

Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Legal Records Appreciation Day

Spring 2018
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Early this year, Governor Phil Scott signed a proclamation that named February 8, 2018 as Legal Records Appreciation Day in Vermont. This proclamation celebrates the state's history through the



Governor's proclamation, January 30, 2018. [Courtesy of the State of Vermont Executive Department, accessed from governor.vermont.gov]

acting under the rule of the English crown in what was then New York. Legal records in Vermont illuminate over two centuries of societal and cultural evolution in the state through its judicial, legislative, and executive functions. These records include many different formats, from delicate parchment to digital files, and consist of charters and petitions, case decisions and opinions, legislation, and much more.

The proclamation recognizes the cultural, legal, and historical significance of these records, and the important work that various archival and historic institutions around the region, including the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), the Vermont Historical Society, Special Collections at the

University of Vermont, the New York State Archives, and others, have done to safeguard, provide access to, and help the public understand and appreciate these records.

Legal Records Appreciation Day coincided with the release of the book *Green Mountain Scholar: Samuel B. Hand, Dean of Vermont Historians*. The book, published by the University of Vermont's Center for Research on Vermont,

gathers thirty scholarly articles about Vermont's political and legal history written by various authors, including Dr. Samuel B. Hand – who helped drive accessibility to Vermont court records. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Hand was a University of Vermont professor for over three decades, served as History Department Chair, and was the first director of the Center for Research on Vermont, which he helped establish. Dr. Hand died at the age of 80 in 2012, and is renowned for his work as historian, scholar, and teacher.

The *Green Mountain Scholar* release party was held on Legal Records Appreciation Day at the University of Vermont, and about fifty friends and colleagues gathered to remember Dr. Hand and reflect on his legacy to the state. Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos attended the tribute, and was honored to recognize “the important role legal records have in preserving our local history.” Former State Archivist Gregory Sanford was also in attendance, and [shared some his memories](#).

Archivists at VSARA recognized [#LegalRecordsDay](#) by sharing highlights from legal records held in the state's archives on Twitter. Learn more about how to do [court records research](#) and [legislative history research](#) by looking at our online research guides.

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Archivists *Rise Up* in New Haven

From March 22nd to the 24th, archivists from all over the northeast gathered in New Haven, CT for the joint meeting of the New England Archivists (NEA) and the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York



VSARA Senior Archivist Rachel Muse speaks on a panel with archivists from Massachusetts and New York. [Courtesy VSARA staff]

(A.R.T.). The theme of the meeting was “Rise Up”, an opportunity to look at all types of archival advocacy, and to consider how archivists can promote and defend the importance of their work. Rachel Muse and Sally Blanchard-O’Brien, archivists from the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), attended the conference to connect with other archival institutions and information professionals in our region, to share ideas and learn from each other.

Sessions included presentations from academic and government archives, local historical institutions, and speakers included archivists, librarians, students, researchers, and other related professionals. VSARA Senior Archivist Rachel Muse participated in a five-person panel entitled *Transcending the Narrative of Neutrality*. This philosophical discussion was well attended and closed out the thought-provoking

conference. The panel investigated the importance of archival work in social and political issues and looked at ways in which archivists can be involved in political action, and the conversation drew heavily from the archivists’ professional experience in the field. A theme that came up repeatedly was how archivists need to make relationships outside their field. Rachel discussed that Vermont has developed research relationships with Vermont state legislators, and invites the public to conversations around records relating to marginalized groups of citizens and past challenges in Vermont governmental history. Archivists have a commitment to neutrality to ensure that every citizen has equal access to our records.

Through presentations and other events, conference attendees found inspiration to try new ideas for archival advocacy, and think about the personal, professional, and political outcomes of that work. In 2019, the New England Archivists will be hosting the spring meeting in Burlington, and our regional colleagues will be able to see just what Vermont has to offer.



Downtown New Haven, Connecticut. [Courtesy of VSARA staff]

Notice: New Reference Room Email Address

On March 9, 2018 the Vermont State Archives Reference Room email address changed to sos.archives@vermont.gov. Any messages sent to our former @sec.state.vt.us email address are not being delivered to our new email address. If you sent any requests or messages to our former email address after March 9, please forward your original message to the new email address. Thank you for your understanding.

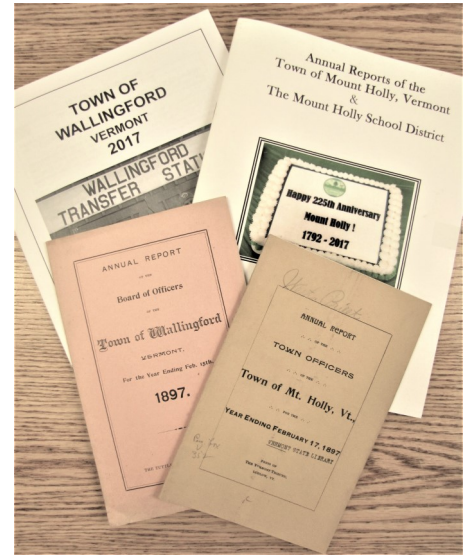
Historic Municipal Reports Now Available at the Vermont State Archives

In 2017, reporting requirements for Vermont's town, village, and city clerks changed, requiring that all annual reports be sent to the local public library, as well as a copy to the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. Along with that change, the entire collection of municipal reports was transferred from the Vermont State Library to the Vermont State Archives. This collection of reports spans over a century, covering the 1890s to the present day, with reports for a few municipalities stretching back to the mid-1800s.

Municipal reports can provide a wealth of information for genealogists, historians, and other researchers, including financial analyses, vital statistics, information about institutions within the town, and even dedications to prominent townspeople. The majority of the reports are in paper form and [can be accessed](#)

through our Reference Room, but some reports are available [online](#).

