**10/07/2020**

**First week: American Archives Month**

The National Archives celebrates October 2020 as American Archives Month. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about the value of archival records. Archival records are permanently retained records with legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical value. Such important records to represent only 2% of our agency’s records!

We keep archival records so that citizens, public servants, legislators, and courts can obtain information necessary to exercise their rights and responsibilities; and to hold our government accountable for their actions.

These type of records include agency-level policies and procedures, agency histories, publications, legislative records, etc. which, per RCW 40.14, must be transferred to State Archives or Digital Archives.

Our schedules, located on the DSHS records retention SharePoint site at <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/Loss/Records/Pages/Schedules.aspx>, tell us which records are archival.  If you have records you think are archival, let your [Records Coordinator](http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/Loss/Records/Documents/RecordsCoordinator.pdf) know.

**10/14/2020**

**Second week: American Archives Month: Why are archival records important?**

Each of us uses archival documents. Have you ever needed your birth certificate or marriage license? Searched for your family ancestry or requested college records? These are examples of archival records. Archival records serve as direct evidence of our activities; and, because the content of the records serve as evidence of these activities, they have **enduring** value.

DSHS also uses archival records, some of which are unique to our agency. These records reflect our department’s history and impact Washington State citizens. Our archival records include executive policies and papers of executive decisions, rule-making files, institutional admission and discharge registers, and master patient indices.

Each of the series listed on the [State General Records Retention Schedules](http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/RecordsRetentionSchedulesforStateGovernmentAgencies.aspx) and unique [DSHS Retention Schedules](http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/Loss/Records/Documents/DSHS-uniqueSchedule.pdf) indicate whether a series is archival. If you have questions about archival records, please contact your [Records Coordinators](http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/Loss/Records/Documents/RecordsCoordinator.pdf) or [Agency Records Officer](mailto:brombma@dshs.wa.gov).

The work we do documents the history of our State and ultimately contributes to the history of our nation: “Only if we are listening can we see that history teaches us many lessons. If we do not listen we may be doomed to repeat it.**” athomas**

Good records management provides evidence to demonstrate we took the right action at the right time for the right reasons. Archival records document this for history.

**10/21/2020**

**Third week: American Archives Month: Lose Yourself in an Archival World**

Sara Sheridan, Scottish activist and writer, opines “Our archives are treasure troves - a testament to many lives lived and the complexity of the way we move forward. They contain clues to the real concerns of day-to-day life that bring the past alive.”

As government workers, the [Washington State Digital Archives](https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/) documents our work and our lives with records about DSHS and our mission to Transform Lives through our [records retention schedules](http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/Loss/Records/Documents/DSHS-uniqueSchedule.pdf). As Washington State citizens, the [Washington State Digital Archives](https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/) retains public records about us, such as our birth certificates, marriage licenses, and land ownership.

**Archival records ensure open government**. Kevin Young, American poet and Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture Director, says, “I rather think that archives exist to keep things safe - but not secret.” Open government means that **citizens have the right to access the documents and proceedings of the government to allow for effective public oversight**. The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires the disclosure of certain public officials’ financial and employment history; and the **Presidential Records Act of 1978** mandates the preservation of official presidential records and makes most of them available in the Freedom of Information Act, passed the Fourth of July in 1966.

“Historical gap is created due to missing written records,” wrote Ghanaian author Lailah Gifty Akita. First-hand accounts of historical events, personal letters and diaries, news events, Congressional records, census records - all contribute to our American story. **History is comprised of archival records.**

**Archival records are interesting.**  Says British military historian Antony Beevor, “I get slightly obsessive about working in archives because you don't know what you're going to find. In fact, you don't know what you're looking for until you find it.” **Celebrate American Archival Month - go down the rabbit hole; and discover the world of archival records.**

[National Archives](https://www.archives.gov/)

[Smithsonian Institution Archives](https://collections.si.edu/search/)

[Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/)

[Internet Archive](https://archive.org/index.php)

**10/28/2020**

**Last week: American Archives Month: Weird Washington State Archival Stories**

State Archives maintains quite a collection of Halloween-worthy stories about such people as Robert Stroud, AKA the Birdman of Alcatraz, and Charles Manson, both staying at McNeill Island. Stroud from 1909 - 1912, and Manson from 1961 - 1966. You can find other less notorious – but still a tad weird – stories in the State Archives collections. For example:

* Willie Keil, called “[The Pickled Pioneer](https://blogs.sos.wa.gov/fromourcorner/index.php/2019/02/archives-spotlight-the-tale-of-the-pickled-pioneer/),” was 19th years old when his family determined to travel from Missouri to the Pacific Northwest in 1855. Four days before his family’s departure, Willie died of malaria. His father, knowing ow important this move was for Willie, placed his son’s body in a lead-lined coffin, filled with whiskey. Interred in Menlo, Washington, near State Route 6, Willie’s tombstone reads, “In the evening by lamplight, Willie was buried here November 26, 1855.”
* [The Wild Man of the Wynoochee](https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/search_results.aspx?q=John+Tornow&region=), born John Tornow in 1880, lived in the Olympic Peninsula forest as a loner and fugitive after the mysterious shooting of his nephews. Living off the land, dressing in animal skins, and bark shoes, stories grew about the “Wild Man of the Wynoochee” and the “Cougar Man” while local law enforcement hunted him for almost two years.
* Kenneth Albert Arnold was an American aviator best known for claiming to have seen nine unusual objects flying in tandem near Mount Rainier, Washington on June 24, 1947. Describing them as “flat like a pie pan” he claims to have seen them flying like a saucer skipping across water, Kenneth helped pen the name first used by the press at that time as “flying saucers.”

Even stranger comes a story out of the archival coffers for DSHS. Established in 1912, Northern State Hospital, located in Sedro Wooley and also called “[Portal](https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/search_results.aspx?q=PORTAL&region=)” closed in 1973, three years after the creation of our agency. Portal closed when advances in the treatment of mental illness lead to greater opportunities for people with mental illnesses to remain in their communities and families; but the story is not over. According to the National Paranormal Society, local stories include hauntings by a little girl playing with a ball, a man who seems to follow her, and a nurse pushing a male patient in a wheelchair. Do ghosts float through the empty hospital halls? The TV show “Ghost Hunters” explored local stories about ghosts in 2007 during Season 3, Episode 14, called “Lost Souls”. Did they find a ghost?

Thank you for celebrating American Archives Month with us. Remember, “Without archives many stories of real people would be lost, and along with those stories, vital clues that allow us to reflect and interpret our lives today.” Sara Sheridan, Scottish activist and writer