

**IMPORTANT DATES IN THE
HISTORY OF
CONNECTICUT'S PUBLIC
RECORDS AND STATE
ARCHIVES PROGRAMS**

1741: The Colonial Assembly directs the Secretary of the Colony "to sort, date and file in proper order, all the ancient papers that now lye in disorder and unfiled in his office" before the next sessions beginning in October. The resolution provides five pounds "as a reward for his service."

1769: General Assembly instructs Governor Jonathan Trumbull and Secretary George Wyllys to work as a committee to "make a diligent search after all deeds of conveyance relative to the title of the lands granted by the Crown to this Colony by the royal charter." The Assembly directs the committee to write the Colony's agent in London to search for these records and send them to the Secretary.

May, 1770: General Assembly appoints Gurdon Saltonstall and Joseph Trumbull to acquire all public records pertaining to the affairs of the Colony "which properly belong to the colony."

May 1771: General Assembly directs Governor Jonathan Trumbull to "collect all the publick letters and papers which hereafter in any way affect the interest of this Colony and have the same bound together, that they may be preserved."

May 1772: General Assembly directs Secretary George Wyllys to make a handwritten copy of the first book of the Records of the Colony of Connecticut and of the Records of the New Haven Colony. Resolution also directs the Secretary to retain the New Haven Colony Records "for publick

use in the publick archives of the Colony" in his office.

August 16, 1774: Writing to Governor Trumbull from Wethersfield, Silas Deane reports that the "greater part" of correspondence of past governors and Journals of the House "have been long since used for wrappers." Citing the lack of public records to document claims of the Colony, Deane urges the Governor and Assembly to preserve public records. "We have," he argues, "a property in them, being written by persons in our employ, and our account."

May 1779: Noting that Journals of the House have "not in time past been secured and kept," thus, resulting in the loss of "many important transactions," the General Assembly directs clerks of the House to close, label, and hand over journals to the Secretary "to be kept with the archives and public writings of the State."

1794: Governor Trumbull's son, David, writes to Dr. Jeremy Belknap of the Massachusetts Historical Society offering to convey the collection of public records acquired by his father under the 1771 resolution to the Society. Belknap travels to Lebanon, Connecticut and from July 9-13, 1794, selects papers which the Society will purchase. In spite of inquiries from the Connecticut General Assembly, the Society will retain these records arguing that they were the property of the Trumbull family and that the Society gained them in a legal purchase. To this day, the thirty volumes of papers are known as the "Trumbull Papers." See below 1921 for return of the papers to Connecticut.

1840: In December, Faith Trumbull Wadsworth conveys the balance of the so-called "Trumbull Papers" which remained with the family to the Connecticut Historical Society. Among the documents are Agents Letters, 1742-73, Council of Safety Papers, 1775-82, Council Orders, 1743-75, and

gubernatorial records of Joseph Talcott, 1724-41, Jonathan Law, 1741-50, and Thomas Fitch, 1754-66. These papers are edited and published in seven volumes of the Historical Society's *Collections*.

1841-45: Sylvester Judd of Massachusetts, is hired to acquire, organize and index Connecticut's early colonial and state records up to the year 1820. To this day, the records are known as the "Connecticut Archives."

1844: The General Assembly designates the Hon. Daniel P. Tyler, Erastus Smith, and Philip S. Galpin, Esquires, as a committee "to make such improvements as they may deem necessary in the distribution, arrangement and entitling of the books and files belonging to the offices of the Secretary of State, in Hartford and New Haven." In addition, the committee was to prepare and "supply manuscript catalogues and indexes as may be needful for the convenient use of the same."

1844: The Connecticut Historical Society reports that in the past five years it has acquired archival records pertaining to the colony and early state history, including records of the Council and governors.

1845-46: General Assembly calls upon the Massachusetts Historical Society to return the so-called "Trumbull Papers," but the Society refuses.

1848-49: George Gibbs, grandson of Governor Oliver Wolcott, Jr., conveys to the Connecticut Historical Society a large collection of papers of Oliver Wolcott, Sr. and Jr. The Society will microfilm them in 1980-81.

