

# The CONNservator

Newsletter of the Office of the Public Records Administrator

March 2001

Volume I Number 3

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## What is a Preservation Planning Survey, do I want one and how do I get one?

by Joyce Mascena, Town Clerk, Vernon, CT

At first, I found the task of assessing my office's preservation needs and developing an overall plan an overwhelming one. Where to start? As a Town Clerk of a smaller mid-sized town, with an even smaller budget, especially for any type of preservation short of day-to-day survival, I want to get the most for the Town's money. I believe preservation is very worthwhile and approached the subject from several different angles with no firm, definitive plan. The November 2000 Historic Documents Preservation Account Committee Meeting allowed me to settled on a firm direction.

At that meeting, Eunice DiBella, Public Records Administrator, announced that each year NEDCC offers a limited number of Preservation Planning Surveys. I thought that this was the perfect place to start because our Town Hall is undergoing renovations to the third floor. I hope that future renovations will include the Town Clerks offices on the first floor.

It made perfect sense to address any nega-

tive-impact on the vaults before embarking on a full-blown conservation/preservation effort. Logically, if one addresses existing conditions to insure a minimum standard, one can save money in the long run by breaking the cycle of destruction. With the possibility of future renovations, this was a great time to get recommendations on conditions affecting the vaults. We hoped to address them as part of an overall building plan because a stand-alone project was not probable given our present budgetary system.

I contacted NEDCC immediately. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that they were accepting applications for a subsidized Preservation Planning Survey. This grant is offered twice a year in December and June. NEDCC offers three types of surveys: general preservation, collection specific and item-by-item condition. The subsidy program covers the general preservation survey, which identifies overall hazards to collections by examining building conditions, storage and handling procedures, disaster preparedness, and

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Notes from the Public Records Administrator

By now, every town clerk should have received a copy of the Application and Guidelines for the Historic Documents Preservation Account Grant Program. Judging from the number of calls that I have received, there is a great deal of interest in this program. We hope that all 169 Connecticut towns and municipalities will apply for and receive a grant award this year.

The first grants to be awarded are targeted grants. We decided to begin with two specific types of grants: paper preservation/conservation and preservation planning. Dis-

aster recovery assistance grants will become available after July 1, 2001. If a town submits a grant application for a project that is **not** in one of the target areas, the application will be denied. It is very important that town clerks read through the entire booklet before completing the application form. If you have questions, contact my office for clarification.

We are attempting to expand the list of approved vendors. An additional conservator has been added to the list. We will be mailing out the most up-to-date list within the next

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**Preservation Planning Survey** (Continued from page 1)

policies that impact preservation. The consultant inspects each building inside and out, room by room, from a preservation perspective. Many granting agencies require such surveys before funding storage improvements or document treatments.

A collection specific survey focuses on a particular group of records within an institution such as photographic materials, rare books, maps or architectural drawings and makes recommendations regarding overall preventive maintenance actions, as well as conservation treatment options. This survey may also identify individual objects needing treatment, provide cost estimates for treatment and set priorities for a treatment program.

An item-by-item condition survey focuses on a pre-selected group of objects at a more detailed objective assessment level than a collection survey. It examines in-depth a relatively small group of books, works of art, photographs, or archival materials. The consultant develops treatment priorities and cost estimates. It is often an appropriate next step after undertaking a more general survey. For further information on this and other related subjects, as well as the application form, see the NEDCC web page at [www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org).

The NEDCC staff told me that if we didn't make the first round on the subsidy, we could reapply as many times as necessary. The four page application contained four sections: general information about the town, its offices and the types collections it has; the significance of the collections for research in the humanities; financial need; and the town's commitment to preservation. Happily, I heard within a week of applying that we had been awarded a subsidy.

Prior to making an appointment for an on-site survey, we completed a pre-survey questionnaire for the consultant's review. The questionnaire covered more in-depth general information about the municipality, the building and its environment, including the roof and drainage, HVAC system, lighting, housekeeping, emergency preparedness

and security, including disaster/emergency plan, fire protection and security, storage and handling, including storage units and space, exhibition and treatment, including repair, restoration and microfilming practices.

In addition to the ten-page questionnaire, we had to submit a mission statement, organizational chart, current budget for preservation activities, staff list, collection policy, collection use and loan policy statements, long-range collection management plan, building plans, maintenance contracts, security manual or written procedures, housekeeping manual or written procedures, disaster plan, and town history. The Town Clerk's Handbook covered most of these items. A few other documents were already filed in my office and the Public Works Department provided the rest.

Karen E.K. Brown, NEDCC Field Service Representative/Conservator, conducted the survey. Karen wanted to talk with anyone who could provide a history and general information on the building so we met briefly with the buildings maintenance supervisor, fire marshal, and building inspector. We spent the rest of the day touring the vaults looking at them from the outside to the inside including climate control, shelving and access.

