**What’s new at the Connecticut State Library!**

**Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council**

**December 7, 2021**

**Overview:**

1. **COVID-19**
2. **Personnel update**
3. **Building, Budget & Equipment**
4. **History & Genealogy Staff Indexing projects and more**
5. **Digitization at CSL / LOC newspaper grant project**
6. **What’s new in the Archives?**
7. **FamilySearch**
8. **COVID-19:**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Connecticut State Library was closed to the general public from March 18, 2020 to April 23, 2021. From April 26, 2021 to June 30, 2021 the library was open for two sessions per day, with very limited seating for those who registered to use the library or State Archives. Starting on July 1, 2021, the library was opened Monday to Friday, 10-4 to the public without registering for use, with limited seating; about 50% capacity.

The H&G staff was very busy during the library shutdown! Our correspondence jumped significantly from 1,283 items answered in fiscal 2020 to 2,181 items in fiscal 2021. We expanded our research capabilities and offered up to 15 pages of free photocopies/digital images during that time. We also worked very hard on various database and scanning projects as you will see below.

1. **Personnel Update:**

Changes in Connecticut State Library staff:

The new Connecticut State Librarian, Deborah Schander started her tenure during the first week of January 2021.

In July of 2021, Christine Pittsley, was appointed Museum Curator I / Special Projects Director. Christine has developed many valuable programs for the State Library, including Digging into History and the Remembering WWI project.

CSL fiscal officer Frank Calvi has moved on to another state agency and has been replaced by Doralis Hernaiz.

Museum: Dean Nelson, Director of the Museum of Connecticut History retired in November. Currently Patrick Smith is answering all museum related questions.

Steve Rice, Government Information Reference Librarian, sadly passed away on November 28th. He leaves his beloved wife Barbara Austen and his CSL family to mourn his sudden loss.

Looking ahead: Retirements will be a HUGE factor in 2022! A minimum of 3 reference librarian staff members have already indicated their intent to retire in the Spring of 2022, with individuals in other areas of the library likely to retire as well. There may be disruptions of service and hours as we move forward in filling these positions.

1. **Building, Budget & Equipment:**

**Building:** The East side garden was redone toreflect how it first appeared when the building was newly opened. The floor on stack level 1A has been recently received a new coat of lovely grey paint!

We have experienced some “water issues” during the summer and fall of 2021. Roof repair has taken place, with possible future action to be taken as needed.

**Budget:** We are almost mid-way through the fiscal year, and there is nothing to specifically report at this time. There is no indication that Saturday hours will resume in the future.

**Equipment:** H&G, after a long time, will be obtaining a standalone station for a patron use catalog (PRIMO) as we have had in the past.

The IT support staff has been working on upgrading all the CSL computers to Windows 10 which is no small feat in an agency our size, which is spread across multiple facilities!

H&G is now down to three microfilm scanners. **Thank you CPGC** for donating two scanners from funds from the Donna Holt Siemiakoski fund 3-4 years ago!

1. **History & Genealogy staff projects and more:**

**New and improved digital assets**

**Divorce Records** (Mel’s favorite topic!)

**New Haven County Superior Court, No Appearance Files, 1875-1887.**

Jeannie Sherman & Mel Smith

Index added to our [Divorce Records for Genealogy Research](https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/divorce) Guide. A BIG thanks to Jennifer Zinck for pointing this collection out to us!

**New London Divorce volume #18, ca. 1942-47, index to files**

Jeannie Sherman

Completed creating an index to divorce files as recorded in volume #18 of the divorce records (ca. 1946-48) as this volume is missing from those which were sent to us by the court, (CSL has volumes 1-17, 1857-1946; volumes 19-43, 1948-74). This index is now posted and available online, see: [New London County, Superior Court, Divorce Judgements Index Volume #18, 1942-1947](https://ctstatelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NewLondonCo_Sup_Court_Div_Index_vol_18.pdf)

**Court Records:**

**Inquests into untimely deaths, 1711-1892**

Barbara Austen, Susan Bigelow & Mel Smith

Two additional updates were made to this database in 2021, which now covers the years 1711-1892 and has over 2,500 entries into some rather unique Connecticut deaths. For access to this enlarged database, please see: [Connecticut Courts, Papers by Subject, Inquests into Deaths, 1711-1892](https://ctstatelibrary.org/connecticut-state-archives-archival-record-group-rg-003/)

