

# Tivoli Times

The Tivoli Times is the official newsletter of the Albany County Hall of Records, Office of the County Clerk Thomas G. Clingan, Albany County Clerk

www.albanycounty.com/achor

Albany County Hall of Records • 95 Tivoli Street • Albany, New York 12207 Volume 1, Issue 1 (518) 436-3663 April 2010

#### From the Editor...

It is my sincere hope that as a result of the *Tivoli Times*, you will become more familiar with the many benefits of our outstanding historical archives which can help you answer questions running the gamut from personal lineages to personalities in American, New York State or Albany County histories.

We will truly enjoy working with you, your organization, or your school group on your quest for the past and into our archives at the Hall of Records. Nothing helps history come alive more poignantly than delving into primary sources; few things bring the satisfaction and fulfillment of connecting with one's familial past. For further information or queries, please feel free to contact me at:

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Craig Carlson, Editor

Plecome to the first edition of *Tivoli Times*. Our focus this first time out is, naturally, on the Hall of Records itself, in order to make our customers in County and City government more aware of who we are and what we do.

Most of you are familiar with our light brown one-cubic-foot records storage boxes. If you imagine more than 70,000 of them stacked up all in one place, you'll have an idea of what our situation is here at ACHOR. Years ago, we had a newsletter called *Eight Miles High* that referenced the over 42,000 cubic feet of records held by City and County government. Now, our 70,000 cubic feet of records would stack up over 13 miles high—and that's just here at the Hall of Records. (The Byrds had a song entitled "Eight Miles High," but that's another story.)

"Tivoli" is a reference to 95 Tivoli Street, our address in Albany. Some of you may remember it as the former location of Huck Finn's Warehouse (even though our building is relatively new, built in 2000). Tivoli is also a good historic Albany name, referring to the Tivoli Lakes part of the city that is still a nature preserve.

We welcome the chance to tell our story, as well as highlight other new and different things we're doing here. In future edi-



tions, we'd like to include stories about YOUR records as well: what you're doing to better manage them, as well as how you're putting them to work for the public good.

Here at ACHOR we're proud of what we do. We're fortunate to have

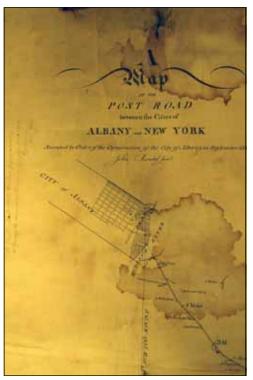
the support of the County and the City in preserving records both old and new. We're also glad to have partners in every agency and department, who work with us to describe, organize and preserve the documents that are vital to our governments' operations. Thank you for doing your part to ensure that success.

Tom Clingan, Albany County Clerk

### Treasures from the Archives: 1810 Albany Post Road Map

By Ginny Farinacci

In the midst of an archival project to inventory our City Engineer maps, we discovered an 1810 map of a post road between Albany and New York City (picture below) that turned out to be a real treasure. Formally titled, "A Map of the Post Road between the cities of Albany and New York surveyed for the Corporation of the City of Albany in September 1810 by John Randel, Jr.," the map is 23 feet 3 inches long and 22 inches wide. Drawn in pen and ink with pencil annotations, the map notes towns, residences, churches and taverns where the postal carrier stopped along the route from Albany to New York City. The 154-mile road followed the east side of the Hudson River, along what is now Route 9, passing through Schodack, Hudson, Claverack, Poughkeepsie, and other villages and towns.



1810 Albany Post Road Map (View full-size image at www.albanycounty.com/achor)

In this age of instant communication, an 1810 map of a postal road does not seem too exciting. It gets more interesting, though, when you realize how hard it was, in early times, to get a message across dense forests and uncharted land. The first post rider's task was dangerous and difficult, since he rode alone on a trackless terrain; he often had to blaze (notch) trees to show the way to future riders. Postal service of this kind was quickly disrupted by wars and skirmishes, which actually served to widen the road to accommodate wagons and artillery. After a series of wars, Governor Thomas Dongan revived the postal service in 1686 and by 1785, a "stage-wagon" was chartered by the legislature "to erect, set up, carry on and drive stage-wagons between Albany and New York."

In 1769, Benjamin Franklin, the first Deputy Postmaster General, had milestones (or, "guide stones") placed along the road, first in Manhattan, then farther north. These milestones were 5 ½ feet high, 14 inches wide and 6 inches in thickness. They were made of sandstone and were soft enough to carve on. Each stone indicated in Roman numerals the number of miles from New York City. Located in villages, near churches

and business establishments, milestones also served as convenient references in land boundaries, addresses and wedding announcements; some of these milestones still exist today.

