

STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD (SHRAB) MEETING  
JUNE 14, 2011  
11:00 AM

A meeting of the State Historical Records Advisory Board was held on June 14 in Room G-24 of the State Museum Building. The following board members attended: James Beidler, Michael Dabrishus, James Gerencser, Susan Hamburger, David Haury, Douglas Hill, June Lloyd, Heidi Mays, and Pamela Whitenack. PHMC staff who attended were: David Shoff, George Ellis, Linda Ries, Joshua Stahlman, and Teresa Clouser. Absent were board members Lee Arnold and Laurie Rofini.

#### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Haury at 11:00 AM who welcomed all attending members.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 9, 2010 MEETING

The minutes of the December 9, 2010 meeting were reviewed. Since no corrections or additions were needed, a motion to accept the minutes was made by Mr. Beidler and seconded by Ms. Lloyd. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

#### REPORT FROM THE STATE ARCHIVIST

Dr. Haury informed the board of a press release that was issued today informing the public of more than 300 cubic feet of Governor Rendell records which are being opened to the public starting today. Included are digital records contained within VideoBank, most notably videos all of Governor Rendell's speeches. Not all of the Rendell records are completely processed; a very small percentage are closed, but the State Archives is pleased with what it received compared to the Governor Ridge papers, all of which require previous permission for access which must be obtained from a Ridge appointed representative for 20 years, and the Governor Casey papers, approximately one third of which are closed for 20 years. Mail sent to Governor Rendell is the largest category with over 100 cubic feet and is broken down into the following categories: Constituent; Legislature; Children; Form Letters; Miscellaneous; and Inmate mail. Since Governor Corbett took office in January of this year, original mail to the Governor's Office will be scanned as tiff documents and stored in SharePoint. Later this year it will be determined whether it is feasible for the State Archives to take the digital copies instead of the paper originals.

Dr. Haury attended a very interesting National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) meeting as a representative of the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) on June 1. There was a lengthy discussion on grant applications and programs as well as the budget. Five years ago, the NHPRC's grant budget was \$13.5 million which was subsequently reduced to \$9 or \$10 million a couple years ago, and, which was further reduced in the proposed budget of the White House to just \$5 million for next year. The reduction in funds over a five-year period is quite significant. Also, if the NHPRC splits the funding 50/50 between publications and records, then the amount of money available for records grants would be only \$2.5 million; however, NHPRC is trying to gather support to obtain more money in its budget. Preliminary budget figures so far are: the Archives Leadership Institute in Wisconsin will continue at a cost of \$250,000; thirty states will each receive approximately \$20,000 for their SNAP programs (\$600,000 total); and enhanced SNAP grants

(Itinerant Archivist) will continue and be extremely competitive; \$400,000 will be spent on very competitive digital records projects; and \$1 million for basic and detailed processing grants which can now be combined instead of separated. Obviously, with so little money, competition will be fierce.

Dr. Haury wanted the board to discuss options on what Pennsylvania should do with the funding it would receive in the next SNAP grant. Dr. Hamburger asked what the State Archives spends its current SNAP grant money on and several staff responded that the funds go to support Heritage Week, the annual Archives poster, Archives Without Tears workshops, etc. with the overall goal in mind being general education of the public in regards to records. Dr. Haury asked if the board wanted to focus on another goal and asked for input.

The meeting at the NHPRC was quite lively with much debate over the policy for publications projects which now requires grant recipients to provide free online access to their final product. Some were opposed to this because of the amount of work that would be involved to thoroughly index a product; however, right now all that is minimally required for online access is a searchable pdf document. The University of Virginia is currently developing software to index founding fathers documents. The category for small subvention grants was eliminated; however, a negative reaction from publishers persuaded NHPRC to continue this type of grant for one more year. The categories of scholarly publishing and historical editing fellowships were also eliminated. One board member asked how many years the Archives Leadership Institute has received funding and if it was a worthwhile program. The institute has received funding for three years and both Drs. Haury and Hamburger replied that it was a worthwhile program. As noted in the previous minutes dated December 9, 2010, Dr. Haury reminded the board that the NHPRC failed to be reauthorized in the federal budget and, subsequently, any US legislator can stop funding for an unauthorized program.

Dr. Haury gave the board an update on pending legislation involving records. PA Senate Bill (SB) 361 would make death records public after 50 years and birth records public after 100 years. He advised the board that the Department of Health is arguing to keep the records closed indefinitely because the Department thinks it's an invasion of privacy and might result in identity theft and the cause of death could possibly be embarrassing to family members. He also noted that the former head of the Department in Pennsylvania is now working for the national association of vital statistics offices and is aggressively pushing for the records to be open after 75 years for death certificates and 125 years for birth certificates. PA House Bill (HB) 1481 requires the Department of Health to digitize death and birth records in a format which would be indexed and searchable.

