

IN MEMORIAM



SARAH L. DOPP

1946–2024

Vermont lost a champion of its history and a steward of its land with the passing of Sarah L. Dopp, 77, on March 7, 2024, at her home “the Morgan House” in South Burlington. Sarah served the Vermont Historical Society as a board member for thirty-two years, from 1990 until 2022, including two terms as president, 2007–2011. In 2023 she was elected honorary lifetime trustee by the VHS board in recognition of her many contributions to the organization.

Sarah was a child of Vermont and of Vermonters. She was born in Burlington on November 21, 1946, the only surviving child of Leroy J. Dopp Jr. and Katharine (Eckley) Dopp. Her father worked for the University of Vermont Agricultural Extension Service and had a passion for hiking and motorcycles. Her mother, a native of Proctor, also worked at UVM. An accomplished church organist, she was part of the Vermont crafts movement beginning in the 1960s. Thanks to Sarah, the VHS collections document several aspects of her parents’ lives.

Sarah attended South Burlington schools and the University of Vermont, receiving a bachelor’s degree in medical technology in 1968 and a master’s degree in English in 1982. She worked at the University of Vermont Medical Center and its predecessors for fifty years.

Sarah joined the VHS board in 1990, the same year that I became its librarian, and was an active presence throughout our parallel tenures there. As Executive Director Steve Perkins said at Sarah's memorial service, "We could always rely on Sarah to respond to every communication, to attend every meeting, to volunteer for every event and program, and to advocate strongly for the modern mission statement she helped craft—'we believe an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.'" I especially remember Sarah correcting board minutes, participating in Collections and Research Committee meetings, working at the speakers tent at many Vermont History Expos, and bringing the library treasures from her family's seemingly endless accumulation of historical items.

She supported the society's acquisition of the Spaulding Graded School in Barre for a new research and collections center in 2000. Always one to support her beliefs, Sarah generously donated funds to renovate and furnish the library's new reference area, memorializing her father, Spaulding High School class of 1928, and Christie E. McLeod, MD, class of 1926. In January 2008 Sarah as VHS president visited the White House with Executive Director J. Kevin Graffagnino and board member Marilyn Blackwell to receive the National Medal for Museum and Library Service on behalf of the society. This trip, and the honor it bestowed, created a lasting memory for Sarah, recounted in many conversations throughout the years.

In addition to her involvement with the VHS, Sarah served as president of the Chittenden County Historical Society and was photographer for its three-volume *Historic Guide to Burlington Neighborhoods* (1991–2003). She was also a supporter of the UVM library's Department of Special Collections and was a frequent visitor to the reading room there.

Sarah founded the South Burlington Land Trust in the summer of 2003 and served as its president until her death. In 2023 she donated to the trust a conservation easement on forty acres of farmland, woods, and wetlands. She said her motivation to do so was inspired by the land's previous owner and long-time friend, UVM English Professor Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Bandel.

In 2014 Sarah was recognized for thirty years of dedication to land conservation and historic preservation with the Hildene Award, presented annually by the Lincoln family home in Manchester, Vermont. At the award ceremony VHS Executive Director Mark S. Hudson said, "Sarah showed me what it means to lead by example. In all her endeavors, she selflessly gives her time, talent, and treasures . . . she doesn't simply do things—she lives them!"

Music was another of Sarah's passions. She was a patron of the Lane

Series at UVM, sponsor of the annual Katharine Dopp Organ Recital at First Baptist Church, Burlington, and served as president of the Craftsbury Chamber Players. During the summer of 2020, at the height of the Covid pandemic, Sarah hosted an open-air concert by the chamber players in the field next to her home so that people could listen to great music in an uncertain time.

A celebration of the life of Sarah Dopp was held on April 12, 2024, at First Baptist Church, Burlington, where Sarah sang in the choir from childhood until her unexpected death in March. Community members and representatives of several organizations spoke of Sarah's self-sacrifice, strong convictions, and embrace of life. Eulogizers spoke of her deep faith, and her fellow choir members sang the anthem "Peace" by Patricia Mock, which Sarah loved for its music and its message.

PAUL A. CARNAHAN

Paul Carnahan was librarian of the Vermont Historical Society from 1990 until 2022.