

Champaign County Historical Archives at The Urbana Free Library



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April 19, 2021



What is CCHA?

- Department of The Urbana Free Library
- Research-level collection on Champaign County history and genealogy
- Established in 1956
- Official repository for non-current Champaign County records since 1987
- Urbana Municipal Documents Center (1970s-1990s)
- Collections are open to the public
- Reference staff available during all open hours

What can you find?

- Primary focus is Champaign County
- Collections that document life from the 1830s through the present day
- Holdings are indexed in the Local History Online catalog available at:
<http://archivescatalog.urbanafreelibrary.org/polaris>
- Extensive holdings for the rest of Illinois
- States that supplied significant migration routes of communities that comprise Champaign County



Collections

- Books and journals
- Champaign County records
- City of Urbana records
- Newspapers
- Directories
- Yearbooks
- Records and manuscripts



- Photographs
- Maps and atlases
- Oral histories
- Local organization newsletters
- Special collections
- Chanute Air Museum collection
- Digital databases and resources



Chanute Collection

- Acquired in 2015
- Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum
- Maps, blueprints, photographs, subject files, base publications, videos, scrapbooks, oral histories, personnel collections





The News-Gazette Archives Collection

- Collection housed at Lincoln Square Mall
- Over 40 file cabinets of subject and name files including clippings, photos, and records
- 350 boxes of subject clippings
- 35 bound volumes of smaller newspapers



The News-Gazette

News-Gazette Collection



Digital Exhibits

<https://urbanafree.omeka.net/>

LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY
THE URBANA FREE LIBRARY
Digital Exhibits

Home Exhibits Collections Records Local History Online Contact

Champaign's Gambling Hotspots In 1937

Credit: Sherrie Bowser, Tom Kuipers, and Allison Kilberg

In 1937, an unnamed *Evening Courier* reporter made a survey of the gambling conditions in Champaign. His 9-part series appeared nightly in the *Evening Courier* beginning April 29, 1937 and ending May 9, 1937. He found that even though gambling houses were hidden behind ambiguously marked doors, steep staircases, and peepholes, they were an open secret available to anyone. The writer of the series claimed no malice and supposedly did not intend for the articles to be vindictive. They merely wanted to make the police and community aware of the establishments and how they operate openly without rebuke.



The analysis of the *Evening Courier* series in this exhibit is supplemented by a brief history of gambling in Champaign County prior to 1937, as well as another example of vice and institutional corruption in the form of a dishonest mayor. The stories found within this exhibit are reminiscent of the noir stories of Chandler and Bogart but are tinged with the excitement of true crime. To learn more about gambling and other true crime in Champaign County, please visit the Champaign County Historical Archives at The Urbana Free Library.

Databases

We subscribe to a number of databases including:

- Ancestry Library Edition
- Find My Past
- Fold 3
- Heritage Quest
- MyHeritage Library Edition
- The News-Gazette
- Newspapers.com



Databases (continued)

- We partner with **FamilySearch** as an affiliate library, making materials from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, available to our patrons.
- If you are unable to find what you need here, our staff can help you make an **interlibrary loan** request to have materials sent to our library.



Digital Resources



- [Local History Online catalog](#)
- [Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections](#)
- [Illinois State Archives](#)
- [Archives Grid](#)
- Periodical Source Index (PERSI) through FindMyPast

Our Genealogy Resources

- Vital Records
- Cemetery Records
- Court Records
- City Directories
- Newspapers
- Social Organizations
- Yearbooks
- Family Files, Photographs, Genealogy Books
- Plat Maps, Grantor/Grantee land deed index

