

**Department Vision Statement:**

- *Through its rich collections, dynamic programming, effective outreach and resolute leadership, the Vermont Historical Society preserves the past, informs the present and promotes Vermont's shared legacy for future generations. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.*
- VHS was chartered by the legislature in 1838 and is the oldest cultural heritage organization in the state (22 V.S.A., sections 281-285).

**A Unique Collaboration: VHS and the State of Vermont:**

The VHS has a unique relationship with the State of Vermont that creates economic development opportunities, saves the State money with support from private contributions, and enhances services to Vermonters:

- In the event of the dissolution of the VHS, management of its collections and related property will become the responsibility of the State (22 V.S.A., section 284). The Public trusts the VHS in keeping their heritage and collections safe.
- 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).
- VHS is both a tenant and a landlord of the State of Vermont Fee for Space (\$211,469 or \$16.13/sq. ft. in FY2017 for 13,112 square feet) is assessed for the museum space in the Pavilion in Montpelier; rent is received (\$11,500 or \$6.22/sq. ft. in FY2017 for 1850 square feet) for space provided for the Archaeology Center or ACCD at the Vermont History Center in Barre.
- VHS provides secure, environmentally-controlled space and curatorial oversight for the State's collection of historic flags, including Civil War regimental flags and guidons without charge.
- With the downsizing and ultimate change-in-focus for the State Library, VHS is now the primary research facility for the study of the culture and heritage of Vermont by both professionals and casual researchers alike.
- VHS provides meeting rooms and emergency alternate work sites at the Vermont History Center without charge to state agencies.
- The Vermont History Center provides the eastern anchor of Barre's economically vital downtown, serving as a tourist draw, visual punctuation, and key partner in downtown initiatives.
- The Vermont History Museum in Montpelier is a key attraction in the capital city and serves as Vermont's state museum.
- Our work with, and support of, over 200 local historical societies and museums throughout the State advances their vitality in the communities they serve.

**Key Budget Issues:**

The Vermont Historical Society (VHS) has been running operating deficits since opening the Vermont History Center in 2002. With the hiring of a new Executive Director and a strategic reassessment of budget strategy, fundraising, and earned revenue as well as staff retirement and the recasting of staff structure, the \$300,000 operating deficit of FY15 was cut 75% by the end of FY16 and eliminated in the FY17 budget. The largest budget pressures on VHS result from the cost of running the 50,000 square-foot History Center in Barre, 13,000 square-foot State Museum in Montpelier, and personnel expenses that are fixed according to statute. VHS has managed to maintain a minimum level of staffing throughout changes in the past year, but those levels are always at risk with the rising costs of salaries and benefits. Efficiency projects and addressing deferred maintenance issues are important to mitigating the cost of the History Center building. Key to the long-term stability of the society and its physical plant is finding a partner, ideally a complementary state agency, to occupy the remaining undeveloped space in the History Center.

Proposed changes to the Vermont History Museum (State Museum) in Montpelier (funded through a grant from National Life) will update 15-year-old exhibits and add interpretation of events taking place in Vermont from 2001 to now (current exhibit ends with events of 2001). New curriculum will provide trusted information and experiences to the thousands of Vermont school-children who visit the museum and Capitol each year.

VHS has put an increased focus on its role in serving Vermonters throughout the state, both through local society support and state-wide programming and media. Membership remains strong and VHS looks to increase the level and effectiveness of its fundraising.

With the recasting of the Vermont State Library, VHS has stepped in to provide added research support to Vermonters (and others) exploring the culture and heritage of our state. Ultimately, the research collection currently housed at the State Library space in the Pavilion will need to be assessed, focused, moved, housed, and made accessible. The State Librarian has approached us to take on that role. This is not insignificant and will require staff time and resources in the transition and space and staff time managing the collection for Vermonters going forward.

Finances are still very tight, but with the State's continued partnership, we can achieve these realistic goals to make VHS a sustainable partner in preserving the State's story as it has since the legislature created the organization in 1838.