



# Town of New Lebanon

**REVIEWED BY TB – NO CHANGES 10/10/2023; 10/8/2024**

**Official:** Town Historian

**Type:** Appointed by Town Supervisor

**Term:** Annual

**Responsibilities & Duties:**

1. As defined by New York State Office of State History, *"Duties and Functions of New York State's Local Government Historians"* (Appendix A)
2. As outlined in NYS Education Department Publication *"Number 81: Historical Records and the Local Government Historian"* (Appendix B)
3. All donations will be handled and processed according to the Town of New Lebanon Historic Items Policy using *"Donations of Historic Documents & Items"* and *"Records Deposit Agreement"* forms (Appendix C: Policy with attachments)



# Town of New Lebanon

## Donations of Historic Documents & Items

Donor:	
Address:	
Telephone:	Email:
Credits (how items should be referenced, eg. <i>Collection of Tilden bottles from John Brown</i> )	
Description of Item(s):	
I hereby give/donate/bestow to the Town of New Lebanon the property described above to be used and/or disposed of by the town in their unrestricted discretion. I understand that the property described above may be transferred to the appropriate depository with ownership retained by the Town of New Lebanon. For myself and my personal representatives, I waive all present or future rights to said property, its use or dispositions.	
Signature of Donor:	Date:
Signature of Historian:	Date:
Historian's determination of the appropriate repository:	
Has "Records Deposit Agreement" been executed between town and repository? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If "Yes," attach executed copy to this document.	
If "No," explain why it is not needed: _____	
_____	
_____	
*Town Board authorization required to waive "Records Deposit Agreement" requirement.	
I, _____ Town Clerk for the Town of New Lebanon, hereby certify that the New Lebanon Town Board has approved the waiver of the requirement for a "Records Deposit Agreement" in this instance. Said approval was made at the _____ meeting of the Town Board. _____ (date)	
Town Clerk's Signature	Date
The original of this document and the "Records Deposit Agreement" are required to be filed with the Town Clerk.	



## **Duties and Functions of New York State's Local Government Historians**

The State Historian provides guidance, direction, and training to the network of Local Government Historians in New York State. New York's Local Government Historians have been preserving, interpreting, and presenting local history since the positions were established by law in 1919. Today, they operate under Section 57.07 of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law.

The network of Local Government Historians consists of:

- \* 5 Borough Historians in Greater New York City
- \* 12 Community Historians (in community districts of the Borough of Manhattan)
- \* 62 County Historians
- \* 62 City Historians
- \* 932 Town Historians
- \* 544 Village Historians

Total: 1,617 jurisdictions

### ***Duties and Functions of Local Government Historians:***

The national History Relevance Campaign (HRC) ([www.historyrelevance.com](http://www.historyrelevance.com)) has several excellent suggestions as to why the study, teaching, protection, and promotion of history is vital to a functioning society. In their document "The Value of History: Seven Ways it is Essential," the HRC suggests the following reasons why history is valuable:

- a. **IDENTITY:** History nurtures personal identity in an intercultural world. History enables people to discover their own place in the stories of their families, communities, and nation. They learn the stories of the many individuals and groups that have come before them and shaped the

world in which they live. There are stories of freedom and equality, injustice and struggle, loss and achievement, and courage and triumph. Through these varied stories, they create systems of personal values that guide their approach to life and relationships with others.

b. **CRITICAL SKILLS:** History teaches critical 21st century skills and independent thinking. The practice of history teaches research, judgment of the accuracy and reliability of sources, validation of facts, awareness of multiple perspectives and biases, analysis of conflicting evidence, sequencing to discern causes, synthesis to present a coherent interpretation, clear and persuasive written and oral communication, and other skills that have been identified as critical to a successful and productive life in the 21st century.

c. **VITAL PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK:** History lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities. No place really becomes a community until it is wrapped in human memory: family stories, tribal traditions, civic commemorations. No place is a community until it has awareness of its history. Our connections and commitment to one another are strengthened when we share stories and experiences.

d. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities that have preserved a strong sense of historical identity and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy, providing an infrastructure that attracts talent and enhances business development.