**Revolutionary War Pension Applications, 1789-1853**

Susan Bigelow

A brand-new online index to almost 500 Revolutionary War Pension Applications found in Superior & County Court, Papers by Subject court files. A wealth of information about veterans’ war time service, family members, occupation, and place of residence over time. In order to access this wonderful resource, see: [Connecticut Courts, Papers by Subject, Revolutionary War Pension Applications, 1789-1853](https://ctstatelibrary.org/revolutionary-war-pension-applications-index/)

**New Haven County, County Court Record Volume indexes**

Mel Smith & Jackie Bagwell (CSL IT Support)

Scanned images of indexes found in the front of 27 volumes of New Haven County, County Court record volumes with a date range of 1666-1837; 1841-55, for access see: **[New Haven County, County Court Record Indexes.](https://ctstatelibrary.org/new-haven-county-county-court-record-indexes-1666-1837-1841-1855/)**

**Connecticut Military Service Personnel, Photograph Collection Index**

Kristi Finnan, Jeannie Sherman, & Mel Smith

Index to photographic images of Connecticut Military Service Personnel, 5 boxes, circa 1938-53, as found in State Archival Record Group #012, Connecticut State Library Records, Connecticut War Department. These photographs, which also includes some newspaper clippings, letters, and memorials, depict over 700 images of military service personnel who served primarily in World War II but include some later images of those who fought in the Korean conflict as well. These images range in style from official studio portraits of men in crisp military uniforms, to civilian snapshots including recent graduation pictures taken in happier times. For access to this database, see: [Connecticut Military Service Personnel Photograph Collection Index](https://ctstatelibrary.org/connecticut-military-service-personnel/)

**Special Genealogical File**

Maria Paxi, Glen Sherman & Mel Smith

After many years of hard work, the Special Genealogical Files, State Archives Record Group #74:54, has been posted online with 1,300 compound digital objects being posted on CTDA. All 13 boxes representing Family Bibles and Family Records, surnames Abbott to Young, are included! For direct access to these records, see: [Special Genealogical Files (RG 074:054)](https://ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/30002%3ARG074-054). Glenn has also created a handy [Special Genealogical File, surname finder](https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/specgenfiles) that allows you to find a surname listed in any of the records of this vast collection.

**Connecticut Vital Record Indexes**

Carolyn Picciano & Mel Smith

With approval of the State Vital Records Registrar, the Connecticut State Library was able to expand access to the Connecticut Death & Marriage indexes to the year 2001. This allowed 30 additional years of records to the database which had had a shifting 50-year embargo of records. For access to these indexes, see: [Connecticut Death Records Index, 1897-2001 or](https://ctstatelibrary.org/death-records/) [Connecticut Marriage Records Index, 1897-2001.](https://ctstatelibrary.org/marriage-records/)

**Connecticut Historical Bills & Acts Index**

Lindsay Young & Eric Paiva

Database of historical Connecticut legislation searchable by bill number, act number, year, title **keyword**, and committee. This index could be a valuable historical research tool for genealogists to use! Give it a try at: [Connecticut Historical Bills & Acts Index](https://ctstlibrarydata.org/)

**Ongoing projects for 2022 and beyond:**

**Connecticut General Assembly granted divorce cases**

Mel Smith (what else is new….) & Jeanie Sherman (because she dared to ask if she could help….)

A new database of hundreds of divorces granted by the Connecticut General Assembly 1655-1897 will soon be posted (late December or January), for use on our website. Various manuscript and published resources are utilized in highlighting, sometimes-fascinating, colonial to 19th century divorces granted by the Connecticut General Assembly. Many of these divorces pre-date those granted by the Connecticut superior court system which was formed in 1711.

**Early Connecticut Superior Court divorces**

Susan Bigelow & Mel Smith

We are just starting the process of indexing divorce cases found in Early Connecticut Superior Court Records. Thirty-one volumes of records (ca. 1713-1798) of rotating superior court recorded judgements which include divorce cases. We have already determined that there are divorces recorded that pre-date Grace Knox and Barbara Ferris’s two works on Connecticut County Superior Court divorce files. This project will take a while to complete due to the number and nature of the manuscript volumes. Once completed, this index should offer a wealth of genealogical information on Connecticut families once completed.

**Pauper database**

Kevin Johnson, Barbara Austen & Maria Paxi

Pauper database, circa 1844-1907, Boxes of town correspondence to the Connecticut State Comptroller for payment of non-resident paupers. Kevin has inputted 23 boxes of correspondence into a database which includes over 11,600 entries! It has been determined that due to the change in format of the correspondence, that the project will end with box 23 (1907). Maria is currently editing Kevin’s work (she is currently in box #18) and Barbara is helping with foldering and re-boxing of the correspondence. This database is likely to go on-line sometime in 2022, stay tuned!

