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Keeping Appraised

Archivists Unite! VSARA Represents at Regional Conferences

This past spring was a busy time on the road for archivists at VSARA. Three northeastern conferences had VSARA staff sharing their expertise and learning from others in the field about topics such as archival practice and theory, digital records processing and management, and genealogical research.



Archivist Sally Blanchard-O'Brien with UVM Institutional Repository Management and Outreach Librarian Fred Pond at the NEA Movie Night [Courtesy VSARA staff]

The New England Archivists (NEA) professional association had their annual spring meeting in downtown Burlington, Vermont, from April 4 – 6. Archivist Sally Blanchard-O'Brien was in attendance and completed committee work, presented two clips from Vermont government films at the movie night, and reported on a session that presented on Vermont history. Vermont Historical Records Program Coordinator Rachel Onuf, who also attended as a member of the program committee, presented a daylong workshop on Caring for Historical Records, and chaired a session about “Archival Life in Retirement.”

The same weekend brought Archivist Mariessa Dobrick to Manchester, New

Hampshire for the biennial New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC) Conference, where she presented on the use of Vermont court records in genealogical research, as the sponsored speaker of the Genealogical Society of Vermont. She was an Ancestors Road Show volunteer and also learned more about genealogy resources available all over New England.



Archivist Mariessa Dobrick presenting at the NERGC Conference [Courtesy John Leppman, Genealogical Society of Vermont]

The end of April took Senior Archivist Rachel Muse and Digital Records and Information Management Specialist Zack Whitaker to Columbus, Ohio for the Best Practices Exchange 2019: New Digital Directions. This relatively informal “un” conference allows professionals wrestling with managing, preserving, and providing access to digital information an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other. Zack and Rachel presented on VSARA’s evolving digital records processing workflows. More information about this presentation is available on page five.

The opportunity to share knowledge with others around the country is an invaluable experience that allows Vermont’s archivists to better serve their records and researchers. VSARA is grateful for all of the opportunities in which we were able to take part!

“In view of the widely scattered condition of our rural communities, I am of the opinion that it would be a step in the right direction for many towns to look toward a central school, to which all pupils can be brought, thus making it possible to give them the benefits of the better educational advantages thus afforded at a slight increase of cost.”

*Inaugural address of
Governor Charles J. Bell,
1904*

Spotlight on Records: School Consolidation

For well over one hundred years Vermont has wrestled with the expense and administrative struggles of its small, rural schools. And the conversations from those earlier years look remarkably similar to ones we are having today. Vermont’s 1777 constitution made common schools mandatory in every town, so Vermont schools have long been small and numerous. While Vermont’s rough, hilly terrain was popularly blamed for the need for so many small schools, Superintendent Eaton, in 1848, suggested that geography was used as an excuse to provide the cheapest schooling possible.

Major change came to the landscape of Vermont schools in 1864. Act 61 repealed school funding through attendees’ fees and shifted it to a tax upon the grand list of the school district. Free, entirely tax-supported common schools would become the norm in Vermont. With this would come increased interest and controversy around how school districts were drawn and the cost of supporting small, rural schools. Act 10 of 1870 allowed towns to voluntarily abolish their multiple school districts by vote at a duly warned meeting, but consolidation was slow and did not always take.

Reviewing the reports of the Board of Education from the mid-nineteenth to the early 20th century is an interesting exercise. Those who administered education at the state level believed that, “Consolidation is a natural sequence to the evolution of the modern industrial system.” The details of the arguments may have changed over the years, but parents’ desire for the very best for their children has not. As long as Vermont’s unique challenges stand, the debate will carry on, in new ways. Read more about this continuing issue on our [website](#).

New Accession: Environmental Court Records

Over 260 cubic feet of archival records (series [ENVC-1482.1108](#)) have been transferred from the Environmental Court, now the Environmental Division of the Superior Court, into the permanent custody of the Vermont State Archives. The Environmental Court presides over the state’s environmental law and legal disputes that relate to permitting the division of a parcel into two or more parcels; the construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration, relocation, or enlargement of any building or other structure; or of any mining, excavation, or landfill; and any change in the use of any building or other structure, or land, or extension of use of land. The records consist of case files spanning nearly two decades, from 1989–2008 and shed light on an important part of the process that shapes the Vermont landscape.



