

Good afternoon. I am Mark Hudson, Executive Director of the Vermont Historical Society. I am here today to speak to you about the appropriation of \$947,620 that is proposed in the Governor's budget recommendation. Before addressing some of the details of the appropriation, I want to spend a few minutes discussing with you the importance of the work we do at the Vermont Historical Society and the impact we have upon individuals and community in Vermont, by focusing upon 7 ways that history is essential to ourselves, our communities, and our future.

History is Essential to Ourselves

History is essential to each of us through the ways it informs our personal identity. History enables people to discover their own place in the stories of their families and communities. Through these stories they create systems of personal values that guide their approach to life and relationships with others. At the Vermont Historical Society, we facilitate self-discovery through programs and services for genealogy and family history research. Each year nearly 2,500 people use the resources of our research library in their personal discovery. The online research resources on our website experienced over 85,000 unique page views last year, with over 20,000 of those visitors seeking genealogical information. The quest for personal identity through these family history explorations often link one generation to the next.

History also provides an opportunity for self-discovery through engagement with community history. At the Vermont History Expo, held every 2 years in Tunbridge, hundreds of communities share stories from their past to an audience of nearly 4,000 people. Expo allows these communities to celebrate what makes each town in Vermont unique.

History also teaches critical 21st century skills and independent thinking. The practice of history allows us to better judge the accuracy and reliability of sources of information, promotes an awareness of multiple perspectives and biases, and develops important skills around research and oral and written communication. Among the activities of the VHS that promote critical thinking is Vermont History Day—a program for junior and senior high school students throughout Vermont. Each year nearly 200 student participate by conducting original research on a historical topic and creating projects that interpret and share this research, including websites, documentaries, exhibits, dramatic performances and papers. Students from classrooms and homeschool families participate from all over the state, including from Grand Isle, Vergennes, and Rutland.

These projects are judged competitively at a statewide competition. Participants who perform well at that level are entitled to participate in National History Day held in College Park, Maryland in June. A recent study by National History Day demonstrated that students who participate in the program not only perform better on standardized tests, but also develop career-ready skills such as collaborating with team members, talking with experts and other adults, and managing time. Perhaps most importantly, History Day programs have a positive impact upon students whose interest in academic subjects wane during the high school years.

History is Essential to Our Communities

History lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities. No place really becomes a community until it is wrapped in human memory—family stories, local lore and civic commemorations. The Vermont Historical Society, through our League of Local Historical Societies and Museums, promotes these ideals through our work with over 200 community heritage organizations in Vermont. We help these organizations preserve their community history through a variety of programs and services, including workshops, on-site technical assistance and mentoring, online information resources and peer-to-peer networks. Through our Local History e-newsletter we promote the sharing of ideas and information and we help them tell their stories through exhibits at Vermont History Expo.

At the League's Annual Meeting, held each fall at rotating locations throughout the state, we celebrate the important work being done by these groups through our Local Historical Societies & Museums Achievement Awards. Recent award recipients have included the Rutland Historical Society for their virtual walking tour program, the Richmond Historical Society for the Round Church Bicentennial and the Isle la Motte Historical Society for the Frances Ford Exhibit.

History is also a catalyst for economic development. People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character. Through our efforts to save and preserve the Spaulding High School building in downtown Barre, the Vermont Historical Society sparked an ongoing rejuvenation of a community that had suffered from economic decline for decades. Our investment in this community landmark—made in partnership with the State of Vermont—was a key event in the turnaround.

Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and is an essential component of any vibrant local economy. The Vermont History Museum serves as an essential cultural anchor for Montpelier. Each year over 11,000 people—both Vermonters and cultural heritage tourists enjoy the museum experience as an introduction to Vermont’s rich history. Through our partnerships with the Vermont State House and Montpelier Alive the museum enhances the experience for visitors to other Vermont attractions and downtown businesses. This is your state museum.

History is Essential to Our Future

An understanding of the past promotes engaged citizens. History helps people craft better solutions by allowing us to understand the origins of, and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and our state. This can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, open people to new possibilities and lead to more effective solutions for today’s problems.

Increasingly programs and activities of the Vermont Historical Society are informing discussions around contemporary issues. For instance, our most annual meeting symposium examined Vermont’s image and identity, and included a summary of ongoing research that is seeking to better understand the factors that determine why Vermonters, leave, stay or return to the state. Exhibits like *Plowing Old Ground*, about Vermont’s organic farming pioneers in the 60s and 70s and our current Vermont 70s project are exploring the recent past to better understand our lives today.

