

## Historical Records Survey of Westford, Massachusetts

By Nancy V. Kougeas  
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## INTRODUCTION

It has been a great pleasure to conduct this survey of Westford's historical records. The Town's history is rich and its historical record very complete, with documents from the 1700s to the present. Many individuals have devoted themselves to preserving the Town's history, and I was fortunate to meet and talk to many of them during the course of this work. I hope the survey and the recommendations in it further the important work being done to preserve the Town's past.

## Survey Results

### WESTFORD TOWN HALL

#### Historic Records Located in the Town Hall:

##### 1. Clerk's Office and Vault

Kinds of Records: Births, deaths and marriages; treasury accounts, tax lists, street railway locations, town reports, annual reports; bound selectmen's meetings; financial records; early militia reports; jurors lists; licenses; pole locations; removal and cremation permits; some photographs

Record Keeper: Town Clerk

Usefulness and Importance: Impressive and important collection of early Town records.

Dates: 1725--present

Estimated Cu. Ft: 87

Condition: Many need conservation work (torn pages); some older volumes need to be rebound because bindings are in poor condition. The vault is not fireproof or climate controlled.

Recommendations: Some vital records have been microfilmed and are available at the Fletcher Library. Continuing this would reduce wear and tear on of the originals and provide greater access to these records since the library is opened many evenings and on weekends. (Certified copies would still be obtained at the Clerk's office.) The vault is not fireproof; since the building is wood frame, a fire could destroy many irreplaceable documents.

##### 2. Town Hall Basement--Vault

Kinds of records: School Dept. Records, 1809—; Highway Records, 1820—; Journals, 1850—; Accounting Journals, 1920-1950s; Voting Registration Cards; Annual Reports; Selectmen's Receipts, 1890s-1950s. Note: The highway records have been entered onto an Excel database and both the Clerk's Office and Highway Department have copies.

Record Keeper: Town Clerk

Usefulness and Importance: These are extremely important early Town records

Dates: @1800--1996

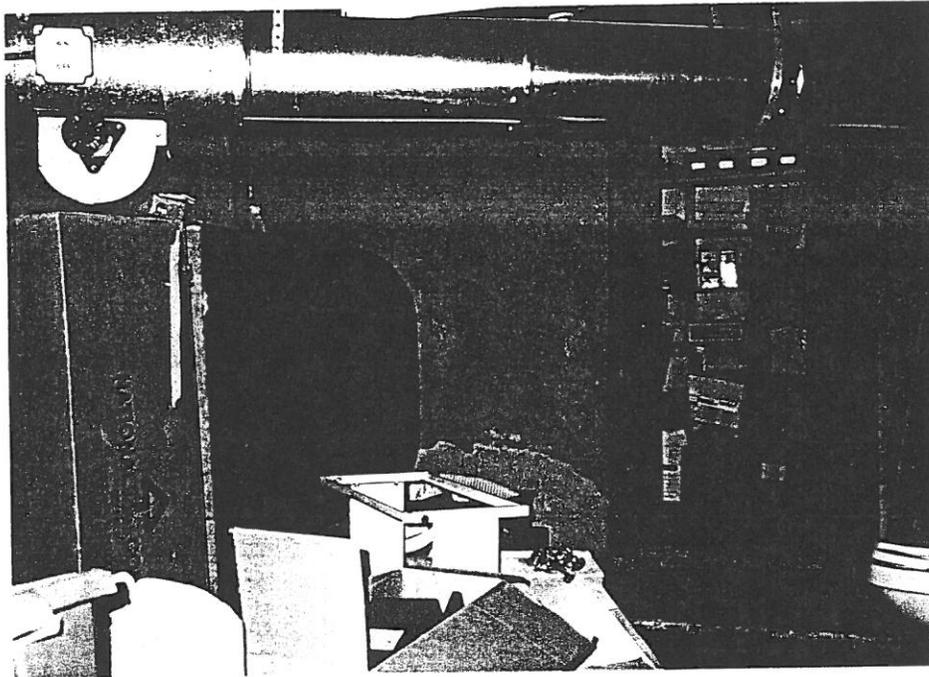
Estimated Cu. Ft: 112

Condition: The vault is very damp. It has a dirt floor. While it might have originally been constructed to provide fire protection, it is currently in poor condition. Portions of the ceiling have fallen because of dampness, and the metal containers holding many of the oldest materials are rusting. Hinges on

journals are also rusting. An oil tank in the room outside the vault gives off a strong odor of oil.

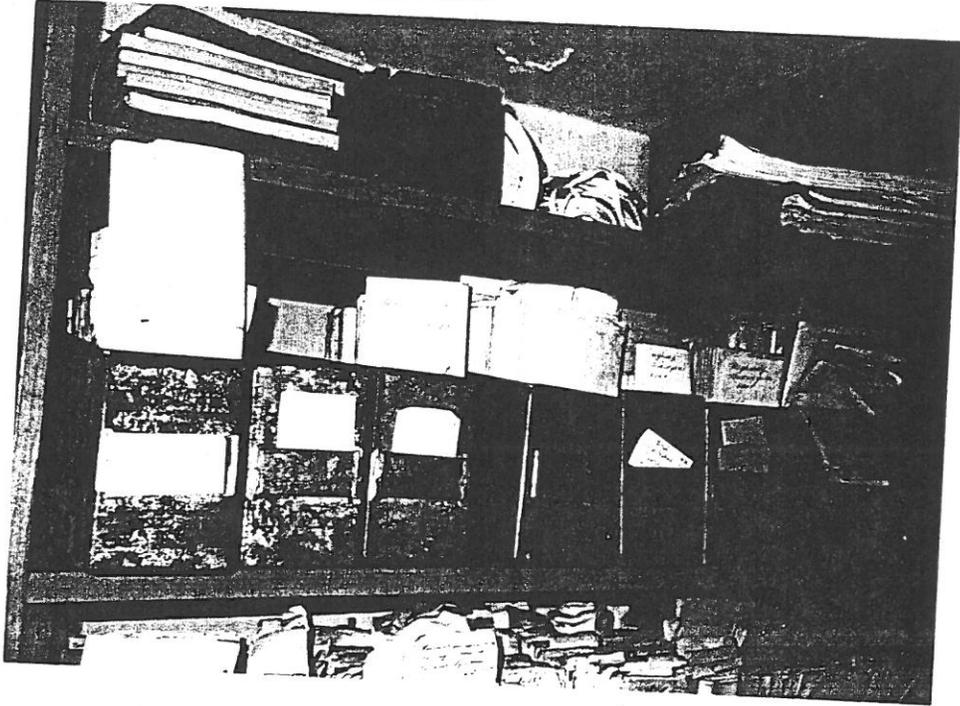
## 2. Town Hall Basement Vault – continued

Recommendations : This collection is a very important part of the Town's history, and priority should be given to moving it as soon as possible to a safe location. Because these are Town documents, which according to the Massachusetts State Law should be kept in the Town Hall, this will pose a challenge, as there is no fireproof vault in Town Hall. Please see the articles *Temperature, Relative Humidity, Light, and Air Quality: Basic Guidelines for Preservation* and *Drying Wet Books and Records*, in Appendix VI.



