

June 2011

State Archives at the Ohio Historical Society

By Fred Previts, CA
State Archivist, Ohio Historical Society



OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Ohio Historical Society collects, preserves and makes available the evidence of the past that is found in documents, photographs and artifacts. While the Ohio Historical Society is a non-profit organization and not a state agency, the Historical Society provides history-related services for the state, as mandated in the Ohio Revised Code. This includes maintaining the state's historical records in the State Archives. These records document more than 200 years of activities and operations of state and local governments. This includes the records of Ohio's governors and other elected state officials such as the Attorney General, Secretary of State, and State Auditor. In addition, the State Archives preserves the records of the general assembly members as well as the House and Senate Committees which are used by patrons for researching the legislative intent behind bills.

The records of Ohio's state agencies are also maintained by the State Archives. Ohio's military history is documented in the records of the Adjutant General's Office. Changes to Ohio's environment can be traced through the records of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency. Ohio's economic and commercial progress is traced through the records of the Departments of Commerce, Development, and Taxation. Social changes in Ohio can be researched through the records of such agencies as the Departments of Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Correction, and Job and Family Services.

Besides state-level records, the State Archives also holds the records of select local government offices. These include county commissioner journals, the minutes of city councils and township trustee minutes, and court journals. In addition, the legal rights of citizens are protected in local government records such as deed, mortgage, and tax records. While the majority of the local government records held by the State Archives are from central Ohio, local records from across the state, in particular from southeast Ohio, are also included.

The records held by the State Archives do not just document the actions of government but also the lives of its citizens. Among the records frequently used by genealogists are: birth and death records (including death certificates from 1908-1953 for the whole state); land entry records including plats, survey notes, and tract and entry books documenting the original subdivision of the Ohio Country; and probate court records such as marriages, wills, and naturalization records.

The Ohio Historical Society also has an extensive collection of records documenting Ohio's private sector. These include personal papers such as the letters and diaries of private citizens; the records of Ohio businesses; and the records of churches, unions, and other organizations. In addition, the Ohio Historical Society holds the largest collection of Ohio newspapers in the world. The microfilm of the newspapers is available to researchers off-site through interlibrary loan. More information on borrowing newspaper microfilm is available at <http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/archlib/ill.html>. The Ohio Historical Society's *Online Collection Catalog* includes a database of newspapers held by the Historical Society as well as a catalog of books and government and private record collections.

Additional information on the State Archives, including contact information, current hours, and a link to our *Online Collection Catalog* is available at <http://www.ohiohistory.org/research>