

VERMONT

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75 YEARS OF INSPIRATION

A Brief Conference History





75th Annual Conference

For the past 75 years, Vermont's parks and recreation professionals have gathered together to share knowledge and find inspiration. While a time line of events can't possibly capture the depth of experiences we've shared together, we hope his list shows a bit about the growth and development of this important annual event.

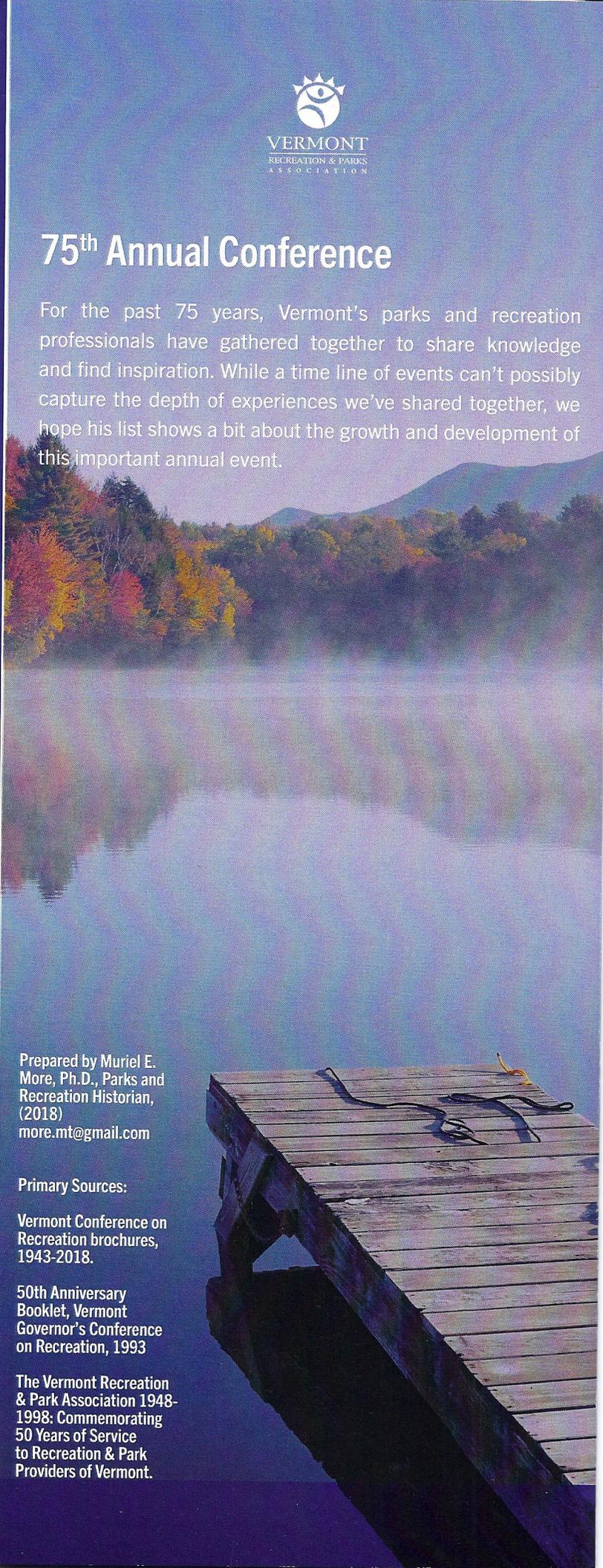
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Primary Sources:

Vermont Conference on Recreation brochures, 1943-2018.

50th Anniversary Booklet, Vermont Governor's Conference on Recreation, 1993

The Vermont Recreation & Park Association 1948-1998: Commemorating 50 Years of Service to Recreation & Park Providers of Vermont.