1849: General Assembly provides funds for the first time to edit and publish *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*. James Hammond Trumbull is hired as the

first editor and in 1850, publishes volume number one covering 1636-1665.

1851: The General Assembly creates a **State Library Committee** to be appointed annually and charged with "the care and custody of the State Library." The Assembly appoints the Governor, the Secretary of State, and the Hon. William L. Storrs as the first committee.

1854: General Assembly renews the State Library Committee's appointments and authorizes it to appoint a **State Librarian**. James Hammond Trumbull accepts the appointment. The Assembly also transfers to the State Librarian the duties exercised since 1848 by the Secretary of State in compiling and tabulating and reporting on data supplied by local registrars of vital records

The State Library is located in the State House, now known as the Old State House. In his 1855 annual report, the first one by a State Librarian and only one he Trumbull would complete, he describes the rooms in the upper story of the State House as "small, badly lighted, inconvenient, of difficult access." Moreover, the library requires "extensive alterations and repairs, involving considerable expense, to provide even the temporary accommodation of the books, and their security from damp." The library could not expand "without a change of location." He also writes that the library is "deficient in most of its departments." During the year, a special room is constructed for the State Library in the State House. After completing his annual reports on the Library and vital statistics, Trumbull will resign in 1855 and take a European "tour."

1855: Charles Jeremy Hoadly is appointed the second State Librarian, a post he will hold until his death in 1900.

- Secretary of the State transfers the “Connecticut Archives” to the State Librarian.

1863: Charles J. Hoadly writes that the State Library is “exceedingly cramped for room” and that “every little while I have to send things up into the attic, [of the State House] because no place can be found for them on our shelves below.”

1870: General Assembly directs all town clerks to make copies of “manuscript volumes of town records, containing entries of deeds, town votes, wills, or judicial proceedings made prior to...1700” on blank books furnished by the State Librarian. It also directs town clerks to transfer the completed books to the State Librarian on or before July 4, 1871.

1878: A provision of a bill passed by the General Assembly in its 1877 session transfers the function of the State Librarian in gathering, tabulating, and reporting on vital statistics to the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the newly formed State Board of Health.

1879: In Hartford, the new State Capitol, designed by Richard J. Upjohn and constructed on grounds purchased from Washington College, is opened. The State Library occupies the third floor in this structure, now the Senate Chambers.

- General Assembly enacts legislation requiring that every town’s selectmen provide “a fire-proof safe, vault, or building for the protection of its records against fire.”

1880: General Assembly amends legislation requiring towns to provide fire-proof facilities by adding sections to deal with conflicts over the price of land between the town and the owner. Legislation also gives

religious and ecclesiastical societies the right to refuse a purchase offer for land on which a church building stands.

1886: General Assembly constitutes the Secretary of the State and State Librarian as a committee “to make an inquiry or to procure the same to be made, in regard to any ancient, colonial or state records of any of the territorial organizations now or formerly existing within the state, for the purpose of taking measures for the observation and indexing of state records.” The committee hires Judge Sherman Adams, who conducts on-site surveys of offices of court clerks in five counties and the original four probate courts, and receives assessments through the mail from clerks of three other counties.

1888-1892: Charles J. Hoadly corresponds with Robert Winthrop and receives through the mail packages of documents selected by Winthrop from the Winthrop Papers in the Massachusetts Historical Society pertaining to the colonial history of Connecticut. One package is delayed due to the Blizzard of 1888. The papers are “silked” and bound in volumes. The documents are known as the *Robert C. Winthrop Collection*.

1888: A “second-hand dealer” disposing of the estate of the Seymour family in Hartford discovers manuscripts in trunks in the garret, and old desk, and boxes in “an outbuilding.” Judge Sherman Adams purchases the “ancient documents” and finds two hundred and thirty-five original muster rolls and payrolls of Connecticut men serving in the French and Indian War. A Hartford book dealer, who may have been a partner with Judge Adams, offers to sell the rolls to the State. Charles J. Hoadly refuses to purchase the documents, arguing that they are a missing part of the state archives and therefore, are state property. He threatens to go to court to recover them. Judge Adams and Hoadly agree on a compromise. Hoadly pays him \$50, well-below the asking price,

and Judge Adams relinquishes his ownership of the documents to the State Library. The rolls are organized, bound, and silked and labeled as the Sherman W. Adams Collection.