e. **ENGAGED CITIZENS:** History helps people craft better solutions. At the heart of democracy is the practice of individuals coming together to express views and take action. By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and nation. This can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, open people to new possibilities, and lead to more effective solutions for today's challenges.

f. **LEADERSHIP:** History inspires local and global leaders. History provides leaders with inspiration and role models for meeting the complex challenges that face our communities, nation, and the world. It may be a parent, grandparent or distant ancestor, a local or national hero, or someone famous or someone little known. Their stories reveal how they met the challenges of their day, which can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.

g. **LEGACY:** History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. History is crucial to preserving democracy for the future by explaining our shared past. Through the preservation of authentic, meaningful places, documents, artifacts, images, and stories, we leave a foundation upon which future Americans can build. Without the preservation of our histories, future citizens will have no grounding in what it means to be an American.

The work of the Local Government Historian touches on each of these seven points and falls into four broad categories. Where the historian places emphasis will largely be a matter of personal interest and inclination as well as reflect the priorities and interests of the historian's appointing authority.

## **1. Research and Writing**

The first, and primary, responsibility of the Local Government Historian is interpretation of the past. This will involve research and writing on aspects of the history of one's jurisdiction and may include scholarly monographs and articles as well as writing for a more general public audience in magazines and newspapers. On this subject, Dr. Judith M. Wellman has noted: *The best local historians have upheld high standards of gathering and evaluating evidence, making thoughtful and appropriate generalizations, writing well-organized and readable narratives, and sharing their work with others through the most appropriate mediums.*

## **2. Teaching and Public Presentations**

The second category of responsibility for a Local Government Historian involves the interpretation of the history of his or her community through teaching and public presentations. In this regard, the Local Government Historian may teach courses on local and regional history, serve as a resource to local and regional teachers, especially in the fourth, seventh and grade social studies curriculum, serve as a content consultant for historical agency exhibit and public program planners, speak and lecture to community groups, participate in radio talk shows, maintain blogs and other forms of social media, discuss historical precedents and parallels to current issues and otherwise disseminate knowledge of the history of their locality. In addition, the Local Government Historian may also be asked to work directly with students and other individuals interested in the community's past.

## **3. Historic Preservation**

The third category of activity related to the work of Local Government Historians is that of historic preservation. This embraces not only the preservation of the built environment, but also includes the preservation of manuscripts and records that document a community's past as well as the unique objects and artifacts that make up a community's material culture.

The Local Government Historian is both an advocate for historic preservation and a resource to his or her appointing authority on questions related to history and preservation. As such, the Local Government Historian may be asked to prepare cultural resource surveys of areas scheduled for development, to identify historic structures and districts and to prepare nominations to the State and National Register of Historic Places, to develop and manage local historic marker programs, and to answer questions regarding the historic significance of places and properties within their jurisdiction.

In addition, the Local Government Historian promotes and encourages the preservation of historic manuscripts and other records as well as artifacts by recommending appropriate repositories of historical materials, such as local government archives, local public libraries, or historical agency collections.

## **4. Organization, Advocacy, and Tourism Promotion**

The fourth area of activity for Local Government Historians is that of organizer and advocate for their jurisdiction's history. Local Government Historians are often asked by their appointing authorities to support the local Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA). Heritage Tourism is the largest segment of the tourism industry and studies show that heritage tourists spend more time (and more money) on their trips than other tourists. Successfully promoting a location's history

depends on an accurate and engaging presentation. Successful efforts continue to have an important positive effect on local and regional economies.

Local Government Historians are often asked to organize and direct the commemoration of historical anniversaries and to participate in other civic observations. Again, providing historical accuracy in an engaging way is important with regards to these events.

The Local Government Historian may be also asked to act as a fund raiser or grant writer to provide resources for historical programs or to use their knowledge of local government to lobby for or introduce legislative initiatives to promote community history. A Local Government Historian should be knowledgeable about where and how to access grant funding as well understand their local, regional, and state governmental structure and political leaders.

