Old Vermont Films: Opportunities for Research, New Films & Community Events

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Vermont Historical Society

• Leahy Library
  – Books, Archives, Genealogy
  – Moving Image Collection
    • Deaccessioned Dept of Libraries films
    • Donated home movies – including Coolidge
    • Vermont Development Films of 1950s, 1960s
    • 16mm or 8mm film
    • Various video formats, most formats not readable with society equipment
Objective: Digitize Old Films

- ~150 16mm films in VHS vault
- At risk
- Not easily viewed, accessed
- Largely unknown, used or cataloged
The Plan:

• Specific titles selected
• Funding source identified
• Computer equipment
• Specs identified
• ‘Best Copy’ concern
• ‘Chain of Custody’ process
‘Best Copy’ Concern

- Most VHS films are ‘well loved.’
- Attempts to find best copy successful.
- Several stored Vermont State Archives & Records Administration (VSARA)
- Agreement with VSARA to use their copies.
- VSARA helped with transportation $$; received digital copies.
Promotion

• Vermont Filmmaker Network announcement

• Meetings with UVM Special Collections, Vermont Archives & Records Administration

• Select films uploaded on Internet Archive
  – www.archive.org/details/movies

• Vermont Historical Society web page
  – www.vermonthistory.org/film
Challenges

- Film file size
  - 30 minute film = 250GBs uncompressed
- Storage space
- File Backup Plan
- Equipment Failures
Gratitude

• Only one film affected by vinegar syndrome.

• Cooperative filmmakers, archivists, donors.

• Enthusiastic viewers!
Outcome: New Films

• *Headline Vermont (2010)*
  – View on www.vpt.org

• *The Vermont Movie: Freedom & Unity (in production)*
  – View trailer on http://thevermontmovie.com/

• *Tunbridge at 250 (in production)*
  – Vt State Guard at fairgrounds.
Outcome: Community Events

- **Vermont State Guard in World War II**
  - Special screening to VSG members, fund raiser, Montpelier, June 2009.
  - Waterbury Historical Society, October 2010.
  - Air National Guard, February 2011.
  - Middlebury Veterans Foreign Wars, March 2011.
BACK TO THE LAND, AGAIN—on film!
Come see three historic films on Vermont’s farming heritage!

- Windy Wood Orchard 1935-1954, B&W, silent, Barre
  In this history of a small family apple orchard, scenes depict planting, pruning, and harvesting over a span of years.

- Morel Farm 1950s-1970s, B&W, silent, Northfield
  Selected shots of active “gentlemen farmers” Norman and Eleanor Applegot, new arrivals to Vermont. Bonus feature shows Interstate 89 being plowed through nearby.

- Thanks to Vermont 1951, color, sound
  Vermont farm scenes
  This state film features the marketing of a strong and scientific farm industry; includes many farm scenes, a state fair, concluding with a Thanksgiving table of bounty.

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Vermont History Expo 2010
History’s Country Fair
Outcome: Research

Future Steps

• Advocate for film digitization
• Encourage oral histories
• Organize uncataloged Vermont film resources
• Foster use of Vermont film through academic & professional filmmakers