

Newsletter
of the
Illinois
State
Archives
&
The Illinois
State Historical
Records
Advisory Board

Jesse White
Secretary of State
&
State Archivist

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Secretary of State Jesse White



Reference requests to the Illinois State Archives totaled nearly 11.3 million in 2002, an increase of nearly 2.5 million from the previous year. The significant increase in requests is attributed to the addition of the Illinois Death Certificate Index (1916-1950), which became available on the State Archives Web page in early 2002.

State Archives usage statistics have grown exponentially since 1995 as my office's Web site has expanded to include more Archives databases and other historical information. The majority of requests are made anonymously from unspecified computer terminals with little or no interaction with our staff. Although many of our users are unknown to us personally, we appreciate their growing numbers.

With the addition of the new Digitized Federal Township Plat database to the Web site in January, the State Archives anticipates even more impressive usage statistics at the end of 2003. As State Archivist, I am pleased to be able to offer this useful tool for accessing your legal, historical and genealogical document needs.

Jesse White

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Secretary of State & State Archivist

Digitized Federal Township Plats project complete

The State Archives staff have posted all 3,478 Federal Township Plats (record series 953.012) on the Archives section of the Secretary of State Web site, culminating a yearlong digitization project through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Copies of these township plats originally were transferred from the U.S. Surveyor General to the Illinois Governor's office in 1865. In 1957, the records were turned over to the Illinois Secretary of State for deposit in the State Archives. Since then, the plat records have received considerable use by land surveyors, archeologists, engineers, environmentalists, geographers, geologists and

historians. Family historians and genealogists in increasing numbers also have consulted the plats for their visual representations of ancestor home sites.

The plat images were digitally scanned at the State Archives in Springfield by a contracted vendor. The Secretary of State's Information Technology Department then loaded the compressed, digital images onto the Archives server for Internet access. Prior to completion of this major project, original high-resolution images of the Federal Township Plats were available only onsite at the Illinois State Archives or in Washington, D.C. Now they are available at <http://landplats.ilsos.net/Flash/Welcome.html>.

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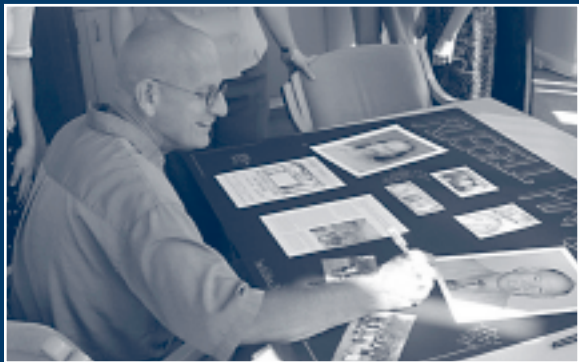


Douglas County historian Chuck Knox presented copies of his book, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Stories of Douglas County, Illinois Civil War Veterans*, to Secretary of State Jesse White for use in the Illinois State Library and the State Archives. Left to right are state Rep. Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet), Caryl and Chuck Knox, Secretary White, State Library Director Jean Wilkins and State Archives Director John Daly.

Archives Board remembers Archie Motley

At its February 2003 meeting, the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board selected a committee to frame a resolution to express the board's condolences concerning the death of Archie Motley on Nov. 11, 2002. The board passed the committee's resolution by consensus. It reads as follows:

"We the members of the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board hereby resolve to memorialize our friend and colleague, the late Archie Motley. During his more than 42 years at the Chicago Historical Society, Archie reached out into his community to acquire significant manuscripts collections, which document the city's evolution and growth, especially from the viewpoint of the average citizen. With his intimate knowledge of his city's history and of its source material, Archie guided a variety of researchers through the society's complex holdings and at the same time pointed them towards resources which could be obtained elsewhere.



Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

"Archie was a founding member of the Midwest Archives Conference, served as its first president, and continued to be active in its affairs until the time of his death. He also was an involved member of the Society of American Archivists, served on its council and on a host of its committees, and was recognized for his service to it and to his profession by being named a SAA Fellow in 1997. In related endeavors Archie was a founder of the Chicago Area Archivists and the Chicago Urban History Seminar and a member of a number of boards, including the Archdiocese of Chicago Archives Advisory Board, the Supreme Court of Illinois Historical Committee, the Board of the Illinois Labor History Society, the Northern Illinois Regional History Center Advisory Board and the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board.