1889: The committee formed to make inquiries about “ancient records” and report on findings issues *Report of the Secretary of State and State Librarian to the General Assembly on Ancient Court Records*. This is the first assessment made by the state of the condition and management of historical public records and one of the first in the nation.

1895: General Assembly directs all town clerks to make handwritten transcriptions of passages from original town records pertaining to the Revolutionary War between 1774 and 1784 and to mail these “extracts” to the State Librarian. Sixty-three towns comply.

- Using the Massachusetts’ law creating a Commissioner of Public Records as a model, the State Librarian and the Connecticut Bar Association get a bill introduced into the General Assembly creating the post of Examiner of Public Records. The bill dies.

1899: General Assembly creates a Temporary Commission on Public Records. The Commission will survey town clerks, probate judges, and churches on the condition of historical records.

1900: Commission issues its First Report summarizing the survey.

- After the death of State Librarian Charles. J. Hoadly, George S. Godard of Granby is appointed the third State Librarian, a post he will hold

until his death in 1936. Under Godard, the State Library will make its greatest advances to date in establishing a public records program for Connecticut, the most important of which will be the construction of a new building.

- General Lucius A. Barbour, former legislator and Adjutant General, hires James Arnold of Rhode Island to transcribe information from town records and Vital Records up to the year 1850. His son, Lucius B. Barbour, will continue the project in the early years of the century. The family will expend from \$25,000 to \$27,000 on the project and will donate the books of transcription to the State Library. In turn, the Library create a surname slip index and lists by town and calls the index, The Barbour Collection of Vital Records.

1901: General Assembly continues the Commission on Public Records.

1902: Commission issues its Second Report. Both reports recommend creating a Permanent Commission on Public Records.

1903: Assembly creates the post of Temporary Examiner of Public Records. Charles R. Hathaway of Manchester, a railroad attorney and former prosecutor, is appointed. Assembly continues the post in 1905 and 1907.

1904: Temporary Examiner issues his first annual report. Examiner conducts a mail survey to all town clerks, Probate Judges, and churches.

1905: Temporary Examiner issues his second annual report.

1906: Temporary Examiner conducts a mail survey of Connecticut religious organizations.

1907: Temporary Examiner issues his third annual report.

1909: General Assembly abolishes the post of Temporary Examiner.

1909: General Assembly authorizes State Librarian to accept any public records for “permanent preservation.” **This act recognizes the State Library as the official State Archives.**

1910: In Hartford, the new State Library and Supreme Court Building opens. The State Library’s public records program and major operations are still located in this building, making it the oldest structure in the nation housing a State Archives.

1911: General Assembly creates the post of **permanent Examiner of Public Records as an assistant to the State Librarian.** The State Library Committee appoints Lucius B. Barbour as the first Examiner.

- The State Library begins accessioning files from Connecticut Probate Courts.

1916: The State Librarian’s Report contains *Bulletin No. 8*, Effie M. Prickett, Chief of the Archives Department, *Instruction for Care of Archives in the Connecticut State Library* and *Bulletin No. 9, Select List of Manuscripts in the Connecticut State Library.* The former explains indexing procedures for the “Connecticut Archives” and a summary statement of organization of other archival records. The *Select List* is the first published summary guide to archival and manuscript records in the State Library.

1917: General Assembly authorizes the transfer of public records pertaining to the First World War from state offices to the State Library.

1918: The Council of Defense designates the State Library as its repository of historical records.

1919: General Assembly creates the post of State Military Necrologist, the only such job title in the nation. George Godard appoints Charles L. Hale so that he may continue his work of gathering information from the headstones of veterans.

- General Assembly creates the Department of War Records in the State Library. The major work of this unit involves verifying service of veterans.

1921: General Assembly authorizes the State Librarian to accept land and probate records if they are significantly deteriorated in exchange for a bound, photostatted copy.

