

Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Glover Fourth-Graders Research Vermont Court Records

On April 6, 2015, the Vermont State Archives received visitors that we don't often have in our Reference Room — a group of sixteen fourth-graders from the Glover Community School! For the past four years, students at the school have participated in a program where they work with volunteers from the Glover Historical Society and local author Natalie Kinsey-Warnock to learn research skills and embark on a research project about an old part of Glover known as "Slab City".

This year, the students began by looking at old newspapers from Glover. In one article, they read a story about a toddler taken away from her family because of severe neglect. The students decided to make the girl, Ida May Jerome, and her family the focus of their project.

The students used a wide range of records to build the story about the Jerome family, including online newspaper articles, and census and Vermont vital records on Ancestry.com. They also visited the Glover town clerk to research school and land records. In their research at the Vermont State Archives, they looked at county court records, probate court records, and records related to the Weeks School, an institution created for juvenile delinquents but often used to house neglected children.

Students had a behind-the-scenes tour of the State Archives and the State Records Center, marveling at the number of boxes, the height of the shelves, and the "coolness" of our vaults. After the tour, the students settled in our Reference Room, where they went to different research stations to view records related to the Jerome family. Some records included case files relating to guardianship of the Jerome children, estate records willing money to the children from their grandparents, and criminal case files involving the grandfather of the neglected child.

In the weeks after their visit to the Vermont State Archives, the students prepared a report about the Jerome family based upon all they had learned through their research, and a copy of this report is available in our reference room. Our staff were very impressed by the enthusiasm and knowledge of these students! The experience was beneficial for all, and we hope to invite more students to our reference room in the future.

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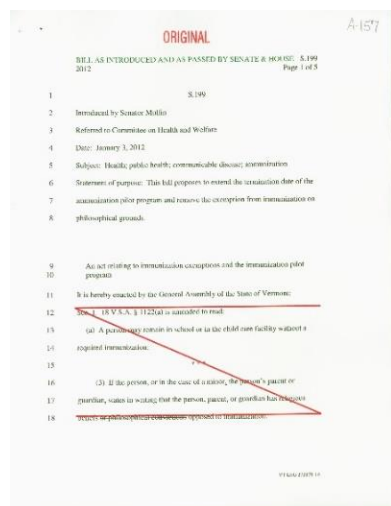
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Senior Archivist Rachel Muse leads the Glover Community School fourth-graders on a tour of the State Archives and State Records Center
[courtesy VSARA staff]

Spotlight on Records: Vaccination Exemption Legislation

The memorable 2015 legislative session has come to a close, and one of the hottest topics of debate was that of vaccination exemptions. This led to the removal of the exemption on philosophical grounds. This debate is not a new one, and records in the State Archives illustrate the way the law has evolved over the years.



Act 157 of 2012 [courtesy of VSARA, series SE-005]

In 1903 there was no legal requirement to be vaccinated. A State Board of Health survey of vaccination rates in Vermont towns showed that more than half of the towns in Vermont had conducted general vaccination against smallpox. In the report on this survey, the Board of Health declared, "No better use can be

made of public funds, at just this time, than by expending money to ensure a community against this disease; a disease that proves invariably to be an expensive visitor."

The requirement that children be immunized prior to attending public school did not come into law until 1979; exemptions were built into the statute from the start. Legislative committee minutes show lively debate about this bill. While the majority of those providing testimony supported the law, those who were opposed cited concerns about schools taking responsibility for social problems and stepping into a role more appropriately filled by parents.

In 2008, the language allowing exemption from vaccination requirements due to "moral convictions" was changed to "philosophical conviction." In recent years, Vermont has seen a high number of individuals requesting exemption, and a rise in communicable illnesses among unvaccinated individuals. In 2012, amendments to the law retained the exemption but required that individuals requesting exemption view evidence-based educational material and understand that failure to complete the required vaccination schedule increases risk.