"Archie's colleagues on the Illinois State Archives Advisory Board consider ourselves to have been his friends as well. We express our sincere condolences to his wife Valerie Gerrard Browne, director of the Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola University of Chicago, and their daughter Mara, a senior at Evanston Township High School."

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Accessing the Township Plats

A multi-tiered access platform was created for the Federal Township Plats, including the following links:

- Introduction — Provides an overview of the project.
- History — Outlines how the U.S. Land Ordinance of 1785 provided for the surveying and sale of federal public lands in the west.
- About the Township Plats — Defines a legal township and broadly covers the natural and man-made features of the plats described.
- Rectangular Survey System — Provides the basics for surveying townships in relation to orientation and measurements.
- Georeferencing — Addresses researchers who want to affix current coordinates onto the digital images through the use of geographic information systems (GIS) software.
- Public Domain Land Sales — A link to the State Archives Public Domain Land Sales database enables users to locate the first purchaser of any Illinois public domain parcel. Likewise, the Archives' Public Domain Land Sales database has a link to the Federal Township Plats site. Furthermore, the Public Domain Land Sales database site contains a link to the Federal Land Patents Database of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. (Land patents were issued by the federal government when public domain parcels were paid for in full.)

Viewing the Plats

A graphic legend depicts the symbols and measurements surveyors employed while drawing the township plats.

- Viewing Tips — Offers helpful advice for users maneuvering through the site.
- View the Plats — Takes a user to the actual images of the digitized plat maps. An introduction explains that in most instances, individual townships have more than one certified plat. Users have their choice among multiple plats for most townships. Each certified plat is dated by the U.S. Surveyor General.

Viewing Plats by Region

Following is a guide to viewing a specific regional township plat map:

- Choose a region of the state. A map of that region will be displayed. Individual counties are delineated and the names are printed within.
- Select a county. A map is displayed showing grid coordinates and political township boundaries.
- Select the appropriate Federal Township Plat(s) by legal township and range grid coordinates or by political township designation. A compressed image will appear. Built-in controls allow the user to zoom in on the areas of interest.
- Select Print for copies of the images as they appear on the screen.

State Archives acquires records on capital punishment, criminal justice system

The records of two reform commissions created by former Gov. George Ryan have been accessioned by the State Archives. The records include a study of capital punishment in Illinois and recommendations on the improvement of the state's criminal justice system.

Commission on Capital Punishment

The Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment was established by executive order on March 10, 2000. The commission was formed in response to the fact that between the time the death penalty was reestablished in Illinois in 1977 and early 2000, 13 prisoners awaiting execution had their death sentences and criminal convictions vacated by the courts. As a result, public outcries over an imperfect criminal justice system spawned debate over capital punishment in the state. In January 2000, Gov. Ryan declared a moratorium on capital punishment in Illinois and formed a Commission on Capital Punishment to:

- examine the capital punishment process in the state;
- examine ways to improve the system from investigation through trial, judicial appeal and executive review;
- consider the findings and considerations of the contemporary House Death Penalty Task Force and the Special Supreme Court Committee on Capital Cases; and
- Make recommendations or proposals that would ensure the application and administration of the death penalty in Illinois would be just, fair and accurate.

The 11-member commission made its final report on April 15, 2002. On Jan. 10, 2003, Gov. Ryan commuted the sentences of all 167 Illinois death row inmates. In 164 cases, the sentences were commuted to life in prison while the other three were commuted to 40 years each.

Archives accessions from the Commission on Capital Punishment include research and case files.

Research Files (1977-2002)

10 1/3 cu. ft. Includes data from various state governments, the federal government and various foreign governments as well as from a wide range of domestic and international advocacy organizations. Subjects include prosecutorial misconduct, race, jury instruction, proportionality review, evidence discovery, capital punishment system funding, defense attorney competence, statistical case summaries, mental competence, exculpatory evidence, videotaping police interrogations, the commission's own hearings and the commission's final report.

