

From the Editor...

RIVERBANK DWELLERS

For most of us, born and raised within a stone's throw of the Hudson River, it is mostly a pleasant and rejuvenating experience to walk along its banks and gaze at the gentle ripples and shadowy secrets of centuries.

But every now and then, as we witnessed recently when Hurricane Irene left rivers and creeks in New York, most especially the Mohawk, overflowing their banks and covering land and property, our comely and helpful rivers have become destructive and malevolent forces, carrying water and mud into homes and ruining precious memorabilia and family records. **Continued on page**



Albany, New York Flood 1936.

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Water, Water, Everywhere: Albany's Historic Floods

This October, the Albany County Hall of Records will join archives across New York State in celebration of Archives Month. Archives play a vital role in preserving and making available to the public our recorded history.

To commemorate Archives Month and in recognition of the disastrous effect of Hurricane Irene on our neighbors in the Capital District, County Clerk Thomas G. Clingan has invited Assemblyman John J. McEneny to speak on the topic of historic floods in Albany and the surrounding region. His presentation will be held on Wednesday, October 26th from 10 am – 12 noon at the Albany County Hall of Records. Also, Garry Horne from Albany County Emergency Management will speak on disaster preparedness. An exhibit of flood-related historical records will be on display, as well as practical information for protecting and salvaging records in water-related emergencies. Tours of the Hall of Records will also be offered.

A lifelong Albanian, Mr. McEneny graduated from Christian Brothers Academy, Siena College, New Mexico State University and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He served in the Peace Corps in Columbia, South America, and directed youth programs in Albany before heading the Albany City Human Resources Department from 1971-1984. Mr. McEneny served as Albany County Historian and remains involved in documenting and preserving Albany history. He is the author of the book *Albany: Capital City on the Hudson, An Illustrated History*, first published in 1981.

Seating for the presentation is limited. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to Jill Brothers: 436-3663, ext. 202 or jbrothers@albanycounty.com

RECORDS CENTER DISASTER RESPONSE

By Camisha Smith

The Records Center at the Albany County Hall of Records, in response to the recent devastating natural disasters in this region can provide some assistance with the recovery/disposal of damaged records. The Hall of Records staff can provide on-site assessments of situations of deterioration, spoilage or contamination and advise agencies of contact for emergency clean up services and/or disposal of ruined records.

The Hall of Records will also contact the New York State Archives regarding the situation and apply for the approval of any destruction of records as necessary, as well as compile and furnish information regarding grants and financial assistance for clean up and/or recovery.

In the case of extenuating circumstances such as water damage and the resulting mold and mildew, the New York State Archives alone **must** approve all destruction of records that do not follow its records retention and disposition schedules - the schedules have the force of law. The Hall of Records is the liaison with the State Archives for both the County and the City of Albany. When the Hall of Records secures proper approval, Records Center staff will then coordinate the proper disposition of the records.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Records should always be stored at least three to five inches off the floor to prevent damage from water, pests, etc and they should never be stored in areas known to be prone to these hazards. Ultimately, the Hall of Records offers the best option for off-site storage, freeing up expensive office space and guaranteeing that your records are both safe and dry.

From the Editor, continued from cover page

Sadly, some possessions were forever lost; but, other things, with proper treatment, can be salvaged, in part, at least. In the following pages, it is my sincere hope, that suggestions will be found which will be helpful with storage, restoration and preservation of the irreplaceable.

Craig Carlson, *Editor*

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Albany, New York Flood 1936
Albany County Hall of Records Photo Collection

Salvage Tips for Your Family Records

By Meredith Cherven-Holland

Flooding and water leaks are the most common cause of damage to family records. It is heartbreaking to walk into a damaged home and see priceless and irreplaceable wet, damaged, muddy or moldy documents, books, photographs and works of art. Often the first response is to toss them out with the wet carpet and other debris but, if you have patience and can take some care, you'll find they are more resilient than you first thought.

The following tips are based upon recommendations from the **American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works**. For more detailed information about how to salvage your treasures, please see the Disaster Response and Recovery Guides and Information on their website under How to Care for Your Treasures: <http://www.conservation-us.org/>. It is always a good idea to consult a professional conservator before you begin since wet records are extremely fragile!

Air Dry. Find a cool, dry space with fans and a large open area to lay out wet items. Air dry indoors if possible since sunlight and heat can dry certain materials too quickly, causing splitting, warping and buckling. Long tables or plastic tarps are useful for laying out objects. A dehumidifier will help keep humidity low and mold growth in check.

Timing is critical. Air drying should be done within 48 hours to minimize mold growth. If items cannot be air-dried within 48 hours, freeze. If freezer is unavailable, keep as cool as possible with air circulation until air drying is possible. Expect mold growth.

