

From the Editor...

Holiday Greetings to all our friends, fellow historians and researchers. Let me introduce myself: my name is Craig Carlson and I am a Historical Archivist and Deputy Director of the Albany County Hall of Records with a BA in History from Siena College and a MA in History from SUNY Albany. I was hired in 1990 by the Hall of Records to assist local governments of Albany County. Our goal was to preserve the recorded history of each municipality which was accomplished by visiting local offices and bringing in government minute books. Following training with Micrographics Supervisor, Paula Forezzi, I was on my way microfilming these books. *Continued on page 2....*



Microfilming local minutes-Craig Carlson, 1990

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Albany County Hall of Records Open House October 17, 2012

The Albany County Hall of Records celebrated its 30th anniversary on October 17, 2012. Over fifty people came to ACHOR to hear talks, view records on display, and tour the facilities. It was very gratifying to see the appreciation and interest of the public in our recorded history. The Albany County Penitentiary mug shots were exciting for many to see and the size and neatness of our facilities were impressive to many. Also of interest to our guests were: the 1810 Albany Post Road map, the Dongan Charter, Civil War allotments, immigration and slave records. For instance, the Albany Post Road map between Albany and New York City is 28 feet long and the Dongan Charter incorporated Albany as a city on July 22, 1686. Photos displaying ACHOR'S former "homes" and employees covering the period of thirty years to present were also of interest to many. Certainly, Jill Brothers home-made goodies were a big hit with our visitors and staff. Thanks to the Hall of Records staff for contributing to the success of the open house.



Congressman Paul Tonko and Albany County Clerk Thomas G. Clingan display the Dongan Charter which incorporated the City of Albany on July 22, 1686.

From the Editor, continued from cover page.

When the microfilming was completed, all of the books were wrapped in acid-free paper along with the newly created microfilms and returned to Albany County municipalities. The goal of safe-guarding local government minutes was completed. Now, we have copies of the municipal minutes in the Hall of Records search room and we have the master microfilm stored in our climate control/ fire suppression vault.

Planning for and safe-guarding an archival collection, or even protecting family records at home, takes time. Furthermore, with the destruction caused by Hurricane Irene last year, and recently, Hurricane Sandy, the fact that preparedness is essential has been dramatically driven home. Recently, while doing research using a Green Island minutes microfilm from 1853, visible at the end of the roll was my signature from 1990 as the camera operator. Amazing how time has flown! More importantly, the microfilm was in great shape, proving once again, the importance of microfilm as the best preservation tool. Another example of the importance of microfilm can be seen in our ambitious project that converted over 150 Albany County Penitentiary volumes dating back to 1825 (see photo below.) Currently, we are starting to microfilm hundreds of Albany Police Department blotters for preservation purposes.

Last month, I spoke at the Hall of Records to a group of local retirees from the Capital Region Oasis Program-Center for Excellence in Aging & Community Wellness. The title was “*Archives of Albany County*” and detailed the History of the Hall of Records, the archival collection and gave a behind the scenes tour of the building showing how a dedicated staff preserves the records of Albany County.

Preserving and making available the recorded history of Albany County has always been the mission of the Hall of Records since our beginning in 1982. In this edition of Tivoli Times, you will read about the history of the Hall of Records from Albany County Clerk, Thomas G. Clingan and from an interview I conducted with Robert W. Arnold III, the first Executive Director of the Hall of Records.

Lastly, as we celebrate our 30th anniversary, I would like to thank all of the Hall of Records employees, past and present, for their commitment to preserve Albany County’s history. Most especially, kudos to the people whose vision over the years made the Hall of Records a meaningful reality.



Albany County Sheriff Department volumes converted to microfilm.

Craig Carlson, *Editor*

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Beginnings

Albany County can trace its records management program to a 1978 National Historical Publications and Records Commission (“NHRPC”) grant of \$9235 to inventory Albany County Clerk records, accepted by the Albany County Legislature in Resolution 99 of 1978. This first modern inventory was completed and printed in 1979. The theft and quick recovery of County Clerk’s oldest Dutch record book in May 1980 increased public awareness of the need to safeguard these documents, and in January 1981, Resolution 10 of that year accepted a further \$20,000 NHRPC grant to study the possibility of a joint city and county archives and records management system.

The City of Albany’s earliest efforts at records preservation began even earlier. Federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (“CETA”) funding was used by the City’s Human Resources Department under Commissioner John J. McEneny to create a City Records Library in 1971. City Historian Norman Rice worked with newly-hired Robert Arnold to survey older records held by various City departments and relocate them, first to the top floor of City Hall (sadly, itself the site of a fire in 1976) and then to 27 Western Avenue, the former Albany High School annex. Federal CETA funding to the City dried up in the early 1980’s, just as the County’s records management program started. The leadership of both governments chose to work on a joint solution.

