

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE LAUNCH
Awarding Nick and John a Testament of Gratitude
From the Vermont Bar Association

Tonight we celebrate our friend Sam Hand for his many gifts, lectures, books, articles, his spirit and inspiration. His achievements are manifest at UVM, the Center, VHS, in his students and colleagues.

To put your arms around Sam's work, you need to reach beyond him to the many scholars who shared authorship with him, including Jeff Potash, Greg Sanford, Ralph Orth, Gene Sessions, Michael Sherman, Jennie Versteeg, Nick Muller and John Duffy, and others I haven't named. Few of the authors who've dedicated themselves to Vermont history have not been moved by his advice, correction, and enthusiasm.

Sam Hand was a collaborator on so many projects, sharing the research and writing, sparking that special illumination that comes when two or three minds collide to produce something more than any of them could have done on their own.

These affairs risk devolving into self-congratulatory scenes, and yet there are precious few opportunities to celebrate those who have done so much to preserve and explain our history. Too often, as with Sam Hand, these are posthumous affairs, and that's unfortunate. This night is one of those rare occasions when we can speak candidly about our common goal—immortality—and bow to those who have made a difference.

He was no lonely scholar, scratching out text in a dark garret. More likely you'd find him in the stacks of the Wilbur Collection, or the rooms of the VHS, or the State Archives, talking over ideas with colleagues (and sometimes strangers), making and taking commitments on how to share the work, living a very social, scholarly life.

At the time Sam came to Vermont, Vermont history was a quiescent discipline. Sam changed all that. But he didn't do it alone. He led a small legion of remarkable pilgrims to open up the field of Vermont history. Among them are two of the editors of this tribute, Nicholas Muller and John Duffy. They deserve a special appreciation for their work with Sam, and on their own, in many areas of Vermont history, and in particular in Vermont legal history.

You can't avoid the history of law in the study of the history of Vermont. By their interest and curiosity, Sam, Nick, and John all contributed to that understanding. It's always a temptation to write about dramatic events—the floods, the wars, the movement to gain independence and statehood. It's more challenging, and perhaps more important, to look closer at the periods when all seems calm on the surface. Vermont history is different when you focus on the questions nobody has completely addressed, and there are so many myths begging to be exploded, so many canonical truths to be revised and revealed.

The VBA was founded in part on a desire to preserve and understand the third branch, its judges, courts, lawyers, and jurisprudence. The work Sam, Nick, and John have done on Vermont legal history has contributed to that objective, and the association's Board of Bar Managers has adopted the following Testament of Gratitude in their honor:

Testament of Gratitude

The Vermont Bar Association recognizes the profound influence that writers of the vision, diligence, and wisdom of N. Nicholas Muller III, and John J. Duffy have had on our understanding of the history of Vermont law and its courts. Their work has contributed to the preservation of court records, the growth and sophistication of the state's archives at VSARA, the VHS History Center, the Center for Research on Vermont, and the UVM archives, and new scholarship on the state's third branch. They inspired a new generation of writers and scholars to dedicate their time and energy to biographies, histories, and analyses of the judicial system. For those contributions, the Vermont Bar Association gratefully acknowledges their work and legacy.

Daniel H. Maguire, President, VBA