

Vermont Research Facilities Part 2: State of Vermont General Services and Records Center

By Scott Andrew Bartley

The State of Vermont General Services and Records Center holds an abundance of beneficial resources for Vermont researchers. The services provided here are outstanding and the organization of the records enables researchers to find what they want quickly and efficiently. In addition to having the most open access to vital records in the country, this facility also keeps probate records, county land records, town records, censuses, indices for naturalizations and burial transmittals, military records, and much more. This is a “must-see” repository for all Vermont researchers!

Vital Records

Many of you who have been researching in Vermont may recall visiting the “Roots Cellar” in Montpelier. That was the busy room filled with index cards of vital records in rows and rows of filing cabinets. Those were the good old days when you could check a variety of records quickly. Now these cards are on microfilm and the filing cabinets gone. While I miss the cards (you could correct misfiling that cannot be done on microfilm), Vermont researchers should feel fortunate. These are the most open vital records in the country. By contrast, imagine this: I recently traveled across the country to California to conduct research at the State Capitol. Once there I was told that the statewide index to marriages (only found there) was no longer available to the public. Realize that the facility representing the most populous state in the union until recently had only one microfilm reader. The person at the counter did say they could research it for me – although it would take two to three years!

Vermont’s vital record microfilms form the backbone of the collections genealogists seek. They are actually a card file in alphabetical order broken down into year ranges: 1760 to 1870; 1871 to 1908; 1909 to 1941; 1942 to 1954; 1955 to 1979; and annually from 1980 to 1997. There is another set of “revised, delayed, and amended” records. There is also a card index for divorces covering 1861 to 1968 and then annually to 1997. Keep in mind that these cards are only a secondary source copied by the town clerks (or county clerks in the case of divorce) to send into the state. The other large collection there is the actual town record books (the original records) for all but a few towns. These records are generally filmed up to 1850 or 1900, depending on the town. This is always the preferred version of the vital record. The town record books include town meeting proceedings and most importantly, the tax list, called the grand list in Vermont. These are annual taxation records that were usually copied into the town books.

Probate Records

Probate records are arranged chronologically by district. Each county is one complete district or is divided into two districts. These records were microfilmed up to 1850 and in some cases to 1900. One thing that you cannot find anywhere else (except at the probate court itself) is the card index to the estate and guardianship records. Most of these indexes go up to the 1960s, although it varies depending on the district. Some of the indexes are closed as they contain cards for adoption cases. Most probate docket books have an index for that in each volume. The only great loss of records is the Addison District with a fire in 1852, although some records back to 1801 were preserved.

Land Records

Land records are kept on the town level as are most records generated by the government. It should be noted however that *some* early land records were registered at the county level, and subsequent sales of this land continued to be recorded by the county. I have never been able to determine why the county kept land records. I would be interested to learn the reason if anyone has figured it out. Not every county kept the records, but the ones that exist are kept at this facility. The following list shows everything available on microfilm in the reference and research room.

- Addison Co. land deeds, 1784 – 1870, 7 volumes
- Addison Co. land deeds, index, 1774 – 1926
- Bennington Co. land deeds, 1782 – 1832, 5 volumes (individually indexed)
- Bennington Co. land deeds, index, [1782 – 1891], volumes A – E
- Bennington Co. land deeds, index, 1891 – 1984, volumes F – I
- Caledonia Co. land deeds, 1796 – 1971, 6 volumes (includes Harris Gore proprietor’s records)
- Caledonia Co. land deeds, index, 1796 – 1971

- Chittenden Co. land deeds, 1785 – 1970, 14 volumes
- Chittenden Co. land deeds, index, 1785 – 1944 (through v. 12)
- Cumberland Co. land deeds, 1766 – 1777, 2 volumes (individually indexed)
- Essex Co. land deeds, 1793 – 1971, 21 volumes
- Essex Co. land deeds, index, 1793 – 1871
- Essex Co. land deeds, index, 1871-1971
- Franklin Co. land deeds, 1797 – 1883, 7 volumes (individually indexed)
- Orange Co. land deeds, 1770 – 1781, 1 volume [no index]
- Orange Co. land deeds, 1789 – 1847, 2 volumes [no index]
- Orange Co. land deeds, 1771 – 1832, volumes A to I [note v. M begins 1850]
- Orange Co. land deeds, index, 1771 – 1952
- Orleans Co. land deeds, 1799 – 1849, 4 volumes (individually indexed)
- Rutland Co. land deeds, 1773 – 1849, 9 volumes
- Rutland Co. land deeds, index [note vol. 8 missing]
- Windsor Co. land deeds, 1784 – 1794, 1 volume (indexed)

Town Records

Town records form the largest collection of microfilm. The bulk of the records are proprietors' records, town meeting minutes, and land and vital records. The proprietors' records were the first records generated for any town. They are usually the minutes of meetings and the division of town land recorded even before anyone settled in the town. The town meeting records were the next records created by the town. At first, they included everything but land records in a single volume. Later they created separate volumes for tax records, vital records, and other specialized subjects. The land records were recorded in separate volumes after the proprietors divided the land. There are normally separate, filmed card files of grantors and grantees. Vital record volumes appear by 1857, when the state mandated their collection, although separate volumes were created for some towns prior to that. Allegedly there are several towns missing from the collection. I know that Fair Haven is one of them.