Entrance to the vault. This room and the vault itself have dirt floors, which are damp

## Interior Views of the Basement Vault



These metal containers are rusting from the dampness, and the papers inside are damp from the humidity in the room.



Portions of the ceiling are falling; the binders have hinges that are rusting due to the excessive dampness.

### 3. Town Hall Basement – Wooden Shelving

Kinds of records: Tax Lists, Collected Cash, Board of Appeals, Board of Health,

Record Keeper: Town Clerk

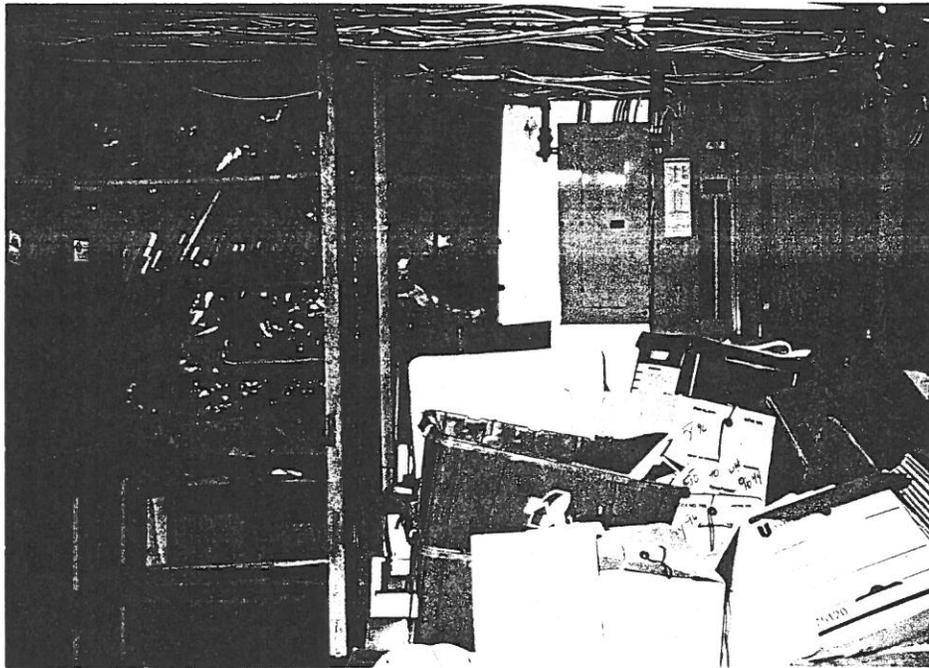
Usefulness and Importance: Very important early records of the Town.

Dates: late 1800s – 1950s

Estimated Cu. Ft: 111

Condition: The storage these records are in is in extremely poor condition. Plastic covers the journals on the top shelf so that water doesn't leak onto them, but many of the records are wet and moldy. It was impossible to see everything because so much material was heaped around this cupboard.

Recommendations: These records should be moved from the basement as quickly as possible. See recommendations under "Basement – Vault"



The shelving can be seen at the left of this photograph. Much of the material to the right has been removed since this photograph was taken in May, 2000

#### 4. Town Hall Basement – (excluding Vault and Wooden Shelving)

Kinds of Records: Records from many departments, many of which fall under State Retention Schedules

Record Keeper: Varied – many departments are storing their records here due to lack of storage.

Usefulness and Importance: Varies – some are permanent, archival records, others can be disposed of after relatively short periods

Dates: early 1900s-present

Estimated Cubic Ft: 824 (probably 150-200 cubic ft. are obsolete forms and publications that could be disposed of without permission of the State.)

Condition: Varies widely – some are in locked file cabinets, others are in boxes without covers, their contents strewn on the floor. Part of the floor is wet and there is a moldy smell; most of the floor is concrete, but it appears water enters the building around the stone foundation. Chipmunks were seen in the basement, perhaps attracted by the food from the Recreation Dept., which is stored in them, a few packets of which were open. Note: My first visits took place in May; on a return visit in June, a clean-up of the area was in progress and many of the materials such as obsolete forms, outdated publications, etc. had been discarded.

Recommendations: Ann Vandal is working to obtain compact shelving for the Building Dept., Planning Department, Conservation Commission and Board of Health records. If this plan were carried out, many of the files of these departments now stored in the basement would be moved upstairs to the second floor. This is an excellent idea; many of these records must be permanently kept. However, the Town must continue to plan to maintain its records; as the Town grows its record-keeping requirements will continue to increase. Please see the “Recommendations” section for a further discussion of this.

#### 5. Attic/Balcony Area

Kinds of Records: Various departments, including the Building Department, and financial records, many relating to grants.

Record Keeper: Varied

Usefulness and Importance: Many appeared to be permanent, archival records while others were materials that need not be kept after their retention dates have passed.

Dates: 1920s? – 1990s

Estimated Cu. Ft: 172

Condition: This room is being used partially for records storage and partially as a place to leave excess equipment (computers, tables chairs, etc.) here are many boxes scattered around, some of them empty, some open with their contents spilling out.

## 5. Attic/Balcony Area – continued

Recommendations: To fully understand what is here, this area needs to be cleaned, and all equipment, empty boxes, etc. removed so the materials can be inventoried. Many records appear to be ones that fall under retention schedules; those that have been retained for the recommended length of time and which do not have archival value could be discarded, once permission is obtained from the State Records Management Unit. There is no climate control in the attic, but it does appear that the ceiling, which had previously leaked, has been repaired. With the addition of air conditioners and dehumidifiers, this room might be used to store (until permanent storage is located) the “at risk” collections now stored in the basement.



## Town Hall Offices with Current Records:

### 6. Assessor's Office

Kinds of Records: Assessor's Records in various formats. Some have been scanned and CD's created (the originals are stored in the basement until a decision is made about what to do with them); some maps and photographs,

Record Keeper: Assessor

Usefulness and Importance: These records are essential to the functioning of the Town; many are of permanent value.

Dates: Current

Estimated Cu. Ft: 98

Condition: Good

Recommendations: See "Use of Optical Media" (SPR Bulletin No. 1-93 in Appendix II) concerning retention of paper copies once digital copies have been made. This also contains a discussion of factors to consider when optical storage is being considered.

### 7. Recreation Department:

Kinds of Records: Program information related to the Recreation Department

Record Keeper: Director Rose P. Thoman

Usefulness and Importance: The brochures and correspondence kept by this office document the activities of two community programs--the Westford Recreation Department and the Westford Board of Health

Dates: 1990 – present (the Department began in the 1970s, stopped and was restarted about 10 years ago.)