To date, I have not received the final report which will serve as a guide to for future planning. I anticipate that it will contain short-, medium- and long-term goals from a building-wide perspective as well as general record collection and records maintenance. Some actions we will implement immediately at very little cost, while others will be more far-reaching and part of a capital improvements plan based upon Karen's findings. I will also be able to pull additional information from technical leaflets available on the NEDCC web page. Thus far, I have found Karen Brown from NEDCC a great source of useful and valuable information.

**Public Records Administrator** (Continued from page 1)

few weeks.

I have also contacted the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (1717 K Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 452-9545, e-mail: [info@aic-faic.org](mailto:info@aic-faic.org)). This is the national membership organization for conservation professionals. I suggest that you contact this organization if you need help in finding a vendor that meets your needs. If the conservator appears on their list, we will approve them for this grant round (July and Dec.)

To date, we have only one vendor that is approved to do preservation planning surveys. That is the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) 101 Brickstone Square, Andover, Mass 01810-1494, (978) 470-1010, [www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org). NEDCC is also sponsoring the preservation conference that we are offering this June.

## Corrections

Our lead article in the last issue inadvertently lost its footnotes. The following citations should have been included:

1. "Lesson 6: Preservation Planning. from *Preservation 101: an Internet course on paper preservation* offered by the Northeast Document Conservation Center. <http://www.nedcc.org/p101s/lesson6.htm>."
2. This article was prepared with extensive notes from the item cited above. For related information search the Northeast Document Conservation Center web site at <http://nedcc.org/welcome.htm> or see the bibliography in Lesson 6.

We apologize for any inconvenience.



## Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

The Historic Documents Preservation Account Advisory Committee met January 24, 2001 at the Middletown Library Service Center.

State Library staff reported that the Preservation Account's balance was \$619,000. When all December receipts are in, there should be \$650,000 in the fund. All towns are currently in compliance having filed at least one report.

The agenda included the upcoming Basic Preservation Workshop in June; review of the grant forms and guidelines distributed February 1, 2001; progress on hiring another staff person; and a report by Joyce Mascena on her experiences with a comprehensive preservation planning survey conducted by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC).

The next meeting will be March 28, 2001 at 12:30 p.m. at the Middletown Library Service Center. Please note the time change.