- The Massachusetts Historical Society returns the Trumbull Papers to the State of Connecticut in a ceremony in Memorial Hall in the State Library and Supreme Court Building.
- General Assembly directs the Secretary of State to transfer to the State Library the first two volumes of the Records of the New Haven Colony.

1924: The Examiner of Public Records sends 1,230 questionnaires to “every minister, rector and priest having a pastoral charge in Connecticut” inquiring about the conditions of church and parish records. 457 return completed forms. Approximately 65

churches deposit their historical records. The State Library will offer bound, photostatic copies in exchange or will keep the copies in its collections. The Administrator will begin a project to create a surname slip index and town lists that are bound from these church records. The exchange program is ended in the mid-1950's.

1927: General Assembly directs officials to create detailed indexes of probate records. The State Library distributes forms and instructions and will become the repository of these indexes.

1933: General Assembly enacts legislation granting authority to the Attorney General, Comptroller, and Treasurer to approve all requests for destruction of public records submitted by "each commissioner and the head of each state department, commission or board...each at his discretion...at any time after six years from the date thereof." Though the law provides for a blanket six year retention period, it represents **the first attempt at setting a minimum legal retention period for State government "records and files."**

September 1934-January 1935: Using funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the W. P. A., Charles L. Hale leads a corps of seven supervisors and seventy-five tabulators to locate all of the burial sites in Connecticut for the purpose of transcribing genealogical data. Field teams locate 2,269 sites and complete 886,043 forms. When stones are not available or cannot be deciphered. Some field teams exhume the coffins to read brass labels. Another part of the project completes forms for marriage and death notices in Connecticut newspapers up to 1870. State Library staff will type up a surname slip index and town lists, and the finished product will be the Hale Headstone Inscription and Newspaper Marriage and Death Notice Index.

1935-44: Under the Works Progress Administration, several surveys of records are conducted: the survey of State, county, town and municipal records; the church records survey; and the manuscripts survey. A guide to inventories of churches and one for the archives of towns and cities are published. Many original survey sheets are lost.

1939: General Assembly passes a statute mandating that all public records be stored in "fireproof vaults or safes."

1947: The State Library Committee endorses the plan of the Genealogical Society of Utah to film all land records in the towns through 1850 and probate record books through 1850. The Society agrees to give the donor copy of the films to the State Library. Vital Records through 1900 are added to the list, and the dates for land and probate records are expanded into the early twentieth century. For the following four decades, camera operators hired by the Society will work in town halls, probate court offices, and the State Library.

1953: General Assembly creates a temporary commission to "make a survey of the various functions of government carried on in, or in connection with, the State Library and Supreme Court Building, to determine whether there is a need for provision for additional space to be occupied by them, and,...to consider in what way the need can best be met." Legislation provided that a report of its study and recommendation be presented to Governor Ribicoff.

1955: General Assembly creates a **Records Management Committee**, composed of the Commissioner of Finance and Control, the Attorney General, the State Librarian, and "chief executive officers of the Connecticut town clerks association, the municipal finance officers association of Connecticut and the Connecticut probate assembly, or

their duly appointed representatives.” The Commissioner of Finance and Control serves as ex-officio, chair of the committee. Legislation gives the committee primary responsibility for records management services to state agencies within the Executive Department. The Committee also has the authority to order agencies to produce inventories of records and to submit records retention schedules for its approval. The statute authorizes the Committee to approve or reject requests to destroy records and to determine which are of historical value. Any State agency intending to microfilm records shall submit to the Committee of list of records designated for filming for its approval.

- The “Temporary Commission Appointed to Consider the Needs of...the State Library and Supreme Court Building” presents its report to the Governor on January 5. The report notes that the State Library “**is not a library in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather a State Archive or Hall of Records.**” The Commission recommends building fire resistive vaults and installing air conditioning in the current building, constructing a bombproof vault under the North Lawn on Capitol Ave., and constructing a five-story addition to the East Wing on Lafayette St. It also recommends that the General Assembly appropriate money so that the State Library can establish an efficient microfilm program to conserve space and preserve archival records.

FY 1956/57: Records Management Committee approves **a records-retention-storage-disposal program for state**

agencies, thus establishing the first modern records management program for State government.