Estimated Cu Ft: 16

Condition: Good

Recommendations: Food for this program is currently stored in the basement. Another location should be found, for although most food is tightly sealed, chipmunks were observed in the basement.

### 8. Tax Collector

Kinds of Records: Tax

Record Keeper: Tax Collector

Usefulness and Importance: Vital to the functioning of the town; many must be kept permanently.

Dates: Current records; @ last 7 years

Estimated Cu. Ft: 65

Condition: good

Recommendations:

9. Second Floor:

Building Department

Board of Health

Planning Department

Conservation

Kinds of Records: Current records for each of the above departments, arranged in file cabinets or map cases. According to Ms. Vandal, some originals have been scanned and the originals kept.

Record Keeper: Ann Vandal

Usefulness and Importance: Records vital to the functioning of the above departments.

Dates: Currently useful records; @ 10 years

Est. Cu. Ft: 335

Condition: Good

Recommendations: Ms. Vandal was getting estimates for high density shelving in May, 2000 to bring materials from the above departments currently stored in the basement up to the second floor. This would allow an approximate 36% increase in the amount of materials that could be stored here. This is an excellent idea, and would remove important materials that are still used, many of which must be permanently maintained, from the basement.

10. Town Manager

Kinds of Records: Records of the Selectmen and Town Manager in current use

Record Keeper:

Usefulness and Importance: Current records important to the functioning of the Town

Dates: Current

Est. Cu. Ft: 38

Condition: Good

Recommendations: Older material is stored in the balcony/attic.

## WESTFORD TOWN BUILDINGS

### 11. Cameron Senior Center

Kinds of Records: Council on Aging Minutes; newsletters dating from 1980s Grants applications (1990s); subject files relating to elder affairs; plans of the building when it was a school (designed by H. Prescott of 259 summer St., Boston @1900); plans of the 1992 renovation that converted the building to a senior center.

Record Keeper: Joanne Sheehan

Usefulness and Importance: The records show the Town's involvement in caring for its elderly, and are an important piece of the Town's history. The plans for the building add to the completeness of the architectural record.

Dates: @1900--present

Condition: Good

Est. Cu. Ft.: 28 cubic feet of records; 12 cu. ft. of rolled plans

Recommendations: The plans, which are in the basement, should be moved to a more secure spot, as should the records kept in the second floor cupboard. This is a wood framed building, and there is always the danger of fire; the plans in the basement could easily be mistaken for something unimportant and tossed out as part of a clean-up.

### 12. Fairview Cemetery Office

Kinds of Records: journals of burials; maps; correspondence, minutes and burial permits; two sets of cards (one arranged alphabetically by name, the other by Lot #)

Record Keeper: Mr. Baxendale

Usefulness and Importance: Records important for genealogical research

Dates: @1837 – present

Est. Cu. Ft.: 7 cu. ft.

Condition: The wood-frame building is not climate controlled or fireproof, but most materials are stored in a fireproof, locked safe. Most information has been entered onto 5 x 8" cards, which are in good condition. Most maps appear to be duplicates. Mr. Baxendale has begun entering the cards into a database.

Recommendations: If the database were completed (or if the cards were microfilmed), they could be stored at either the J.V. Fletcher Library or another location where they could be more easily accessed as a research tool. This would also help Mr. Baxendale, who finds he is most likely to receive research inquiries during his busiest season.

### 13. Fire Department:

Kinds of Records: Fire Department records, including invoices, applications, daily logs and permits, many of which fall under retention schedules; some older materials, including Annual Reports.

Record Keeper: Fire Chief

Usefulness and Importance: Some of these are permanent records the department must maintain; others may be discarded after their retention periods have passed.

Dates: 1950S – 1990s

Est. Cu. Ft. 48

Condition: Material is stored in the attic, most of it in two rooms on either side of a loft area. While some material is in file cabinets and boxes, it was difficult to accurately determine the cubic footage because coats, flags, educational materials and electronic equipment are also heaped in these rooms.

Recommendations: This area should be cleaned and inventoried by someone who understands the State's Retention Schedules and the Fire Department's needs. Material should not be stored in the attic, as it is difficult to reach (accessible by ladder) and not climate controlled.

### 14. J.V. Fletcher Library

Kinds of Records: In Mary Atwood Hall: One box of materials relating to the dedication of the J.V. Fletcher Library in 1896; (including invitations and announcements); Town of Westford Valuation Lists, bound volumes, 1831-1857; Tax Lists, 1745-1847 (10 volumes); historic photographs of Westford; large framed photographs; glass negatives; maps; records of the Westford Light Cavalry, (1861); scrapbooks. Main Room: Microfilmed records, including: the *Westford Eagle*, 1978-1998; Town Vital Records, 1726-1902; Westford Academy Trustee Archives, 1792-1892; *Westford Recollections* by June Kennedy; 1 cabinet of maps; 6 binders of material about the Westford Knight

Contact: Ginny Moore

Usefulness and Importance: An important collection of materials, many of which document areas not represented in other collections – the Westford Light Cavalry records, for example.

Dates: Late 1700s – present

Est. Cu. Ft. 65

Condition: Collections are partially processed. Some are in archival enclosures. Those that have had conservation work are kept in a locked case. The room is climate controlled, but must be used for many other purposes – meetings, etc.--not staffed for research all the time. Therefore public access to this material is limited.

#### 14. J.V. Fletcher Library--continued

Recommendations: The Library should concentrate on arranging and describing its most important collections – for example, those that relate to the dedication of the Library itself in 1896. If the Town works to preserve its records, the Library will not need to do so; the Westford Town records should be returned to the Town. The Library should work closely with the Historical Society to ensure that they are not duplicating each other's efforts; they should carefully define which areas each collects.

#### 15. Highway Department

Kinds of Records: Highway Department, maps, snow clearing,

Record Keeper: Mark Hamel

Usefulness and Importance: Records vital to the operation of the town – snow clearing, road repair, etc.

Dates: 1960s--present

Est. Cu. Ft: 46 and 14 flat map files (40 drawers, each 43" x36")

Condition: Good. The Department has created the "Westford Plan List by Street Report," a database in Microsoft's Access of all current plans for the town. Historic plans in the Town Hall basement have also been entered on a database (Excel). Maps appear to be well kept, but there is no climate control in the building.

Recommendations: The department was unaware of the State Retention Schedules, so a copy was given to them.

#### 16. Police Department

Detective Michael C. Perron is writing a history of the department, which was established in 1919. He is using Town Reports and newspaper clippings to do this, and knows of no primary documents either in the Police Department or anywhere else. Although I did not gain access to it, the Records Center in the new Police Station looks to be a model, on a smaller scale, of what the Town needs for its records.