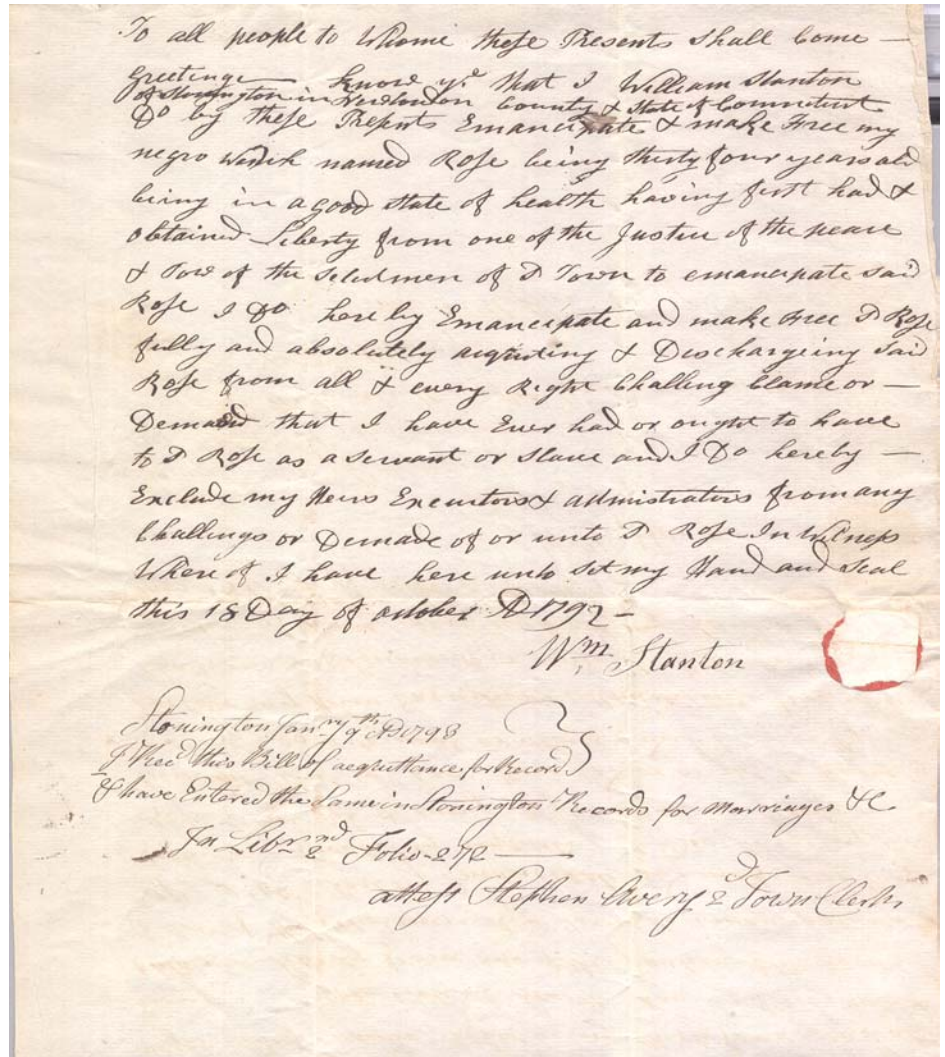
## Collection Activity Report

by Richard Kingston, Director,  
Administrative Services,  
Connecticut State Library

The Historic Documents Preservation Fund has received \$647,824 for the months July to December 2000. These proceeds were based on the recording of over 360,000 documents. The experience for both the first and second quarters of this fiscal year has been consistent with each other lending further credibility to the initial annual projections. The initial estimate of \$100,000 in collections per month seems firmer than ever. Good news for the stability of this account.

## Town Records from the State Archives

by Mark H. Jones, State Archivist, Connecticut State Library



Classified Archives 920 st26p: Stanton Family Papers

Statutorily Connecticut remained a slave state until the legislature abolished the peculiar institution in 1848. However, in 1784, a law established gradual emancipation by freeing slaves born after March 1, 1784 when they reached the age of 25. According to the First Federal Census (1790), Connecticut included 6,562 slaves.

For slaves born before 1784, statutes provided for emancipation by slave owners. A 1792 law required that a slave – owner obtain a certificate of liberty from two officials who were charged with determining that the person to be freed was healthy and able to

take care of herself/himself. The certificate not only permitted the owner to free the slave but also released the owner from taking care of his former chattel.

In 1792 William Stanton obtained permission from a Justice of the Peace and one Selectman to free “my Negro wench named Rose being thirty four years old being in a good State of health.” Many emancipations were recorded in land records. Town Clerk Stephen Avery noted that he recorded this document in the Stonington Records for Marriages, Book 2, page 272.

**NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ADMINISTRATOR**

**Non-Profit Org.  
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Connecticut State Library  
231 Capitol Ave.  
Hartford, CT 06106-1537  
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Phone: 860-757-6540  
Fax: 860-757-6542  
Email: edibella@cslib.org  
Web Site www.cslib.org

Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5

This newsletter is published bi-monthly following the regular meeting of the Connecticut Historic Documents Preservation Account Advisory Committee. The deadline for contributions is three weeks after each meeting. Please send them to the Public Records Administrator, CSL, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106-1537 (edibella@cslib.org).

## Q&A

**Q:** It will cost my town \$2300.00 to have several historical volumes repaired. Should I ask the vendor to break down the cost of his services into labor and archival supplies?

**A:** No, you need only list the amount that the vendor has quoted for the entire job. You should only list a dollar amount in the archival supplies category if you are using grant funds to purchase these supplies for use by the town for a preservation/conservation project, such as reboxing some records into acid free boxes and folders.

**Q:** How do I choose an approved preservation/conservation vendor?

**A:** The Public Records Administrator has compiled a short list of approved vendors. In addition, she has obtained a list from the AIC (*American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works*) that lists qualified individuals in this field. See Note from the Public Records Administrator on p. 1. of this newsletter.

**Q:** I want to purchase some furniture for my vault. Can I apply for grant money in this cycle?

**A:** No, this grant cycle has been targeted for certain specific areas that are described in the application materials that you received. You may use money that you have collected and has been retained by you town for activities and purchases that are not eligible for a grant.

**Q:** Can I apply for a grant to repair historic maps?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** The town manager has designated me (the town clerk) as the grant applicant. Do I still need to have a certified resolution passed by the legislative body in my town?

**A:** Yes. The resolution must always be passed for your application to be eligible for consideration.

## Related Grant Programs

The Historic Documents Preservation Account targets town records held by town clerks. However, there are other custodians of the public record such as the local public library and historical society as well as other town offices. The National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] announces a new competitive grants program for smaller institutions with awards of up to \$5,000.

Projects eligible for consideration are general preservation and conservation surveys and purchase of preservation supplies. Other eligible projects include funding consultants to address previously identified needs and attendance at preservation workshops and training programs. The New England Documents Conservation [NEDCC] is available to assist grant applicants. Further information is available at the NEH website, [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov) or by calling (202) 606-8570. The application deadline for this grant cycle is April 3, 2001.