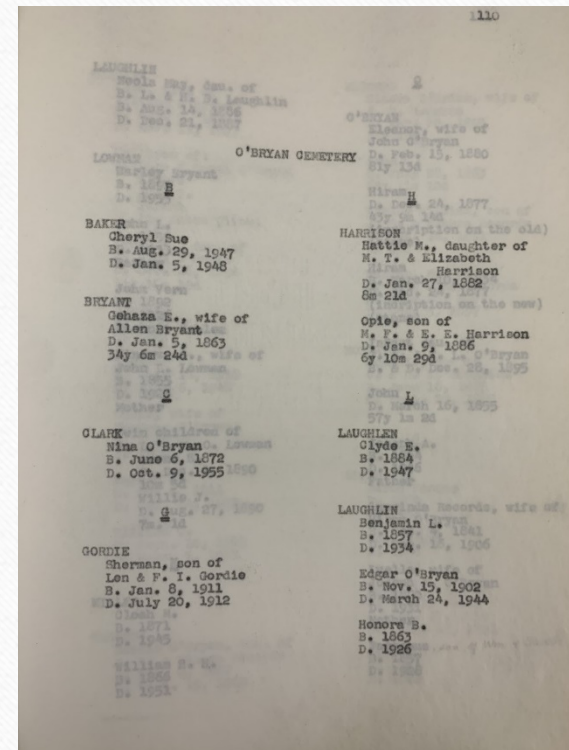
Vital Records

- Records of life events, issues by the government.
 - Birth (1878-1914)
 - Death (1878-2001)
 - Marriage (1833-1975)
 - Naturalization (1859-1906)
- Restrictions
 - Birth – 75 years
 - Death – 20 years
 - Marriage – 50 years



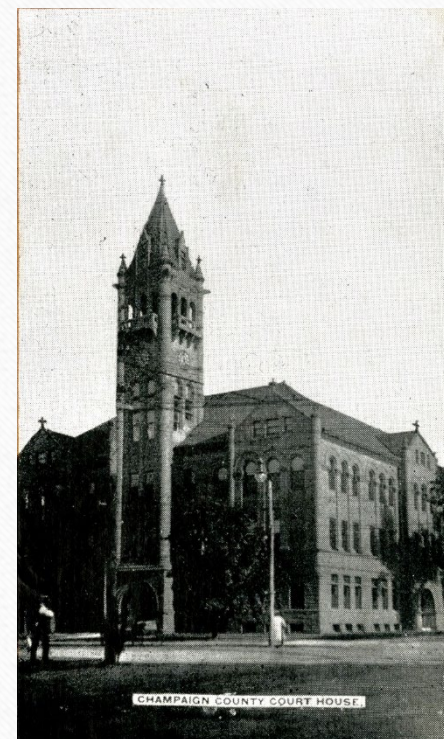
Cemetery, and Funeral Home Records

- Microfilmed cemetery records
- Cemetery record books
- Funeral home collections
 - Heath funeral home



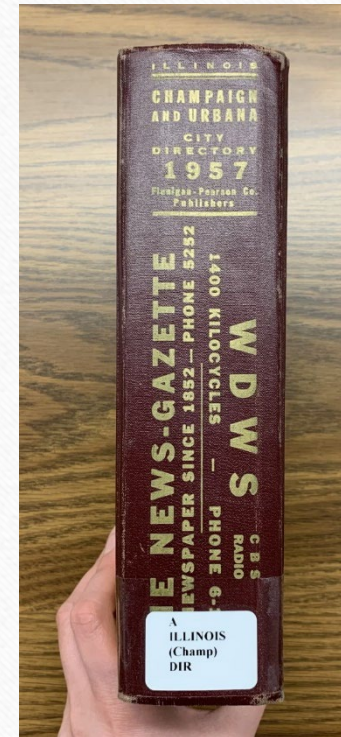
Court Records

- County Court and 6th Circuit Court
- Chancery court cases:
 - Divorces, foreclosures, titles, bills to quiet
- Probate court cases:
 - Wills
 - Testate – Will
 - Intestate – No will
- Establish where someone was living, land they owned, inheritance questions, related names.
- Organized by case number and year.



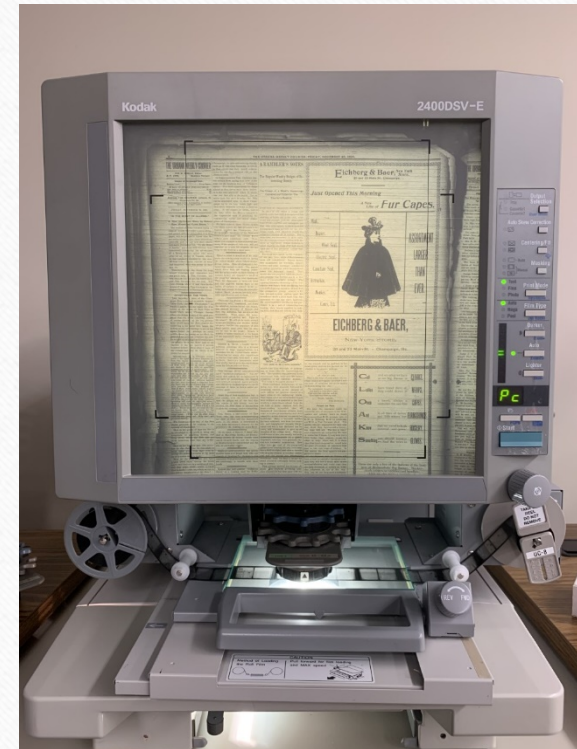
City Directories

- Index of names and addresses of people and businesses.
- City directories can be used to verify where someone lived or their occupation.
- Confirm details.
- Lead you to employment or business records.



