

# Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

## On the Road to Family History: Genealogy Research & Outreach at VSARA

Fall 2016

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Summer is often a busy time of year in our reference room for genealogy researchers, with some coming from as far away as Arizona, Florida, and even British Columbia. But recently, the Vermont State Archives has been able to reach out to local genealogists in new ways.

On July 21, Senior Archivist Rachel Muse hosted the Barre Genealogy Group at VSARA's facility in Middlesex. The group, many of whom had never been to VSARA before, became acquainted with our collections relevant to genealogical research and received a behind-the-scenes tour of our vaults. Rachel highlighted records from Barre,

names, dates, and places. For another chance to see this presentation, please see our [Upcoming Events](#) section.

We have come up with our own top five list of records beyond the usual vital and probate records resources that are our favorites for colorful family history research!

1. **State Institutional Records**—Records from state institutions such as the

Vermont State Hospital, Vermont State Prison, and the Brandon Training School offer information on individuals who were committed to the care of the state. However, researchers should note that some personal, medical, or educational information could be restricted.

2. **Manuscript Vermont State Papers**—These papers are the earliest records of Vermont state government, and individuals who interacted in some way with the government can appear in petitions, treasurers' records, and other government documents.

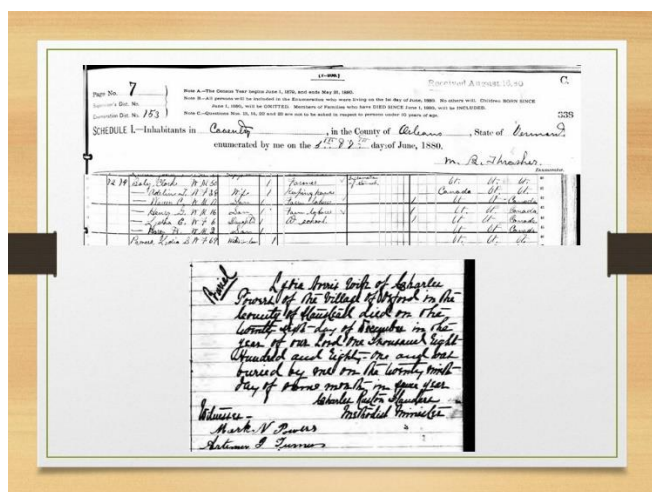
3. **Court Records**—Civil and criminal case records can shed light on ancestors' divorces, disputes, and more.

4. **Town Records**—Local government records aren't just land deeds. They can include things like militia lists, warnings out, and church records.

5. **State and Legislative Reports**—Early reports can have surprising, interesting, and useful items such as cemetery lists, auditor accounts, and even lists of state prisoners.

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Slide from archivist Mariessa Dobrick's talk to the Waterbury Genealogy Quest Group, August 30, showing excerpts from census and town church records. [Image courtesy VSARA staff]

such as municipal court records and naturalization records. We encourage other groups to contact us if interested in taking part in a similar program.

On August 30, archivist Mariessa Dobrick gave a talk for the Waterbury Genealogy Quest Group, introducing them to many of our resources, including some lesser known collections. Mariessa featured interesting stories and unique discoveries, and attendees left with ideas for shedding light on their ancestors' lives beyond just

## Living it up in Lansing: Vermont Archivists at the 2016 NAGARA Conference

This July, archivists from the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) represented Vermont at the annual conference of the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA). This association works toward the



Inside Michigan's state capital building. [Image courtesy VSARA staff]

improvement of local, state, and federal government records. This year's conference was held in the state capital of Michigan.

Vermont archivists presented with archivists from Texas and Virginia. One panel discussed the challenges of records access versus patient privacy in the records of state mental health institutions. The other

panel talked about governors' records, discussing the wide range of research opportunities within those records, as well as the challenges of records transfer after

a change of administration. Email has also been a hot topic on the political stage, and the panel explored those challenges.