History also provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our towns and our state. Though exhibitions like *Freedom & Unity* at the Vermont History Museum and *Service & Sacrifice* at the Vermont History Center in Barre, we share the stories of how Vermonters faced adversity in the past, during times as challenging as the Civil War and World War II. Publications like *Moses Robinson and Founding of Vermont* provide concrete examples of how visionary leaders have guided our state through troubling times, providing a new generation of leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.

Finally, history is our legacy. History saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. Through the preservation of authentic, meaningful places, documents, artifacts,

images and stories, we leave a foundation upon which future Americans can build and form tangible links to the past. Without an understanding of the past every generation starts over.

Our commitment to saving and preserving the past is unparalleled. In the storage vaults of the Vermont History Center, we provide what is considered the finest storage environment for the preservation of collections in New England. Under the stewardship of our curatorial and archival staff we ensure that Vermont's treasures—30,000 artifacts; 50,000 books; 20,000 maps and broadsides; 1,500 linear feet of manuscripts; 30,000 photographs and many other objects that are our shared heritage—are preserved for generations to come.

Our efforts at collecting and preserving the past are vigorous and ongoing as well, as demonstrated by our recent acquisition of the Barre History Collection—a vast collection containing over 250 linear feet of manuscript materials and over 500 museum objects. Initiatives like the Vermont 70s project are providing Vermonters the opportunity to share the stories of their lives to promote a better understanding of this critical period in our state's history, today and for generations to come.

Vermont History is essential to ourselves, our communities and our future. The Vermont Historical Society is pleased to be of service to all Vermonters, “changing lives and building better communities.” Now that you know more about the critical role our programs and services play, I want to share with you some numbers so you can better appreciate the impact we are having on the lives of Vermonters:

- We have 2,400 members from throughout Vermont and across the country.
- Last year we welcomed over 15,000 people to the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier and the Vermont Heritage Galleries in Barre, including over 5,500 students on school field trips.
- Our library staff served 2,500 people onsite and through remote requests for information.
- Our online research resources were accessed 85,000 times and our website had over 167,000 unique visits.
- 2,300 students were served by our classroom lending kits and lending library.
- Over 6,400 people learned about Vermont history through a VHS public program or community outreach event.

A Unique Partnership

In addition to our extensive service to Vermonters, the VHS serves the State of Vermont through mutually beneficial relationships with entities of state government.

- The VHS is both a tenant and a landlord of the State of Vermont. Fee for space is assessed annually to the VHS for the area occupied by the Vermont History Museum in the Pavilion Building (currently \$210,192) in Montpelier; the State of Vermont pays a modest fee to cover operating expenses for the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center at the Vermont History Center in Barre (currently \$8,214).
- The VHS provides secure, environmentally-controlled space, as well curatorial oversight, for the state's collection of historic flags.
- The VHS provides access to meeting rooms at the Vermont History Center without charge to state agencies. During FY2014, the facility was used by state agencies 63 times for a total of 378 hours. Use of this space by state agencies increased substantially in the past year.
- VHS allocates space at the Vermont History Center for use by state agencies as an alternative worksite in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency.
- The Education staff of the Vermont Historical Society works closely with State House staff to coordinate field trips that include a tour of the State House and the Vermont History Museum. VHS provides these tours free of charge.
- Staff members of the Vermont Historical Society serve without compensation on various boards and commissions, including the Vermont Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the Vermont Historic Records Advisory Board. VHS works cooperatively with many state agencies as well, including the Division for Historic Preservation, the Department of Marketing and Tourism, and the Office of the State Curator.

Items of Note about the VHS Budget and the State Appropriation

By statute employees of the Vermont historical society are classified by the state classification system as if they were state employees and receive all general pay increases granted state employees (22 V.S.A., section 285).

The net impact of this in the current fiscal year is \$37,630, which is equal to the amount of the increase provided in the Governor's budget recommendation. In prior years the State has provided a Pay Act appropriation to the Vermont Historical Society to cover the mandatory increases in payroll expenses. Because of the fiscal challenges facing the state, VHS is required to absorb these additional expenses during the current fiscal year.