### ***County Historians***

Organizational abilities are especially important to County Historians who have the added responsibility of providing guidance and support to the municipal historians in their counties and of serving as a conduit of information between the State Historian in Albany and the local historians in their counties. The Local Historian Law reads:

*It shall be the duty of the county historian to supervise the activities of the local historians in towns and villages within the county in performing the historical work recommended by the state historian...*

*County historians hold regular meeting for the local historians in their counties, sponsor in-service training sessions, monitor vacant jurisdictions, propose and carry out co-operative joint projects, and assist the work of their local historians wherever possible.*

### ***Public Access***

The Local Government Historian is the officer of local government charged with responsibility for matters relating to a community's past. As a public officer access is important and, as such, a regular schedule of business hours that are publicly available is necessary. Ideally, every Local Government Historian would be provided with office space in the offices of their jurisdiction. However, this is sometimes not the case and Local Government Historians are required to maintain offices in public libraries or on the premises of chartered historical agencies. Due to the necessity of public access, Local Government Historians should not conduct business from their home. At a very minimum, Local Government Historians should be provided with an official mailing address at the village, town, or city hall or county office building where they can be contacted and should also have access to an email account.

### ***Annual Reports***

Local Government Historians are mandated by §57.09 of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law to report annually to their appointing authority and to the State Historian. The State Historian is currently reviewing the reporting process and gathering information to streamline it and make reporting available online through the Office of State History website.

*A Local Government Historian is Not:*

**1. The Local Government Historian is not an antiquarian.** The Local Government Historian should not just collect "facts" about their community without attempting to put this data into a larger historical framework. Nor should Local Government Historians seek to assemble collections. Collections of artifacts or documents should be referred to an appropriate repository, i.e. a museum, library or historical agency, equipped to catalogue, preserve and interpret such materials. Historians should especially eschew time consuming activities like assembling scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. Clippings of newsprint will only survive for a few years and microfilm copies of newspapers are already preserved in several depositories in the state.

**2. The Local Government Historian is not an archivist.** Local Government Historians have long had to cope with the ambiguous wording of the Local Historians Law relating to archival responsibilities. Local Government Historians must keep in mind the distinction between records collection, preservation, and management, which is the responsibility of the Records Management Officer (most often the village, town, city or county Clerk), and the historian's role as supporter and, most importantly, researcher and user of archival records. This ambiguity was clarified somewhat in 1988 with the passage of the Local Government Records Law, which reads in part:

*Each local government historian shall promote the establishment and improvement of programs for the management and preservation of local government records with enduring value for historical or other research; encourage the collection and preservation of non-governmental historical records by libraries, historical societies, and other repositories; and carry out and actively encourage research in such records in order to add to the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the community's history.*

**3. The Local Government Historian is not a genealogist.** Local Government Historians receive numerous requests for genealogical research and information. The Local Government Historian must, therefore, clearly understand the distinction between genealogy (the narrow pursuit of an individual's lineage), and family or community history (the use of individual lives to illuminate historical situations). Historians in the course of their work may assemble valuable data on early residents of their community and may share portions of that data, if available, in response to genealogical requests. However, they are not authorized to conduct genealogical research on demand. Local historians have often found it expedient to keep on file a list of contract genealogists who may be contacted to provide such services.

**4. The Local Government Historian is not part of an historical agency staff.** Many local historians are active members of their local historical society. However, the office of Local Government Historian is a demanding one. It should not be diluted by the appointment of one individual to be local historian and, at the same time, director of an historical agency. Moreover, a strong potential for conflict of interest exists in this practice. The director of an historical agency is primarily responsible to a board of trustees for the direction of a private membership organization. The local historian is a public officer obliged under the Public Officer's Law to provide equal service to all the citizens of his or her jurisdiction. However, it may be possible for a local government historian to serve on a local historical agency's board, though not as President.

**5. The Local Government Historian is not a partisan political functionary.** Although the Local Government Historian is sometimes a political appointment, he or she must be unbiased in their historical writing and public presentations. The Local Government Historian must adhere to professional standards in striving to produce objective and unbiased history. While it is not inappropriate for the Local Government Historian to write an institutional history of his or her local government, it is inappropriate to write a "puff piece" or apologia for an administration or political party, or to ignore the history of other groups. Furthermore, political campaigning, fund raising, or writing campaign literature is not part of the Local Government Historian's official duties.

