

Keeping Appraised

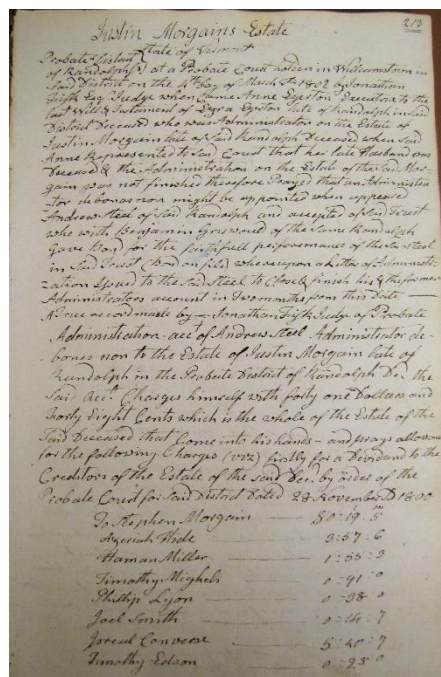
Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Probate: Vermont's Court of Identity & Property

Since Vermont's beginnings, probate courts in the state have been answering two basic questions: who is who, and who owns what? Probate courts have been responsible for the settlement of personal estates and administration of trust estates, as well as guardianships, adoptions, civil commitments, name changes, vital records amendments, and insolvency cases (prior to 1898).

The Vermont State Archives continually receives and processes historic probate records. In recent months,



Record from estate of Justin Morgan, Randolph [courtesy of VSARA, series PRO-RNP-002]

Hartford district record books, volumes that summarize cases reaching judgment, were transferred from the Windsor probate court, and staff archivists finished processing case files from the Marlboro district in Windham County.

Westminster district case files are slated to be processed next, and there are transfers from

other districts that are in the works. In general, the Vermont State Archives houses probate records from most districts in the state that are from 1945 and earlier. There is no single index that covers all twenty districts, so researchers should try to identify the district(s) or town where an individual lived before searching the probate records.

Interested in doing your own research in probate records? Here are five tips to help!

- 1. There is not always a will.** If a person dies without a will, or “intestate,” the probate process determines how the estate will be distributed.
- 2. Guardianships were usually about money, not care.** A guardian was established when a person could not legally take care of his or her assets because of his or her age or mental state, and the guardian may have had no personal relationship with the individual.
- 3. Adoptions were often informal in early years.** This is especially true if the “adopted” child went to live with relatives. An informal adoption may not be recorded in any court records.
- 4. A man's estate could be settled years after his death.** Under dower laws, a widow received a certain percentage of her husband's estate for the remainder of her life, so sometimes the husband's estate wasn't finally settled until after his widow had also died.
- 5. Sometimes there is just no probate record.** A death in Vermont does not guarantee a probate record. The deceased may not have left enough in their estate to become a probate issue, or they may have transferred any property through other means prior to their death or by their heirs after the death.

Summer 2017
Volume 3, Issue 2

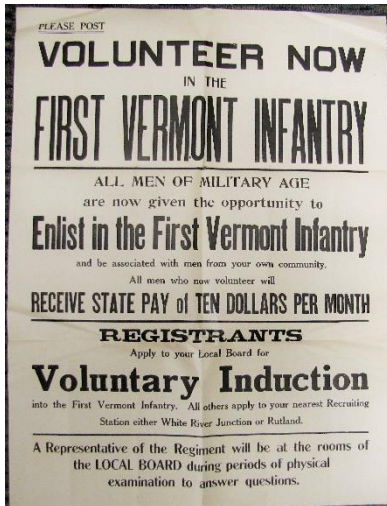
Inside this issue:

WWI	2
Vietnam Vets.....	2
From the Vault.....	3
Upcoming Events	3
On this Day in History	3
Contact Us.....	3

You can see a complete list of probate records available in the Vermont State Archives on our [website](#).

Archivists Commemorate WWI Centennial

April 6th marked the 100th anniversary of the United States' entry into the First World War. Vermont archivists honored the centennial with the creation of a new



Recruitment poster for WWI service [courtesy of VSARA, series PRA-375]