The State of Vermont provides access to the Vermont State Employees Retirement System to employees of the Vermont Historical Society, as well as group coverage for health, dental and life insurance. Annually the VHS makes contributions totaling over \$120,000 to the VSERS. Our current contribution rate is 17.11%, which is in addition to the 6.5% provided by employees. Since 2009 this rate has nearly doubled from 9.7% to 17.11%. We also pay premiums annually of 120,000 for insurance coverage—again this in addition to the premiums paid by VHS employees. In January these premiums went up 18%. These factors, coupled with a \$9,194 rescission in August present considerable challenges to overcome a long-term structural operating deficit.

Despite these challenges we have continued vigorous efforts to achieve full financial sustainability through several broad strategies:

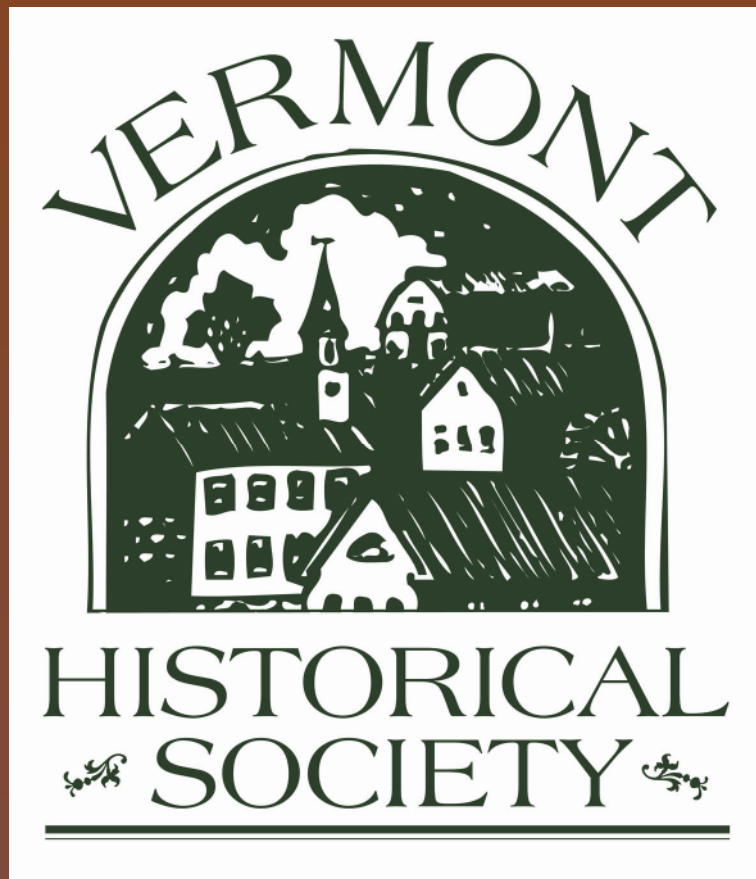
- Increase fundraising revenue through an intensified focus upon new member recruitment, increasing the level of giving among current members, and the cultivation of major gifts through the hiring of a major gifts officer.
- Increase investment income by enlarging the endowment fund through major gifts and contributions. To date our *Vermont Forever Endowment Campaign* has brought in \$522,000 in donations and pledges.

- Increase earned income activities through increased paid rental use of the Community Room and the development of new fee-based public programming.
- Reduce facilities operating expenses through energy conservation measures at the Vermont History Center.
- Reduce the cost of debt service for the capital debt remaining from the initial development of the Vermont History Center by reducing the loan principal through a capital bill appropriation and private contributions.

Through this presentation I am hopeful that we have been successful in demonstrating why Vermont history is essential to Vermonters, to Vermont communities and to our state's future, as well as advancing your understanding of how the Vermont Historical Society plays a crucial role to preserve and share our state's history. Likewise, I believe it is essential to understand the ways that we are providing valuable services to the State of Vermont—promoting the effectiveness of governmental entities and saving the state a considerable amount of money. Finally, I am hopeful you have come away with an appreciation of the fiscal challenges we face and the bold steps we are continuing to take to overcome them.

We are proud to be partner with the State of Vermont in service to Vermonters. We thank you for your current support and encourage you to support the Vermont Historical Society at the level prescribed in the Governor's budget recommendation.

HISTORY IS ESSENTIAL



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OURSELVES

IDENTITY

History enables people to discover their own place in the stories of their families, communities and our state.



CRITICAL SKILLS

History teaches critical 21st century skills and independent thinking.



History Day



HISTORY IS ESSENTIAL TO
OUR
COMMUNITIES

VITAL PLACES TO LIVE & WORK

No place is a community until it has an awareness of its history.