### ***Conclusion***

The 1,617 local government historians in New York State constitute the largest and most impressive network of Local Government Historians in the country. Such a network offers the potential for an organized and professional community of historians across the entire state utilizing best practices and modern technology to conduct their work. Municipalities should fully understand the role and duties of Local Government Historians to help inform decision makers as they appoint and support local historians in their legislatively mandated work.

### **Contact:**

Devin R. Lander  
New York State Historian  
Office of State History  
Cultural Education Center #3023  
Albany, NY 12230  
518-474-0206  
[Devin.Lander@nysed.gov](mailto:Devin.Lander@nysed.gov)  
<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/research-collections/state-history>

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# Historical Records and the Local Government Historian

by

**Robert W. Arnold III**  
**Julie C. Daniels**  
**C. Raymond LaFever**



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The University of the State of New York  
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Government Records Services  
Albany, New York 12230  
<http://www.archives.nysed.gov>

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## Introduction

New York's officially appointed public historians play an important role in preserving and interpreting the history of their communities. This publication suggests ways that such historians can use their specialized knowledge and interests to encourage and support records management and historical records programs that are adequate to the needs of local governments and their constituents. Local public historians can be advocates for the greater and broader use of both governmental and non-governmental historical records, for the preservation of a community's local character, for addressing community needs, and for planning for a community's future. While no public historian may have the time or resources to be involved with all the areas suggested in this publication, it may be possible to work on relevant projects selected from each of the major areas discussed.

Historical records, also called archival records, are records that should be kept permanently because of their long-term usefulness for historical or other researchers. For purposes of this publication, the term **governmental historical records** is used to designate records created, filed, or used by local governments in the course of their business that are worthy of preservation and special care. These records may have continuing importance because the information they contain is useful for administrative purposes or for historical or other research. Such records may include, but are not limited to, land records, minutes of governing bodies, tax records, subdivision maps, photographs, building permits, and records of capital construction, regardless of whether they are on paper, film, magnetic tape, or any other medium.

**Nongovernmental historical records**, for the purposes of this publication, are records produced by private individuals, groups, or institutions that contain significant information about the past and are therefore worthy of long-term preservation and systematic management for historical and other research. They can include diaries, letters, journals, ledgers, minutes, photographs, maps, drawings, blueprints, deeds, contracts, memoranda, and other material, and they may exist on paper, parchment, magnetic tape, film, or any other medium.

In **short**, the State Archives defines governmental historical records as those created by and belonging to some type of government., while non-governmental historical records **originate** and are kept by, private individuals, organizations, and institutions.

Public historians' responsibilities were defined under laws passed in 1919 and 1933 which are now in part outdated. Local government public historians' prerogatives and responsibilities relating to both governmental and non-governmental historical records remain somewhat unclear. Local government public historians are not meant to be collectors, curators, or archivists, although some historians oversee collections that accumulated in the absence of other repositories and that have grown as a result of the performance of official duties.

The Local Government Records (LGR) Law (Section 57.07(1) of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Laws as amended by Ch. 737, Laws of 1987) effective August 5, 1988, updated the "Historians' Law" and partially clarified historians' records-related responsibilities. Section 1 reads as follows:

Each local government historian shall promote the establishment and improvement of programs for the management and preservation of local government records with enduring value for historical or other research; encourage the coordinated collection and preservation of nongovernmental historical records by libraries, historical societies, and other repositories; and carry out and actively encourage research in such records in order to add to the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the community's history.

The LGR Law was developed in consultation with many local government associations, including the former Association of Municipal Historians and the County Historians Association. This law establishes a Local Government Records Advisory Council of twenty-seven members to advise on implementation of the law and on related state oversight and services. Local government public historians are included in the council's membership. Under the LGR Law, local government historians have three areas of responsibility: programs, records, and research.

## Programs

**Each local government historian shall promote the establishment and improvement of programs for the management and preservation of local government records with enduring value for historical or other research.**

The LGR Law not only modified the duties of public historians, but also included provisions relating to records management in local governments and specified the responsibility of the Commissioner of

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Education to provide records management advice and assistance to local governments (exclusive of the municipal agencies of the City of New York). The law requires local governing bodies and chief executives to "promote and support a program for the orderly and efficient management of records, including the identification and appropriate administration of records with enduring value for historical or other research."