Senior Archivist Rachel Muse poses in the Reference Room on her last day with a page from the Gloucester County Court records, an uniquely important set of records she helped bring into the State Archives. [Courtesy VSARA staff]

Transitions at VSARA

This spring, VSARA said goodbye to three beloved employees as they moved on to new experiences. In April, Digital Records and Information Specialist/Archivist Nick Connizzo left to pursue other opportunities. Nick joined VSARA in 2014 and quickly became instrumental in Vermont’s electronic records initiatives, including the launch of the state’s digital archival records repository, [VT-Retain](#).

After a thirty-year career with the State of Vermont, Records Center Technician Ed MacAuley retired in early May. Ed started with the State of Vermont in 1988, working as a Mail Clerk for the Department of Buildings and General Services, and then started working with the State Records Center in 2000.

And in mid-May, Senior Archivist Rachel Muse moved into a public library position after nearly a decade with VSARA. Starting as a Records and Information Management Specialist, she moved into the supervising role of the State Archives for several years, bringing in countless numbers of archival records, overseeing the operations of the Reference Room, spearheading creative outreach initiatives, and much more in her tenure with the State.

All three were valued members of our team and will be sorely missed here at VSARA. The impact of their efforts will be long-lasting. We wish them all well, and look forward to seeing where their next adventures take them!

Records Center Technician Ed MacAuley proudly sports a crown at his retirement party. [Courtesy VSARA staff]



On This Day in History

This issue remembers dates in Rutland County history.

1955 (Jun. 11) - Act 284 changes the Brandon State School (formerly the Vermont State School for Feeble-Minded Children) to the Brandon Training School. The school was responsible for the custody and care of developmentally disabled individuals and was ultimately closed by gubernatorial proclamation in 1993.

1846 (Jul. 7) - Governor Percival Clement (1919-1921) was born in Rutland. Prior to his term as governor, he served as a State Representative for Rutland Town at the time a section was incorporated into Rutland City, and served as a State Senator for Rutland County.

1761 (Aug. 26–28) - Three neighboring towns, Pawlet, Danby, and Harwich, were granted by New Hampshire, one on each day. The names purportedly came from prominent British families. Harwich’s name was changed to Mt. Tabor in 1803.

On the Road with Vermont's Roving Archivist

Follow along with Rachel Onuf, Coordinator of the Vermont Historical Records Program, on Twitter [@rovingarchivist](https://twitter.com/rovingarchivist)!



Logo for the Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance (VSCA). [Courtesy VSCA]

One of the initiatives I am involved with as Coordinator of the Vermont Historical Records Program is Vermont's commemoration of the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which prohibited the US and individual states from denying the right to vote on the basis of sex. Although Vermont had an opportunity to become the 36th and final state to ratify the Amendment, Governor Percival Clement refused to call a special session of the legislature.

This is one of many stories the Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance (VSCA) plans to tell about the history and legacy of the suffrage movement in Vermont. The VSCA formed in fall 2018 and has been meeting regularly ever since, with new organizations and individuals joining all the time. The League of Women Voters of Vermont is leading the Alliance, with logistical support from the

Vermont Commission on Women. As co-chair of the research and history committee, I support other committees, which are developing a web site (www.vtsuffrage2020.org) and Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/VTSuffrage2020/>) and designing a traveling exhibit and curriculum for use in schools. These projects give committee members an opportunity to do some original research and writing as well as serve as fact-checkers.

Relatedly, I am the Vermont Coordinator for the Online Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States (<https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/VOTESforWOMEN>), which entails finding volunteers willing to research and write about Vermont women who were active in the suffrage movement, many of whom are only known by their husband's name and are difficult to trace. There are a couple dozen crowdsourced biographical sketches of Vermonters available on the website, with more to come. This Spring UVM student Kailey Loughran did an independent study with me, focusing on the suffrage movement. She wrote several sketches and did some research comparing 2020 census data with 2020 voting tallies at the county level – and received an award from the Center for Research on Vermont for her work. Congratulations, Kailey!