For the past few months, the PA Department of Health (DOH) has been removing their birth and death records from the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the Archives tower and should be finished soon. Prior to the removal, discussions were held between State Archives staff and DOH involving the release of death and birth records stored there which were at least 100 years old. DOH advocated for never opening the records while State Archives staff countered that if the records were never to be opened to the public then why was the PHMC storing them? As a result of the discussions, DOH is removing their records from the tower and transporting them to a facility in New Castle, PA and they also promised to re-film and scan the records.

Dr. Haury also met with Senator Brubaker regarding pending legislation on replevin issues. A recent incident brought to light the importance of this legislation. The Columbia Historical Society

recently proposed auctioning a PA Senate Oath book dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the society was approached about turning over the book to the State and receiving a \$100 finder's fee, they refused and stated they wanted to sell the book to the highest bidder. The new replevin law would make it easier for the government to recover a government document which is being sold and would cover all levels of governments including the local level. According to the new proposed legislation, a government record would always be presumed to be a government record. Currently, Pennsylvania law requires proof that a government document was stolen before the entity is required to relinquish custody. Such proof is difficult to obtain for government documents stolen many years earlier. Experience shows that these documents change hands quite frequently, thus provenance is difficult to track. One problem on the local level is that many local officials customarily worked from their homes. When the official died, the records often went to family members and were passed down through generations, tossed, given away, sold, etc. Dr. Haury expects the new legislation to take a long time before becoming law and will probably be opposed by the dealer and collector community. The Manuscript Society and the Council of State Archivists have agreed to work together to set up procedures whereby dealers would take more of an interest in establishing the correct provenance of a document and would make an effort to communicate with state officials if they suspect the document might have been stolen. One board member stated that he's seen a flurry of email noting that dealers are not in favor of the legislation; they don't want bothered with trying to establish correct provenance and are in the business to sell and make a profit. On the other hand, archivists aren't going away and North Carolina was able to pass very strong legislation whereby it is illegal to own a government document. At least in Pennsylvania an effort is being made to initiate the process even though it isn't as stringent as North Carolina's law. One board member expressed that there is a need to educate auctioneers on what constitutes government property. A local historical society in Lancaster County recently tried to auction a PHMC historic marker, but quietly removed it from the auction when it was informed the marker was actually state property. Dr. Haury noted that many large dealers are well-educated concerning government property, however, it's the numerous small dealers that need to be informed and educated. One way is to recruit small dealers to become members of local historical societies.

Dr. Haury updated the board on PA House Bill 1453 in which he provided advice for making digital copies of original judicial records with permanent value. If electronic copies are made and the original records are not destroyed, this is fine. However, problems can and do arise when electronic copies are made and the originals are destroyed. Since technology changes so frequently, there is no guarantee the technology used to store the electronic copies today won't be obsolete in ten to fifteen years. If the originals are destroyed and the formats or technology used to store those records becomes obsolete in a few short years, there are, in fact, no copies remaining at all. The bill would require either a human-readable copy to be maintained at all times if the original is destroyed or for those electronic copies would have to meet standards to be set by the Supreme Court. Dr. Haury noted that pressure is mounting for the State Archives to accept electronic records and as each year goes by more original documents are created in a digital format. The time has come to set up standards and scenarios for storage of those records.

#### VIDEObANK DEMONSTRATION

The members enjoyed a tour of the VideoBank area conducted by Linda Avetta, Sharon Nelson, and Kurt Bell. VideBank was briefly described in the first paragraph under the Report from the State Archivist.

## REPORT ON STATE ARCHIVES PROCESSING GRANT

Ms. Ries updated the board on the progress of describing the 26,000 cubic feet of unprocessed material at the State Archives. Series title naming and numbering of unprocessed records will be complete by the end of this month. By June 20 of this year, twenty-five record groups (RG), or about one-third of all RGs, are expected to be completed with series descriptions written, tower shelf locations confirmed, and uploaded to the web and available for public inspection. This comprises 2930.80 cubic feet and 500 series descriptions. The total volume of records examined since September 20, 2010 (the beginning of the grant) is nearly 3,500 cubic feet. Of those, 423.8 cubic feet have deaccessioned upon reappraisal.

A series of meetings were held with regards to streamlining the acquisition and accession processes. A recent shipment of 320 cubic feet from the State Records Center will incorporate some of the streamlining efforts and will be used as a pilot project to test the new ideas.