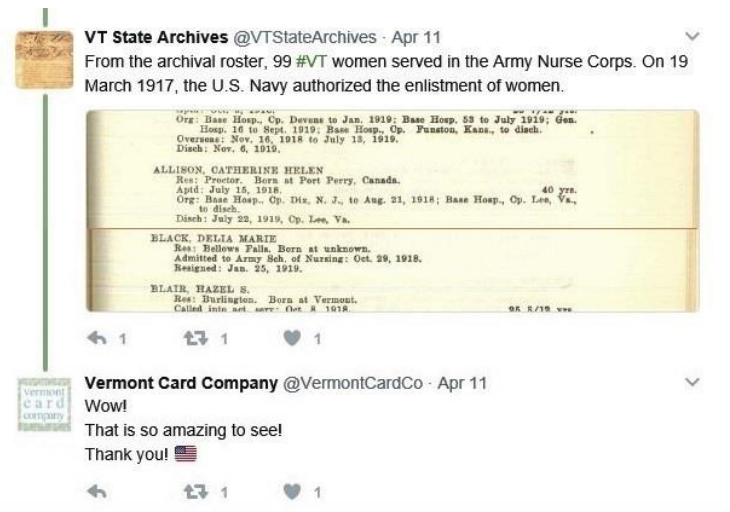
research guide focusing on World War I records in the Vermont State Archives. The featured records range from military records to governors' correspondence, from accounting records to legislation. These records provide insight into how Vermont's leaders handled the

challenges of war, as well as telling the stories of Vermonters' lives as they changed during and after the Great War. Most of the state's existing historic military records were fortunately salvaged from the 1945 Montpelier Arsenal fire, which occurred only two days after the Adjutant General requested safer storage.

Archivists around the nation took to social media on the anniversary to remember a significant time in America's history. VSARA archivists used Twitter to reach out to and

interact with those interested in the history of WWI, and to share stories and documents from our holdings.

Over 16,000 Vermonters served in World War I, and 1,407 were killed or wounded. If you have ancestors who served or are interested in the history of the First World War, you can view the new research guide on our website. The public is encouraged visit the Vermont State Archives to research these and other state archival records in person.



Twitter post, with responses, from WWI Centennial Commemoration [courtesy of VSARA staff]

Vermont's Vietnam Veterans

The virtual "Wall of Faces", maintained by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), connects a face and story to each name on the wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. As of this May, five Vermont soldiers still do not have photos. Do you know any of these five men?

You can learn more and help out by visiting the Wall of Faces: <http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/>.

Please share this initiative and help us preserve the memory of the remaining five Vermonters!

- Roger C. Burnham (Randolph)
- Allen J. Greene (Orwell)
- Wilbur W. Ivanov (Windsor)
- Edwin T. O'Connor, Jr. (Ludlow)
- Eugene D. Treadwell (Essex Junction)

Upcoming Events at VSARA

Blood Has Told: The Push for a “Eugenical Solution” in the Green Mountain State

Wednesday, May 31st

Scholarship on Vermont’s eugenics movement has largely focused on the Eugenics Survey of Vermont of the 1920s, even though state officials proposed eugenical policies as early as 1912. In this presentation, Dartmouth College history student Mercedes de Guardiola will examine why eugenics emerged in Vermont and trace the impact of eugenical policies put into place over the course of the twentieth century. The event will include an exhibit of original archival records that de Guardiola used in her research. For more information, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/k6c3hqb>

Art Inspired by the Archives: Vermont State Hospital

Wednesday, June 7th

Artist Sarah-Lee Terrat & filmmaker Bryce Douglass tell the story of how Vermont State Hospital records held by the Vermont State Archives and the lives of former patients inspired the mural at the new Waterbury State Office Complex. The event will include a film documentary about the making of the mural, as well as an exhibit of original archival records that inspired the artwork. For more information, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/l2jab3t>

For both events, doors open at 5:00pm for a behind-the-scenes tour of the archives and a special exhibit, directly followed by the presentation at 6:00pm. Both events are free and open to the public. For directions to our facility, please see our [website](#).

From the Vault



This July marks the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Vermont State Police. The disappearance of a young student from Bennington College in 1946 helped lead to the state legislature’s passing of Act 163 of 1947, which created the Department of Public Safety on July 1, 1947. In this photo, Governor Gibson inspects the new recruits in 1949. You can see more photos and a scrapbook in Series [A-103](#).

On This Day in History

This issue’s commemorative dates touch on some of the biggest pieces of human culture: religion, government, and entertainment!

1801 (Jun. 1) – Brigham Young, an important leader of the Mormon church, was born in Whitingham. He founded Salt Lake City and served as the second president of the church until his death in 1877. A monument in the town of Whitingham commemorates his life.

2000 (Jul. 21) – *What Lies Beneath*, starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Harrison Ford, premieres. The thriller was filmed in locations around the state, including Waterbury, Burlington, and D.A.R. State Park in Addison.

1961 (Aug. 1) – The longest session ever of the Vermont Legislature draws to a close, after nearly seven months – or 209 days, to be exact.

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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