Resolution 269 approved October 15, 1982, by the Albany County Legislature established ACHOR under the County Clerk to manage all County records. The City of Albany adopted legislation that same year to complete this co-operative effort. Albany City ordinance number 67.82.88 established the City Records office as part of the joint County and City records management.

The City of Albany provided the newly-created ACHOR with its first home in the High School annex from 1982 to 1986. ACHOR first appears as a separate unit in the 1983 Albany County budget, funded at \$236,155, and rising to just under \$500,000 for 1986 as ACHOR occupied its second home at 250 South Pearl Street.

250 South Pearl Street

Resolution 272 of 1984 authorized a lease to convert 12,754 square feet of former supermarket space to two floors of office space and a high-ceiling records storage area. Res. 274 of 1985 authorized architectural services, and \$212,306 in construction contracts were authorized by Res. 11 of 1986. Included was a small vault room with a Halon fire extinguishing system (authorized by Res. 199 of 1986), and a modest public research room, plus a microfilm processing laboratory and a loading dock. The building was capable of holding approximately 32,000 cubic feet of records. The renovated space opened its doors in October 1986. Some twenty tons of County Clerk records were moved from the Court House to the new facility during 1986.

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The fall of 1988 saw several major personnel changes. County Clerk Guy Paquin left to manage the State Land Title Association and I was elected to replace him. ACHOR Executive Director Bob Arnold moved to the new State Archives office, and Deputy Director Mary Wallen became ACHOR's second Director. Patricia Bryce moved from the County Clerk's office to become Deputy Director.

Increasing demand for access to records led to a doubling of the public research area at ACHOR, which took over the area that had once held the clerical staff. Many part-time older workers at ACHOR gradually retired, and ACHOR acquired its first records delivery van. Computers became more and more central to our operations.

The program's success in storing inactive records required additional storage space by the early 1990's. In June 1993, the County Legislature approved a five year lease on a second records warehouse at 105 Bradford Street in Albany, which building employed a "catwalk" system enabling access to two levels of records without the need for ladders. This secondary storage bought time to plan a longer-term solution.

95 Tivoli Street

By 1998, it was clear that ACHOR's existing facilities on South Pearl Street and Bradford Street would not suffice much longer, and planning began for a larger facility that would consolidate the records of City and County government under one roof once again. After consideration of several prospective sites, the former Huck Finn's Warehouse location on upper Tivoli Street was selected, and a lease for a new 39,080 square-foot building here was approved on December 20, 1999.

ACHOR's new home, its third, was the first built from the ground up as a records storage facility. All of the existing buildings on the site were demolished, with the exception of a 1990 warehouse at the property's northernmost edge. A new concrete slab was formed, atop which the new building was constructed and joined to the existing warehouse section. Plans included a public search room more than doubled from South Pearl Street, a larger area for archival work, and a total records storage capacity of 104,000 cubic feet. Vault space was more than tripled, with a new FM200 gas fire suppression system as well as humidity controls. Electric lifts would replace ladders as the means to retrieve boxes stored as high as 21 feet up, on new industrial shelving, and the entire facility would be served by a sprinkler system.

Records and equipment from South Pearl Street and Bradford Street began to move in early January 2001, with staff and office furniture arriving over the long, snowy weekend of January 12 to 15. We opened our doors here to the public on Tuesday, January 16 and staged our official microfilm-ribbon-cutting three weeks later on February 6, 2001. In the Spring of 2003, the County exercised its option to purchase this building, and has owned it since August 1 of that year.

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ACHOR Today

From the late 1980's to 2012, ACHOR has applied for and received over \$655,000 in grants from a variety of sources, primarily the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund. ACHOR also assisted in several other records management grants to the City of Albany during these years, and became a model for local government records centers in our state.

Today, we have more than 90,000 cubic feet of records in storage here – about 86% of our capacity. Moving inactive records out of office space and into this facility has saved the County and City millions of dollars, as well as ensuring that these records are better managed. For example, we annually destroy (through shredding and recycling) several thousand cubic feet of records that have reached their legal retention deadline.

We serve 25 County agencies, 7 City agencies and numerous city, county and state supreme courts. The agencies we served most often in 2011 were County Probation (2,060 reference requests), County Clerk (1,629 requests) and the District Attorney (1,523 requests.)

