

# VERMONT HISTORY

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# About the Covers

## The Red Cross in Vermont

In their Spring 2015 newsletters, the Vermont and New Hampshire regions of the American Red Cross announced their merger into a single region based out of New Hampshire. This brought to a close an approximately 100-year independent Vermont Red Cross. In the intervening years, as new efficiencies were realized, the Vermont administrative offices in Burlington came to be redundant. This spring, the Red Cross regional office approached the Vermont Historical Society to preserve photos, archives, and artifacts relating to the Vermont Red Cross before the facility was emptied and the property sold.

VHS Librarian Paul Carnahan and Director Steve Perkins travelled to Burlington and sifted through years of accumulated items, selecting those that uniquely told the Red Cross story in Vermont. The archive, split evenly between the VHS library and museum collections, is now in the process of being cataloged.

A standout portion of the collection, sure to become a display in the near future, is a selection of Red Cross nurse uniforms documenting the change in dress and service



*Woman's summer uniform, 1956-1958. This uniform, which includes the distinctive Red Cross peaked cap, was developed to provide a cooler summer option to the wool, fully lined uniforms from earlier in the decade. In 1958 this style of uniform was changed to utilize synthetic materials. The medal is a generic, un-awarded medal.*

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from World War I to the 1980s (at which point specific nurse uniforms went out of universal use). Early uniforms feature floor-length, heavy skirts, high-necked blouses, and thick, wool capes. As the century progressed, the hemlines rose to mid-calf and the material became lighter and more utilitarian. By the later years, slacks were introduced. Capes gave way to jackets and pinafores came into use until the modern medical “scrubs” replaced the whole kit. Surprisingly, the most consistent part of the uniform remained the nurse’s peaked cap. Though the color and material changed over time, the design of the cap remained basically the same until the cap was dispensed with altogether in the 1970s.

Also included in the archive are photos, signs, and posters representing now-shuttered Red Cross chapters from throughout the state, such as Springfield, Rutland, Bennington, and St. Johnsbury. Medical kits and Vermont-branded backboards and neck braces illustrate the changes in emergency response over the years. Booklets and loose documents relate the Red Cross response to the 1927 flood, World War II, and even disaster aid in the 1980s and 1990s.

We look forward to fully integrating this new archive with our existing collection of Vermont Red Cross material to better tell Vermont’s story to visitors and researchers for years to come.

STEVE PERKINS, *Director*  
*Vermont Historical Society*

*Front cover: Vermont Red Cross nurse’s dress, 1930-1940, and cape, c. 1940. Nurses’ garments stayed pretty basic through the 1930s, retaining capes and long, sack-type dresses until the outbreak of World War II.*

*Back cover: Nurse’s uniform, 1948-1956. Similar to uniforms developed during World War II, this example of lightweight denim came into use post-war until it was replaced by garments of synthetic blends in 1956 and fully synthetic fabric in 1958.*



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