

November, 2011

History of Genealogy Collections at the State Library of Ohio
By John Bittel, Research Services, State Library of Ohio

Until 2007, the State Library of Ohio had a large genealogy collection that was very well used. Due to a shrinking budget, reduced space, and loss of personnel, almost all of that collection (except for duplicates) was transferred to the Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) and merged with its genealogy collection. CML has made excellent use of the State Library material, with the advantage of more convenient hours and a larger staff. Note that the State Library still has some unique resources that should be of interest to genealogists.

The foundation of the State Library genealogy collection was a donation of material by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in the early 1930s. The collection continued to grow, especially in later years under Petta Khouw and then Paul Immel, and it reached its peak after a large increase in space following the State Library's move to its present location on East 1st Avenue.

The State Library genealogy collection focused on Ohio, but also contained a lot of material from states to the east and the south. States to the west got some coverage, as did foreign countries. The book collection was augmented with material on microfilm and with Internet genealogical services such as Ancestry.com.

Due to the efforts of Paul Immel, the State Library became the home of several special genealogical collections. Joy Wade Moulton, who wrote a genealogy column for the Columbus Dispatch for many years, donated her extensive private collection of British sources. In the mid-1990s, the Ohio Huguenot Society donated its collection, which was later placed in a wooden cabinet built by Paul's father. Both collections are now at CML.

The U.S. Census is a very important source, so the State Library collection had all of the available years of the Census and its indexes on microfilm. These included the non-population censuses of the 19th century that covered Ohio farms and businesses. Also very useful on film were the World War I draft records and the Ohio veterans' grave registrations.

The Mormon Church and local Ohio historical and genealogical societies were excellent sources of useful material which included birth, death and marriage indexes, along with cemetery grave listings, church records, family Bible information, and city and county histories. People who compile and publish family histories are often willing to donate a copy to the collection, so the State Library had many hundreds of them. Of course, much of the research for them was probably done in the library.

As part of the agreement to relocate its genealogy collection and to discontinue supporting services, the State Library is working to provide easier access to items in its Government Documents collection that are useful to genealogists. The State Library has retained the microfilm of the non-population censuses of the 19th century, the World War I draft records, and the Ohio veterans' grave registrations. There are also good amounts of other military material and Ohio county histories and atlases.