League of Local
Historical Societies &
Museums Awards



Collections training and
workshops

Economic Development

People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character.



Economic Development

Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy.



HISTORY IS ESSENTIAL TO
OUR
FUTURE

Engaged Citizens

By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of the challenges facing our communities and the state.



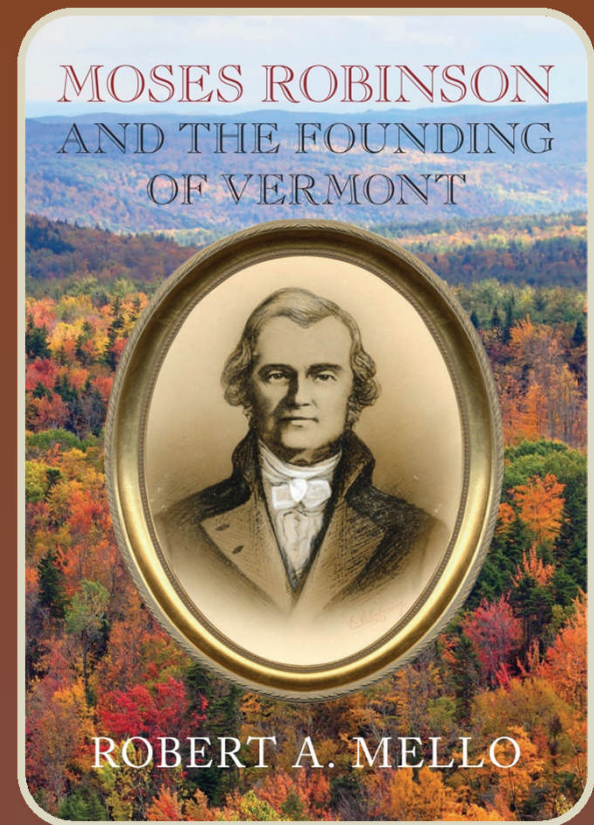
Lectures and Discussions



Exhibits

Leadership

History provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our communities and our state.



ROBERT A. MELLO

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Legacy

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History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explaining our shared past.*



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Barre History Collection arrives
December 2014

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SOCIETY WE BELIEVE HISTORY IS
ESSENTIAL BECAUSE...

*...an understanding of the past
changes lives and builds better
communities.*

2,400

members statewide and across the country

15,000

annual visitors to the Museum and Heritage Galleries

2,500

on-site library users and remote requests for information

167,000

unique visits to VHS websites

2,300

students served by VHS classroom lending kits and lending library

6,400

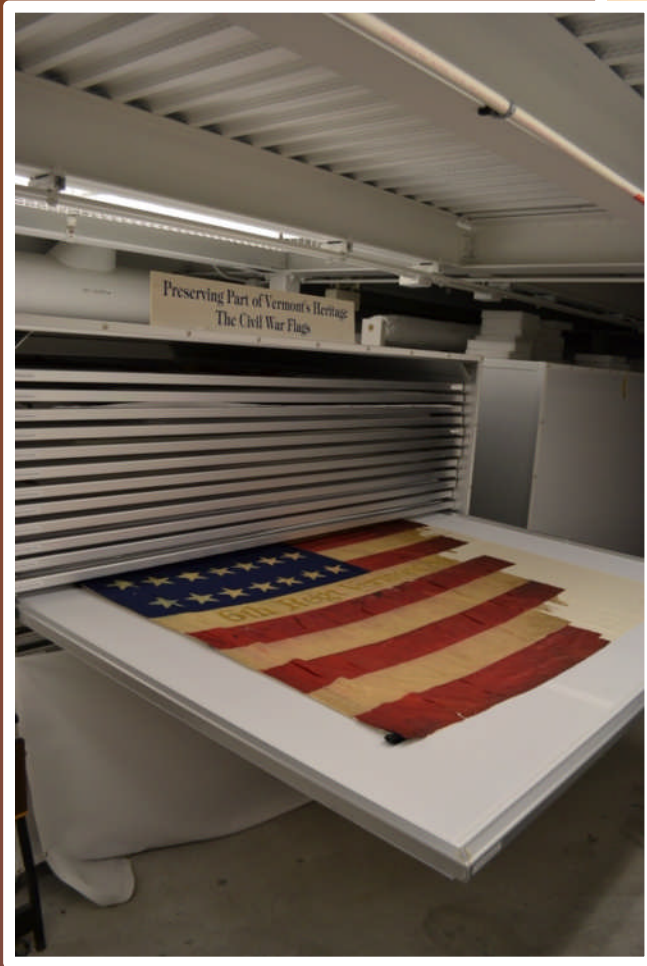
People attended a VHS public program or outreach event

VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGY HERITAGE CENTER





Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center Storage

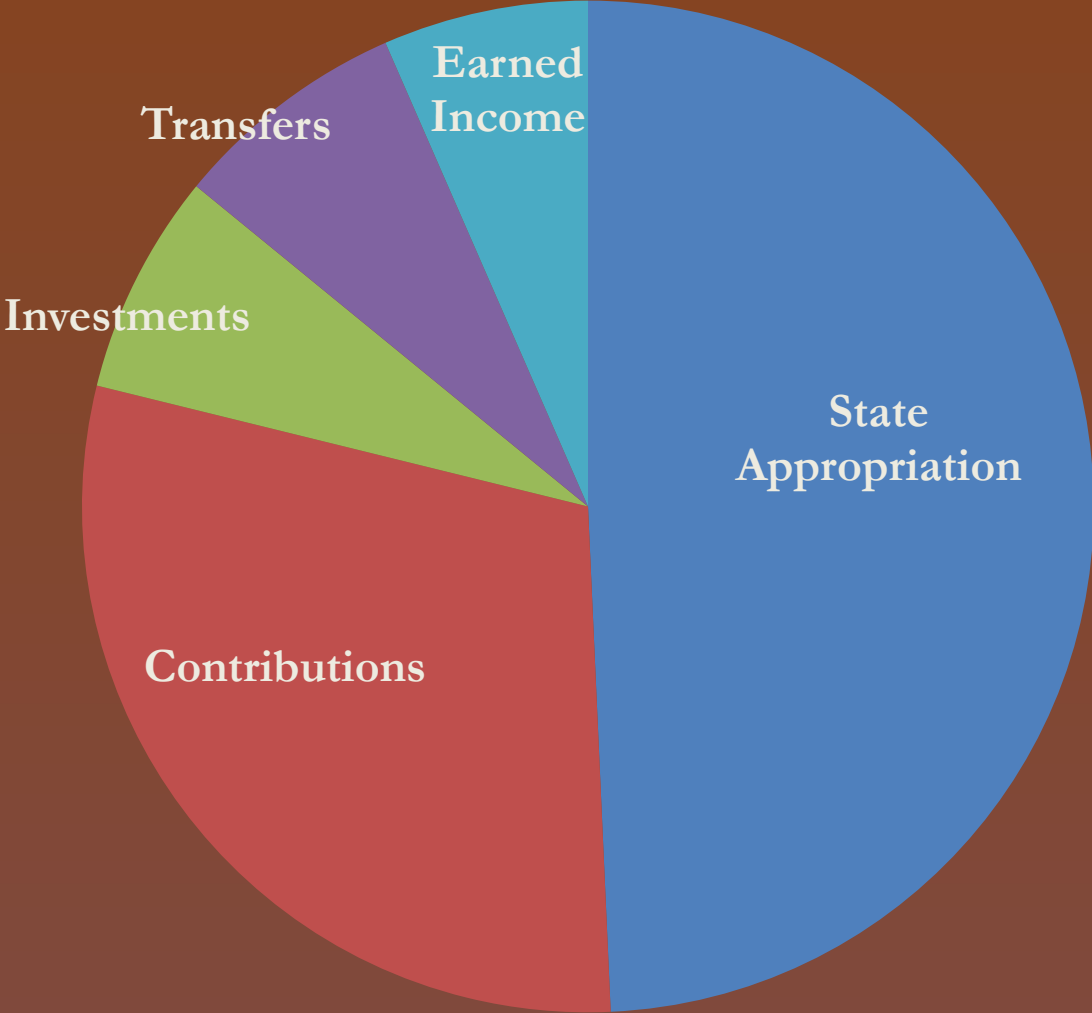


State of Vermont Civil War Regimental Flags



- Dept. of Health
- Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
- Division for Historic Preservation
- Agency of Education
- Blueprint for Health
- Dept. of Forests, Parks & Rec.
- Development Disabilities Serv.
- Dept. for Children & Families
- Agency of Natural Resources
- Vermont Dept. of Libraries
- Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs
- Community High School of Vermont

Projected Revenue FY 2016



Projected Expenses FY2016