Now and then: reports from Wallingford and Mt. Holly span 120 years, 1897—2017. [Courtesy VSARA, series SE-180]



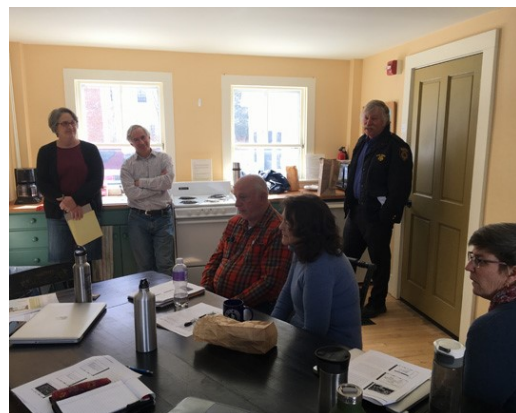
Disaster Planning for Cultural Heritage Organizations

The Vermont Historical Records Program Coordinator, Rachel Onuf, has partnered with the Norwich Historical Society (NHS) to offer a four-part workshop, *Disaster Planning for Cultural Heritage Organizations*. The group, which includes participants from the Thetford Historical Society and the Norwich Public Library as well as the NHS, is meeting once a month for four months for lectures, discussions, and hands-on activities. In the first two workshops, we covered risk assessment, the components of a disaster plan, and the nature of fire and how it spreads. Retiring Norwich Fire Chief Steve Leinoff joined the conversation and led a walk-through of the NHS, identifying potential risks and suggesting ways to minimize them. Our next topics are disaster response and collections salvage. Participants are busy working on their risk assessments and disaster plans for their own institutions in between meetings, with the goal of having them completed by the last workshop.

If you are interested in participating in this series of workshops in the future – or a condensed version – please get in touch with Rachel (rachel.onuf@vermont.gov or 802-828-2204). She hopes to provide this training throughout Vermont. A side

benefit of spending this time together is getting to know people from other organizations in your region, who might help in the event of a disaster or be collaborators on more pleasant projects!

This workshop series is based on a similar program developed for Massachusetts organizations with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The Vermont Historical Records Program is a program of the Vermont Historical Records Advisory Board and is funded by the Vermont Secretary of State.



Fire Chief Steve Leinoff speaks to workshop attendees. [Courtesy of VSARA staff]

Upcoming at VSARA

VSARA Tenth Anniversary Event—Thursday, June 21

This year the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration celebrates its tenth year! Join us for an informal conversation among friends and supporters, including current and former Secretaries of State, State Archivists, state legislators, and more. Come join us for this celebration and share your own memories and experiences! The event starts at 5 PM and is free and open to the public.

Volunteer! Write a biographical sketch of a Vermont Suffragist

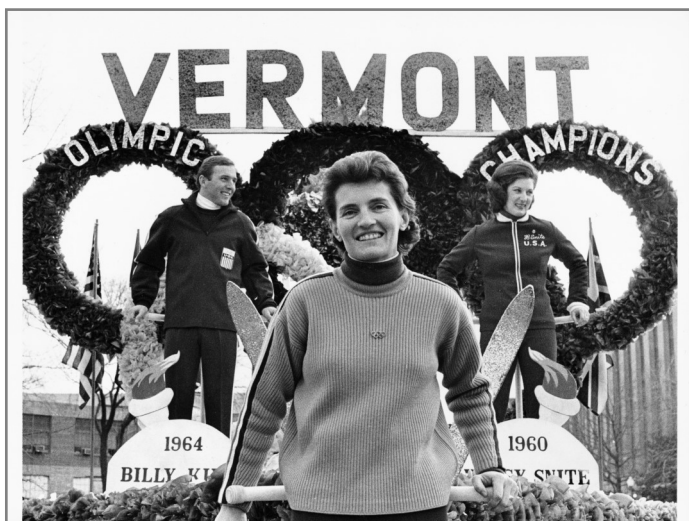
Be part of a national crowdsourcing project that is creating the *Online Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, which will include sketches of over 2,500 suffrage supporters affiliated with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) from 1900 to 1920. The sketch should be about 500 words. Sample sketches and research tips provided. Flexible deadlines. Want a name? Questions?

Please contact the Vermont Coordinator, Rachel Onuf:

rachel.onuf@vermont.gov

802-828-2204

From the Vault



The 2018 Winter Olympics has come to a close, but here we celebrate our state's success in games past. This float was in Lyndon Johnson's inaugural parade in 1965 and boasts Vermont Olympic champions Betsy Snite and Billy Kidd, slalom silver medalists in 1960 and 1964, respectively, and Andrea Mead Lawrence, giant slalom gold medalist in 1952. This image comes from the Department of Tourism and Marketing photo series, which spans several decades of publicity and promotion in the state. You can find more in series [A-078](#).

On This Day in History

This issue looks at significant dates in Vermont's election history, including campaign finance, reapportionment, and a governor's first.

2015 (Mar. 7) - F. Ray Keyser, Jr., Vermont's youngest-elected governor, dies. He was elected governor at the age of 33, and served one term, from 1961—1963. His defeat by a democrat is seen as the shift in Vermont's history from a red state to a blue state.

1915 (Apr. 1) - Act 4 mandates the reporting and public disclosure of primary campaign finances for the first time.

1965 (May 17) - The Vermont House of Representatives votes to reapportion itself by a vote of nearly two-thirds to one. The number of representatives reduced from 246 to 150 and changed to population-based representation rather than by town. This followed on the heels of a federal court order that state legislatures must be apportioned by population.

Contact Us

Have research questions?

Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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Please note our new email address!

sos.archives@vermont.gov

Visit our website:

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

Find us on Twitter: [@VTStateArchives](https://twitter.com/VTStateArchives)