WPA Surveys

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) conducted extensive surveys of records in Vermont, which can help locate records moved to storage at the state or county level. A handful were finalized and published from 1936 to 1943:

Federal records in Vermont:

- Federal Courts (1939)
- Department of the Treasury (1939)
- Department of War (1938)
- Department of Justice (1938)
- Department of the Navy (1939)
- Department of Agriculture (1939)
- Department of Commerce (1940)
- Department of Labor (1941)
- Veterans' Administration (1939)
- Miscellaneous Agencies (1941)

County "Archives":

- Lamoille (1936)

Town Inventories:

- Addison Co.
Bridport (1939)
- Chittenden Co.
Bolton (1939)

Charlotte (1939)

Essex (1940)

- Franklin Co.
Fairfax (1940)
- Grand Isle Co.
Alburgh, Grand Isle, Isle LaMotte, North Hero, South Hero, Two Heroes, Alburgh Village (1939)
- Lamoille Co.
Belvidere (1940)
Cambridge (1941)
Eden (1940)
Elmore (1941)
Hyde Park (1940)
Johnson (1941)
Morristown and Sterling Village (1940)
Stowe and Mansfield (1940)
Waterville (1939)
Wolcott (1939)
- Orleans Co.
Albany (1940)
Coventry (1940)
Derby (1939)
Derby Supplement for Salem Town, 1781-1880 (1941)
- Rutland Co.
Benson (1941)
Castleton (1941)
Clarendon (1940)
Danby (1941)
Hubbardton (1940)
Mt. Tabor (1941)
Shrewsbury (1940)
Tinmouth (1941)
Wallingford (1940)
- Windham Co.
Brookline (1939)
Grafton (1941)
Jamaica (1941)
- Windsor Co.

Cavendish (1941)
Plymouth (1940)

Church Archives:

- Protestant Episcopal, Diocese of Vermont (1940)
- Reprint of Churches of Hinesburg, 1789-1939 (1939)
- Directory of Churches and Religious Organizations in the State of Vermont (1939)

Miscellaneous Publications

- Calendar of the Ira Allen Papers in the Wilbur Library of the University of Vermont (1943)

- Index to the Burlington Free Press in the Billings Library, University of Vermont, 1848 – 1870, 10 vols. (1940-1942)
- Public Laws of Vermont Relating to Duties of Town Clerks (1940)

Other Resources

The following resources are also available:

- Manuscript versions of unpublished works. Some of these manuscript copies are in book form and others on microfilm. A complete set of census microfilm and official governmental indexes for Vermont from 1790 to 1930.
- Card index to the naturalizations in Vermont from 1791 to 1906 (later ones are at the Vermont Historical Society).
- Card index to burial transmittals starting in 1935.
- A small collection of church records, cemetery transcripts, and miscellaneous bible and family records and manuscripts. There are other small collections not mentioned here.
- The largest, non-Vermont resource is the alphabetical card index of Barbour Collection of vital records for 137 towns in Connecticut to 1850.

A part of the facility that researchers rarely visit is the records center. A records center generally contains a large volume of temporary records that the law requires the state to keep for a specified time. There is a small core collection of permanent records stored in the records center in their original form and not microfilmed. Most of them are not of genealogical interest; those records that may be of value are listed below.

The court records they hold vary. A scan of an in-house guide to the records showed:

- Bennington Co. Court, naturalizations, 1842 – 1929
- Chittenden Co. Court, dockets and judgments
- Chittenden Co. Municipal Court, naturalizations, 1869 – 1906
- Essex Co. Superior Court, naturalizations, 1859 – 1958
- Rutland City Court (Municipal), civil and criminal dockets, 1873 – 1891, 1899 – 1907
- Rutland Municipal Court, 1892 – 1893
- Windham Co. Court, 1851 – 1906, 1908 – 1922
- Vergennes City Court (Municipal), civil, 1794 – 1815
- Windsor Co. Superior, naturalizations, declarations and oaths, 1838 – 1958 (in 26 vols.), Indexes 1888 – 1902 and 1908 – 1929 [Note: Filmed 1811 – 1957 (*sic*)]

Other miscellaneous records of note:

- Acts of Congress, 1803 – 1851
- [Eugenics Survey](#)
- Grand lists
- Justice of the Peace records, 1842 – 1855, 1891 – 1909 (Salisbury & Shaftsbury)
- State maps
- Works Progress Administration (original material of the above mentioned surveys)

The last major collection consists of all the original military records of the state. You cannot use the originals anymore because of their fragile condition; however, the entire collection is microfilmed. A discussion of the project and a guide to this collection is available [online](#). A detailed guide to the Civil War records is also available [online](#).

About the Facility

- The State Records Center is located on Route 2 just west of the Middlesex exit off from I-89 behind the State

Police building.

- It is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except state holidays.
- There are nineteen microfilm readers.
- The cost of photocopies range from seventy-five cents to \$2.50 depending on the size of the page. If the copy is from the vital records films, the cost is \$3.00 for an “informational” copy. Anything can be certified for an additional \$5.00.
- Other services include a mailed request. Vital records and divorces cost \$9.50, which includes a second search into the revised, delayed, and amended records. If you request a copy from non-vital records, the charge is \$3.00 per microfilm used.
- You can even buy any microfilm you can use at the facility. You can pay by cash, check, money order, or credit cards. The credit card is surcharged \$6.00 and includes VISA, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express.
- You can write them at Public Records Division, Drawer 33, Montpelier VT 05633-7601. Their telephone is 802-828-3286 or 3701 and the fax is 828-3710. Forms in Word or pdf format are available [online](#).