1940s

- 1943 1st Governor's Conference on Recreation organized by Theresa S. Brungardt.
- 1944 Theresa Brungardt appointed first State Recreation Director by Governor William H. Wills.
- 1945 Early conference attendance was robust; 210 attended in 1945.
- 1946 4th Conference was held in Proctor when Governor Mortimer Proctor was in office. This was the decade's only conference not held in Montpelier.
- 1947 The Vermont (VT) legislature created the State Recreation Board (second in the nation, 10 days after North Carolina).
- 1948 Theresa Brungardt founded the Vermont Recreation Society (now Vermont Recreation and Parks Association).
Conference drew 308 attendees from 72 communities.
Theresa Brungardt organized the first New Hampshire/Vermont Recreation Workers Weekend (now Northern New England Recreation Conference).
Vermont selected by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Office of Military Government, and the National Social Welfare Assembly as a training and observation area for German youth leaders.
- 1949 Keynote speakers Dr. Harold Meyer (1947) and Charles K. Brightbill (1949), were later inducted into the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Robert W. Crawford Hall of Fame.
Conference drew 317 attendees from 129 communities.
- 1943-49 Major conference topics in the 1940s included problems in small and large communities, arts and crafts, publicity and public relations, recreation boards and commissions, planning, winter sports and therapeutic recreation. Conferences typically ended with an evening of country dancing.

1950s

- 1950-51 Over 500 people attended the Governor's Conferences on Recreation. Most were volunteers, as few communities had professional recreation staff.
- 1950 1st conference theme—"A Mid-Century Look at Recreation"
Vermont's Andrea Mead Lawrence, first alpine skier to win two Olympic gold medals, spoke on "Starting Young in Winter Sports".
Vermont Recreation and Park Association (VRPA) first published its newsletter, *the Contact*. Publication continued bi-annually until 1964.
- 1952 Theresa Brungardt elected President of the American Recreation Society; first woman so honored.
On behalf of the U.S. State Department and the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, Theresa Brungardt traveled to Germany to consult on youth and recreation activities. She visited 75 communities in Bavaria.
- 1954 "Exhibits" first mentioned in conference brochure.
- 1956 Three key speakers this decade, Joseph Prendergast (1950, 1953), Beatrice Hill (1955), and Robert W. Crawford (1956), were inducted into the NRPA Robert W. Crawford Hall of Fame, which was named in Crawford's honor.
- 1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) to study the nation's recreation needs. Laurance S. Rockefeller of New York City and Woodstock, VT chaired the Commission.
- 1959 The 1959, 1960 and 1961 conferences were called the Governor's Conference on Recreation and Youth Fitness, in response to the 1960 White House Conferences on Children and Youth Fitness.
- 1950-59 All conferences this decade were held in Montpelier. Major topics included recreation planning, arts and crafts (especially silver crafting), country dance workshops, senior recreation, therapeutic recreation, party plans, mixers and dances, youth fitness and outdoor recreation. All ended with country dancing and often singing.

1960s

- 1962 The ORRRC Report on the nation's recreation needs was published in 27 volumes. Now considered a landmark in the nation's recreation history, it documented the need for federal funding of state and local parks and recreation needs by calling for dedicated federal funding.
Keynote address by William H. Whyte, ORRRC Advisory Committee member and author of seminal books on public use of urban spaces.
Evening conference activities dropped.
- 1964 Theresa Brungardt retired from state service.
- 1965 Congress established The Land and Water Conservation Fund. To date, Vermont has received over \$33,000,000 for parks and recreation projects.
Post-conference off-site tours first offered at Northfield Memorial Park 1965/1966.
- 1967 Conference not held because the state professional recreation staff was in transition.
1st State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) published.
- 1968 25th Governor's Conference on Recreation. The theme was "The Challenge of Change".
Mid-conference exhibit time scheduled for the first time.
- 1960-69 Family camping was a new conference topic this decade. Other important topics included senior and therapeutic programming, recreation planning, arts and crafts, recreation programs for all ages and teen centers/councils. Many sessions reflected the increased emphasis in outdoor recreation, including trails and motorized recreation. All conferences were held in Montpelier.