People wonder how we can find specific files in those 90,000 cubic feet of records, and the answer is that since 1989 we have an excellent computer system to help us manage that task. Whenever a box of records is transferred here, the sender also submits a description of what's in that box. That way, when the department owning the records needs a file back, they use this computer system to find the specific record, and then submit their request electronically. The request prints out here, and then the record is retrieved and delivered to the requester. And then, of course, we replace that record back again when it returns to us.

Albany County Information Services created this software system and keeps it updated, for which we are very grateful. It's that same software that also tells us when each box reaches its destruction date. Info Services also maintains the ACHOR web site, enabling our customers to "visit" us at all hours. An ongoing effort to improve our records descriptions in standard MARC format has enabled us to make our holdings more visible to researchers everywhere.

A major part of our work here is micro-imaging. This includes both traditional microfilming as well as digital imaging. Our equipment can image anything from a tiny microfilm frame about the size of a fingernail to maps four feet wide and many feet long. We also perform conservation work on older records, and we prepare records descriptions so that the public can learn more about our holdings here.

In our public search room, two staff work full-time to assist researchers in finding information within our records; in 2011, we had about 1200 such visitors. Among the tools we offer here are a complete set of City Directories from 1830 to the present, as well as census books, building records, and water rents.

We reach out to school groups through our Hands on History program, and are adding more records online every year. All of this takes a lot of work by the 17 County and 2 City employees stationed here under the leadership of Patricia Bryce and Craig Carlson. Our annual budget has grown to about \$1.2 million now, with about \$200,000 in annual revenue. This dedicated staff performs all manner of functions, from cleaning and deliveries, to microfilming and imaging, to preservation work and ordering supplies, to working with agencies

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on how to better manage their records, to recovering damaged records, and to supervising volunteers. We manage records, manage grants, and manage people. Every work day, we help county and city workers, and the public, find the records that they need.

So while we commemorate these first thirty years of the Albany County Hall of Records, we also congratulate the men and women who have worked here, now and in years past, for making our program a success. A fair number of us have gone on to careers in records management elsewhere, but many have remained here. I am grateful to every one of them for their service and dedication.

We have also had the constant support and commitment of the governments of the County and City, and we thank the County Executives, Mayors, County Legislators and Aldermen who have made this program possible. We would not be here without them.

27 Western Avenue, 1982-1986



A. W. Feller -
PUBLIC SCHOOL NO. 22, BOWEN STREET, CORNER WASHINGTON AVENUE.

250 South Pearl Street, 1986-2001



**Homes of Albany County
Hall of Records
1982-2012**

95 Tivoli Street, 2001-present



Carlson's Corner-Robert W. Arnold III

Robert W. Arnold III interviewed March 30, 2012 at Albany County Hall of Records by Archivist/Deputy Director Craig Carlson

The Albany County Hall of Records (ACHOR) is celebrating its 30th Anniversary this year. You have played an instrumental role in the creation of the Hall of Records. Can you describe the early days prior to the Hall of Records?

I started in the attic of Albany City Hall with a group of federally-funded people under Jack McEneny, who felt that the City of Albany should have an archives. On my first day on the job, in 1971, then-City Historian Norman Rice and I toured city agencies and listed old records covered in soot. A City Records Library was started within the next few months. Mayor Erastus Corning 2nd supported this new program.

Did the City Records Library then move to a new Home?

With cramped space in the attic in Albany City hall and also a fire there in 1976, The City Records Library moved into what had been the Albany High School Annex at 27 Western Avenue. We had to lug every box, every book and all the furniture and equipment to our new home on its second floor. The building then was vacant and was owned by the City.

How did this joint City-County Program become a reality?

The federal CETA program - also directed by McEneny, funded the City Records Library. When that funding dried up in during the Reagan era, Albany County Clerk Guy Paquin had come to believe that both the city and county should have a records management program. Guy Paquin secured a grant from the Local Government Archives program at the New York State Archives to survey Albany City and County archival records. As we worked in the agencies of the county and the city, we soon realized that the archives were the tip of a much larger iceberg and that there was a serious need for a cost-effective records management program that could provide services and free consultation to our local officials while also protecting and making available their archival records.

Mayor Corning charged me to oversee the program and with the advice of the city Corporation Counsel and the County Attorney, I wrote local resolutions that were passed by the city and county legislative bodies in 1982 to establish a joint records management program as the Albany County Hall of Records. The County Clerk transferred his Micrographics Unit, its equipment and its staff to the Hall of Records. Though novices, we started to microfilm County Clerk records first, and then film for other agencies. One of the first agencies on board with the new program was the Albany Police Department, which assigned a competent young officer as a liaison. ACHOR at that time may have been the first local agency to employ e-mail and fax to communicate with other departments.

