

# Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

## Happy Birthday, VSARA!

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This summer marked the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, created by Act 96 of 2008. The act merged the former State Archives, part of the Office of the Secretary of State, with the former Public Records Division, under the Department of Buildings and General Services. The anniversary was celebrated in June with an event entitled *Off The Record* that shared stories about days past, celebrated how the institution came to be, and acknowledged how it has changed in the past decade.

Secretary of State Jim Condos, the 2018 recipient of the Council of State Archivists' Advocacy and Archives Award, opened the event, remarking that VSARA has "modernized and grown over the last ten years, while in many states, archives have been under the gun of cost-cutting." State Archivist Emeritus Gregory Sanford reiterated the growth that has happened since the creation of VSARA and since his retirement in 2012. Sanford went on to discuss the important role of records in our society, "the importance of the right to know and of public records." He remarked that archives are "a place that you can go and say, well, what actually happened, at least that's captured in the records...In the

end it really gives you context, and it also gives you the opportunity to wonder."

Deb Markowitz, Secretary of State at the time of VSARA's creation, was unable to attend but provided recorded comments to be shared. She felt the most important part of the entire process "was the passage of the law...because that created the legal infrastructure for a modernization of how we

managed records in Vermont." And that still continues today; just this past legislative session another law was passed to update and clarify definitions and duties of VSARA and the statewide records and information management program.

Former Governor Jim Douglas explained that "it was a different era but an important time to build what everyone sees today." He went on to congratulate VSARA staff by saying "I'm really proud of what you've been able to accomplish."

Markowitz' Deputy Secretary of State, Bill Dalton, echoed congratulations. "This just a building. But the programs that are a part of this organization that have been developed over the course of time...are something that everybody in this room can be proud of," he said.

Much has changed in the past ten years. The Vermont State Archives went from a basement location to state-of-the-art facilities, the state has a firmly established statewide records and information management program for local and state records, and VSARA routinely accessions born-digital archival records. But the mission remains the same: to provide, protect, promote, and preserve Vermont public records.

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Former Governor Jim Douglas, Secretary of State Jim Condos, and State Archivist Emeritus Gregory Sanford. [Courtesy VSARA staff]

# Advocacy, Outreach and Archival Values: VSARA Archivists in DC



*Hart Senate Office Building [courtesy of VSARA staff]*

The joint Council of State Archivists (CoSA)/ National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)/ Society of American Archivists (SAA) conference took place in Washington D.C. August 12 – 18. State

Archivist Tanya Marshall, Records and Information Management Specialist Megan Wheaton-Book, Senior Archivist Rachel Muse, Vermont Historical Records Program Coordinator Rachel Onuf and Archivist Bethany Fair were in attendance and taking active roles in a variety of ways. Secretary of State Jim Condos made a special appearance as he was presented with CoSA's Advocacy for Archives Award. VSARA archivists are proud and grateful to have such a strong supporter of government archives as Vermont's Secretary of State.

Rachel Muse was the first to arrive in DC in order to take part in a day long archival advocacy program on Capitol Hill to raise awareness around issues important to archivists – supporting federal funding programs, the National Archives and Records Administration, and initiatives to better manage and preserve electronic records. Rachel first made a quick visit to the office of New Hampshire Senator Maggie Hassan, before paying a longer visit to the office of Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy. Senator Leahy's Archivist Colleen Mason and Legislative Director Erica Chabot both expressed a great deal of support and interest in archives issues in a very productive meeting. The next day, Tanya Marshall, past president of NAGARA and former CoSA board member participated in a day long work session at the CoSA Great Ideas Exchange.

Megan Wheaton-Book chaired and presented with

Archivists and Records Managers from Florida, California, and Kentucky on access restrictions to state public records. The session provided an overview of each state's legal context, and how different requirements led to slightly different implementations for public access to records. Megan's presentation focused on VSARA's use of ARMA's Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles as a framework for explaining VSARA's facilitation of access, not only to archival records but also to public records held by state agencies.

VSARA attendees rounded out the conference with two presentations on the final day. Rachel Onuf participated in a session reflecting on "Archival Values," facilitating discussion about how our core value of "preservation" is presently defined and how archivists engage with this value. Archivist Bethany Fair served as Chair and Speaker at an outreach session entitled, "Lumos Maxima! Illuminating Controversial or Restricted Records through Outreach" alongside archivists from the JFK Library, Boston City Archives, and City of Somerville Archives. Through a series of case studies, the session compared and contrasted the ways in which different institutions have increased engagement with emotionally and legally challenging records on a limited budget. Bethany's case study focused specifically on engagement with Eugenics Survey of Vermont records.

VSARA staff had a whirlwind week engaging with archivists from around the country and discussing records on a national stage. The experience has given them new tools and ideas to bring home and put into practice within their own institution.



*Archivists Rachel Muse and Bethany Fair, Secretary of State Jim Condos, State Archivist Tanya Marshall, Records & Information Management Specialist Megan Wheaton-Book, Vermont Historical Records Program Coordinator Rachel Onuf [courtesy of Office of the Secretary of State]*

# Remembering the 1918 Influenza Epidemic

This autumn marks a century since the 1918 influenza epidemic, a strain of the flu notorious for taking the lives of those in their prime. It was known as the “Spanish flu,” and frequently referenced as “the grip,” and the numbers associated with influenza tell a sad story in statistics. The year 1916 saw 336 Vermonters die of the flu, and 158 lost their lives this way in 1917. But in 1918, 1,772 lives were lost – accounting for over 25 percent of all deaths in the state that year. Most of these deaths occurred in a span of less than three months.