Recommendations: If any information is found about the beginnings of the Police Station, Mr. Perron should be advised. Otherwise, it seems the early history of the department has been lost.

### 17. Roudenbush Community Center

Kinds of Records: Program records for the main facility at 65 Main St.; the Frost School and Rodenbush at Nabnasset.

Record Keeper: Mrs. Patti Mason

Usefulness and Importance: Both program files, photographs and scrapbooks document both the programs of the community center and the architectural history of the Town.

Dates: A few, late 1890s; most current

Est. Cu. Ft: 15 cu. ft.; 6 large tubes with plans of the schools; framed photographs and scrapbooks in Avis's Lounge

Condition: Good

Recommendations: The materials are stored in two locations on the first floor. Because the building is wood-frame, they should be in fireproof containers. The plans are in particular an important part of the Town's architectural heritage. Copies should be made of photographs on display so that the original may be preserved.

### 18. School Department--Administration Building

While I was told that there were no records of importance at the school department that could be publicly accessible, I did note as I was leaving that in a first floor meeting room (which was occupied) there were Westford School Registers and School Committee Reports from approximately 1853 onward.

Est. Cu. Ft.: 32

### 19. Schools--Nashoba Valley Technical School

Kinds of Records: Minutes (1966 – present); payroll information; correspondence, grant information; cafeteria reports; student records (not public; must keep 60 years); personnel records (not public, must keep 25 years).

Record Keeper: Claudia Saball

Dates: 1966 – present

Est. Cu. Ft.: 113 (minutes, approx. 10)

Usefulness and Importance: The minutes (approximately 10 cu. ft. in binders) show the development of the technical school and its programs. Many of the others are confidential.

Condition: Very good. The school has a vault on the first floor. Most records are stored in file cabinets. Temperature and humidity both see fine.

Recommendations: Schools have been very important to Westford's history, and the minutes document an important aspect of education in the mid-twentieth century.

## 20. Parkerville Schoolhouse

Kinds of Records: Scrapbooks, correspondence, photographs, and artifacts document the history of the schoolhouse, its renovation, and the programs held at the school. This is a fine example of restoration and reuse of an historic building, and a wonderful example of documentation of both the history of the building and its subsequent use. Although the building is owned by the Town, the Friends of the Parkerville School have assembled all materials and records; they are not the Town's.

Record Keeper: June Kennedy

Usefulness and Importance: A model of what can be done; excellent documentation of an important facet of the Town's history.

Dates: early 1900s

Est. Cu. Ft. @4 cu. ft.

Condition: The condition of the historic records is excellent; archival supplies and scrapbooks have been used. Some further work might be done to research best way to care for some of the artifacts and textiles.

Recommendations: The Parkerville Schoolhouse is a wood framed building that is not climate controlled. Thus, there is always the risk of fire and deterioration of the records because of humidity. However, scrapbooks and other materials are kept at the Kennedy's home at 31 Old Lowell Road. While this is also a wood framed building, Mrs. Kennedy has made more than one copy of the scrapbooks; it would be good to keep a master copy in an archives to ensure their protection.

## 21. Schools--Westford Academy

Early records of Westford Academy are located at the Historical Society; and the Westford Academy Trustees Archives from 1792-1892 have been microfimed and are at the J.V.Fletcher Library. I attempted to call Lloyd Blanchard to confirm this, but he was away.

## 22. Water Department

Kinds of Records: Westford Water Co. Records; current Water Department Records

Record Keeper: Robin Fullford

Usefulness and Importance: Important early collection of Water Company records, including: logbooks, plans, deeds and mortgages, and specifications; current records of the Water Department.

Dates: Early 1900s – present

Est.Cu Ft: Pumping Station: Downstairs: 4 cu. ft.

Upstairs: 10 Cu. Ft.

Main Building: 65 cu. ft. (current records)

## 22. Water Department--continued

Condition: Early records are located in the brick pumping station, behind the Water Company's building at 63 Forge Village Road. This building houses the original pump, which is no longer in use, but which is in good condition, a 1916 Rumsey Triplex Power Pump. In a safe to the left of this pump are the original specifications to the pump, maps such as "Abbott Worsted Co. Brookside Water Supply, 1907" and the other documents listed above. On the second floor of this building are additional materials that are in very poor condition because of the humidity in the building – many are very wet. These may not be salvageable.

Recommendations: The material in the pumping station is at risk because of the excessive humidity and should be moved from there as soon as possible; they are so damp their condition is deteriorating. According to Ms Fullford, Mr. Sweetser, the Superintendent of the Water Department wants to move the Rumsey Pump to the new building that is to be built for the Department. The specifications for this in the safe and the other materials in the pumping station should likewise be preserved as part of the Department's rich history.

## 23. Westford Historical Commission

See notes under Westford Historical Society

## 24. Westford Historical Society

*(All records are located in the Museum Cottage on the grounds of the Westford Museum, except as noted.)*

Kinds of Records: There are 4 distinct collections in this building: 1) Westford Academy Alumni Records in an office on the First Floor; 2) Historical Commission records, including materials subject to State Retention Schedules; 3) Town records moved here for safekeeping; 4) collections donated by individuals. The materials are varied in format and include: logbooks, journals, maps, plans, correspondence, Town Records, early business records, photographs, (including large glass negatives of early industry); and videos. The majority of the records are on paper.

Town Hall Records: See Appendix \_\_\_ for inventory of early Town records, 1725-1830, moved from the Town Hall Basement. These include early records of the Selectmen, the Poor Farm, the Board of Health, and the School Department. In addition to these, there is a file cabinet of Assessor's Cards from 1920s-1940s. The Historical Commission meets in this building. Among its other records here are copies of its "Form B's in binders on the first floor. I believe that many of the Westford Academy Alumni records have been microfilmed (1792-1892) and these are at the J.V. Fletcher Library. The archival display case in the Westford Museum also contains photographs and archival material from the Academy.

## 24. Wesford Historical Society--continued

Record Keeper: Marilyn Day

Usefulness and Importance: A diverse and important collection of Westford records; the second largest after the Town's records.

Dates: 1700s--present

Est. Cu. Ft: 90, plus 1 large map case in the Westford Museum

Condition: The Cottage building is not fireproof or climate controlled. While some collections are in fireproof file cabinets, many materials are in cardboard boxes and a fire would be disastrous. An item-by-item accession inventory is being created, and was approximately half finished in May (about 4100 items have been entered onto the Excel database) This will be a great help when this collection is processed – and processing portions of it should be a priority.

Recommendations: This is an important collection of archival materials.

Although the building is owned by the Town, I do not believe Town records can be kept here unless the Town passes an article authorizing this. It is important to check with the Records Management Unit of the State Archives about the legality of this. It also seems that the Historical Society and the J.V. Fletcher Library should further refine their collection policies so they are not collecting the same materials. Both seem particularly rich in mid-19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> century documents. Since both collections have materials that need conservation work, special care should be taken that this work is not duplicated. Also, each organization should carefully consider what subjects each will collect in the future. Perhaps the Historical Society would like to concentrate on 20<sup>th</sup> century business, or the arts in Westford, while the Library chooses to specialize in 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs.

