

Keeping Appraised

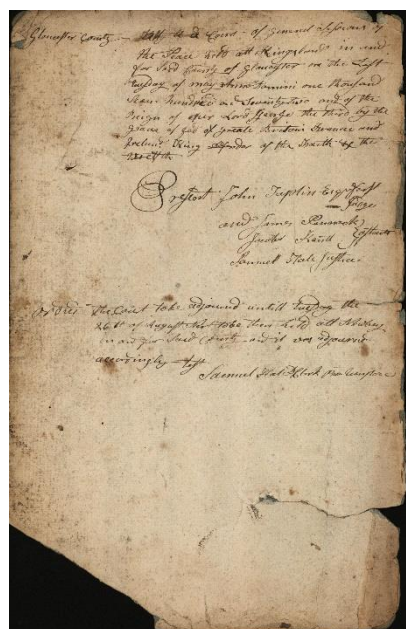
Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Unearthing Early VT Treasures in Orange County

While boxing up early County and Supreme Court records with Orange County court staff in Chelsea, we came across an interesting item. Buried under the usual detritus that piles up in an office, we found a package enclosed between two thick pieces of cardboard. Someone had thoughtfully noted on the cardboard in bold red ink, "Historic Court Records – Don't Destroy" and those instructions had, thankfully, been followed over the years. Opening the pack revealed something amazing – a small file of original records from Gloucester County Court – some of the earliest surviving records VSARA archivists have seen in any courthouse in Vermont.

Gloucester County predates the State of Vermont, and even the Revolutionary War. It was created by New York, then an English colony, in 1770, with the then-named Kingsland (now the town of Washington) serving as its county seat. Kingsland had no residents at this time, creating a challenge for those charged with running



Inside cover page of Gloucester County records, [courtesy of VSARA, series GCC-002]

county business. The court records illustrate this, "travilled until Knight there Being No Road and the Snow very Deep we traveled on Snow Shoes...we trailed some ways and Held a Council when it was Concluded it was Best to open the Court as we Saw No it was not whether in Kingsland or Not But we concluded we ware farr in the woods...All Cases Continued or adjourned over to next Tirm the Court if one adjourned

over until the Last Tuesday in May next." The county seat moved in 1772 to Newbury, a town that was populated by at least a few settlers.

The 38 or so pages record the activities of Gloucester's Inferior Court of Common Pleas between 1770 and 1774. They were transcribed and published by the Vermont Historical Society in 1943, so the text has been available for quite some time, while the location of the originals was uncertain.

The small packet of handwritten pages serve as court calendar and recording book, and little happens in the first year. Eventually, regular court business begins to pick up and many cases come before the court, though the details concerning most cases are scarce. Cases include debts, assaults, tavern licensures, appointments of public officers, and even an interesting bastardy case. One of the major items tackled is the construction of a courthouse and jail.

The documents had been remarkably well conserved in the 1950s – even the documentation around this conservation work was still included with the records. We're very pleased to transfer these records to the Vermont State Archives in Middlesex where they will be stored in secure, climate-controlled conditions. These records provide an amazing glimpse into the challenging earliest days of what would eventually become Vermont. They are a tangible link to our past, joining our ever-growing body of material that makes up the story of Vermont's government. Thanks to the care and knowledge of the Orange County Clerks and courthouse staff over the years, they've survived throughout the centuries as the State of Vermont formed and evolved.

The Upper Connecticut: Narratives of its Settlement and its Part in the American Revolution, Vol. 2 (Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 1943) is available online through Family Search at: <https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/193915>

Winter 2016-17
Volume 2, Issue 5

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It's in the Records: Celebrating American Archives Month



Open house attendees browse an historic records exhibit. [courtesy VSARA staff]

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

Throughout the month, VSARA archivists presented at various state meetings. At the League of Historical Societies and Museums meeting, archivist Rachel Muse presented on digital local history resources; at the Genealogical Society of Vermont's membership meeting, archivist Mariessa Dobrick spoke on genealogical research with government records; and our newest archivist, Bethany Fair, along with digital records specialist Zachery Whitaker, presented an overview of VSARA current events at the Vermont Archivists' Network event.

VSARA also hosted two open houses to offer the public a chance to view historic records and tour the State Archives' vaults. Each open house featured a lecture around the theme of using archival records in cold-case investigations. Historian Brian Lindner presented the first

lecture, telling the story of the mysterious death of Waterbury's Pauline Molony in 1950, only three years after the creation of the Vermont State Police. In the second lecture, Detective Kris Bowdish and State Archivist Tanya Marshall discussed their investigative work and research into the unidentified skeletons discovered on a rural logging road in Middlebury in 1935. The second open house also featured a curated exhibit highlighting the wide range of material available at the Vermont State Archives for researching murder and other criminal activity.



Detective Bowdish and State Archivist Tanya Marshall present on the Middlebury skeletons. [courtesy VSARA staff]

Through this year's events, we were able to introduce seasoned researchers and beginners alike to the importance of using archival records for a wide variety of research – not just historical. The records in the State Archives vaults are always available to researchers via our Reference Room.

Meet the Archivists!

2016 has brought a lot of changes to the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, including many records accessions, new office and processing space, and last but not least, a brand new archivist to our team!

Bethany Fair is joining us from Boston, MA, where she earned an M.S. in Library and Information Sciences from Simmons College with a focus in Archival Management, as well as an M.A. in History from Simmons College in 2015.



VSARA Archivists (left to right): Mariessa Dobrick, Rachel Muse, Bethany Fair, Sally Blanchard-O'Brien

Between 2012 and 2015, under the direction of Dean Eileen Abels, she conducted an environmental scanning initiative called "Unbound," a project seeking to identify technology trends in libraries, archives, and historical information settings. She previously worked in publishing as Digital Licensing Manager at Perseus Books Group.

Upcoming Events at VSARA

NOTICE: NEW REFERENCE ROOM HOURS

Beginning **January 9, 2017**, the VSARA Reference Room will be open on Mondays. With the addition of our new staff, we are happy to be available to the public five days a week. The Reference Room hours are **Monday – Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM**. Please note that we stop pulling records from our vaults at 3:30.

Travel Channel's Mysteries at the Museum

State Archivist Tanya Marshall recently appeared on an episode of *Mysteries at the Museum*, a program on the Travel Channel that tells the stories of unusual objects and records in museums and archives all around the country. A letter from VSARA's holdings in connection with a crooked Burlington cop features in the segment in the episode entitled *Man Who Saved the World, Man in a Box, and From the Depths of Hell*. The episode originally aired on July 29, but you can catch it again on **Saturday, December 17, at 8 AM**.

From the Vault



Vermont is no stranger to outdoor fun, even in the cold winter temperatures. Just follow the lead of these snowshoe hikers from 1956!

You can find this image and many more in the Department of Tourism and Marketing photographs at the Vermont State Archives series [A-078](#).

On This Day in History

Who says winter can't be fun? These historic dates look at Vermont celebrations, from movie premieres and grand balls to the prohibition of what might be deemed as joyriding!

1999 (Dec. 12) - *Cider House Rules* premieres in the United States. A large portion of the movie was filmed in southern Vermont.

1791 (Jan. 26) – Vermont legislators pass an act enabling sheriffs and other law enforcement to apprehend, without warrant, any person “unnecessarily travelling, journeying, or driving sleighs, teams, or droves, on the Sabbath”.

1876 (Feb. 28) – A grand opening ball is held for the new Pavilion Hotel in downtown Montpelier. The original hotel had been torn down two years earlier to make room for a more modern hotel.

Contact Us

Have research questions?

Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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