

# MONTEREY COUNTY



## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER

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June 23, 2017

Honorable Mark E. Hood  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
240 Church Street  
Salinas, CA 93901

**Re: 2016-2017 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report - "Preservation of Historical Documents of Monterey County"**

To The Honorable Mark E. Hood, Presiding Judge:

The following is in response to Findings F1- F9 and Recommendations R1- R3 of the 2016-2017 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report - "Preservation of Historical Documents of Monterey County".

**Findings 1 - 9:**

**F1:** The archivists and historians employed by the different agencies are well educated in their field and take great care in their duties.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding as it relates to the Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder's Office.**

**F2:** Most agencies in Monterey County charged with the task to maintain and store historical records and artifacts do the best that they can with the facilities and funds they have available.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding as it relates to the Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder's Office.**

**F3:** The documents stored and maintained in these repositories vary. The most modern and up to date methods are those maintained in a temperature and humidity controlled vault at the Monterey County Historical Society.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees that documents are stored and maintained in a variety of ways throughout Monterey County and its Offices. It is unknown by this office if the most modern and up to date methods are those at the Monterey County Historical Society.**

**F4:** The volumes of records in the vestibule of the office of the Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder, although preserved, may be damaged by public use. These documents are neither temperature nor humidity controlled. Additionally, access to the title transfer records is uncontrolled.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees partially with this finding. The volumes referenced are located in the County Clerk/Recorder's public access area and represent only a small number of**

books maintained by the Office. These books have already been digitized and although customers are currently free to view these books on their own, the viewing area is subject to constant supervision and monitoring by way of a closed circuit video camera surveillance system. In the very near future these volumes, as suggested and agreed upon, will be stored off-site and will be available only in supervised and arranged conditions.

F5: Historical documents and photos should be digitized and available to the public on-line, to lessen the amount of handling of documents.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder partially agrees with this finding. In 2010, the Monterey County Recorder's Office converted all of its official real property records (microfilm and books) dating back to 1850 into tiff images; current real property records are digitized on an ongoing daily basis and have been since 1996. As for vital records (birth/death/marriage), since 1996 they have been digitized in-house on a daily basis and, going backward from that date, vital record books/filings are being digitized in-house back to 1850 (currently the progress on digitization is at least back to 1963). Current law prohibits the placement of any of these images on the internet but they are accessible to the public through the use of computers in the County Clerk/Recorder's office public access area Monday - Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Alternatively, the official real property record index, without images, may be viewed on the internet, 24 hours a day, via the County Clerk/Recorder's website. The vital record index, without images, may only be viewed in the Office upon completion of a State mandated request form.**

F6: The historical documents and artifacts of Monterey County are valuable assets to the citizens of California, Monterey County and residents of the cities located within the county. As such they should be protected to ensure proper storage, maintenance, and handling.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding.**

F7: Not all the locations that store and maintain historical documents are staffed by trained archivists.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding.**

F8: Some entities, i.e. Monterey County Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder, are able to "hire" outside companies to digitize their data. Others rely on the generosity of volunteers.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding.**

F9: Monterey County stores many of the historical documents in a warehouse. These documents are not in humidity or temperature controlled environments.

**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this finding as it relates to the Monterey County Clerk/Recorder's Office and its hard copy original documents.**

### **Recommendations 1-3:**

R1: All Cities and agencies within Monterey County should catalog and index all historical documentation they maintain.

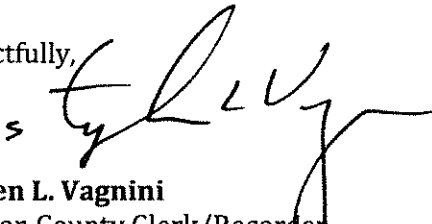
**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this recommendation. As one of its mandated duties, the Monterey County Clerk/Recorder's Office has always and will continue to maintain an index and image of all its recorded and filed historical documents.**

**R2:** This index once created should be shared between each city and all county historical agencies.  
**The Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder agrees with this recommendation. The Monterey County Clerk/Recorder's Index is available on our website or can also be reviewed on the computers in our public access area Monday - Friday between the hours 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.**

**R3:** Monterey County offices should have all their historical documents stored in humidity and temperature controlled environments. To address the lack of funding to protect these documents the County Clerk should add a small assessment on documents requested to generate revenue.

**The Monterey County Clerk/Recorder's Office agrees that all historical documents should be stored in humidity and temperature controlled environments. This would require working with the State and the County to find the best viable way of providing funding for such a facility or adding humidity and temperature control components to our existing Records Retention facility. Such a financial burden cannot be imposed solely upon persons who are currently requesting documents from the Monterey County Clerk/Recorder's Office.**

Respectfully,



**Stephen L. Vagnini**  
Assessor-County Clerk/Recorder  
Monterey County Assessor-Clerk/Recorder's Office

cc: Grand Jury  
Lew Bauman, CAO  
Manuel T. Gonzalez, Asst. CAO  
Mary Adams, Chair and Members of the Mo. Co. Board of Supervisors  
Charles J. McKee, County Counsel