Like many American towns and highways, the Albany Post Road was known by several different names as time went by. It began as an Indian route called "The Path," a collection of trails used by the Wappinger/Wicopee Indians, who carried mail on foot as early as 1671. Then, to honor the person in power at the time, it was called the "Queen's Road" or the "King's Road," eventually becoming known as the Albany Post Road ("post" from the Latin "postum" meaning "stopping place") and this is the name that appears on a map in the collection of the Albany County Hall of Records.

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## WELCOME TO THE RECORDS CENTER!

By Camisha Smith

Here, in the Records Center, we manage records for City, County and Court agencies. The staff of this department consists of six individuals: two laborers, a clerk II, a records manger and a records manager II as well as a courier who serves our daily delivery needs twice a day.

Working together, we prep, shelve, store and retrieve all records housed in our warehouse. Our warehouse measures 32,000 square feet. Currently, we have a total of 71,113 cubic feet of records in storage and have the capacity to store 104,000 cubic feet of items on site. At this point, the records we have stored plus the records we are bringing in each month exceed the records we destroy.

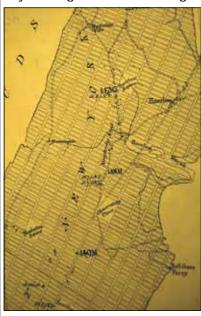
Only when legally eligible and/ or when approved by the agencies to do so, are we able to destroy agency records. To destroy records we adhere to New York State Archives records and retention schedule manual CO-2 for county records, MU-1 for city records and OCA for court records. This process allows us to maintain our current facility and keeps the amount of records we store manageable.

However, we need your help. In an effort to decrease the amount of stored items, we are asking the agencies who utilize our storage to help us address this storage space issue and in the process hopefully become a little more "green!"

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### Treasures from the Archives, cont. Continued from page 2

The mapmaker, John Randel, Jr., was nationally known as a surveyor, engineer and cartographer. He was hired by the NYC



Manhattan, New York, 1810 (View full-size image at www.albanycounty.com/achor)

commissioners to survey every inch of underdeveloped land on Manhattan Island, a task he began in 1808 and took over 21/2 years to complete. By 1810, the Manhattan Streets Commission built a city grid based on Randel's survey—twelve 100-foot wide avenues running north to south and one hundred fifty-five 60-foot wide streets running east to west. Defying this grid, the post road in Manhattan meanders along the Indian foot path and becomes what is now known as Broadway.

The old Albany Post Road has not seen much change since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Later improvements in transportation and technology diverted traffic away from it and have helped to preserve the road in its historic form.

Photo shows the Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown in western Putnam County, a section that remains unpaved and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Old\_Albany\_Post\_Road)



**Welcome to the Records Center!**, cont. Continued from Page 3

Please consider the following key points when preparing your next records transfer:

- When filing/prepping for storage, file *like* records together (*e.g.*, fiscal, bids, legal cases); this makes the disposition process both easier and faster
- Remove unnecessary and/or insignificant items such as blank forms or rough drafts, leaving only pertinent pieces of the record for storage. Lessening the size of files and/or the number of boxes used leaves more space to be utilized both by us and you!

These key points can also be used when maintaining your personal records at home. Happy Packing!



View of Hall of Records Warehouse

## Researching at Albany County Hall of Records By Craig Carlson

The Hall of Records search room is a popular place for researchers. The search room is open from 8:30-4:30, Monday-Friday. The Archives Staff is always willing to assist researchers in their work. Over the years, we have assisted researchers from basic genealogy queries to discovering that President Abraham Lincoln pardoned prisoners from the Albany Penitentiary in 1864.



Researcher Peter Allen using Assessment Rolls to date a house.

Records that are available for research: Albany water rents, almshouse records, building plans, cemetery records, census records, church records, civil war allotments, court records. deeds, directories, history files, immigration records, jail records including mug shots, local government minutes, maps, oral histories, patents, photographs, slave manumissions, tax assessments. Remember, come and see your archival facilities on Tivoli Street; we're easy to find and well worth your time.



View of the Hall of Records Search Room

### Community: the Best Classroom for Wildwood Students

By John Paul Ciejka

It is often said that life is the greatest classroom and experience the greatest teacher. While these truisms have lost some of their impact over time, the positive effects of learning by doing are undeniable and exemplified by the work being done through local programs and schools such as Wildwood.

Roy Brasmeister and Emmet MacDonald attend the Wildwood school, a private, non-profit day program in Albany. Part of the school's curriculum, emphasized especially with the young adult students, involves learning and applying skills that are acquired in a wide spectrum of real life settings. The Hall of Records is extremely pleased that Wildwood has chosen ACHOR for such a setting.

