



# The CONNservator

Newsletter of the Office of the Public Records Administrator

September 2004

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- Lizette Pelletier, Archival Consultant and Editor
- Bruce Stark, Assistant State Archivist

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## 2005 Cycle I Grant Recipients

The Office of the Public Records Administrator announces one hundred and six grants totaling \$916,156.00 from the Historic Documents Grant Programs. This year's grants range from \$7,000 to \$17,000. The awards consisted of \$57,000 for Inventory and Planning grants to conduct Records Management or Disaster Planning Surveys; \$278,156 for Organization and Indexing to improve indexing or automate the retrieval process; \$486,000 for Preservation/Conservation grants; \$12,000 for a Program Development grant to implement a town wide records management program; and \$83,000 for Storage and Facilities grants for upgrading records storage and environmental monitoring equipment.

For a complete list of grantees, please turn to page 3.

## Notes from the Public Records Administrator

Eunice G. DiBella, Public Records Administrator, Connecticut State Library

When is a disaster a disaster?

In today's world we are forced to think of disasters more often than we would like. The news seems to be filled with them every day. Major disasters draw a lot of attention, but disasters come in different ways and of varied intensity. A malfunctioning sump pump or an unexpected infestation of insects or rodents can have a devastating effect on paper or other types of records. These situations could also qualify as a bona fide disaster.



When the Historic Preservation Grant Program was established, I was concerned about records disasters and the effect they could have on a municipality. For this reason, the legislation addressed disaster recovery and we decided to offer disaster

recovery grants, currently set at \$10,000. Since 2001, we have awarded one disaster recovery grant. Unfortunately, other situations have come to our attention during vault inspections and preservation and records management surveys that could have been eligible for assistance.

These grants are not just available to town clerks and their records. Disasters that occur in other municipal offices that impact public records, such as police or educational records also qualify for disaster recovery assistance. Disaster recovery grants have no impact on a town clerk's eligibility to apply for a targeted grant. Remember that the office affected by the disaster must notify this office within 60 days of the event or discovery of the event to qualify for a disaster recovery grant. We hope that none of you experience unexpected problems, but if you do, we can offer assistance.

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On another note, I have been trying to visit as many town halls as possible to see what affect the Historic Document Preservation Grant Program has had on the condition of historic documents. In addition to the vast number of land records and vital records that have been restored, I see new equipment and technology emerging in the towns. This is most evident in the handling of maps. Some of the towns have used grant funds to purchase hanging map

files that make it much easier to retrieve maps and add to their longevity. Some towns have had their maps scanned and have purchased oversized printers. This is really impressive, since in a most instances, copies made from the computer file will suffice, thus reducing the handling of the original. This is a perfect example of how technology can improve access to records and aid in preserving original documents.

## “A Word from the Archives”

by Bruce Stark, Assistant State Archivist, Connecticut State Library

The State’s Historic Preservation Fund and the National Historic Publication and Records Commission jointly fund the Connecticut judicial records project. The records for each court consist of *Dockets, Files, and Papers by Subject*, and bound volumes of *Records of Trials*. Work on the project has concentrated on *Files and Papers by Subject*. *Papers by Subject* are records that were removed from the original files after their transfer from the court to the State Library in 1921. The subjects addressed in the *Papers by Subject* vary from county to county, but they include such topics as *Admissions to the Bar, Conservators and Guardians, Costs, Executions, Indians, Li-*

scale in October 2003 with the rehiring of project archivist Debra Pond and the hiring of Louise Tucker, a former law librarian, both of whom were affected by the layoffs. We also had the assistance of volunteer Paul Baran who worked one afternoon per week and a general worker who joined the staff at the end of May 2004.

As one might expect, it took some time to gear up to full production mode, but as the table below indicates, almost 360 boxes have been processed, arranged, and preserved in the last nine months of FY2004.

**Table 1: Boxes of Court Records Completed**

Court	6/30/03	6/30/04	Total 2004
Litchfield County. Files	146	277	131
Litchfield County. Papers by Subject	0	63	63
New London County. Files	134	256	122
New London County. Papers by Subject	38	81	43
<b>Totals</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>359</b>

*censes, Meeting House, Partition of Land, Revolutionary War Pensions, and Travel.*

The project began on December 2, 2001 and substantial progress was made over the course of the next year in processing, arranging, and preserving the records from the Litchfield County Court and the New London County Courts. It ground to a halt in December 2002, however, due to the State’s fiscal crisis and the accompanying layoffs. Work commenced again on a significant