Of note, the weekly meetings of project staff continue to be valuable; having these records examined with a critical eye after languishing in the tower for decades is much appreciated; and many shelf locations that were misnamed or mislabeled have been corrected as well as misfiled items.

PHMC is preparing to apply for a detailed processing grant this fall. The proposal will focus on the Turnpike Commission records which consist of nearly 600 cubic feet and are of national significance because they date back to the original Department of Highways and contain the original drawings of the turnpike which was considered an engineering feat in its day.

## ARCHIVES WITHOUT TEARS (AWOT) UPDATE

Mr. Stahlman gave the board an update on the Archives Without Tears workshops which entail the basics of archival methods and procedures and are funded by federal dollars through SNAP grants. The successful workshops began in 2009 and have since trained 311 people representing 210 organizations. Statistics for this year alone include 84 attendees with an additional 50 plus anticipated for the Harrisburg workshop at the end of this month. So far, attendees for 2011 represented 47 organizations. The workshop held in Freedom, Beaver County in April of this year had a total of 31 in attendance representing 14 organizations, most of which were historical societies or genealogical organizations. In May, the workshop was held in Philadelphia at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania with a total of 23 in attendance representing 14 organizations, mostly historical societies or academic organizations. At the beginning of June, the workshop was held in Bradford County with a total of 30 in attendance representing 19 organizations of which most were historical societies or museums. Staff received many positive comments from attendees on the workshop evaluation forms.

Mr. Stahlman and Mr. Ellis also informed the board of the IPER (Intergovernmental Preparedness and Emergency Response) training sessions which they conduct involving essential records and emergency response courses. Dr. Haury noted that Pennsylvania is leading the nation in the number of “graduates” who have completed these courses. Seventy-two graduates took the essential records course and twenty-two graduates took the emergency response course. Perhaps the IPER courses will substitute for the fall annual seminar this year.

Mr. Shoff gave the board an update on the June meeting of the NHPRC which received fifty-eight applications for archives-basic and archives-detailed processing project grants for a total of \$6.3 million. Pennsylvania's SHRAB board reviewed three of those applications at its December 9, 2010 meeting and did not recommend funding for any of the projects. However, the NHPRC did recommend partial funding of \$88,738 to the Historical Society of Western PA after budget related concerns that SHRAB members had with the application were further clarified by the society after the December meeting. The James A. Michener Art Museum and the Pennsylvania Hospital projects were not funded. Mr. Dabrishus wanted to know if there was an opportunity for the grant applicant to revise its budget before the SHRAB reviewed it. Mr. Shoff stated that grant applicants are given the opportunity of having several weeks to implement PHMC staff suggestions regarding their application; however, it is not an absolute requirement. Dr. Haury suggested that SHRAB members spread the word that if a grant applicant sends in their application to the PHMC at least six to eight weeks before it needs to be reviewed by the NHPRC, staff have ample time to make suggestions for improvement and the applicant has time to clarify any questions or concerns before the SHRAB reviews it.

The SHRAB has received one application for NHPRC funding from a Pennsylvania institution to review this cycle. Since the deadline was just last week, we have only received a summary of a proposal from Cambria County, and SHRAB members will receive the full proposal and instructions for the review after this meeting. Cambria County has applied for a grant from the NHPRC for digitizing historical records from the Register of Wills Office and Recorder of Deeds Office. The multi-year project would entail hiring a vendor to scan 250,000 birth, death, and marriage certificates as well as estate records at a cost of 40 cents a record. The records will be organized in a searchable records database and a website for gaining free public access to these records will also be developed.

## NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Lloyd informed the board that the first four cases in the Capitol Rotunda exhibit on the Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary contain archival materials from York County.

Ms. Whitenack stated that the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company?) will air a film on Milton Hershey in July.

Mr. Dabrishus asked when the next meeting of the board would be held. Dr. Haury noted the best time to meet would be the last week of October or the first week of November since grants are due at the beginning of October. This will give staff a few weeks to compile and mail out the information to board members before the meeting.

Dr. Haury informed the board that the PHMC has taken a 3% cut in the FY 11/12 state budget proposal of Governor Corbett. Labor contracts are not finished but a three-day meeting will be held next week between the state and labor unions. It was asked if the budget would be on time this year and there's a good chance it will be since the previous administration did not pass a budget on time even once during the last eight years and this is a major objective of the current administration. There are dozens of vacancies at the PHMC which we might be able to fill, depending on the final budget amount. Dr. Hamburger asked if the grant program would be resurrected any time soon, but this appears to be highly unlikely.

The PHMC has no commission chairman at the moment since the resignation of Wayne Spilove. All nine of the commissioners who are appointed by the Governor have been replaced, but the new appointees have not completed the appointment process.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.