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Carlson's Corner-Robert W. Arnold III

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Describe the Hall of Records on the move?

As our collection and work continued to grow we needed to look for a bigger, permanent home for the Hall of Records. 27 Western Avenue was built as a school in about 1910, and was inadequate for a records repository. We had to deal with its leaky roof and the considerable weight of the records stored on the second floor there. In 1985, we started a search for a new home and in late 1986 moved into new quarters at 250 South Pearl Street, a former supermarket. This was an enormous improvement, the available space was more than doubled, public records became centralized and for the first time we had a climate controlled vault for our earliest prized materials.

How did you feel about a bigger home for the Hall of Records?

I loved that 250 South Pearl Street had free parking for the staff and the public. Our last location had served its purpose - barely - but was limited. Now in a new, modern space the staff was excited. We could do things in a new way. We became more involved in local history with our dedicated search room; the micrographics equipment was updated with the first large format camera and the records center was assisting our agencies with their inactive records. The New York Association of Local Government Records Officers (NYALGRO) - a professional organization allowing for local government officials to meet and share their records management experience and expertise - started at 250 South Pearl Street.

Now 30 years after the inception of the Hall of Records, what is your over-all reflection?

I went to work for New York State in 1988. I wanted to take the model of the Hall of Records statewide. Guy Paquin and I had already been among the drafters of the New York State Local Government Records Law in 1987, and in 1989 we also helped to draft the enabling statute for the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund in 1989.

Over my time we went from an attic to a school and to a purpose-built multi-use building at 250 South Pearl Street. This would not have been a reality without Guy Paquin. Mayor Corning and Jack McEneny also played big roles.

Looking back, what gives me the most pride is that Hall of Records is run by professionals in a professional manner, under a highly competent County Clerk in the person of Tom Clingan and a cadre of professionals using industry-standard methods. What we set out to do, we did.

Robert W. Arnold III was the Executive Director of the Albany County Hall of Records from 1981-1988.

Hall of Records Open House October 17, 2012



Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy



First ACHOR Director Robert W. Arnold III



Albany County Clerk Thomas G. Clingan



**Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy
Albany County Clerk Thomas G. Clingan**

ACHOR Staff

Patricia Bryce
Deputy County Clerk

Craig Carlson
Deputy Director

Camisha Smith
Records Manager

Brandy Alden
Records Manager
City of Albany

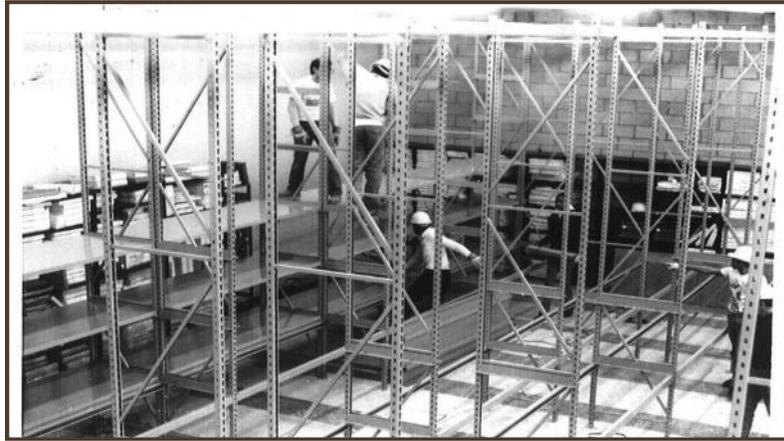
Lori Dudek
Warehouse Supervisor

Meredith Cherven-Holland
Archivist

John Paul Ciejka
Assistant Archivist

Virginia Farinacci
Deputy Archivist

Robert W. Arnold III
Consultant



**Installing shelving in 1982 at 250 South Pearl Street.
Albany County Hall of Records Photo Collection.**

The Albany County Hall of Records is a capital resource for the agencies of the local government it serves and to the citizens of the City and County of Albany. The Hall of Records is jointly funded by the City and County of Albany and is under the jurisdiction of Albany County Clerk, Thomas G. Clingan. Our purpose is to preserve, promote and make available the recorded history of Albany County to its citizens in the most efficient and cost effective way possible. We want to say thank you to all the people, past and present, who have made the Hall of Records an invaluable asset to our county.



Hall of Records warehouse, 2011. Albany County Hall of Records Photo Collection.