1958: The State Library opens the State Records Center in Rocky Hill.

FY 1960/61: New addition to the State Records Center is completed.

FY 1965/66: Examiner of Public Records issues the first *Records Manual for Connecticut Town Clerks*.

1967: In legislation that becomes operable in January 1968, the General Assembly creates a **Department of Archives and Records Administration** in the State Library to be run by a new titled position, the Public Records Administrator. The State Librarian appoints the last Examiner of Public Records, Rockwell Harmon Potter, Jr. as the first Administrator. The Records Management Committee is retained, and its powers are revised to include the issuing of records retention schedules. The Department is charged with “developing and directing” a records management for state agencies, towns, cities, boroughs and districts, and probate districts within the state. The Committee may “cause enforcement” of its orders by application to the Superior court or any judge of a court not sitting for a decree or process.

- Another addition to the State Records Center is completed in December.

1968: A two million-dollar East Wing addition to the State Library and Supreme Court Building is completed. It includes a four-tiered vault with two vault doors and a seventh level designated originally for library storage. The State Archives will move into the new vaults and will occupy half of the seventh level addition.

FY 1969/70: The Records Management Committee approves the first formal regulations issued by the Public Records Administrator of standards for fire resistive vaults.

1971: Legislation authorizes the Records Management Committee to establish and run a centralized microfilm service for all state agencies. This service is also opened to local governments for the filming of records of permanent value. Moreover, the Committee may provide storage for security copies of the film.

- State Library hires Robert Claus, the first professional archivist in its history. He had worked at the National Archives and was first archivist for the United Nations. He will serve in this post for the next decade and shall acquire hundreds of cubic feet of archival records. He shall organize and describe them in “descriptive registers” by record groups structured according to National Archives descriptive standards.

1974: Responding to a request from the Archivist of the United States, Governor Ella Grasso creates by appointment the first **State Historical Records Advisory Board** to assist the National Archives’ National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) with evaluating grant applications for records projects from Connecticut. All members serve under appointment from the Governor at no pay, and over half must be active archivists. The Archivist and his successor serve as the chair and administrator.

1975: General Assembly changes the name of the State Library Committee to “State Library Board.”

1976-1977: Under a federal grant, State Library staff organizes the 80,000 item Pictorial Archives into 63 Picture Groups and produces descriptive registers of the groups. A summary *Guide to Pictorial Archives in the Connecticut State Library* is published in 1977.

FY 1977/78: Another addition to the State Records Center is completed.

1979: Legislation transfers the responsibility for “developing and directing” the state records management program from the Records Management Committee to the Commissioner of Administrative Services. The Department of Archives and Records Administration is charged with carrying out the program.

1980: General Assembly transfers responsibility for the public records program in state agencies and the towns back to the State Library.

1981: Legislation authorizes the Commissioner of Administrative Services to approve “requirements” for microfilming equipment or services submitted by state agencies.

- The Archivist in the Department of Archives and Public Records issues the third and most complete edition of a summary *Guide to Archives in the Connecticut State Library*.

1982: The State Librarian transfers the State Archives out of the Department of Archives and Records Administration and combines it with the History and Genealogy Unit to make the Archives, History and Genealogy Unit.

FY 1982/83: Office of the Public Records Administrator initiates the first **Records Management Partnership Program** with state agencies.

1983: The Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board issues **the first statewide assessment report of Connecticut's historical records in public and private repositories.** The report contains many recommendations for improving and expanding the operations of the Public Records Administrator and the State Archives.

- In March, the State Librarian forms an Archival Program Planning Committee to “initiate planning of a State Archives program adequate to meet Connecticut’s needs for preservation and access to historical government records.” It is chaired by the Head of the Archives, History and Genealogy Unit

1984: General Assembly includes the post of State Archivist in the State Library for the first time in statutes pertaining to the State’s public records program. The State Archivist’s functions now include review of all records retention schedules and disposal authorizations from state agencies and local governments to identify historical records.