Death Row Inmate Case Files (1981-2003)

27 1/3 cu. ft. These files cover the 167 prisoners whose death sentences were commuted on Jan. 10, 2003, as well as other death row inmates dating back to 1981. Individual files contain copies of prisoner data from the Department of Corrections, narrative summaries of case histories from the Illinois Death Penalty Education Project, and Illinois Supreme Court, U.S. District Court and U.S.

Supreme Court considerations.

Included with the files on the 167 commutations are copies of the commutations, state's attorney statements and summary forms. State's attorney statements provide a narrative of the crime circumstance, violence level, indication or not of remorse, in-depth indication of prior criminal activity, behavior while in prison, indication of prior drug use, and a statement as to what the conviction was based upon (e.g., confession corroborated by evidence). Summary forms provide a checklist of mitigating circumstances and procedural misconduct.

Illinois Criminal Code Rewrite and Reform Commission

The Illinois Criminal Code Rewrite and Reform Commission was created by executive order on May 4, 2000. The commission was formed as a result of the fact that the Illinois Criminal Code of 1961 had grown from 72 pages as originally enacted to more than 1,200 pages today. Amendments and additions to the Code over the last 40-plus years have been made on an ad hoc basis without any comprehensive review of the Code itself. As a result, provisions overlap and contradict, offenses have become obsolete or out of touch with significant changes in society, penalties are disproportionate to the harm involved or in comparison to other offenses, major criminal offenses are defined outside the criminal code, and important common-law rules remain in force but not codified.

The purpose of the 33-member commission was to:

- conduct a comprehensive study and analysis of the state's existing criminal and procedural and sentencing laws;
- propose more simple and clear language and a more coherent structure for these laws;
- review offenses and penalties for proportionality as well as for public protection, crime deterrence, and offender rehabilitation; and
- address the changing nature of crime in such areas as gang activity, drug trafficking, and computer technology.

The commission made its final report on Jan. 9, 2003. The State Archives accession from the commission consists of administrative files from May 4, 2000, through Jan. 1, 2003, which make up a little more than 3 cu. ft. of files. Included are draft code revisions, commission member comments on drafts, journal articles, copies of criminal codes in other states, and commission minutes, correspondence, memoranda and agenda. Subjects include the Code revision of 1961 and the various aspects of the current proposed draft (e.g., offense harm, nonexculpatory defenses, corporate liability).

Both the records of the Commission on Capital Punishment and the Illinois Criminal Code Rewrite and Reform Commission have been fully arranged and described for ready access. Both are available for use in the State Archives reference room in Springfield.

A Summary Guide to Local Governmental Records in the Illinois Regional Archives, second edition (1999), 265 pp. — \$6

Descriptive Inventory of the Archives of the State of Illinois, second edition (1997), 940 pp.; or CD ROM — \$20

Chicago City Council Proceedings Files, 1833-1871: An Inventory (1987), 989 pp., and Chicago City Council Proceedings Files, 1833-1871: An Index (1987), 93 microfiche (18,714 pp.) — \$35

Illinois Public Domain Land Sales (2001), explanatory booklet (7 pp.), and CD-ROM (538,750 entries) — \$25

The Margaret Cross Norton Working Papers, 1924-1958 (1993), 8 - 35 mm microfilm rolls with An Inventory and Index (1993), 7 microfiche (1,055 pages) — \$60

Hard Times in Illinois, 1930-1940 (2002), teacher's manual (119 pp.) and 50 document facsimiles — \$10*

The Illinois and Michigan Canal, 1827-1911 (1998), teacher's manual (115 pp.) and 50 document facsimiles with transcriptions — \$12*

Illinois at War, 1941-1945 (1994), teacher's manual (119 pp.) and 50 document facsimiles — \$12*

From the Ashes, 1872-1900: A Selection of Documents from the Proceedings Files of the Chicago City Council (1990), teacher's manual (123 pp.) and 50 document facsimiles with transcriptions. — \$10*

Early Chicago, 1833-1871: A Selection of City Council Proceedings Files from the Illinois State Archives (1986, 1999), teacher's manual (115 pp.) and 50 document facsimiles with transcriptions — \$14*

*** Teaching packets are available FREE to Illinois educational institutions by submitting a request on letterhead stationery. All other requests are filled for the fee listed. To order publications, please contact: Illinois State Archives, Norton Building, Publications Unit, Springfield, IL 62756, 217-782-2226. Please make checks payable to Secretary of State.**