Decisions also need to be made about processing and arranging the collection. However, priority should be given to placing the materials into the available file cabinets to give some measure of protection against fire and/or leaks. Perhaps Simons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science could be contacted to see if a student in the Archives Program could begin processing a collection as part of his or her coursework. Please see the "Discussion" section concerning the need for an archive.

## Records Kept By Individuals, and Organizations

### Collections Documenting Important Aspects of Westford's History

#### 25. Mickey Crocker (Golden Age Club)

Kinds of Records: Golden Age Club, Veterans Records, Food Pantry

Contact Person: Mickey Crocker, Telephone 692-8259

Usefulness and Importance: Mrs. Crocker says she has many materials stored in her basement (which is dry), but couldn't give even an approximate idea of the amount. This is potentially a very important collection, because Mrs Crocker started the Golden Age Club, and was the Town's first Veteran's Agent. She implemented programs in the late 1960s, when the Town began to receive Federal money for programs for the elderly and the poor. She continues to work with the Food Pantry. While the Golden Age Club continues to meet, the Cameron Senior Center now conducts many programs for the elderly.

Est. Cu Ft: Unknown

#### 26. First Parish Church United

Kinds of Records: Records of the Unitarian Church, the Congregational Church, and merger of the two which comprise the church of today. Most records are on paper, including some journals.

Contact: June Kennedy, Telephone, 692-924

Usefulness and Importance: Excellent documentation from the earliest dates. A very complete record of activities and programs of the church, perhaps the most complete for a single institution. There are exceptional early records,(including an Isaiah Thomas presentation bible); however, present day activities of the church are also being carefully documented.

Dates: 1725--present

Est. Cu. Ft: 46 cu. ft.

Recommendations:

Many materials are kept in fireproof file cabinets, however, some are in the hall closet and some are in the basement of the new addition. The building is not climate controlled, and the long-term preservation of the collection would be enhanced if it could be moved to a climate-controlled space. June Kennedy has created a cataloguing form, and is in the process of cataloguing all materials. This would be an excellent collection to process; portions of it could be microfilmed (and the films given to the J.V. Fletcher Library) to increase public access, particularly since the church was in existence before the Town was formed.

27. George Fletcher – personal collection

Kinds of Records: Mr. Fletcher has had a farm stand for 10 years; before that he owned a dairy farm, and he thinks he has photos. He also has a family tree from 1635. He also believes his sister, Charlotte Stone, has more family photos. June Kennedy interviewed his mother.

Contact: George Fletcher, Telephone, 692-6288

Usefulness and Importance: This collection might be important in adding to knowledge of the Fletcher family and of agriculture and dairy farming.

Dates: 1635-present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown

Condition: Unknown

Recommendations: This collection might be a good addition to the Historical Society's collections.

28. H.E. Fletcher Social and Athletic Club

Kinds of Records: Original charter (famed, on wall of Club); membership records; 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary yearbook; minutes.

Contact: Walter Longley/Peter LaFond

Usefulness and Importance: Club was established for the people who worked at Fletcher Quarry. I was not able to see the membership records on the day I Visited as Mr. LaFond was not in and I could not reach him.

Dates: 1948--present

Est. Cu.Ft: Unknown

Recommendations: Follow-up on the membership records; these might provide useful information about the quarry workers.

29. Graniteville Pride

Kinds of Records: minutes, newsletters, newspaper clippings, many photographs (in scrapbooks)

Contact: Mrs. Diane Healy, 692-2137

Usefulness and Importance: These records document the rebirth of the neighborhood after the Sargent factory closed; Graniteville Pride works closely with the Mill Pond Association.

Dates: from the beginning of the organization in 1997--present

Est. Cu. Ft. 1

Condition: good; in Mrs. Healy's home

Est. Cu. Ft. 1

Recommendations: Mrs. Healy is very willing to share these; they would be a good collection for the Historical Society to acquire to document late 20<sup>th</sup> century Westford.

### 30. June Kennedy-- Personal Collection

Kinds of Records: 400 slides; 3 scrapbooks; reel to reel tapes of interviews done 25 years ago for *Westford Recollections*.

Contact: June Kennedy, telephone: 692-8924

Usefulness and Importance: This collection is composed of the research Mrs. Kennedy did to write her articles and books about Westford, including taped interviews.

Dates:

Est. Cu. Ft: 4

Condition: Excellent; approximately 75% of the collection is composed of copies (clippings, etc.)

Recommendations: Excellent care has been taken of this collection. The reel to reel tapes have been copied and put onto cassettes. However, a fireproof, climate controlled storage space would ensure the preservation of these materials.

### 31. Jewish Community

Kinds of Records: Brochures, flyers about meetings

Contact: Nancy Roberts, 692-2035

Usefulness and Importance: The Jewish community is new to Westford and doesn't have a synagogue. Currently, this organization does outreach by word of mouth and by leaving brochures at real estate offices. It is mainly a social organization, organizing parties and picnics; currently there are about 60 members. Ms. Roberts thought there was little historical information about Jews in Westford; she had heard that the first Jewish resident owned a chicken farm located where the Market Basket now is, but said nothing had been substantiated.

Dates: Recent

Est. Cu. Ft: 1 binder of material

Recommendations: Although this collection of material is small, it is important to follow up on this group's work and research more about the Jewish community in Westford

### 32. League of Women Voters

Kinds of Records: The League was established in Westford in 1968. Its records consist of reports and bulletins about studies the League has done. Juta Moter says the records are not in her possession (they are kept by the president, and 4-5 past presidents still have possession of some), and are not organized yet to be useful. Some may have been destroyed when kept in someone's basement and damaged by water. Ms. Moter understands an archive where the League had storage space would be extremely useful.

### 32. League of Women Voters—continued

Contact: Juta Moter, Telephone 692-6743

Usefulness and Importance: This is potentially a very important collection, because it documents a period of time when the Town was undergoing many changes.

Dates: 1968-present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown

Recommendations: Include Ms. Moter in discussions organizing an archive in Westford.

### 33. Mill Pond Preservation Committee

Kinds of Records: Minutes and fundraising correspondence (raised money for 18 benches); Mrs. Hall has written a 2-page history of the organization, and has many photos of events, including the recent bench dedication and activities such as the planned "Bond with the Pond" day organized with Westford Academy.

Contact: Dorothy Hall

Usefulness and Importance: Document the re-birth of an area after the mills closed.

Dates: 1997 (beginning of the organization) – present.

Est. Cu. Ft: 1

Condition: Good

Recommendations: Along with the Graniteville Pride's records, this would be a good collection for the Historical Society to acquire.