**Rare Book and Special Collections**

Inspection of the Special Collections to determine internal placement, or removal from the Connecticut State Library collections by Carolyn & Mel has been put on hold as other higher priority projects have arisen. Perhaps in the future these collections will be evaluated as we had intended, as staff becomes available to do so.

**W.P.A. Old House Survey**

Maria Paxi

Investigation/correction of the W.P.A. Old House surveys has been put on hold as the problems found with the Town of North Branford sheets/photographs have been identified and will be corrected online in the future.

H&G staff with assistance from our colleagues in the State Archives are continually striving to make available to our patrons’ unique information online from the wide and varied resources found in the State Archives and Special Collections of the Connecticut State Library.

1. **Digitization at CSL /LOC newspaper grant project:**

**Digitization of objects at CSL**

CSL continues to digitize and place items on-line to be discovered and accessed via the State Library online [Primo Catalog](https://cscu-csl-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=CSL_V1&lang=en_US&sortby=rank). You may also access the [Connecticut Digital Archive](https://ctdigitalarchive.org/) (CTDA) directly as well to search and find items. Barbara Austen continues to add digitized objects to CTDA and I would encourage you to investigate this resource from time to time to determine what new materials have been added that might be helpful to you in your genealogical and historical research.

**Newspapers in the Connecticut Digital Archive** Please visit the Connecticut Digital Newspaper Project (CDNP) website [ctdigitalnewspaperproject.org/](https://ctdigitalnewspaperproject.org/) for information on titles that have been digitized to date, as well as blogs, guides and other resources.

Recent additions to the CTDA Newspapers of Connecticut collection include the weekly [*South Norwalk Sentinel*](http://hdl.handle.net/11134/450002:o10383360) (1870-1887) and the daily [*Evening Sentinel*](http://hdl.handle.net/11134/450002:o27981650) (1887-1924). CSL has been adding the digitized files provided by the Norwalk Public Library to CTDA.

**LOC Grant Newspaper Grant Digitization**

The Connecticut State Library has received a fifth federal grant to digitize additional Connecticut newspapers from our newspaper microfilm collection. The grant will allow Connecticut to add another 100,000 pages, digitized from microfilm of newspapers published in the state between1751 and 1963. We will probably start announcing titles that will be digitized in early 2022, and more newspaper pages will be posted up in Chronicling America starting in early 2023. For access to the free online newspapers at the LOC please see: [Chronicling America](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/).

1. **What’s new in the Archives?**

**New Haven Court Records Project**

Thanks to a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the Connecticut State Library is processing the New Haven Court records collection for enhanced public access and use. You will find an online [subject guide](https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/archives/uncoveringnewhaven) along with a published a [blog](https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/c.php?g=1136015&p=8291556) that chronicles a selection of the interesting, amusing, tragic, and sometimes infuriating cases found in these court records.

**Connecticut Charter & Bill of Rights Conservation** State Archivist Lizette Pelletier has been working very hard making arrangements to have the Connecticut Charter of 1662 and the Connecticut copy of the United States Bill of Rights sent to the Northeast Document Conservation Center for treatment. This would allow for the preservation and digitization of these very important documents to ensure access for future generations.

For information about items in our State Archives, please consult our [**ArchivesSpace**](https://cslarchives.ctstatelibrary.org/) finding aid!

1. **FamilySearch**

The Connecticut State library is in negotiations to have two couples come to our institution in 2022 to begin digitizing 1-1.5 million images of items from our State Archives and other book collections. The following is a preliminary listing of items being explored for possible digitization:

Family & Bible Records U.S. Census Schedules 1850-1870

Church Records Temporary Home Records

Veteran Records/Fitch Home Connecticut Archives Series (subjects missing)

Coroner records not done before CT vital records from RG #72

Probate Record volumes (to 1940) Probate files (to 1940)

Municipal Tax lists (grand lists)

Divorce Record Volumes for Fairfield, Hartford & New London Counties

Other collections or items may be included/added to this listing as approval and condition of the material allow. Connecticut land records in the custody of the various town clerks will not be included in this potential project.

**Wishing you all a safe and prosperous holiday season and wonderful New Year!**

**Hope to see you at the Connecticut State Library in 2022!**