents *Fairbanks Scales.*

"This was a rich and inspiring day, as always. The presentations were excellent. Thank you so much."
-LLHSM attendee on feedback form

<u>Goal Two Supporters in FY24:</u>
National Historical Publications & Records Commission, Walter Cerf Community Fund, The Alan Weiss Fund at VHS, Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation, and generous individual donors.

FY24 Charitable Contributions in Action

Goal Three:

Build resilient and connected communities, so Vermonters will understand Vermont's history and its place in the broader world.

This year, our Vermont History Day participation returned to pre-pandemic levels, with students presenting on the theme of Turning Points in History. We revised and expanded the Vermont History Explorer website to begin transformation into an information hub, which had 87,489 visits in FY24. We welcomed over 600 people to talks, events, and trivia contests.

2,604 students served through museum & classroom programs

319 students participated in Vermont History Day

156 schools served

New education programming
Hands-on History: Buffalo Soldiers
History for Homeschoolers:
Agricultural Economics Activities - Design Your Own Sheep Farm & General Store Goods Trading



All of our students really loved the experience and will be back next year with more of their friends!
- Polly Allen, Vermont History Day parent



YouTube:
21,080 views,
1,310 subscribers
Facebook:
11,907 followers

The student interviews give me hope for the future.
-Vermont History Day judge on feedback form

Goal Three Supporters in FY24:

George W. Mergens Foundation, Johnson Family Foundation, Northfield Savings Bank, Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation, North Country Federal Credit Union, Community National Bank, Key Bank, Vermont Mutual Insurance Group, Killington Resort, and generous individual donors.

FY24 Charitable Contributions in Action

Goal Four:

Enrich guests' experience through deeper understanding of Vermont and its people.

The Vermont History Museum grew as a place of connection and learning this year, despite the challenges of the floods. VHS continued to serve our guests in the library and through virtual assists. When the Museum reopened, we took the opportunity to improve the telling of Vermont's story.

337 library reference assists

8,393 visitors to the Vermont History Museum





1,387 VHS memberships

Skiing was my favorite part of the museum.

Learning all about the past makes the present feel more important.

-Photo booth comments



July 2023

Just before the floods, VHS learned we needed to uninstall half of the Civil War exhibit at the Museum – inadvertently protecting these sensitive items during the floods and shutdown. We redeveloped that portion of the exhibit, including a greater emphasis on the homefront and postwar veteran experiences.





New exhibits at the Museum this year included *Calvin Coolidge: Vermont's President* and *Stitch in Time* – a frequently changed exhibit focusing on the history of clothing.

Teaching Vermont kids to love learning.

-Ms. Burns

<u>Strategy Four Supporters in FY24:</u>

The Montpelier Foundation, Vermont Community Foundation, The Windham Foundation, and generous individual donors.

We are deeply grateful to you, our many donors and members, who help preserve Vermont's rich history, so each generation can learn from the legacy of our past. Your generous contributions provide the critical support needed to host public programs, educate students, present exhibits, publish unique stories, and preserve and share Vermont's treasures.

The Legacy Circle is comprised of individuals who share a love of learning, a sense of wonder about Vermont, and a commitment to ensuring our cultural and scientific heritage is passed to future generations. By supporting the Vermont Historical Society through an estate or life income gift, these individuals have recognized the timeless value of VHS's work and the enduring place it has in Vermont history.

Dawn K. Andrews
Jane Campbell
Jack Carter
Michael and Laurie Curtis
Rolf Diamant
Sarah L. Dopp
John Phipard Dumville
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Martha E. Nye
Kay and Max Schlueter
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Lola Van Wagenen and George Burrill
Nick and Leslie Ward
Laura Warren
Allen Rice Yale, Jr.

The 1838 Society, named in honor of the organization's founding year, recognizes loyal individuals, families, and organizations based on their lifetime giving of $5,000 or more to the Vermont Historical Society. Members of the 1838 Society are among a timeless cadre of philanthropists who envision a future of infinite opportunity for VHS.

Maple (100,000+)
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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Lola Van Wagenen and George Burrill
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
Vermont Humanities Council
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The utmost care has been taken in preparing this report. Occasionally, however, errors do occur. We apologize if this has happened and ask that you notify us with any inaccuracies or omissions.

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