1970s

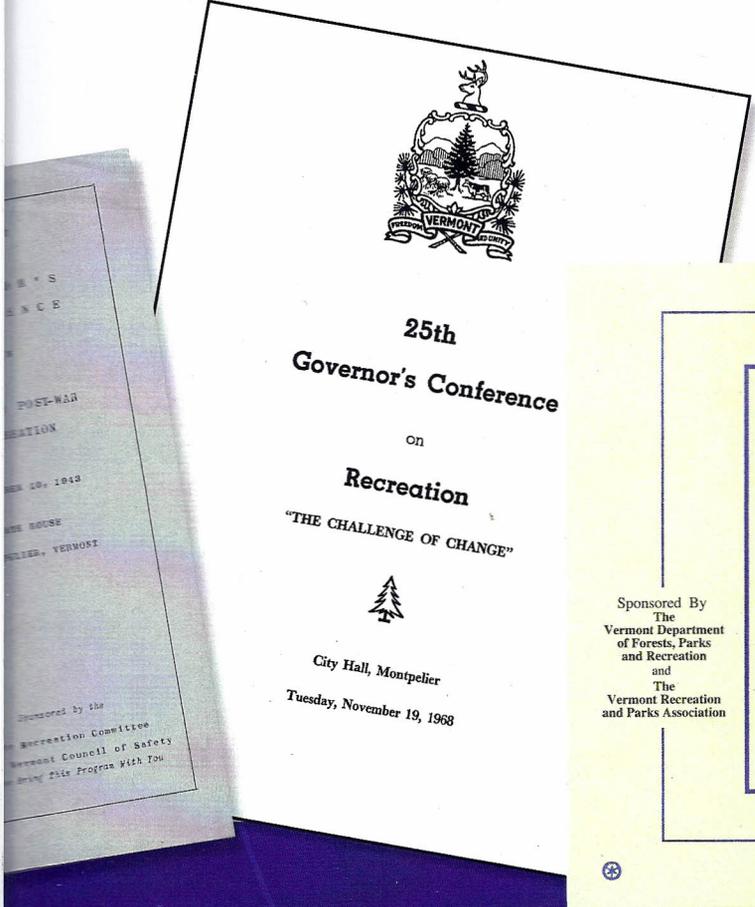
- 1970 Twelve commercial and fifteen educational exhibitors were listed by name in the conference brochure for the first time. One vendor, M. E. O'Brien, has continued as an exhibitor and conference sponsor through the present.
The State Board of Recreation became part of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.
- 1973 1st VRPA State Track Meet held in Newport. Today, it is held in St. Johnsbury.
- 1975 VRPA and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) agreed to co-sponsor the annual conference.
The Theresa S. Brungardt recreation awards were established by VRPA and FPR in her honor and first presented at this conference. Since then 125 awards have been given to professionals, friends and agencies/organizations.
Following the conference, VRPA began holding its annual meeting and evening banquet.
- 1976 1st conference session on computers in recreation noted that the speaker "will fascinate you with possibilities".
- 1978 1st listing of conference costs and registration form in brochure. Costs included \$16 for the complete package (including the VRPA banquet), \$10 for the conference and awards luncheon, \$5 conference registration only.
- 1970-79 New topics this decade included using computers, family recreation, legal liability, tourism, marketing, leadership skills, balancing life and work, providing more recreation services for less, and challenges for administrative assistants. In addition, 3 conferences focused all sessions on a single theme: seniors (1977), therapeutic recreation (1974) and the American Bicentennial (1975).

1980s

- 1982 A "crisis" conference explored direction for recreation professionals in Vermont. Only full-time professionals were encouraged to attend.
1st Green Mountain Senior Games held.
- 1983 **The 40th anniversary conference. Theresa Brungardt, now 90, attended and spoke on "Pioneering Recreation in Vermont". A special reception was held for her before lunch.**
1st time fee charged for commercial vendors; \$20 included lunch.
- 1984 1st breakfast offered at the conference; \$2.25 continental, \$5.75 full.
Accommodation costs first included in conference brochure; \$40 single, \$50 double, \$5 each additional person at the Lake Morey Resort.
Conference registration cost for VRPA members was \$16 including lunch, \$10 conference only, \$25 for commercial vendors.
VRPA began selling Great Escape tickets as a summer promotion.
- 1985 **President Ronald Reagan established the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors to review public and private recreation opportunities, policies and programs and make recommendations for the future.**
Dr. Wilbur F. LaPage, Member, President's Commission on Americans Outdoors and Director, NH Division of Parks and Recreation, was the conference keynote speaker.
- 1987 **Conference sessions focused on implementing the report of the 1985 President's Commission on Americans Outdoors.**
Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund established.
- 1988 **Vermont Trails and Greenway Council formed.**
- 1989 VRPA newsletter re-introduced.
- 1980-89 New conference topics emphasized physical fitness, wellness, lifestyle, nutrition, special event programming, cost savings strategies and revenue generation. One entire conference focused on implementing the 1987 report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, which was a follow-up to the 1962 ORRRC Commission report.

