

# Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

## History and Mystery of Vermont Governors' Records

Shortly before a governor leaves office, no matter which state, there is always strong public and media interest in his or her records. Such interest often comes with



Decades of governor executive records in the vault [courtesy of VSARA staff]

questions about what happens to a governor's records when he or she leaves office and who decides which records are to be preserved and why. Vermont is no exception and the story behind our gubernatorial records offers

fascinating insight into the evolving role of Vermont's chief executive officer.

For a long time there was no requirement for correspondence to be preserved as a state record. Fast

forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by which time the Secretary of State was taking custody of more and more gubernatorial records, and to 1990 when the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that governors can claim "executive privilege" and withhold certain records from the public.

In January 2017, VSARA received, for the first time, gubernatorial records that are almost wholly digital in nature. Records from the Shumlin administration range from the traditional "executive records"

to official correspondence and social media. This recent transfer shows how the role of the governor and the complexity of his or her records continue to evolve with each generation.

You can read more about this topic in our [History Space](#) article. To see the newly acquired records of the Shumlin Administration, please visit our online [finding aid](#).

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## Records of the Justice of the Peace: Orange County

Justice of the Peace courts were the most common court in early Vermont. Justices had jurisdiction similar to today's small claims court and also heard minor criminal matters. They could also bind people over for trial in the county court. Justices often heard cases at home, in their offices or even in the local tavern.

The Vermont State Archives has recently processed the Orange County Justice of the Peace records dating from 1787 to 1884. The records includes case files and dockets from various town justices. The majority of the cases are related to debt, but there are also orders of removal from

a town, bastardy and inquests over unexpected death. In general, justice cases can be difficult to track down – if they survived at all. Most justice records were kept as personal papers and were therefore lost or given away. When the records do survive, they tend to be a fragment of the total records that were created. But justice cases can provide a unique look at the social and criminal history of area. To research the Justice of the Peace records in our holdings please visit our [online catalog](#).

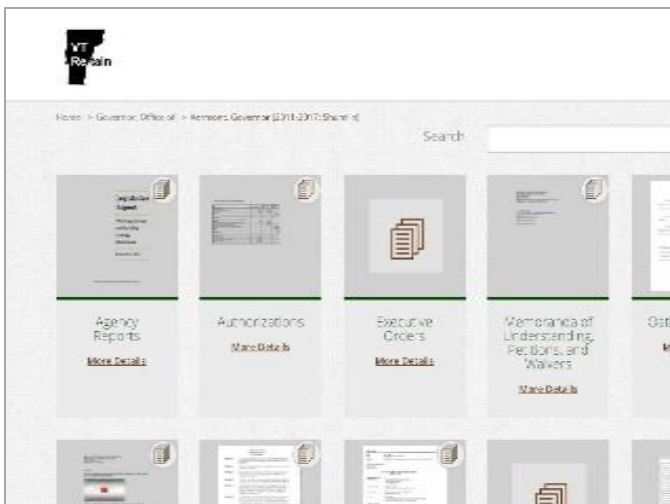
# Vermont's New Online Records Repository - VTRetain

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) is proud to announce the launch of its new online digital record repository! VTRetain is the final repository

for all State of Vermont digital archival public records. The name reflects VSARA's commitment to assure that all archival public records, regardless of format, are preserved and accessible to current and future generations.

Currently, VTRetain holds digital records from Vermont's past two governors, Jim Douglas and Peter Shumlin. You can read more about Vermont governors' records in our front page article. But as we progress further into the digital age, more and more of Vermont's business and government practices will become entirely digital. In the future, more of these records will be added to our online repository, covering a wide range of formats and government functions.

You can visit VTRetain at this link: <https://vermont.access.preservica.com>. And be sure to check back periodically to check out new additions!



Governor Shumlin records on VTRetain [courtesy of VSARA staff]

## Records Beware: The Bookworm

Spring reawakens the creepy-crawlies, which can pose a threat to books and records. A bookworm is not a real worm, but a general term for any type of insect or pest that attacks records or archival collections. Silverfish, booklice, and cockroaches are among the most common, usually attracted by the adhesives and starches in books and paper. These pests can do serious damage before they are discovered, especially if the records are only handled occasionally.

In order to keep pests at bay, it's important to have continued housekeeping to prevent them from finding a happy hiding place. This can include inspecting your building, fixing broken windows and other areas, frequent cleaning, maintaining a consistent climate, having proper storage boxes and shelving, and restricting plants and food from storage areas.

If you spot only one or two insects, this may not indicate infestation. But it is an opportunity to further monitor the situation. And if a serious infestation occurs, direct treatment is necessary. This can include chemical

treatments such as insecticides and repellents, as well as non-chemical treatments like controlled freezing. Non-chemical treatments are preferred, as they can kill the bugs without posing a hazard to staff or to most records.



Bug-eaten probate record [courtesy of VSARA staff]

For more information about this topic, please see the [pest management leaflet](#) written by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

## Upcoming Events

### Vermont History Day – Saturday, April 8

Vermont History Day is an education program that encourages students to develop research and critical thinking skills through the study of history. Judges play an important role in the process, by interacting with students and providing them with feedback on their research. VSARA archivists serve as judges each year and relish the opportunity to interact with young people interested in history. Interested in getting involved? Contact Victoria Hughes at (802) 828-1413 or email [victoria.hughes@vermonthistory.org](mailto:victoria.hughes@vermonthistory.org) for additional information.

### World War I Centennial Research Guide Launch – This March

On April 6, 1917, the United States officially entered World War I. To commemorate the centennial anniversary, we will be launching a new research guide to help those researchers interested in Vermont's role in the conflict. Keep an eye on our website this March to get started with your own World War I research.

Stay tuned for summer programming events this June!

## From the Vault



90-year-old view of Montpelier's State Street, 1927. This is an early image from the Houston Studio, which took lots of images of state government over several decades. More images can be found in record series [A-017](#).

## On This Day in History

This issue looks at dates remembering our state's fight or flight response, so to speak!

**1935 (Mar. 7)** – Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, gives a speech to the Vermont legislature on her experiences and in support of American aviation. Two years later, Earhart vanished without a trace over the Pacific Ocean.

**1861 (Apr. 23)** – A special session of the legislature begins for the purpose of enlisting recruits to fight in the newly-started American Civil War.

**1775 (May 10)** – Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys capture Fort Ticonderoga from the British in an early morning raid.

## Contact Us

Have research questions?

Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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