State Archivist Tanya Marshall speaks on a panel session. [Image courtesy VSARA staff]

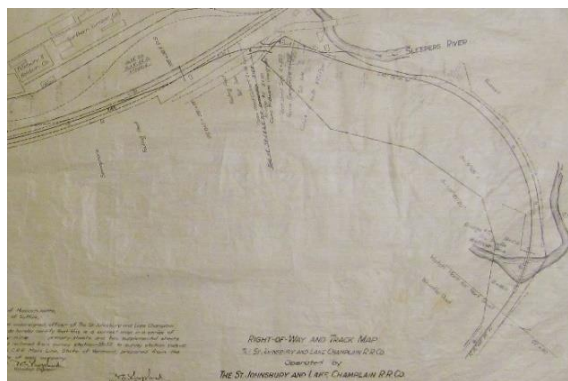
Attendees toured the impressive Michigan History Center—comprised of the Michigan State Library, Michigan State Archives, and Michigan Historical Society—as well as the beautiful and historic state capital building. The host city fostered an engaging experience for government records workers to learn from each other and bring creative ideas back home.

## A Trifecta of Records: New Additions to Executive, Legislative, & Judicial Branch Collections

The most recent legislative session has come to a close and the records from the 2015-16 biennium are now at the Vermont State Archives. Committee handouts, agendas, and records of action have been added to record series [A-116](#). The legislature has modernized how committee hearings are recorded, and 2016 recordings

are now entirely electronic, while 2015 recordings are still held on CD.

[Supreme Court briefs](#) from 1858 to 2014 have been transferred from the Department of Libraries. Briefs are summarized arguments filed by both parties in an appeal. Some case decisions—those considered precedent-setting—are published in the Vermont Report volumes. Briefs give more insight into those published decisions, and can give more information about those cases that aren't included in the Vermont Reports.



Section of valuation map for what became Lamoielle Valley Rail, in St. Johnsbury. [Image courtesy VSARA staff]

We are currently processing railroad records from the Agency of Transportation. The Railroad Valuation Act of 1913 was a federal initiative to report on the value of all property owned by rail carriers. Many Vermont railroad maps created for Vermont are included in this set of records, some with revisions into the late 20th century. There are also engineering plans for structures along the railroad lines, as well as other related records.

## Upcoming VSARA Events -----

### October is Archives Month!

October marks American Archives Month, an effort by organizations and repositories around the nation to highlight the importance of records with enduring value. The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration is hosting and taking part in several events to celebrate.

#### **VSARA Open Houses**

Our open houses offer the chance to view historic records, tour the State Archives' vaults, and hear stories straight out of the archives. This year VSARA is featuring two lectures around the theme of using archival records in cold case investigations. Tours begin at 5 PM, lectures follow at 6 PM.

- **Tuesday, October 18**—*"Was it Murder?" presented by Brian Lindner*
- **Thursday, October 27**—*"It's In the Records: Shedding Light on a Middlebury Cold Case" presented by Kris Bowdish & Tanya Marshall*

#### **Saturday, October 15: Using Digital Resources to Enrich Local History**

VSARA Archivist Rachel Muse will be presenting with Victoria Hughes of the Vermont Historical Society at the League of Historical Societies and Museums Annual Meeting.

#### **Saturday, October 29: On the Road to Family History**

VSARA Archivist Mariessa Dobrick will be lecturing on Vermont State Archives' genealogical resources at the Genealogical Society of Vermont's membership meeting. For more information, please see our [front page article](#).

To learn more about these and other Archives Month events [visit our calendar](#).

## From the Vault -----



Fall foliage, late September 1963 around the Wells River. From the Department of Tourism and Marketing photographs at the Vermont State Archives series [A-078](#).

## On This Day in History

From Chittenden to Montpelier, these fall dates remind us of our environmental, political, and even paranormal history!

**1938 (Sept. 21)** – Five Vermonters die when a hurricane hits the Green Mountain State; only eleven years after the great flood of 1927.

**1932 (Oct. 25)** – William Eddy, one of the spirit mediums from the world renowned Eddy family of Chittenden, dies at the impressive age of 99.

**1805 (Nov. 8)** – Montpelier is selected as Vermont's new state capital. The first state house was completed three years later.

## Contact Us

Have research questions?

### Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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### Visit our website!

<http://www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives>

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