1990s

- 1990 **Theresa Brungardt died at age 97; she was inducted into the NRPA Robert W. Crawford Hall of Fame in 1997.**
1st time conference extended into a second day.
- 1991 NRPA Small Town Institute and Governor's Conference combined; conference planning committee included in-state and out-of-state people, with the chair from Connecticut.
First session on skateboards, rollerblades and facilities for bicycle and ATV courses.
1st time advertising appeared in the conference brochure.
- 1992 Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, VT's only National Park Service site, was created in Woodstock to honor the national conservation efforts of three Vermonters: George Perkins Marsh, Frederick H. Billings and Laurance S. Rockefeller.
- 1993 **50th Anniversary Governor's Conference on Recreation. The theme was "50 Years of Recreation and Parks". A 24-page special program booklet celebrated the conference's 5 decades of achievements. The program ended with a cake and ice cream anniversary party.**
Continuing education credits first mentioned in the conference brochure.
- 1994 1st VRPA scholarship presented to a college student.
- 1996 **VRPA employs first part-time executive director, George Plumb. George had previously been the Recreation Chief and Trails Coordinator at FPR.**
1st time keynote speaker pictured with write up in conference brochure.
- 1997 VRPA assumed sole responsibility for the Governor's Conference on Recreation.
- 1998 1st two-color conference brochure.
- 1990-99 Trails, greenways, lakes, rivers and open space were key conference topics in the 1990s. New topics included recreation benefits, risk management and sustainable tourism. Maintaining recreation facilities and areas continued to be important, and skateboards were discussed for the first time.



2000s

- 2001 Last time George Plumb served on the conference planning committee. He served for 33 years, from 1968–2001, and like Theresa Brungardt, George's efforts helped make this conference the vibrant meeting it is today.
- 2003 Conference sponsors and their logos appear in the brochure for the first time.
- 2004 1st session on dog parks.
30-minute mini-sessions expanded conference offerings.
- 2005 1st "Vermont's Finest Silent Auction" organized by Carol Hartshorn, Green Mountain College. Conference donations topped \$8500 in value.
U.S. Forest Service 100th anniversary. Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest was established in 1932.
Richard Louv published the groundbreaking, and influential "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder"
- 2007 Pre-conference day of educational sessions and planned activities added to the conference.
1st commercial vendor social and fireworks.
- 2008 With a theme of "Get Out...Rediscover the Outdoors", the conference addressed Richard Louv's book. The keynote speaker was Gina McCarthy, Commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection, who subsequently was appointed to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by President Barack Obama. She discussed Connecticut's "No Child Left Inside" program, including ways to bring children and nature together in communities.
- 2009 1st full color conference brochure, including pictures.
Silent auction grew to 200+ items valued at over \$20,000.
- 2000-09 Children became a major topic in the new century. "No Child Left Inside", a national and state policy/program outgrowth of Richard Louv's book led to sessions on getting children and families outdoors and youth programming. Other new topics included partnerships, natural playgrounds, dog parks and web design.

2010s

- 2013 Theresa Brungardt's family first attended the conference to help present the Brungardt awards.
Theresa Brungardt recognized as a Legend by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.
- 2014 Conference expanded to a full two-day meeting.
- 2015 The conference name changed from the Governor's Conference on Recreation to the Vermont Conference on Recreation.
1st use of new conference logo in brochure.
The Land and Water Conservation Fund's 50th anniversary was celebrated at the conference.
- 2016 Conference celebrated the National Park Service's 100th anniversary.
- 2017 Online conference registration initiated.
- 2018 75th Vermont Conference on Recreation. The theme is "Honoring the Past and Inspiring the Future". The keynote speaker is Charlie McCabe, Director, Center for City Park Excellence for the Trust for Public Land.

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