Any organization or business can function more efficiently thereby increasing productivity if it is well organized; organization itself is our business, our end product and part of our mission for the public and participating agencies. In line with this objective, and following Wildwood's

calling to help nurture their students in real work environments, Roy and Emmet are assisting Hall of Records staff in performing work vital to our effectiveness in storing, preserving and arranging public records. Currently, they are working hard in a major shelf-reading project. Emmet is surveying rolls of master microfilm, recording data regarding the film type, the record's creating agency, series title and date range-tasks that suit his focus and attention to detail. Roy's instructor's expressed to us that Roy (photo below) has both an interest in and aptitude with computers, so he has helped us take the



Wildwood Student Volunteer Roy Brasmeister comparing survey data at Albany County Hall of Records on December 1, 2009.

next step in comparing the survey to the data residing in our electronic inventory system, noting errors and inconsistencies that could cause search and retrieval issues. These processes call for patience and an attention to detail and their work will help us improve the accuracy and consistency of the information, which is important since we store thousands of untampered film meant to preserve public information for over 500 years!

The lessons go beyond learning some of the work of an archives and records center. The students gain first-hand experiences in a different social context, a professional work environment that can better prepare them for the future and we learn from them a unique perspective on life, gaining some help with our new friendships and partnerships along the way.

## Preserving Your Family Archives: Purchasing supplies for your family archives

By Meredith Cherven-Holland

Storing your valuable family papers and photographs in the right materials is essential to their preservation. Archival enclosures are made so that records will last longer because they are protected against light, dust, handling, air pollutants and rapid changes in the environment. They must be made of materials that are strong, durable and chemically stable if they are to provide long-term protection.

When purchasing supplies for your collection, buyers should select a vendor that specializes in products for archival use. There are many claims of "archival quality" and consumers should look for good product descriptions and technical information before purchasing. It is better to turn to reputable vendors than risk purchasing materials that may ultimately harm your records. For a comprehensive list of preservation supply vendors who specialize in products for archival use, check the New York State Archives website: <a href="www.archives.nysed.gov">www.archives.nysed.gov</a> under the heading Managing records/Consultants and vendors/Archival supplies.

The following tips are helpful for evaluating products:

Plastic: Most plastics that are commercially available are bad for records because they contain chemicals that give off gas and leak. Polyester, polypropylene and polyethylene are the three types of plastic that are suitable for storing photographs and paper. They should be uncoated and free of additives. Uncoated polyester is very stable and is sold under the brand Melinex 516 or Mylar D. Most other plastics contain additives that can damage photographic materials. Beware! Vinyl pages and "magnetic photo albums" contain unacceptable plastics that will permanently damage your photographs.

Paper: Poor quality paper and board contains acidic compounds that are the result of manufacturing. Choose paper products that have a pH of 7.5 to 9, and a calcium carbonate buffer of 2-3%. This will neutralize acid contaminants that come in contact with the paper and slow down the process of deterioration. Storage materials for paper should also be "lignin-free." Lignin is a natural part of the cell walls of plants and trees. If it is not removed during the manufacturing process, it can react with light and heat to produce acids and darken paper.



Hall of Records volumes wrapped in acid-free paper

**Photographs:** All materials that come in contact with acid-free paper photographs should pass the Photographic Activity Test

(PAT). This test verifies that materials are non-damaging to sensitive photographic materials and is approved by the National Association of Photographic Manufacturers. Always look for this icon when selecting storage products: PASSED PHOTO ACTIVITY TEST.

Some photographic processes, particularly color, will react to alkaline environments. When storing color photographs, negatives, blueprints and dye transfer prints (from color negatives), make sure that folders, sleeves and envelopes are made of <u>unbuffered</u> paper (pH of 7-7.5 is best). Buffered paper should be used for storing black and white photographs and negatives. Paper has advantages for storing photographic materials because it helps to protect images from light and dust and helps to provide support. Chemically stable plastic is recommended for storing images that receive continual handling and viewing. If you have questions about supplies, please feel free to call the Archives at (518) 436-3663 ext 216.

### **ACHOR Staff**

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Virginia Farinacci Deputy Archivist

Robert W. Arnold III
Consultant



Albany's Madison Avenue, 1915

The Albany County Hall of Records is a capital resource to the agencies of the local government it serves and to the citizens of the City and County of Albany. The Hall of Records is jointly funded by the City and County of Albany and is under the jurisdiction of Albany County Clerk, Thomas G. Clingan. Our purpose is to preserve, promote and make available the recorded history of Albany County to its citizens in the most efficient and cost effective way possible. We want to say thank you to all the people past and present, that have made this possible.

