

Researching Jo Daviess County Ancestors

One of the most frequent inquiries the Historical society receives are questions relating to family histories. A wealth of information exists, but where to go and how to get started is usually the obstacle. Here is a summary of the sources to which the Historical Society refers family researchers:

Historical Collections Room

Galena Public Library
601 S. Bench St.
Galena, IL 61036
815.777.0200

info@galenalibrary.org

Open M, Tu, Th, F 3pm-5pm; W 3pm-8pm, Sat 12pm-4pm

Local Galena historians H. Scott Wolfe and Steve Repp staff the room and provide on-site assistance to anyone seeking research information on families, houses, historical events, etc. They will also answer written or e-mail correspondence and provide photocopies of documents for a small fee. Donations welcome.

Here's a brief list of documents available (either intact or on microfilm):

- County Assessor's Books from 1850s-WWII
- Federal, IL state, and Territorial censuses from 1830s-1910
- Area newspapers from 1834-1982
- Indexes to vital records (marriage, death, etc.) stored at the Jo Daviess County Courthouse
- Family histories and diaries
- Galena City Directories, beginning in 1847
- Some Galena church records
- Maps; Tax and Block Books (1838-1876); county, township, regional, state and community histories
- Photographs from the area; access to the private photographic collection of Alfie Mueller

Jo Daviess County Courthouse

330 N. Bench St.
Galena, IL 61036

• **County Clerk's Office, 815.777.0161**

County Vital Statistics:

- Death records beginning in 1877; usually include the date and cause of death (sometimes place of birth).
- Birth records beginning in 1877
- Marriage records beginning in 1830. Include two documents: actual license and accompanying certificates signed by clergyperson and witnesses.
- Naturalization records from 1828 to approximately 1910. Two documents: "Declaration of Intent" to become a U.S. Citizen and the Naturalization paper. Records pertain to men only.

• **Circuit Clerk's Office, 815.777.0037**

Probate Records from 1828 onward. These records include Wills, Probate and Guardianship of minors. They often show itemization of expenses, income, inventory of possessions of deceased, and upkeep and schooling expenses for minor children.

TIPS TO GETTING STARTED ON YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

- Talk to all living relatives and ask them for family history information.
- Record your conversations with living relatives.
- Try to stick to one family line at a time to avoid burnout.
- Decide how serious you are in your commitment. The process can be very time-consuming and expensive, especially if you hire a qualified genealogical researcher.
- Keep careful records of your sources for information. Early records were not always complete or accurate. By keeping a source record, you'll be able to find discrepancies.
- Share your progress and findings with relatives to continue their interest which will in turn help you to keep up momentum.
- Remember, it's a long process that often takes years (or a lifetime!) to complete.