For more information about the [Vermont Historical Records Program](#) (VHRP) contact Coordinator Rachel Onuf at rachel.onuf@vermont.gov or 802-828-2204.

Quote of the Quarter:

“...several times people have asked me, why is the Governor inviting the hippies to Vermont this summer?”

-Memo to Gov. Davis from Agency of Development and Community Affairs, 1971

@VTStateArchives Featured Tweet



Remember that term “red tape” used to describe restrictive bureaucracy or hindering of processes or decisions? Well, it’s based on real red tape, or string, used to bundle court records and other legal documents of the past. Here’s an example of some red tape in our very own archives!

Follow along with us on Twitter [@VTStateArchives!](https://twitter.com/VTStateArchives)

The More You Know

Election results throughout Vermont history are available on the website of the Elections Division: <http://vtelectionarchive.sec.state.vt.us>

This database contains historical data for many elections, while the original records, and more, are available for research through the [Vermont State Archives Reference Room!](#)

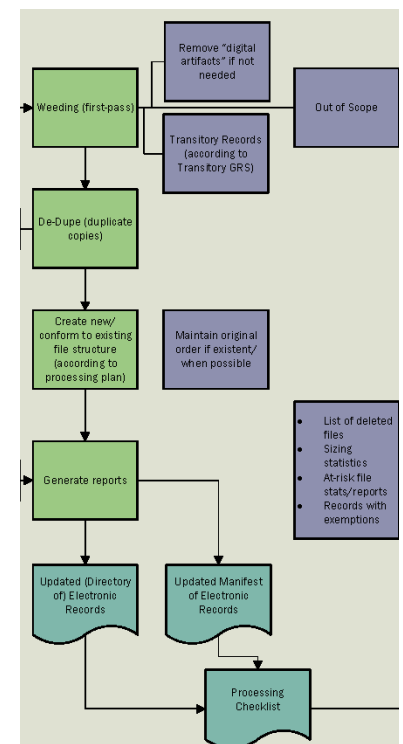
Hunting Rare Bits: Digital Recordkeeping & Preservation

Archivist Rachel Muse, and Digital Records and Information Specialist Zack Whitaker, recently debuted new digital archival processing workflows at the Best Practices Exchange conference in Columbus, Ohio. The workflows were developed over the course of several months by Rachel, Zack, and former Digital RIM Specialist/Archivist, Nick Connizzo.

With the bulk of state agency records being created in digital format, it is imperative that VSARA have mechanisms and workflows in place to effect the transfer and processing of digital archival records in a way that accounts for their particular legal and technological requirements while leveraging archival best practice. To better align our processes with best practices, VSARA recently acquired a dedicated digital processing workstation equipped with a suite of digital forensics tools. The new digital processing workflows leverage the newly-acquired tools to ensure the authenticity, integrity, reliability, and accessibility of digital archival records in our custody, pursuant to the ISO-15489: Records Management standard.

The new digital processing workflows are a work in progress. We will continue to refine and update the workflows as we continue testing and as new opportunities present themselves.

Section of a digital processing workflow. [Courtesy VSARA staff]



From the Vault



This image is not a still from a movie—it's from a Vermont State Police firearms training class (approx. 1940s—1950s). This image is one of several from a collection of photographs ([A-103](#)) from the Department of Public Safety, taken by Major Andrew Monti. The photographs document activities of the Department from its creation in 1947 to 1968.

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Upcoming Events with VSARA

Archival Insights into the 1778 Battle of the Shelburne Blockhouse Thursday, June 20 6 PM— Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Join Agency of Transportation Archaeologist Brennan Gauthier as he describes the little-known Battle of Shelburne using primary source documents from early Vermont State Papers. Details of the battle include ice skating British soldiers, inebriated officers and a burning roof put out with beer. Doors open early 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.

Launch Celebration for the Vermont Arts & Culture Disaster and Resilience Network (VACDARN) Tuesday, September 10, 10 AM—4 PM, Chandler Center for the Arts, Randolph

The Vermont Historical Records Program and Vermont Arts Council are leading a group in developing and emergency preparedness and response network for arts and cultural organizations. Join us for a day of presentations, training, and discussion.