Use absorbent material. Materials such as plain newsprint (no ink), blotters, and paper towels should be placed under objects. Replace blotting material as it becomes wet. Materials dry slowly and unevenly – a spine will often be the last part of the book to dry. Check blotting material frequently.

Prioritize. What you tackle first will depend on how many items and how much damage there is. Most materials are **extremely weak and fragile** when wet and need to be handled with extreme care. Items with the most sentimental value should be a priority and it is wise to consult with a professional conservator about their care. Partially wet or slightly damp objects can easily be separated from wet items and dried on location.

Techniques for drying paper based items:

Documents: Air dry flat, in piles no thicker than 1/8" within 48 hours; or pack snugly, upright in original folders (if no folders, pack flat) and freeze.

Photographs Rinse mud off photographs (using gentle water stream or by immersion and gentle agitation). Thoroughly wet photographs can stay wet in a container of clean water. Dry or freeze within 48 hours. If possible, interleave photographs with wax paper prior to freezing. Freeze or air dry damp or partially wet photographs.

Books. Air dry, once the volume is slightly damp, stand upright and open covers gently to support book. After 48 hours, pack snugly, spine down in milk cartons and freeze. Muddy books may be rinsed in tubs of clear water; clamp book tightly shut and quickly rinse in tub using a side to side dipping motion.

Framed Art on Paper or Photographs. If image appears stuck to glass/glazing, leave in frame and dry glass-side down. Call a Conservator. If not stuck, unframe and dry materials separately.

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Salvage Tips for Your Family Records

In addition, Heritage Emergency National Task Force has an excellent streaming 10-minute “how to” video, Coping with Water Damage, which provides step-by-step guidance for dealing with water damage at museums, libraries, and archives. Practical tips on safety, simple equipment, and salvage priorities also make the video a useful guide for home owners who want to rescue treasured family heirlooms. <http://www.heritagepreservation.org./PROGRAMS/TASKFER.HTM>

The following New York State vendors can provide the appropriate supplies for disaster prevention and recovery:

Affiliated Warehouses Co., Inc.

P.O. Box 295

1337 Capital Circle

Hazlet, NJ 07730

Phone: (732) 739-2323

Website: www.awco.com

Services/sales: Available warehouse refrigeration and freezer space in several locations around the state including Albany.

Eastman Kodak Company

1700 Dewey Ave., B65, Door G,

Rochester, NY 14650-1819

Phone: (800) 352-8378

Website: www.kodak.com/global/en/business/docimaging/globalPages/contentItem.jhtml?id=6100002/

Services/sales: Reprocessing of damaged film and microfilm.

Gaylord Brothers

Box 4901

Syracuse NY 13221-4901

Toll free phone: (800) 448-6160

Toll free fax: (800) 272-3412

www.gaylord.com

Services/sales: Archival supplies for storing family treasures

Grainger

35 Corporate Circle

Albany, NY 12203-5154

Toll free phone: (518) 869-1414

Toll free fax: (518) 869-1418

www.grainger.com

Services/sales: Preparedness supplies (gloves, masks, plastic sheeting, etc...)

VIDIPAX

30-00 47th Ave. 6th Floor

Long Island City, NY 11101

Phone: (800) 653-8434

Phone: (718) 482-7111

Fax: (718) 482-1370

Website: www.vidipax.com

Services/sales: Audio, video, and data recovery services.

Carlson's Corner for Questions: Brandy Alden

By Craig Carlson

When did you start working at the Hall of Records?

About 2 ½ years ago in April, 2009

Can you tell us a little about yourself/background?

I started working with a few local town governments in positions funded by NYS Archives grants after college in 2003 and that sparked an interest in archives and records management. I have a BA in Geography from SUNY Geneseo which may seem unrelated but is essentially the study of people and their environment which is how I look at history. As I child, I was exposed to a ton of history including local history, I grew up in Geneseo which is a National Historical Landmark Village in western NY. For me the jobs within local government were a natural progression stemming from my interest in the local towns and their history.

Can you explain to the readers about your job and responsibilities?

My job with ACHOR as a Records Manager consists of essentially acting as a liaison between City, County and Court agencies and the Records Center. I assist agencies with properly identifying their records, correctly boxing them up, describing them so they can be accurately located and finally facilitating getting them transferred into the Records Center.

Does your work assisting City and County Agencies get challenging at times? Example.

My job can be challenging. There are constraints on staff at the agencies that can frequently cause records management to fall lower on the priority list than I would like which can be frustrating. So far, with help, I've been able to successfully navigate around any issues that arise and the agencies themselves have been very appreciative of what we do for them.