Just as each general-purpose local government (county, municipality) must appoint a public historian, so must each local government appoint a Records Management Officer (RMO) to "coordinate the development of and oversee" its records management program. The law specifies that each locality's town or village clerk shall be the RMO and that a fire district's secretary shall be the RMO in a fire district. Other local governments-counties, school districts, public benefit corporations, special authorities, BOCES, and miscellaneous units of local government-must appoint an RMO, but the designation is a local choice, subject to the usual process for official appointments. In a number of counties, county historians are the RMO or work closely with or for the RMO.

The State Archives strongly recommends that each local government pass an ordinance or other enactment that establishes a records management program. The State Archives also encourages the creation of a records advisory board, which includes the public historian, that works with the RMO to produce records management plans, policies, and procedures, including those related to archival records.

A local government records management program is an ongoing administrative necessity, comparable to highway maintenance, central purchasing, civil service, or taxation. Records management usually includes the survey and inventory of records, development of filing systems, coordination of micrographics, establishment of appropriate inactive records storage, systematic destruction of obsolete records, analysis and planning for information systems, and deployment of modern information technology, as well as the identification, maintenance and use of records.

It is sometimes hard to remember, when faced with the archival riches of a local government, that these documents were not created for eventual use by historians. Rather, these records were created in the most prosaic way for the most mundane reasons. Local government archival records-those with enduring legal, fiscal, administrative, or historical research value-accumulated from the routine of government, and have as their main reason for permanent retention their ongoing utility. Local government archival records should always be an integral part of a comprehensive records management program,

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serving the overall informational needs of the government and citizens. These records contain information needed to document property rights, maintain infrastructure, establish precedents, and serve as a basis for comprehensive planning. They define the responsibilities and the prerogatives of government, protect the rights and property of citizens, help the government defend itself in court or bring suit, assist the government in preparing environmental impact statements, and support the government's qualifications for federal community development money. Use of such archival records for historical research is important, but it is generally a secondary use in a local government setting.

Public historians can support the development and operation of a local government's records management program, including its archival component, in several ways:

- Consult with the local government's RMO, chief elected official, and other appropriate officers to ensure the development and adoption of a local law or ordinance that establishes a records management program that includes an archival component
- Serve on the records advisory board established as part of the records management program, giving particular attention to issues concerning the identification and management of local government archival records.
- Attend State Archives workshops and other relevant training opportunities to enhance knowledge of records management and archival administration.
- Assist **RMOs** with the identification and appraisal of local government records with enduring value, and provide a local historical perspective in reviews of requests to dispose of records. Local governments may legally dispose of records by adopting and following the Archives' retention schedules, or, as appropriate, the schedules issued by the Office of Court Administration. However, the public historian's specialized knowledge can provide both the RMO and the local records advisory board with a perspective on non-permanent records series that may have ongoing local research value and thus should be kept permanently.
- Support the development and maintenance of the archival component of local government records management programs by:
  - (A) stressing the need for sufficient resources so this component can function effectively
  - (B) ensuring that archival records are identified and made accessible on a regular basis



- (C) encouraging development of guides to facilitate access to archival records and encouraging distribution of these guides to local repositories, libraries, other historians, and researchers
  - (D) promoting use of archival records by local government officials, schools, and others
  - (E) helping new users become acquainted with archival records for public policy, planning, legal, and other research (see "Records" below)
  - (F) supporting a proper environment for the storage and use of archival records
  - (G) advocating the physical security of archival records
  - (H) ensuring that the records of defunct local government departments or agencies pass to the local government's archives. When a program ends, a department is merged with another, or a local government is dissolved or annexed, the archival records of those former entities must be protected and assessed for their ongoing research value
- Promote the importance of archival records to local government officials, news media, the historical community, and the public.
  - In the case of special purpose local governments (such as school or fire districts) where no public historian is required by statute, a public historian can still serve on records advisory boards, provide advice and historical perspective during the development of a records management program, and advise on the identification and treatment of archival records.