Due to the great research interest in records on African Americans and Native Americans, we have taken particular care to look for materials on these two groups. Two copies are made for each African American and Native American case. The original papers are restricted, one copy goes in the location from which the original came, and the second copy goes into a new artificial collection of records devoted specifically to African Americans and Native Americans. Table 2 shows the number of

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## 2004 Cycle I Grant Recipients

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Andover	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000	Haddam	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Avon	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Hamden	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
Barkhamsted	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000	Hartford	Preservation/Conservation	\$17,000
Berlin	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Hartland	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Bloomfield	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Hebron	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Branford	Storage and Facilities	\$12,000	Killingworth	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Brookfield	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Lisbon	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Brooklyn	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Litchfield	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Burlington	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Madison	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Canaan	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Manchester	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
Canterbury	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Marlborough	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Canton	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Meriden	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
Cheshire	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Middlebury	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Chester	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Middletown	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
Clinton	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Milford	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
Colchester	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Montville	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Columbia	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Morris	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Cornwall	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	New Britain	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
Coventry	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	New Hartford	Inventory and Planning	\$ 7,000
Cromwell	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	New Haven	Storage and Facilities	\$17,000
Deep River	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	New Milford	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
East Granby	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Newington	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
East Haddam	Inventory and Planning	\$ 7,000	Newtown	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
East Hampton	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Norfolk	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
East Hartford	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	North Branford	Inventory and Planning	\$ 7,000
East Haven	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	North Canaan	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
East Lyme	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Norwich	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
East Windsor	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Old Lyme	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Easton	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Old Saybrook	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000
Ellington	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Orange	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Enfield	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000	Oxford	Inventory and Planning	\$ 7,000
Essex	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Plainville	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Farmington	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Portland	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Glastonbury	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000	Preston	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Goshen	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Putnam	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000
Greenwich	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000	Redding	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Griswold	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Ridgefield	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000
Groton	Program Development	\$12,000	Rocky Hill	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Guilford	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000			

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Municipality	Category	Amount	Municipality	Category	Amount
Salem	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Wallingford	Organization and Indexing	\$11,156
Salisbury	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Warren	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Seymour	Storage and Facilities	\$ 7,000	Waterbury	Inventory and Planning	\$17,000
Shelton	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Waterford	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Sherman	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	West Hartford	Storage and Facilities	\$12,000
Somers	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Weston	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
South Windsor	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000	Westport	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
Southington	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000	Willington	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Stafford	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Winchester	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Stamford	Preservation/Conservation	\$17,000	Windham	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Sterling	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Windsor	Inventory and Planning	\$12,000
Stratford	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Windsor Locks	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000
Tolland	Preservation/Conservation	\$ 7,000	Woodbridge	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Torrington	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Woodstock	Organization and Indexing	\$ 7,000
Vernon	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000			

## Town Records from the Genealogist's Perspective

Richard C. Roberts, Unit Head, History and Genealogy

Connecticut's town and borough records contain a wealth of information useful to family historians and genealogists. Although vital records and land records are the most common resources used for genealogical research, less well-known town records are also invaluable.

Early proprietors' records provide names of "freemen" admitted to the town. They also give information on lands granted by the towns, including the names of those who drew home lots, farm lots, and rights in the common land. Sometimes these records indicate the names of those drawing land based on the rights of others, such as a father or grandfather, thereby giving clues to family relationships.

Town meeting minutes, beyond providing information on routine town business, give the names of town officers – proprietors, selectmen, treasurers, justices of the peace, fence viewers, etc., and thereby provide clues to the relative importance of the appointees in the community's social structure.

Records regarding surveys of town boundaries and the laying out of new roads and highways sometimes mention the landowner's name and provide clues as to where an individual lived within the town.

Licensure records, including those issued for dogs, sheep, etc. and records of ear and cattle marks and of strays also can reveal the relative wealth of the town's residents, while adding to the picture of what household life may have been like.

Tax records, including rate books, tax abstracts, and individual tax lists ("poll" and property) can serve as substitute for a census, identifying individual taxpayers within the town for the years between the federal censuses. They can reveal the taxpayer's "acres of tillage," other uses of land, (pasture, meadow, woodland, etc), numbers and types of livestock, and can help researchers determine ages and relationships to other residents with the same surname. The records may also include lists of non-resident property owners. Similarly, election records, in addition to the copies of election statistics forwarded to the Secretary of the State, can include lists of the town's electors, thereby placing an individual within a town at a given point in time.

Treasurers' accounts sometimes include reasons for payments. Reimbursements to those caring for the ill or poor say much about those who provided the services. Such records, along with tax abatements for widows and the

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cases found over the course of the past fiscal year. Researchers have never examined most of these cases involving people of color.