- The State Librarian’s Archival Program Planning Committee issues its final report, containing nine recommendations.
- Governor appoints the State Archivist as Chair of the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board (CT SHRAB).
- The National Historical Publications and Records Commission approves a two-year grant from the State Library for a court records survey and assessment project

including court records at the State Library and Probate Court files in the State Library and those that remain in the courts. The project allows the State Archives to utilize automation technology for the first time. NHPRC gives an extension, and the State Library uses funds to continue the work. The project is closed in April 1988.

1985: The Attorney General Joseph I. Lieberman issues an opinion upholding the authority of the Public Records Administrator to issue minimum legal retention periods for public records, even when they conflict with public employee union contracts.

1986: Office of the Public Records Administrator issues a records management manual for state agencies. For the first time, the office issues state-wide *generic* retention schedules by function.

- Using its own resources, the CT SHRAB completes strategic planning and issues ***Cooperation, Collaboration and Leadership: A Strategic Plan of the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board.***

1988: General Assembly approves legislation granting authority to the State Library Board for the transfer (deaccession) of records from the State Archives and mandating that it submit regulations governing the process.

1989: General Assembly passes legislation requiring state agencies to appoint **Records Management Liaison Officers** to administer records management programs within their respective agencies.

- The Assembly approves regulations submitted by the State Library Board covering procedures for transferring records from the State Archives. Regulations specifically state that provisions apply **only** to non-government and local government records in the State Archives.

1990: By unanimous ruling, the State Supreme Court decides that disciplinary records involving state and municipal workers cannot be destroyed as part of the grievance negotiation process. The Court upholds the authority of the Public Records Administrator to set minimum legal retention periods for public records and to approve all public records destruction requests from State and local government.

1991: State Library Board approves a revised and substantially expanded State Archives collecting policy.

1994: Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives issues *General Letter 94-1, Optical Imaging and Public Records: A Policy Statement*. The Statement provides for the first time guidelines for the retention and disposition of public records reformatted on an optical imaging technology.

1995: The Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives issues its first policy statement on the retention and disposition of E-mail. (See below for 1998.)

1996: The Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives issues *General Letter 96-2, Required Minimum Microfilming Standards for Public Records*, the first publication of the Office dealing with microfilming standards.

1997: The Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives issues the *Guide to Records of the Judicial Department: State Archives Record Group No. 3*, a revision and substantial expansion of an earlier, shorter version. The *Guide* takes two years to research and prepare. The Assistant State Archivist uses data gathered from the NHPRC Court Records Project and gathers additional data herself.

- NHPRC approves a two-year planning and implementation grant submitted by the State Library on behalf of the CT State Historical Records Advisory Board to collaborate with the CT Town Clerk's Association and the CT League of History Organizations in surveying their respective members on their most "critical records needs," compiling literature of "best practices," and preparing and running pilot workshops, one for each organization. In 1998, the Board hires a consultant who carries out a survey of "critical needs."

1998: The Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives participates in agency planning to alleviate a space crisis in the State Archives.

- The Office issues *General Letter 98-1, Electronic and Voice Mail; A Management and Retention Guide for State and Municipal Government Agencies*.
- Almost one hundred years after the creation of the first Temporary Commission on Public Records, the Office issues an expanded and reformatted

manual for local officials containing updated records retention and disposition schedules. For the first time, each records series is given a control number.

- The Office issues the *Finding Aid to the General Assembly Papers, 1821-70*. This is the first finding aid of the project to reprocess all of the General Assembly Papers.

1999: The Office issues a second finding aid to General Assembly Papers entitled, *Finding Aid to General Assembly Rejected Bills, 1808-70*.

- The Public Records Administrator reissues an expanded version of the *State Records Management Manual; Statutes, Policies, and Procedures for Connecticut State Agencies*, first issued in 1986.
- The CT State Historical Records Advisory Board continues to work on a two-year NHPRC grant. By March, the project consultant had prepared a bibliography of “best practices,” and planning for the two pilot workshops to be held that summer, one for each organization, was underway.
- The Office issues *Time-Line of Important Dates in the History of Connecticut’s Records Management and State Archives Programs*.
- The Office issues *Finding Aid to Records of Connecticut Governors, 1821-58*.