Is your work assisting City and County Agencies rewarding? Example.

It's rewarding for me when I meet people who enjoy and take pride in the work they do and with this job I have the opportunity to come in contact with a number of people from a variety of different agencies.

What part of your job interests you the most?

The variety, I've always been a person that's interested in a lot of different things. This job allows me to work here in the Records Center in a permanent position but it also allows me to go out to the agencies and get a feel for what they do as well.

Hobbies? And last book you read?

My main hobby is reading. I enjoy a good story, either fiction or non-fiction. The last book I read was [The Little Stranger](#) by Sarah Waters. It's a book that takes place in England just after WWII and centers around a crumbling haunted mansion and the family that lives there.



Brandy Alden
Records Manager
Albany County Hall of Records

Things That Go Bump In The Archives

By Robert Arnold III with Jill Hughes

Jill Hughes has spent the past seven years steering the public to the records that will define their genealogies - naturalization records, marriage records, assessment rolls, and the like, or to document their properties, via deeds, tax rolls, building permits, and city directories. Those are the straightforward questions that Jill learned to address in her seven years of on-the-job training, with side excursions into the history of Ireland and the Albany Irish. Jill knows where to guide them all. A third-generation Albanian, she enjoys the diversity of the questions that come her way and providing service to patrons who can go away with just a little more information than when they arrived.

She also has learned to listen to what researchers leave unsaid. When they approach the archives, sometimes obliquely and somewhat sheepishly, they still ask about the addresses into which they are inquiring, but the real questions have to do with who lived there and what may have happened inside those closed front doors. They want to identify the origins of what seem to be paranormal events, the haunted homes of Albany, an eerie investigation that ultimately cannot be proven.

The archives at the Hall of Records are the answer to the questions of local history but not generally the proof of Albany folklore. Evidence is evidence, true and verifiable, even though odd things - once a pistol, once an empty whiskey bottle from a long-vanished South Pearl Street liquor store - turn up unexpectedly in boxes sealed by forgotten clerks. When the allotment rolls of some of Albany's Civil War units are consulted, those soldiers become people, emerging ghostlike from the past, records at once both a kind of database and social portrait. THESE ghosts do walk. and as such, they belong to us all. Local records are the fine brushstrokes on the broad canvas of a history that belongs to everyone.

Jill Hughes, and Eric Phoenix who works with her, are the immediate interface with that history for people coming to use the Archives. Give the archives a try - hunt down that missing great-grandfather, or that property about which you've been curious for so long. In the process, shake hands with Albany's historical ghosts. Give Jill or Eric a call and come in to see the past made tangible.



Archival Clerk Jill Hughes inspecting microfilms in the Hall of Records Search Room.

19th Century Election “Spreadsheet” Preserved

By Ginny Farinacci

Among the interesting documents in the archival collections at the Albany County Hall of Records (ACHOR), is the *Official Canvass of Votes Taken at the General Election Held in and for the County of Albany on Tuesday, November 8, 1898*, an oversized document that shows how the people of the county of Albany voted that year.

The framed document is a handwritten, late 19th century version of a “spreadsheet” nearly six feet long and tallying city and town district votes for the positions of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Comptroller, Treasurer, Attorney General, State Engineer & Surveyor, Supreme Court Justice, Congressman, Senator, District Attorney, County Clerk and Coroner. This tally shows that in 1898 the candidates for Governor of New York State included Theodore Roosevelt, who was elected Governor for two years: Roosevelt became United States Vice-president and then President upon the assassination of William McKinley (an Albany Law School graduate) in 1901. Headings down the left side of the document list the wards in the city of Albany, as well as names of the other cities and towns in Albany County. The offices to be filled are written across the top; the number of votes for each is totaled at the bottom.

Discovered in a box of early Albany City papers once held for safekeeping by the New York State Archives, the 1898 election tally and other records of this period were returned to the Hall of Records to be sorted, described and made available to the public. The election tally, originally folded into a small packet, was given special attention and sent to a conservator who unfolded, deacidified and framed it, making it accessible to researchers. It now hangs in the hallway adjoining ACHOR’s public research room.

Other election records in ACHOR’s holdings include: Election Canvasses, 1801-1898, 1900-1906, 1970-2001; Registers of Voters 1918-1966; assorted election expenses, poll lists, results, reports and nominations from 1851-1915, not inclusive; Election Returns, 1807-1881, Record of Nominations, 1896-1898, and Election Delivery Record, 1891-1896.

1898 Election Tally at the Albany County Hall of Records

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Hudson River
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.



Hudson River
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