The overwhelming majority of cases consist of lawsuits between individuals, but on occasion municipalities in their corporate capacity are represented. To

**Table 2: African Americans and Native American Cases**

<b>Court</b>	<b>6/30/03</b>	<b>6/30/04</b>	<b>Total 2004</b>
Litchfield. Files: African Americans	54	109	55
Litchfield. Files: Native Americans	7	10	3
New London. Files: African Americans	155	264	109
New London. Files: Native Americans	129	223	104
<b>Totals</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>271</b>

At the end of the fiscal year, the *Files* for New London County have been completed for the periods 1691-1772 and 1825-55, while those from Litchfield County span the dates 1752-1820. Louise Tucker finished *Papers by Subject* from Litchfield County and completed about two-thirds of *Papers by Subject* for New London County.

The county courts served as the workhorses of Connecticut's court system from 1666 until they were abolished in 1855. They dealt with a wide variety of cases, the most prevalent by far (accounting for 85-90% of the total) being civil actions for debt. The most common form of these cases were debt by note in which the borrower "for value receive" promised in a note or writing to pay a certain sum or perform a service by a specific date. The other forms consisted of debt by book and debt by bond.

The *Files* section of court papers addresses a number of additional subjects. They include assault and battery, defamation and slander, covenant broken, counterfeiting and forgery, fornication and lascivious carriage, idleness and bad husbandry, inheritance and partition of land, malicious mischief and unlawful night walking, religious dissent, retailing strong drink without license, riot, theft, trade and maritime affairs, trespass, and trover and conversion. In addition, the records provide a valuable source for documentation on the poor, women, and provide scattered references to the lot of apprentices. Persons interested in such other subjects as biography, genealogy, rates of literacy, and the expanding role of lawyers in society will also find these records extremely useful.

cite just three examples from the 1740s, the County Treasurer sued the Selectmen of Norwich in February 1741 for their failure to build a highway between Norwich and Lebanon. Two years later the Selectmen of New London sued Benjamin Baker of Enfield and others from New London and Lyme to compensate the town for the funds it expended to care for aged and infirm Hannah Baker. The Selectmen lost the case because one defendant was out of the jurisdiction of the court and the other people named were not children or grandchildren of Baker. In a third case in June 1744, Samuel Burrows of Groton sued the Selectmen. The plaintiff stated that although he possessed a considerable estate, he had been deprived of his freedom and property on account of the false charge of idleness and bad husbandry and had been taken into the care of the town. The county court determined that the law on idleness and bad husbandry was not correctly applied in this case and said Burrows should be restored to his property.

The court records project is extremely important because it makes important records readily accessible to genealogists and historians for the first time. Prior to this project, the records were stored in packets wrapped in pink string and researchers needed to go through considerable time and effort to find whatever cases or cases interested them. The papers have been unfolded, placed in proper order, conserved and preserved, and placed in acid-free folders and boxes. They have already seen an increase in use by researchers. Upon completion of this project, all county court records for Litchfield and New London Counties will be processed, arranged, described, and made more user friendly to those interested in the important information the papers contain.

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

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## Financial Report

**As of June 30, 2004**

**Total Receipts:**

Town filings	\$7,513,733.00
Interest	<u>\$ 136,162.84</u>
	\$7,649,895.84

**Disbursements**

Grants awarded	\$2,824,910.07
Operational expenses	<u>\$ 845,454.22</u>
	\$3,670,364.29

**Set asides**

Disaster Recovery Grants	\$ 100,000.00
Competitive Grants (future)	<u>\$ 250,000.00</u>
	\$ 350,000.00

**Balance**

\$3,629,531.55

**Committed Funds FY2005**

Grants (169 towns)	\$1,403,000.00
Operational expenses (est.)	\$ 696,055.00
State Library preservation projects	<u>\$ 500,000.00</u>
	\$2,599,055.00

**Available Balance**

\$1,030,476.55

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poor, may be the only source of information about a town's less-prosperous residents.

Beyond school committee meetings and finances, school records sometimes mention teacher appointments and occasionally include names of pupils.

Town records are an invaluable primary research resource, serving as a "check" for the accuracy of secondary sources such as published genealogies and local histories. Records, in the original handwriting and context, may provide information and clues not always discernible through transcripts. They provide important evidence relating to questions of identity and ancestry. They expand and flesh out information on the families who lived in the town. Beyond that, by utilizing all available town records, family historians can better understand the everyday lives of their ancestors within the context of the time and place of the entire community.

## Reminder Dates/Upcoming Events

LeAnn Johnson, Public Records Grant Program Specialist

**Note:** Grant applications for Cycle 2 must be postmarked by September 30, 2004 to be eligible for consideration.