Those on the front lines providing medical care to the afflicted were not spared. Charles S. Caverly, the president of the State Board of Health, died on October 16, 1918. On his death certificate, acute influenza appears as the contributing disease leading to his death by pneumonia. The duration of the illness – just three days. As was common with flu deaths due to fears of infection, a private funeral was held at his home.

The epidemic dissipated as suddenly as it arrived. By the time the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the long lists of the sick and dead were significantly decreasing in Vermont’s newspapers. The people of Vermont celebrated the end of the war

alongside the end of the epidemic. Worldwide it is estimated that 20 million people lost their lives to the epidemic. The impact of the flu on Vermont families, the state’s institutions, and public health law in Vermont would be long felt. Following the path of the epidemic throughout Vermont and the response of the state’s government provides a fascinating glimpse at a wartime nation suddenly facing a crisis at home, with resources dangerously depleted.

Learn more about the flu epidemic in Vermont by reading an article by VSARA Senior Archivist, Rachel Muse, in the [Burlington Free Press’ History Space](#).



A ward at the Vermont State Hospital in 1918. [courtesy of VSARA, series VSH-001]

## Many New Additions to Vermont Archival Records

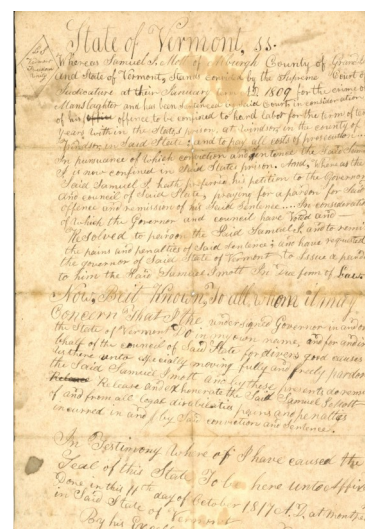
2018 has seen a number of varied and interesting accessions into the Vermont State Archives that include records from all three branches of government. Among the first accessions this year was the entire collection of [municipal and town reports](#) from the Department of Libraries, dating from the mid-1800s to the present, which are completely processed and available to the public.

The records of Attorney General Jeffrey Amestoy (1985-1997) and Chief Highway Engineer Reginald Arnold (1967-1974) came in this summer and are currently being arranged and described.

Additions to existing Bennington Probate District records in the State Archives were also transferred this summer and are also being arranged. Most recently, records from the 2017-2018 legislative biennium were accessioned, including the records of the special

session this past June. And VSARA archivists are working with the Addison Probate Court to transfer in historical probate records from the Addison and New Haven districts.

VSARA received one gem from an early period in Vermont’s history – the pardon of Samuel Mott, a convicted smuggler and manslaughterer in the Black Snake Affair of 1808.



Pardon of Samuel Mott by Governor Galusha, 1817 [courtesy of VSARA staff]

## Upcoming Events at VSARA

October is American Archives Month, an effort by organizations and repositories around the nation to highlight the importance of records with enduring value.

### Thursday, Oct. 11—Raising Spirits: Spooky Stories from Vermont Public Records

Come on an historical ghost tour through the vaults where you may meet with spectres from Vermont history whose stories have been captured in public records. This event is free and open to the public but requires a reservation: <http://bit.ly/SpookyArchives> Tours will last approximately one hour.

**Caution** – This event may not be suitable for children under the age of 12.

### Thursday, Oct. 25—“Murder, Mystery & Indigenous Mobility” with Jill Mudgett

Historian Jill Mudgett tells a story about indigeneity in Vermont by focusing on a man from southern New England who arrived in Vermont during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was murdered in the woods. Doors open at 5 PM for a behind-the-scenes tour of the archives and special exhibit, followed by the presentation at 6 PM. Free and open to the public.

### Live Twitter Events

#### Wednesday, Oct. 3 – Ask an Archivist Day

Take this opportunity to engage with your friendly local archivists, just use the tag #AskAnArchivist or #AskAVTArchivist.

#### Wednesday, Oct. 10 – Electronic Records Day

Follow us on Twitter all day as we promote awareness about the important role electronic records play in our world.

## From the Vault



This beautiful foliage image was taken in West Dover in the fall of 1956. The Vermont Development Commission and later Department of Tourism and Marketing captured many autumn scenes as a way to promote Vermont's beauty, available in series [A-078](#).

## On This Day in History

This issue looks at the origins of a few of Vermont's towns in connection with this year's autumn holidays.

**Sep. 3, Labor Day** - Tunbridge is born on this day in 1761, from a New Hampshire grant. The name reportedly was in honor of Viscount Tunbridge, a prominent anti-colonial member of the British establishment.

**Oct. 31, Halloween** - Three towns can trace their origins to this day: Danville, Mt. Holly, and Waltham. All three were created after Vermont's independence and subsequent statehood, in the years 1786, 1792, and 1796, respectively.

**Nov. 13** - New York issued patents for two towns on this day in 1769—one survived, the other did not. Royalton continues to thrive in present-day Vermont, but the area comprising what New York planned for “Camden” now belongs to parts of Dover, Jamaica, and Wardsboro.

## Contact Us

### Have research questions?

#### Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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