### 34. Nashoba Valley Camera Club

Kinds of Records: Club records, newsletters, announcements, photos of club activities

Contact: Dick Kenyon, Telephone 692-4608

Usefulness and Importance: The Club's records document an interesting social activity; club members might be able to help with other documentation projects.

Dates: 1983 (founding of the Club)--present

Est. Cu. Ft: 1

Condition: good

Recommendations: The Club has photos of some events around Town, such as the Apple Blossom Festival. Most of the records relate to Club activities. Mr. Kenyon would be happy to donate these to an appropriate archive. Since the Club has approximately 50 members, if photo documentation is needed in Town, it might be worthwhile to contact Mr. Kenyon for help with specific projects.

35. The Picking- Gould Farm.

Kinds of Records: The farm is in the process of being restored, and good records are being kept of its restoration (June Kennedy has shared much information). They found no records from the previous owners (Bernice Picking was the last family member to live on the property).

Currently one project of note at the farm is an ecumenical outreach garden. Four churches in town are taking turns tending a garden; when the crops are ready, the food will be shared with group helping the homeless.

Contact: Mrs. Webb, Telephone 692-4595

Recommendations: If the work is well documented (including the projects like the ecumenical garden), a very complete record of a 21<sup>st</sup> century historic restoration/social project could result.

36. St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Kinds of Records: Church records

Contact: Beth Shaw, Telephone, 692-7677 (Church historian)

Usefulness and Importance: These are the historical records of this church, which was built in 1964. I spoke to the rector, who said the new addition to the church currently being built will have a records room and a display area. The records are presently fairly inaccessible, and I was unable to reach Ms. Shaw.

37. St. Catherine's Catholic Church

Kinds of Records: Church records in many formats, including paper, drawings, and photograph; included are church bulletins; baptism and confirmation records

Contact: Doris Karkota, Telephone 692-6663

Usefulness and Importance: Records document the history of the church

Dates: 1922-present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown

Recommendations: Ms. Smith is the church's historian; she is currently writing a book about the church's history. She notes that many early records are kept by the Archdiocese's Archives and are sealed for 50 years.

38. United Methodist Church of Westford

Kinds of Records: Records of the church since its founding in 1869. See Appendix V for a complete inventory. Mr. Oliphant has transcribed many of these records.

Contact: Robert Oliphant

38. United Methodist Church of Westford--continued

Condition: Most books and records appear to be in good condition. They are kept in Mr. Oliphant's house and in the Pastor's offices at 3 Church Street; they plan to purchase archival enclosures for the collection. The

Recommendations: The inventory that has been created and the transcriptions could be made available at the J.V. Fletcher Library.

39. VFW Post 159

Kinds of Records: The Post has material on members who served from the Spanish American to the Gulf War. He also has forms called DD214s.

Contact: Commander Paul Murray, Telephone, 692-2763

Usefulness and Importance: Document the lives of those who served in the armed forces.

Dates: @1900-present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown

Condition: Unknown

Recommendations: The Post is sometimes offered collections and Mr. Murray understands the need for a place to archive these. He would be interested in participating in a roundtable on archives.

40. Westford Academy Alumni Association

Many of trustees' records have been microfilmed; these are located in the library. The trustees also have an office in the Historical Society, with a fireproof cabinet holding its records. Note: I tried to reach Lloyd Blanchard to discuss this collection, but he was away.

41. Westford Conservation Trust

Kinds of Records: Minutes, year-end reviews, and correspondence.

Contact: Marian Harman Telephone, 692-3907

Dates: @1985 – present

Est. Cu. Ft: 3

Usefulness and Importance: An important collection, documenting the growing concern about preservation of land in Town.

Condition: Good; some records are kept at the clerk's home

Recommendations: This collection should probably be acquired by the Historical Society.

42. Westford Eagle

Kinds of Records: Newspaper records, including photographs.

Contact: News Editor Robert Green.

Usefulness and Importance: Mr. Green believes most of the paper is on microfilm, but isn't sure of the dates. Maintains a "pretty good" clip file for 6-7 years only, and keeps photos for about 10 years. Since the paper is now located in Concord, few people from Westford drop in for information.

Dates: ? -- present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown

Condition: Library has the paper on microfilm from 1978 – present.

Recommendations: The J.V. Fletcher Library should obtain microfilm of any years it doesn't already own. Since the newspaper is not indexed, any collections that include newspaper clippings arranged by subject are important and should be maintained.

43. Westford Women's Club

Kinds of Records: A framed charter; brochures; many files are kept at a previous president's house

Contact: Judy Chandler, Telephone, 692-9224

Usefulness and Importance: The Women's Club is a service organization, focusing mainly on work with schools and the elderly.

Dates: 1976--present

Est. Cu. Ft: Unknown:

Condition: Unknown

Recommendations: This collection documents present-day activities of a socially active women's organization.

43A. Westford Colonial Minutemen

Kinds of Records: Information relating to the Minutemen

Contact: Elwin A. Bagley, Telephone 692-8101

Note: The Minutemen were most active around the Centennial. Because of declining numbers, they joined with other Towns, including Chelmsford, some years ago. Any existing records are kept by individual members.

The following collections should be of a lower priority to protect than the previous ones. Most are branches of state or national organizations; often the membership records kept locally are confidential. In some instances, including the Boy Scouts, information about local projects is found in the records of sponsoring organizations. (For example, the First Parish Church United sponsors a Boy Scout troop.)

#### 44. DAR

Mrs. Bette Hook (692-6360) said that many materials for the DAR are archived in either their state headquarters in Haverhill, Mass. or their Washington, D.C. headquarters. Locally, the DAR has about 10 cu. ft. of material, mostly concerning membership information, which she didn't think could be made publicly accessible. Ms Hook, a former Town Clerk was very concerned about the Town Hall's records and suggested that if an archive/record center is needed, it should be located in the proposed Town Annex.

#### 45. 4-H Clubs

Bob Herrmann works locally with the <sup>Stony Brook</sup> ~~Stoneybrook~~ Club; however, he said there are many 4-H clubs in Westford and the person to contact was Wendy Marcks, the Extension Educator at the Waltham Extension Office, Telephone 781-891-0650, ext. 26. Ms Maarcks was on vacation when I called. Mr. Herrmann said there is other information around about the 4-H clubs and the 4-H fair, which was founded in 1956. He recommended Alex Wilder as a good source of information.

#### 46. Lion's Club

Mrs. E. Morine (692-7312) began the Westford branch of the Lions, which focuses on fund raising for eye research. She said they wouldn't share their material, which is mostly membership and donation material.

#### 47. Westford Boy Scouts

Mr. Bob Morawiak (692-8262) told me that each troop keeps its records at the Council in Chelmsford. Some churches also sponsor individual troops (the First Parish Church sponsors Boy Scout Troop 159).

