

## LIBRARY HISTORY

The Belleville Public Library was started over 170 years ago by German immigrants known as "Latin Farmers." To preserve their cultural heritage as well as provide for its growth, these German men met regularly for the discussion and exchange of ideas. On June 26, 1836, these men decided to pool their books and house them in a place easily accessible to all for circulation. At the next regular meeting, the German Library Society of St. Clair County was formed. This first "library" was kept at the home of appointed librarian, Dr. Schott.

The library kept growing, mainly through donations, and in 1853 was moved to the Odd Fellows Hall in Belleville.

In 1861, the German Library Society consolidated with the Belleville Saengerbund, an organization for the culture of music. The Library was then moved to Eimer Hall and was called the Belleville Saengerbund and Library Society.

In 1883, the society offered its book collection to the city of Belleville as a donation to be used as a Public Library. This collection consisted of about 6,000 volumes of general literature, history, science and fiction, plus newspapers and periodicals. There were three times as many books written in German as in English. The library collection was moved to the remodeled Union Engine House on Jackson Street.

In 1916, the library's present location was dedicated. The library building was donated by the Carnegie Foundation with the agreement that the City would provide a site and pledge itself to maintain the library. In 1973, a two-story addition was added to the original Carnegie Library.

## ARCHIVES POLICY

The Archives and Local History Collection is located on the second floor of the main branch of the Belleville Public Library.

The majority of the collection is non-circulating. These books may not be checked out, but copies may be made for 20 cents a page. A portion of the biographies and books on local history can be checked out like other circulating books in the library.

The Founders' Collection and other items in the vault may be viewed for research purposes only because of their condition. If a copy has been made of the original, we urge you to view the copy to preserve the originals as much as possible. If you would like to view something from the vault, a member of the library staff will retrieve the book for you. While viewing these books, only pencils should be used. This is because pencil marks can be erased if made unlike ink from pens which is permanent. Also, pages from many of the books located in the vault cannot be copied because of their fragility. Written notes, of course, are permissible. After viewing, you must return the book to a library staff member.

### Our Hours:

Monday—Thursday: 9:00am - 8:00pm

Friday—Saturday: 9:00am - 5:00pm

Closed Sundays

## BELLEVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

### THE ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION AT YOUR LIBRARY



121 East Washington St.  
Belleville, IL 62220

Genealogy and Archives Section—2nd Floor  
Telephone: 618-234-0441 ext. 22

# THE ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION AT YOUR LIBRARY

## FOUNDERS' COLLECTION

The Belleville Public Library was started when a group of educated, German farmers decided to pool their books together in a common place for circulation. Many of those books have been kept and preserved by the library. Today, the Founders' Collection consists of over 3,400 books that made up that first circulating library. Most of the books are in German, with a few in French, Greek, Latin, Spanish, and Hebrew. The books in the Founders' Collection cover a wide range of topics including Philosophy and Religion, Sociology, Art, History, Biographies and Memoirs, and Geography. Because of their age and quality, each book in the Founders' Collection has been placed in an acid-free box and moved to the library vault. These books can be viewed for research purposes in the Archives.

## LIBRARY COLLECTION

The library collection includes important documents such as the *Charter of the Belleville Saengerbund and Library Society*, *Constitution of the German Library Association in St. Clair County*, and photographs from the dedication of the Carnegie Library in 1916 as well as library meeting minutes and annual reports dating from 1895 to the present.

## LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Local History Collection is made up of a number of resources helpful to the researcher wanting to know more about Belleville, St. Clair County, and surrounding Illinois counties. Some of these resources include:

- Census indexes and records on microfilm for St. Clair and surrounding counties
- County history books for St. Clair and many other counties throughout the state of Illinois
- City and town histories and illustrated books from centennial celebrations
- Church histories and directories from Belleville and surrounding communities
- Belleville and East St. Louis city directories
- Plat Books and Atlases for St. Clair County, surrounding counties, and the state of Illinois
- Newspapers from Belleville and East St. Louis as well as Centralia, Collinsville, Du Quoin, Freeburg, Lebanon, Marissa, Mascoutah, The *Messenger*, Millstadt, O'Fallon, Nashville, New Athens, New Baden, and Sparta for select years.
- Books on Illinois plants and wildlife
- Books and video cassettes on Indigenous peoples, focusing on the Indians of Cahokia
- Biographies and memoirs of famous Illinoisans such as Abraham Lincoln, Adlai Stevenson, Gen. John A. Logan, U. S. Grant, and Paul Simon.
- Historic Preservation Collection which highlights some of the oldest homes in Belleville with guidelines of how to preserve and restore homes.
- Books relating to local military history including books on local Civil War regiments



and Scott Air Force Base

- Periodical Collections including the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* and the *Journal of Illinois History*
- The "Papers of Pierre Menard" and the "Kaskaskia Manuscripts" on microfilm
- City of Belleville City Council Proceedings and Ordinances dating back to the 1850s

## HERITAGE QUEST ONLINE

The Library also subscribes to the genealogical and local history resource, Heritage Quest. With this database, you can find:

- U.S. Federal Census, 1790-1930
- Genealogy and Local History Book Collection which includes thousands of full-text books, family and local histories, city and county directories, church records, tax lists, etc.
- PERSI (Periodical Source Index) which contains a subject index to 1.7 million articles from genealogy and history periodicals
- Revolutionary War Pension Applications

This database is available on any computer in the library. No username or password is required. Remote access is available to BPL cardholders.