



Archives Current

Newsletter of the Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc.

Fall 2011

Indiana State Archives Adds a WOW to Online Research!

Yes, it's true. *Family Tree Magazine* has identified the Indiana State Digital Archives as one of its 101 Best Websites for 2011. Unlike last year, this award encompasses all types of genealogy sites including the subscription sites such as Footnote.com. We are one of only a few states sites that made the cut.

Historians of Indiana can also find the Indiana State Digital Archives useful as it provides a portal to many state and local government records found in the Indiana State Archives. The Digital Archives continues to grow and will contain more databases in the future.

Congratulations to staff and volunteers. This wouldn't have happened with you!

And if **that** wasn't enough, the Indiana Digital Archives (www.indianadigitalarchives.org) has been named a "Best State Website" by *Family Tree Magazine* for the second consecutive year. The "Best



State Website" list honors America's leading genealogy research websites. The seventy-five sites listed represent the go-to bookmarks for browsing America's past, state by state.

The Indiana Digital Archives joined Indiana State Library: Genealogy Collection (www.in.gov/library/genealogy.htm) as one of only two honorees from the State of Indiana. "This recognition by *Family Tree Magazine* is another great honor for the Indiana State Archives and is especially rewarding for State Archives staff and the dozens of volunteers whose years of hard work have made the Indiana Digital Archives a success," said Jim Corridan, Director of the Commission on Public Records and State Archivist. "The Digital Archives has become increasingly popular among researchers due to its ability to instantly connect them to valuable historical records and other holdings within the Indiana State Archives."



About the Indiana Digital Archives

The Indiana Digital Archives (www.indianadigitalarchives.org) is operated by the State Archives Division of the Indiana Commission on Public Records. The result of a cooperative partnership made possible by a grant from the Library of Congress and administered by the Washington State Archives, the Digital Archives has more than 2.5 million searchable records online. Other partners include the states of Colorado,

Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, and Tennessee.

From before statehood in 1816 and on through to its approaching bicentennial, Indiana has been home to thousands of settlers and immigrants. The Digital Archives enables Hoosiers and citizens worldwide to browse the vast collection of historical and vital records housed at the State Archives.

A Message* from Stephen E. Towne President, Friends of the Indiana State Archives

The records in the Indiana State Archives are priceless, one-of-a-kind treasures not to be found anywhere else. The two state Constitutions, correspondence of Indiana's governors dating back to the territorial period over two hundred years ago, acts of the General Assembly, and the case files of the state Supreme Court are all in the State Archives. They are your family heirlooms, the records that help define who you are and establish and protect your rights and freedoms. They should be guarded carefully.

But those records are in grave danger. State administrators ten years ago decided "temporarily" to house the State Archives in a rickety and dangerously unsafe warehouse on Indianapolis' eastside. This pole construction building, built in 1968 to accommodate a vinyl record factory, has perpetual problems with roof leaks after heavy rains and snows. Water has frequently dripped on the records—your priceless documents—soaking many of them. Damaged records include state Supreme Court case files. Time and again, the hardworking and dedicated State Archives staff have rescued records after these leaks. Tornadoes in 2002 and 2008 narrowly missed striking that weak building, which cannot withstand high winds; nearby buildings of similar construction were destroyed. Must we risk having the Archives blown into Ohio?

On top of the threats from a leaking roof is the more insidious problem of terrible temperature and humidity controls where the records are kept. Humidity and temperatures in the stacks fluctuate dramatically causing the two-hundred-year-old papers to get brittle and weaken. When it's hot outside, the air conditioning dries the air to desert-like dryness levels; when it's cold outside, the heating system inside bakes. Days, weeks, months, and years of this stress and strain take a toll on paper, photographs, and film.

State leaders have ignored these threats to the records. Instead, in a temporary expedient, state administrators have recently earmarked over a million dollars to re-roof the old warehouse in which the State Archives is "temporarily" housed. But this does nothing to address the more insistent problem of the bad HVAC underneath the roof. Re-roofing that warehouse amounts to throwing good money after bad in search of a temporary fix. It makes little sense to spend heavily on maintaining an inadequate structure. "Penny wise but pound foolish" is not good stewardship.