Many of the above-named activities can be assisted by Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grants. Funding is available to local governments for a number of projects related to historical records, including

- assessment of the current state of historical records in a local government
- improvement of areas where historical records are stored
- facilitation of access to historical records through their arrangement and description and by the development of finding aids for use on-site, or on a local website or on the State Archives Historic Documents Inventory (see "Records" below for further information on the HDI )
- preservation of records by analysis, reformatting them onto other media (such as microfilm), or conservation treatment

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- promotion of use of historical records through outreach and public programs
  - encouragement of projects that use local government records as teaching tools in the classroom and in community programs

Local officials should contact their State Archives Regional Advisory Officer (RAO) for further information concerning LGRMIF grants. RAOs are based in nine regions across the state; each RAO serves all local governments in a region contiguous with a state judicial district. Local government historians should be involved in the development and implementation of any projects and should encourage local government RMOs to submit applications.

Public historians can also play a role in shaping State Archives services to regions by serving on a Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). RACs meet four times a year to discuss issues and needs in their regions.

## Records

### **II. (Each local government historian shall) ... encourage the coordinated collection and preservation of non-governmental historical records by libraries, historical societies, and other repositories ...**

Every community has historically valuable non-governmental records that include information on the development of the community, its institutions, and its people. But too often, such records have been lost because there were no organized programs to identify, collect, preserve, and make them available for research. Even where such programs exist, they often operate in isolation from each other and are under supported and underdeveloped. Communities do not always see the historical value in such records, particularly more recent records and people seldom realize that what they have been doing in their communities has historical value.

Small municipalities may not have local historical repositories, or their local historical societies may be dormant. In such situations, the public historian often becomes a *de faCID* collector of historical records, but may lack essential collections policies and procedures governing the acquisition, legal custody, accession, protection, storage, and use of those records. Without the appropriate legal and procedural guidelines in place, the line between what the public historian has collected personally and what has been collected in an official capacity can become blurred. Too often items collected

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officially by the public historian fail to pass to a successor, or are irretrievably lost to the antiquarian marketplace. If the public historian accepts private papers and other non-government documents in her/his official capacity, these records become the property of the local government in whose name the public historian accepted them. They are then subject to the retention periods designated in the appropriate State Archives records retention and disposition schedule.

However, local repositories may not have secure space to store and preserve these records, or facilities to make them available. Local government historians considering the collection of such historical records, or actively working to ensure that their community's valuable historical records are not lost, should consult their State Archives Regional Advisory Officer.

The New York State legislature established the Documentary Heritage Program (DHP) in 1988 to help strengthen the state's historical records programs and to ensure that all of New York's historical records are identified, preserved, and made available. The law establishing the DHP authorizes aid to nine regional service providers, following the regional boundaries used by New York's Reference and Research Library Resources systems, to hire archivists to advise and assist historical records programs in their regions. The DHP also provides grant funds for historical records projects. DHP advisory services and its discretionary grants program are available to non-governmental historical records repositories. Local governments are not eligible for DHP funding, but local government historians are encouraged to promote the availability of DHP grants and advisory services to holders of historical records in their communities.

The DHP encourages the comprehensive documentation of New York State's history and culture by supporting projects that identify, survey, collect, and make available important records relating to traditionally under-represented groups and topics. The DHP is supported by the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund and is administered through the State Archives. For further information about the DHP, visit the State Archives' website at [www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov) or call the State Archives' Access Services at (518) 474-6926.

Local government historians can and should support strong historical records programs for non-governmental records. Some suggested ways to do this include,

- Review county-level guides produced by the Historical Documents Inventory (HDI), which are available from the State Archives. The guides give an overview of holdings in regional repositories, as well as list regional topics in repositories elsewhere in the state. Guides

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can be used to determine how well particular places, events, people, topics, processes, or periods are documented The HDI is now available online through the State Archives' Excelsior catalog. Local government historians should work to encourage local records repositories to 1) review entries for their institutions to ensure that the information is up to date and accurate, and 2) encourage local institutions that are not listed to submit information about their records.