Organizations/Individuals Where More Research or Outreach is needed:

48. Rep. Geoff Hall – Jeff Tucker of Rep. Hall's office returned my call. He said that Rep. Hall says he has no historical materials. I pointed out that Rep. Hall's own papers are important to Westford's history (he has been a representative for 10 years), and asked where they were kept. Mr. Tucker said that he didn't think Rep. Hall kept non-current papers; if he did, perhaps someone should contact him when he left office.

49. Stony Brook Fish and Game – When contacted, the person on the phone (who was very hurried and would not identify himself) said they had no records of any kind, but did share the fact that this hunting and fishing club was started in 1892. There is now a waiting time to join of 2-1/2 years. Perhaps a member of the club could help search for historical materials?

Organizations and Individuals without Records:

50. Franco-American Club

According to the manager, a fire about seven years ago destroyed the building and all of its contents, including their membership files. The club, organized as a social club for French Canadians who worked in the mills, has now opened its membership to everyone, so the original purpose of the club has also been lost.

51. Fletcher Granite Quarry

Gerry Johnson, the secretary to the president, said that a flood in the basement about ten years ago destroyed many of their records. Marilyn Day, Director of the Westford Historical Society has obtained newsletters and has made copies of photographs which are the only older materials the company has left.

52. Mr. Alex Belida

Mr. Belida said that he has already given materials to the Historical Society (including newspaper clippings and quarry tools). He is not well and has no more material. He expressed fear that the materials he gave had been thrown away (he says he gave them to Connie English). I mentioned that the Society is carefully accessioning all its materials, but perhaps someone from the Society should contact him, and reassure him that his donations were valued. I mentioned the Museum's current exhibit on quarrying.

53. Jane Hinckley--Only keeps copies at home; no originals.

54. Arnold Wilder – Has been interviewed; has no other records.

Collections where it was impossible to contact anyone

Forge Village Coalition, Mrs. Beverly Johansen  
Nabnasset Improvement Assoc., (Mr. Ron Langell)  
Westford Bible Church  
Westford Girl Scouts, Mrs. Anne Deardon  
Rotary International, Mr. Richard Lee  
Kiwanis Club  
Westford Newcomers and Friends  
Knights of Columbus, #9275  
VFW Post – 6539  
VFW Post 159  
Elizabeth Lane (on vacation)

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction:

This section is divided into two parts, one for Town records and one for the records of organizations and individuals. This is an important distinction, because all Town records are public records under state law. Their retention, access, and destruction are subject to state regulation. Appendix I consists of Chapter 66 of the *Massachusetts General Laws Annotated*, which details the laws relating to public records. These laws and other public records information are clearly explained on the website of the Massachusetts State Archives (<http://www.magnet.state.ma.us/sec/arc/>). A portion of this website is included in Appendix II.

### I. Records of the Town of Westford

While the Historical Society, The J.V Fletcher Library, and the Town are the three largest record-holders in Westford, the Town's collection is by far the largest. I estimate that the Town (including its off-site locations) as approximately 2300 cubic feet of records, at least 750 of permanent, historical value. In comparison, the J.V. Fletcher Library has approximately 65 cubic feet and the Historical Society approximately 90. (To envision the size of these collections, it is helpful to remember that 1 cubic foot is equal to one standard size record carton.)

Although at first it might seem that the recommendations for the Town require unplanned-for effort and expense particularly when the Town is going through a period of enormous growth, the benefits of complying with the state's record keeping regulations will be great. Among these will be:

- ◆ the preservation of the Town's rich history;
- ◆ ensuring that the portion of today's current records that have permanent, archival value – tomorrow's history – will be preserved;
- ◆ effective management of current records so they comply and enhance operational, legal, and fiscal goals
- ◆ cost-savings; as the Town adopts new media for its records storage, the use of compatible equipment and storage media will ensure that decisions are made on a Town-wide rather than a departmental basis.

The greatest needs for the Town of Westford are for:

1. An archives/records center where records can be safely stored, processed, and maintained. This center must contain "fireproof rooms, safes or vaults for the safe keeping of the public records..." (MGL 66, 11). Currently there is no fireproof vault or room in the Town Hall, which is a wood frame building. It should also be climate-controlled. Some of the collections in the worst condition are located in the Town Hall – see "At-Risk Collections," below."

2. An archivist/records specialist to assist the Town Clerk with archives and record management. While the Town Clerk is the "keeper of the record," the Town of Westford has been expanding, adding both buildings and programs over the past years. The record management issues have increased exponentially. While the personnel in some departments are very aware of their record-keeping responsibilities, others are completely unaware or simply do not have the time. Some Town Departments not located in Town Hall have no idea that records retention schedules exist and that records cannot be destroyed without the State's permission.

3. An immediate plan to protect the "At-Risk" collections defined below

#### ACTIONS:

1. Establish an Archives/Records Management Committee

While carrying out this survey, I talked to many individuals who are deeply concerned about the Town's records. These include Paul Murray, who is the Commander of VFW Post 159 and its record keeper as well as a member of the Town's Finance Committee. Mr. Murray suggested that a roundtable be set up to discuss the Town's records. Other individuals who indicated they would be interested in participating include:

Robert Oliphant and Jane Hinckley, both members of the Historical Commission; Dick Kenyon, of the Nashoba Valley Camera Club (who has worked with the Mass Board of Library Commissioners reviewing library plans); and Jutta Moter of the League of Women Voters. Ellen Harde, the Town Moderator, Ann Vandal, the Administrator of the Planning Department, Nancy Oakes, Town Clerk, Ginny Moore of the J.V. Fletcher Library, and Marilyn Day of the Historical Society would all be key participants in this roundtable. (A visit to the Town of Burlington's archives would help the Town of Westford to envision what its archives could become. See Appendix III, for a copy of the website. I have spoken to the

archivist, Lisa Plato, who would be happy to arrange a visit to Burlington's Town Archive. Burlington is of comparable size to Westford, with a population of approx. 20,000.)

2) Because this will naturally take some time to accomplish, a short-term storage space should be sought for the at-risk collections defined below.

#### At Risk Collections:

While all collections in the Town Hall must be considered at risk because it is a wood frame building and there is no fireproof storage, the following are particularly endangered because of their present storage conditions. Historic records in the following locations are endangered:

- 1) The Town Hall basement vault;
- 2) The wooden shelving in the basement of the Town Hall;
- 2) Records stored in the attic/balcony area of the Town Hall;
- 3) Records in the safe and the second story of the Water Department's Pumping station.

Other collections in Town are endangered because they are stored in basements and cupboards and could be discarded by someone who might be cleaning a space and not recognize their value. These include:

- 4) the plans stored in the basement of the Cameron Senior center;
- 5) the plans stored in the Rodenbush Community Center; and
- 6) the maps stored in the Fairview Cemetery office.