The Friends of the Indiana State Archives, a non-profit statewide organization formed to support the Indiana State Archives in its important work, has for years advocated that the state's precious records need better protection. We

believe the best, most cost-effective solution for the citizens of Indiana is to house the State Archives in a purpose-built structure that will be safe, secure, and environmentally friendly to the records, and one that is inexpensive to maintain. The building should also be sited on the state government campus in downtown Indianapolis where citizens can safely visit, see, use, and experience the priceless documentary treasures that are theirs. The State Archives should be taken out of the expensive-to-maintain warehouse that is little better than your backyard tool shed and placed in a suitable building before a heavy rain, snow, or high wind destroys that unsafe shell and its irreplaceable contents.

As Indiana prepares to celebrate its bicentennial—200 years of statehood—in 2016, it is fitting for the state to build a monument that will symbolize the past, present, and future of our state. We recommend that a new State Archives building to house the state's treasures stand as that memorial to the achievements of the past and the triumphs of the future. A purpose-built and safe building for the State Archives to protect the records of executive, legislative, and judicial achievement will symbolize our determination to continue the American experiment in a government of laws and justice for all.

- This message was sent as an Op-Ed piece to newspapers statewide.

Dripping on history

Published: October 21, 2011 3:00 a.m.

Editorials, The Journal Gazette

Many Hoosiers very likely assume the state's most precious historical documents are safely ensconced at the Indiana State Library or the Indiana State Museum. They would be horrified to know that important documents – such as the Indiana Constitution – are stored in a leaky pole barn on the east side of Indianapolis. And archive supporters can't seem to get state leaders interested in rectifying the situation.

"It's a situation that state bureaucrats and elected officials just want to sweep under the rug," said Stephen Towne, an archivist at IUPUI and president of Friends of the Indiana State Archives. "If we don't spend a dollar here, we are going to have to spend more down the road. It's a question of good government. We have to take care of our records."

A small state agency called the Commission on Public Records manages the archives. They were moved about 10 years ago because of renovations at the Indiana State Library. But when the renovations were completed, there was no effort to move the archives back.

Friends of the Indiana State Archives proposed a public/private partnership to build a new home similar to the project that led to the state museum's move from the old Indianapolis City Hall to a new building in the White River State Park in 2002. The organization

hired an architectural firm to complete a study, which resulted in recommending a plot of unused state-owned land across from the state library and Indiana Statehouse.

"Unfortunately, the Daniels administration hasn't been interested in the issue," Towne said.

He said it doesn't have to be a Frank Gehry-designed building. "We don't need a fancy structure; we need a workaday building that will have the proper environmental conditions to protect the records," Towne said.

Protecting the records is not only of interest to those in the capital. The state archives also house records for county and local governments across the state.

The archives house many of Indiana's DD214 forms – proof of military service – for World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

"These records are used constantly by veterans and their families to determine veteran benefits," Towne said.

Curt Witcher, manager of the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library, said he and his staff tap into the state archives at least six times each day and often refer customers there. The archives include naturalization records that tell who came to the country and settled in Indiana.

The state archive also houses the "Negro Registration" records

for Indiana. When Indiana adopted its constitution it rejected slavery, but the state was not welcoming to blacks. Indiana required all blacks to register and prove they were free. The Genealogy Center depends heavily on these records when researching for families with black roots.

The endangered state archives are not only a threat to our state history. The deteriorating conditions are a lost opportunity.

Witcher also notes the popularity of websites such as ancestry.com. He said upwards of 40 million people do some family history research activity every week, and many states are choosing to capitalize on this interest as a tourism draw.

"It's embarrassing for me as a native-born Hoosier," Witcher said. "There is no other state in the union that stores its archives in a leaky warehouse. All other states spend the money to protect their records even in these economic times."