- Promote further development of the DHP, including cooperating with and supporting the work of its regional archivists.
- Support and attend meetings of representatives from area repositories and institutions and meet with individuals interested in particular topics, to encourage coordinated collecting and documentation of previously under-documented subjects. Ensuring a more comprehensive and "even" record of New York's communities is a major focus of the DHP. Local government historians should follow up as appropriate to encourage, coordinate, or lead the development of such efforts.
- Advocate historical records programs in the community. Encourage the news media, community organizations, educators, governmental leaders, and other citizens to take an interest in, and become active supporters of, historical records programs.
- Encourage individuals in local historical records repositories to prepare grant applications under the LGRMIF (for local government applications only), the DHP (for not for profit sector repositories), the Discretionary Grant Program of the New York State Library's Division of Library Development, and the federal government's National Historical Publications and Records Commission's grants program.

## Research

**III. (Each local government historian shall) ... carry out and actively encourage research in such records in order to add to the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the community's history.**

Historically valuable records, including those of government and private organizations, contain information necessary to understand the community's past, cope with the present, and plan for the future. These records need to be actively used by researchers interested in pressing concerns such as health and the environment; by genealogists and family historians; by teachers and students to enrich social studies and history courses; by citizens interested in community

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history; and by scholars exploring how events in the community relate to or differ from regional, statewide, and national developments.

Public historians should be among the chief researchers of these records. However, there are specific ways for public historians to promote and conduct research:

- Draw on the local government's archival records and related sources to write a history of the local government, stressing how its programs and services evolved to meet changing community needs.
- Carry out research in local government archival records and community historical records to prepare historical accounts of various aspects of the community's history.
- Encourage broader and more innovative use of these records by introducing others to documentary resources and the repositories in which they are kept.
- Urge local schools to use historical records in appropriate curricula and teach students the importance and use of historical records. Acquaint local teachers and curriculum developers with local government archival records and help them integrate student use of those records into lesson plans. Working with the local government's RMO and archivist, and appropriate officials such as teachers and school administrators, prepare copies of local government archival records or document packets for use in the classroom. For ideas and information about working with students and teachers, consult *Consider the Source: Historical Records in the Classroom*. This publication can be purchased from the New York State Archives. Examples of the book's contents are available online at [www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov); click on "Education," then on "Publications." A brief course on using historical records in the classroom is available at [www.emsc.nysed.gov/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/)
- Visit school history and social studies classes to discuss community history, drawing on and showing copies of archival records to stress the importance of archival records in uncovering and understanding history.
- Encourage, organize, and participate in annual Archives Week events, using them to draw attention to the importance and research value of the local government and private archival records of the community.
- Encourage community historical records repositories to reach out to researchers, schools, and other groups through effective finding aids, audio-visual productions, and other public and educational programs.

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- In cooperation with the local government's RMO and representatives from other local historical records repositories, use records to prepare audio-visual productions on the community's history.

## For More Information and Assistance

The New York State Archives provides direct advice to local governments and state agencies on records and information management issues. The Archives has regional offices throughout the state, and each office has a records specialist who can visit you and provide technical advice and assistance. Archives services also include publications and workshops on a wide variety of records management topics. The Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund supports these services.

For further information, contact your Regional Advisory Officer, DHP Regional Archivist, or the following State Archives departments:

**For information on local government records,**

Government Records Services  
9A47 Cultural Education Center  
Albany, NY 12230  
518-474-6926  
recmgt@mail.nysed.gov

**For information on the Documentary Heritage Program:**

Documentary Heritage Program  
9C33 Cultural Education Center  
Albany, New York 12230  
518-474-6926  
dhs@mail.nysed.gov

**For information on the educational uses of historical records:**

Public Programs and Outreach  
9B52 Cultural Education Center  
Albany, NY 12230  
518-474-6926  
archedu@mail.nysed.gov



# Town of New Lebanon

## Historic Items Policy

(aka Items related to Town History)

The Town of New Lebanon recognizes that protecting and promoting our local history is vital. All historic items received by the town historian will be recorded on a "Donations of Historic Documents & Items" form (copy attached), evaluated by the historian to determine the appropriate repository for the item such as local government archives, the New Lebanon Library, or the Lebanon Valley Historical Society, as recommended by the NY Office of State History. This determination will be documented on the "*Donations of Historic Documents & Items*" form and a "*Records Deposit Agreement*" (copy attached) will be executed between the town and the repository. The original of both the "*Donations of Historic Documents & Items*" form and the "*Records Deposit Agreement*" will be filed with the Town Clerk.