## II. Records Kept by Individuals, and Organizations

Only 10 organizations returned the preliminary survey Ginny Moore sent and when I made calls to set up appointments to see these collections, it became apparent why this was so. Most of these organizations and individuals simply do not understand that their records are or will be historically important. This is particularly true of records created from the period of the late 1960s through the present.

Another reason for the lack of response is that records have been lost or destroyed. Fire and flood have both taken their toll. The Fletcher Granite Quarry had a flood in its basement about 10 years ago which destroyed many records, and the original building of the Franco American Club burned to the ground 7 years ago, destroying all its records.

However, even more records have probably been lost due to a lack of proper storage and maintenance. Since volunteers run most of the organizations contacted, it is common for the records to be passed from president to president. If one organization merges with another (as in the case of the Minutemen) records are likely to be located in another Town, or lost to the "cleaning out" process that accompanies many moves.

On a much brighter note, several organizations in Town are aware of and actively involved in taking care of their records. The Parkerville School House is a model both of historic restoration, and of documentation. Both St. Catherine's and St. Mark's churches are planning additions that will include records storage rooms.

#### Recommendations:

1. As with the Town, the greatest need for the records of organizations is for permanent, safe storage space. If a Committee is formed to discuss a town archives, one option to consider would be a shared facility--a community archives. This would ensure the physical safety of the collections and allow for processing space. The Historical Society would have the space needed to begin actively collecting records of some of the organizations identified in this survey. All Town records in both the Historical Society and the J.V. Fletcher library would be returned to the Town's collection.
2. The J.V. Fletcher Library and the Historical Society should update their collection policies to ensure they do not overlap. Although the library's Mary Atwood Hall is, because of its climate control, the best place to store records, this hall is used for many meetings and is not usually staffed. The Library should consider concentrating on microfilm and database collections that would improve public access.
3. The Library and the Historical Society should investigate hiring an archivist (perhaps they could share one with the Town), so collections could be processed and arranged and finding aids to the collections created.





Categories Subcategories	Documented – Which Collection	Not Documented – Suggestions to Document
<b>Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postal communications</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Telecommunications</li> <li>• Print media</li> <li>• Censorship</li> </ul>		? contact local public access television
<b>Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private, primary and secondary</li> <li>• Public, primary and secondary</li> <li>• Higher education</li> <li>• Education reform movements</li> <li>• Home schooling</li> <li>• Vocational education</li> <li>• Adult and continuing education</li> <li>• Art education</li> <li>• School desegregation</li> <li>• Schools for the disabled</li> </ul>	7, 11, 14,17,18, 19,20,21,24,34	Well documented
<b>Environment/Natural Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public lands</li> <li>• Public regulation of private lands</li> <li>• Water rights and resources</li> <li>• Natural landscape and geology</li> <li>• Wildlife and vegetation</li> <li>• Ecology</li> </ul>	41 9 22 14	

Categories Subcategories	Documented – Which Collection	Not Documented – Suggestions to Document
<p>Environment – continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deforestation and reforestation</li> <li>• Energy resources and consumption</li> </ul> <p>Labor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child labor</li> <li>• Women as workers</li> <li>• Slavery and bound labor</li> <li>• Labor and trade laws</li> <li>• Immigrant labor</li> <li>• Domestic labor</li> <li>• Factory system</li> <li>• Unemployment and poverty</li> <li>• Unions</li> <li>• Strikes</li> </ul> <p>Medicine and Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitals, public and private</li> <li>• Health maintenance organizations</li> <li>• Epidemics and disease</li> <li>• Alternative medicine</li> <li>• Medical research and development</li> <li>• Treatment of mental illness</li> <li>• Services for the disabled</li> <li>• Paramedic and ambulatory services</li> <li>• Services for the elderly</li> <li>• Community-based health services</li> </ul>	<p>20,24?</p> <p>24</p> <p>11,23 17</p>	

Categories Subcategories	Documented – Which Collection	Not Documented – Suggestions to Document
<p><b>Military</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian Wars</li> <li>• French and Indian Wars</li> <li>• Revolutionary War</li> <li>• Shay's Rebellion</li> <li>• War of 1812</li> <li>• Mexican War</li> <li>• Civil War</li> <li>• Spanish-American war</li> <li>• World War I</li> <li>• World War II</li> <li>• Korean War</li> <li>• Vietnam Conflict</li> <li>• Civilian participation</li> <li>• Military installations</li> <li>• Monuments and memorials</li> <li>• Veteran's groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Politics, Government and Law</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native American government</li> <li>• Colonial and revolutionary government</li> <li>• Federal government</li> <li>• State government</li> <li>• County government</li> <li>• Town government</li> <li>• Political parties</li> <li>• Citizen interest groups</li> </ul>	<p>14</p> <p>39</p> <p>39</p> <p>1</p> <p>1-10; 14; 24</p>	<p>VFW posts who did not respond to this survey should be re-contacted.</p>

Categories Subcategories	Documented – Which Collection	Not Documented – Suggestions to Document
<p>Populations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African-Americans</li> <li>• Native Americans</li> <li>• Immigration, English</li> <li>• Immigration, European</li> <li>• Immigration, Asian and Pacific Island</li> <li>• Immigration, Latino</li> <li>• Race relations</li> <li>• Gay and Lesbian</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Elderly</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Women</li> </ul>	<p>17 11,25 14,24,38</p>	<p>History of minorities is not well documented. Present day Jewish community and others including Asian-Americans should be documented.</p>
<p>Recreation and Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amateur sports</li> <li>• Collegiate sports</li> <li>• Professional sports</li> <li>• Community-based social/cultural activities</li> <li>• Travel and tourism</li> <li>• Outdoor recreation</li> </ul>	<p>17, 28</p>	
<p>Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denominational structure and hierarchy</li> <li>• Community-based religious organizations</li> </ul>	<p>26, 36, 38</p>	<p>Smaller religious groups should be documented</p>

Categories Subcategories	Documented – Which Collection	Not Documented – Suggestions to Document
<p>Religion—continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church and state relations</li> <li>• Religious education</li> <li>• Religious tolerance and intolerance</li> <li>• Congregations</li> <li>• Religious schisms</li> <li>• Religious writings</li> <li>• Religious involvement in social issues</li> <li>• Spiritual movements</li> <li>• Non-Western religions</li> </ul>	<p>26</p> <p>35</p>	
<p>Science and Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific experimentation and discovery</li> <li>• Mechanical invention</li> <li>• Biotechnology</li> <li>• Computers and related technologies</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Weapons and defense development</li> </ul>		<p>Present day technology companies not documented</p>
<p>Settlements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural communities</li> <li>• Maritime cities</li> <li>• Industrial cities</li> <li>• Small towns</li> <li>• Commercial cities</li> <li>• Suburban communities</li> </ul>	<p>29, 32</p>	