Newspapers

- Wide microfilm selection, 1852-present
- Obituaries, birth, marriage announcements
- Social events
- Other sources for newspapers:
 - Newspapers.com – largest online newspaper database
 - PERSI – Through Find My Past, Periodical Source Index
 - Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections



Social Organizations

- League of Women Voters, Kiwanis, Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation
- Directories, membership lists, meeting minutes, promotional materials for events or parties
- Flesh out the details of an ancestor.



Yearbooks

- Almost complete Champaign County high schools, incomplete elementary and middle sets
- Search for photos
- Activities and organizations



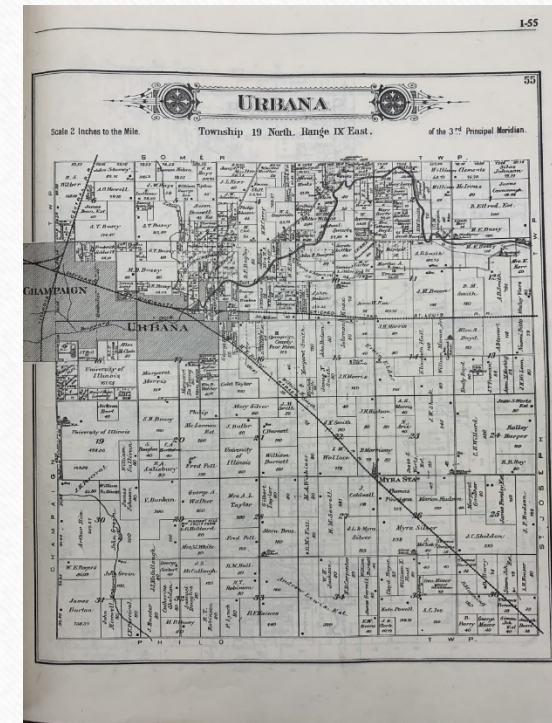
Family Files, Photographs, Family Genealogy Books

- Files of local family histories
 - Family businesses
 - Genealogy
 - Interviews/Oral Histories
- Corresponding family photo collections
- Family genealogy books



Plat Maps, Grantor/Grantee Land Deed Indexes

- Plat maps show who owned land
- Included land owners names
- Microfilmed Grantor/Grantee land deed indexes
 - shows who bought and sold land.



Local History Online Catalog Tutorial

The screenshot shows the top section of the website. At the top is a blue and green gradient banner with the text "LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY" in a stylized font, and "Local History Online | The Urbana Free Library" below it. Below the banner are three navigation links: "Catalog Home", "More Searches", and "Help", each with a small downward arrow. Below the navigation is a search area with a text input field, a search button (magnifying glass icon), and three buttons labeled "Subject", "Title", and "Name". To the right of the search area is a "Quick Tips" section with a list of instructions.

LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY
Local History Online | The Urbana Free Library

Catalog Home ▾ More Searches ▾ Help ▾

Browse Local History Online Headings:

Subject Title Name

Quick Tips ▾

- After typing your search term on the Quick Search page, click the Subject, Title, or Name buttons to browse headings.
- Names are indexed by surname-comma-first name (Example: Busey, Matthew)
- Subject includes streets and addresses.
- Streets and addresses are indexed by Street Name (Town Name), Cardinal Direction, House Number (Example: Green St (Urbana), West, 210)



Workshops and Events

We offer workshops on genealogy and local history topics throughout the year.

- Intermediate genealogy workshop
 - (5/29, 10 am-12 pm)
- Journeying Through the American Indian Way of Life
 - (6/3, 6 pm – 7:30 pm)
- Finding Family with DNA Testing
 - (7/8, 6 pm – 7:30 pm)

Genealogical Society and Research Night

The Champaign County Genealogical Society uses CCHA as its physical location during non-Covid times.

- Speakers 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm
- Research Night 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7pm
- <https://ilccgs.org/>



Visit Us



Open by appointment!

We are open 7 days per week:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday | 11:00 am – 5:00 pm

Wednesday | 11:00 am – 7:00 pm

Sunday | 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Contact Information

The Urbana Free Library

Champaign County Historical Archives

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urbanafreelibrary.org/local-history-genealogy