To view some of the related records and to read more about this and other topics researched in the Archives, please visit our website at: www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives/exhibits/spotlight-on-records.aspx

New Accession: Additions to VSARA's Aerial Photo Collections

Aerial photographs are commonly used in map-making, land-use planning, and environmental studies, and are a rich resource for those researching property boundary and land development subjects. In April of 2015, the Vermont Historical Society (VHS) transferred a large collection of aerial photographs originally taken for the Department of Highways into the custody of VSARA.

Our holdings include aerial photographs created by such varied agencies as the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation; the Division for Property Valuation and Review; and the Agency of Transportation. The photographs recently transferred from VHS are particularly valuable for research as they represent the development of the interstate system in Vermont, providing a unique glimpse of the state before its landscape would be dramatically altered by the construction of those highways.

The new aerial photos can be found in record series HG-002. Hundreds of photographs taken throughout the 1950s and 1960s are included, totaling approximately 15 cubic feet of records.

For more information on this and our other aerial photograph collections, please visit our website:

<https://www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives/find-records/archival-records.aspx?keyword=aerial>



Vermont aerial photo from US Soil Conservation Service, 1942 [courtesy VSARA, series USSCS-001]

Upcoming Events at VSARA

Vermont's Artistic Criminals Lecture – Saturday, October 10, 2 PM

Counterfeiting and forgery were among the first organized crimes in America. Throughout Vermont's history, these crimes were perpetrated by a variety of colorful, talented, and foolish individuals. Despite harsh penalties, men like Christian Meadows, Bristol Bill, and Francis Fox gambled on the possibilities. Vermont State Archives and Records Administration archivist Mariessa Dobrick researched legislative records, court records, correspondence, investigation files, and prison records to tell the stories of these artistic criminals and their crimes.

The lecture will be given at the Vermont Historical Society History Center in Barre on Saturday, October 10 at 2:00 PM.

The Eddy Family of Spirit Mediums & Archives Open House – Wednesday, October 28, 4 – 7 PM

October is Vermont Archives Month! It's our opportunity to focus on the importance of records of enduring value, and to recognize the people and programs responsible for maintaining Vermont's historical records. VSARA will be holding a free open house for members of the public.

This year's presenter will be Jason Smiley, taking us through the illustrious history of the Eddy family — Vermont's own family of spirit mediums! Doors open at 4:00 PM with exhibits and tours of our facilities, followed by the presentation at 6:00. Light snacks will be provided.

Researchers' Corner

Gary Shattuck – *Insurrection, Corruption, and Murder in Early Vermont*

Gary Shattuck is a retired attorney who served 35 years in law enforcement as a Vermont State Police Officer, Vermont Assistant Attorney General, and Assistant US Attorney. He relied heavily on archival holdings in the Vermont State Archives and other institutions to write his book, *Insurrection, Corruption, and Murder in Early Vermont: Life on the Wild Northern Frontier*. Published in 2014, the book recounts one of the little-known periods in the state's history between 1807 and 1815, after Thomas Jefferson's Embargo Act.

Gary will be giving a talk about his book at Bookstock 2015, a three-day literary festival in Woodstock, VT. He will be speaking on Saturday, July 25. For more information, visit: <http://bookstockvt.org/an-inglorious-time-in-vermont-history>.

On This Day in History

Take a look at historic events in past Vermont summers!

1777 (July 8) – Six months after declaring independence, Vermont holds a constitutional convention. The convention concluded its work on July 8, adopting a constitution and creating the State of Vermont.

1923 (Aug. 3) – Vice President Calvin Coolidge is sworn into the presidency upon the sudden death of President Warren Harding. Coolidge was visiting his family home in Plymouth Notch, Vermont when he received word. The farm had no electricity or telephone, so his father, a notary public, administered the oath of office by candlelight in the family parlor at two in the morning.

1941 (Sept. 10) – Governor Willis calls for a special session of the Vermont Legislature to address fiscal problems at the University of Vermont. This session also declared that a state of "armed conflict" existed, triggering pay increases to Vermonters in the military. That action is the origin of belief that Vermont declared war on the Axis powers before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Contact Us

Have research questions?

Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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