

Book of Clues: Using County Histories as a Resource

Elgin Genealogical Society

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Online Sources:

- [?] Accessible Archives (publisher)
- [?] Ancestry.com
- [?] Book publishers & reprints
 - Check the genealogical/historical society in the area for reprints (usually have updated indexes)
 - Genealogical Publishing Company
 - Heritage Books
 - Higginson Book Co.

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- [?] County & Town Histories
 - o <https://www.learnwebskills.com/patriot/countyhistories1.htm#ca>
- [?] Cyndi's List (will guide you by location or publisher, etc.)
 - o <https://www.cyndislist.com/us/>
- [?] FamilySearch.org
 - o Illinois Biographies
 - o https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Illinois_Biographies
 - o https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Lake_County_Illinois_Genealogy
- [?] Google Books
- [?] Hathi Trust Digital Library
- [?] Illinois Biography Project by Michelle Bley
 - o <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~ilbiog/>
- [?] Illinois Digital Archives
 - o <https://www.idaillinois.org/>
- [?] Illinois Census Office Region Map
 - o <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=118219>
- [?] InternetArchive.org
- [?] Local Genealogical and/or Historical Societies plus local public library
 - o These are your "go to folks" who understand the county history and its people
- [?] Northwestern
 - o <https://libguides.northwestern.edu/c.php?g=114914&p=747828>
 - o Early Migration Paths (Map)
 - o <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/3ca47258-b65f-4cdf-b028-ceeda68e62c5f>
- [?] Public Libraries (catalog)
 - o Allen County Public Library
 - o Burton Collection (Detroit Public Library)
 - o Clayton Collection (Houston Public Library)
 - o Library of Congress
- [?] USGenWeb
 - o <https://illinoisgenweb.org/#gsc.tab=0>
- [?] University Libraries & Other Institutions
 - o Best IL list can be found at the IL Digital Archives under institutions
 - <https://www.idaillinois.org/digital/custom/byInstitution>
 - o Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) System
 - <https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/archives/irad/iradregn.html>
 - o MI examples from talk
 - Bentley Historical Collection at Univ. of MI
 - Michigan Central Library – great MI Collection

Working Tips:

- [?] Did you listen to history of the county?
 - o It should have suggested next steps for your record search.
 - o Did you create a list of when records were created?
 - o When did organizations (religious, societies, business, and government) started?

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- ❓ Create a timeline of your family
 - Note that source putting the family there
 - Can you place them on city or plat map?
 - Add facts that took place during the time
 - BMD – children, spouse
 - Pay attention to occupation, religion, education
 - Social organization
 - Military events
 - Epidemics (nature and manmade)
 - Legal
 - Land records, probate, jury duty, criminal
 - Family Stories
- ❓ Create timeline of the community
 - Formation of the county/government
 - Keep in mind changing county boundary lines
 - Township/city histories
 - Pioneers (when did the people come)
 - What was the pull to locate here?
 - Businesses, Churches, Education
 - Newspapers
 - Financial history (the ups and downs)
 - What was the economy of the area?
 - Social organizations
 - Transportation
 - Military and civil events
 - Epidemics
 - Legal matters
 - Property records
 - Don't overlook the State History that could have impacted the county
- ❓ Merge Your Results
 - **Even if your family is not mentioned in the county history**
 - Double check your sources that they should be there.
 - Did you use Federal, State Census, City Directories
 - Newspapers
 - Land Records
 - Do you see gaps?
 - Possible sources to look for that could place your family in the county.
 - Create FAN Club (Friends, Associates, Neighbors)
 - Who were the settlers and families that settled at the same time frame as your family?
 - Create a list of families and the location where they came from
 - Create a list of families where they went to
 - Why did they leave – what was the push or pull to the county