Maintaining the archive of official Indiana records is a primary state duty. The Commission on Public Records should ask the governor to, at a minimum, appoint a task force of public officials and private community leaders to find a better permanent home.

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Supreme Court and State Archives: Working to Preserve Historic Indiana Cases



IUPUI student volunteer Abigail Kennedy cleans coal dust from court documents.

A collaborative effort between the State Archives Division of the Indiana Commission on Public Records and the Indiana Supreme Court has resulted in the cleaning, preservation, cataloging and posting in a database on the Internet, of approximately 31,000 Indiana Supreme Court cases

dating from 1791 to 1878. Ultimately, this project will encompass every decided and dismissed Indiana Supreme Court case from 1791 through the 1970s.

An improved catalog was one of the key factors of this effort. “We originally had to rely on very inadequate

indexes to look up these cases,” said Dr. Alan January, Director of Patron Services, Indiana State Archives. “Cases before 1868 had been arranged in alphabetical order by only the first defendant named, which of course, was fine if you knew the name. The people who were searching for the second party

had to look through thousands of files, which was not very easy.”

The *Indiana Courttimes* (September/October, 2011) published a full article on this important collaboration. To search the database of historic cases, go to courts.IN.gov/cases and choose “Supreme Court Archive Search.”

Announcing the Hoosier Historical Collections Article Prize

The *Indiana Magazine of History* announces the 2012 first annual Hoosier Historical Collections Article Prize, offered for the best article based upon resources found in three of the state’s primary historical collections: the Indiana State Library, the Indiana Historical Society, and the Indiana State Archives. The author of the winning submission will receive \$750.00 and publication in the IMH. The prize is made possible by grants

from those institutions.

The winning article must conform to the basic guidelines for IMH article submissions. (www.indiana.edu/~imaghist/home/editorial_policy.html)

Submissions must be received by December 31, 2012. This competition is not open to paid staff of the sponsoring institutions.



Thirty students from the Decatur Discovery Academy, Indianapolis visited the Indiana State Archives in October. The students are studying the influenza epidemic of 1918 and looking at the Indiana Gold Star Records (Indiana service men and women who died in World War I).

From our Boys School Collection:

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

Form K

June 23, 1915

TO THE COMPANY OFFICERS

All boys wearing shoes throughout the summer are to change socks twice weekly, as heretofore. One of these changes is to be made Sunday morning.

All boys going barefooted are to put on clean socks every Sunday morning. These are to be sent down to the laundry Monday morning and got back again in time for the next Sunday.

Guy C. Hanna, Superintendent.



Dale Armstrong and Alan January at the 2011 Genealogy & Local History Fair held at the Indiana State Library in October. Erin Larson, Sandy Ricketts, and Jennefer Burke also helped in the booth.



Alan January speaks with visitors at the Indiana State Fair in August 2011.

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Corridan, President-Elect of COSA

Jim Corridan, Director and State Archivist, Indiana Commission on Public Records, was elected in July as President-elect of the Council of State Archivists (COSA), and will assume the presidency next summer.

The organization is composed of the 50 state and the 6 territorial archivists in the USA. The mission of COSA is to strengthen state and territorial archives in their work to preserve America's historical records.

To follow our tweets visit <http://twitter.com/indianaarchives> and visit us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Indiana-State-Archives/314341008346> (Indiana-State-Archives)

Tape is Evil

*So how do you mend something
if you're not supposed to use (evil) tape?*

In the lab we use paste made of wheat starch or methyl cellulose. We paint it on strips of Japanese tissue paper that is acid-free. The strips are applied like tape or bandages and then we put weights on them to keep everything flat until it is dry. These repairs are reversible with plain water.

If you want to learn how to do this, there are workshops at the Historical Society and

the Archives.

We do NOT recommend laminating anything. The heat used in the process damages the item, the plastic film used for lamination damages the item, and the process is not reversible. It's just a giant piece of sticky tape!

The album page in this picture is just one of many, unfortunately.