In instances when it would not be appropriate or necessary to have a "*Records Deposit Agreement*," the historian may request a waiver from the Town Board. Authorization from the Town Board is required to waive the "*Records Deposit Agreement*" requirement and the Town Clerk must certify that said waiver was approved by the board on the "*Donations of Historic Documents & Items*" form.

A copy of all "annual reports" prepared by the historian for the Town Supervisor, Town Board and the State Historian will be filed in the Town Clerk's Office.

As required by §57.09 of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law, the New Lebanon Town Historian shall, upon retirement or removal from office, turn over to the Town Clerk, or to his or her successor in office, all materials<sup>1</sup> gathered during his or her incumbency and all correspondence relating thereto.

<sup>1</sup> Materials gathered should be composed of files and documents prepared by the historian, historic items received on behalf of the town should already have been transferred to the proper repository.



.....**Town of New Lebanon**.....

## **Records Deposit Agreement**

This agreement, made in duplicate between the \_\_\_\_\_ (hereafter referred to as "the repository") and the Town of New Lebanon (the Town), deposits and transfers to \_\_\_\_\_ under the below terms, physical custody, but not ownership, of certain records and/or items, described as follows and collectively referred to as "the records":

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### Terms of Agreement

1. The repository agrees to protect and preserve, to the extent feasible and consistent with its usual practices, the physical as well as the intellectual contents of the records, but the repository assumes no responsibility in case of loss or damage by theft, fire, or any other cause whatsoever. The repository need not specially insure the materials covered by this agreement.
2. The repository may arrange or rearrange these materials, in accordance with its usual practices, to make them more accessible to researchers.
3. This agreement may be amended by written documents accepted and signed by the authorized agents of the repository and the Town.
4. The Town warrants that no other individuals, institutions, or other entities have interest in the records covered by this agreement.
5. The below itemized attachments state the Town's required restrictions on access and use of the materials or a stated portion of them for specified periods of time and further state how access and use shall be permitted during the periods to which the restrictions pertain:  

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6. The repository may, without notice or fee to the Town, publish, in whatever form it chooses, descriptions of, catalogs to, or other announcements of the availability and contents of the materials in the usual and customary places and manners.
7. The repository may, without notice or fee to the Town, make copies of any of the materials for purposes of preservation and, within the limits set forth in these Terms, public use.
8. Except for limited periods, when certain portions of the materials may be undergoing preservation treatment, the Town has right of on-site access to the records covered by this

• **Page 2, Records Deposit Agreement**

agreement at all times the repository is open to the public. Further, the Town may request copies of any of the records covered by this agreement. The Town shall be responsible for payment of the usual and customary charges for such copies except either as such charges may be waived in particular instances for courtesy copies of small number of pages or as provision of such copies may be deemed dangerous to the physical preservation of the original items that are to be copied.

9. If the repository should be judged to have failed to carry out its responsibilities under this agreement, and if the Town or any other person seeks to enforce this agreement or claim damages for breach of it, the repository shall have the option of satisfying any obligation imposed upon it by this agreement by returning the given items (and all archival copies of same) to the Town or the Town's legal representative.
10. If the repository, however, is judged to have carried out its responsibilities under this agreement, yet the Town still wishes to regain physical custody of the records, the Town may do so, but only after reimbursing the repository for the fair cost of its care and maintenance of these records over the period of deposit.
11. Further items of agreement covering this deposit and not elsewhere mentioned above are as follows:

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We, \_\_\_\_\_ and the Town of New Lebanon, hereby deposit the records listed in the opening paragraph above or subsequently added under item 3 above and agree to the other items set for within this agreement.

Signed for the Town:- - - - -  
Printed Name & Title of Signer:- - - - -  
Signed for the Repository:- - - - -  
Printed Name & Title of Signer: - - - - -  
Date: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_