Genealogy Research in Illinois

Illinois History

The original inhabitants of the area that is now called Illinois were the Chickasaw, the Dakota Sioux tribe, the Ho-Chunk (also called Winnebago), the Illini, the Miami and the Shawnee.

1000 Mississippian Culture was established. This was the last of the mound-building cultures of North America in Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States.

1673 Jacques Marquette (1637-1675) and Louis Joliet (1645-1700) explored Illinois

1680 The Iroquois entered the area now called Illinois and attacked the Illinois Confederacy tribes. Many were killed in the conflict.
Ren Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle (1643 -1687) and Henry de Tonty (1650-1704) built Fort Cr ecoeur

1699 French priests founded a mission at Cahokia, the oldest permanent European settlement in Illinois, in what is now St. Clair County.

1703: Kaskaskia was founded by the French as an Indian mission by Jesuit missionaries.

1712 The First French Fox War (1712–1716) began when Fox, Kickapoo, and Mascouten attacked Fort Pontchartrain

1720 Fort de Chartres was founded by settlers from France.

1728 The Second Fox War (1728–1733). The Fox were reduced to 500 by French troops and Indian allies. The Fox tribe joined the Sauk Tribe after defeat.

1754 - 1763: The French Indian War was won by Great Britain against the French. France then ceded the Illinois Country to Great Britain. Kaskaskia became the British seat of government.

1764 The Ottawa Chief Pontiac (1720-1769) led a rebellion of a number of tribes against the British

1778 Illinois became a county of Virginia after Americans captured Kaskaskia.

1784 Virginia relinquished its claim

1787 Congress made Illinois part of the Northwest Territory.

1791 By a Special Act of Congress, 400 acres of land were granted to each head of a family who had made improvements in Illinois before 1788

1795 Indian tribes ceded land to the U.S.

1800 The Northwest Territory was divided. The area that is now Illinois became a part of Indiana Territory.

1803 The area that is now Illinois became part of the Louisiana Purchase

1800's Conflict erupted between settlers and the Illinois, Iroquois, Chippewa, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Kaskaskia, Miami, Shawnee, Sauk and Fox tribes throughout the 1800's.

1803 Kaskaskia Indians ceded nearly all of their lands to the U.S. government

1803 - 1805 Tribes in the northwest, central, southeast and southwest part of Illinois ceded land to the U.S.

3 February 1809 The Illinois Territory was formed when the Indiana Territory was divided.

1812: Fort Dearborn (now Chicago): after settlers killed an Indian holding a truce flag, they were massacred by Potawatomie warriors.

1813 Peoria War was a battle between the U. S. Army, settlers and the Potawatomi and the Kickapoo tribes in the Peoria area of Illinois. Indian villages were attacked and the tribes left the area.

1816, 1818, 1819: More tribes ceded land to the U.S. government.

3 Dec 1818 Illinois became a state; the Wisconsin region was transferred to the Michigan Territory.

1820 The census listed 917 slaves and 457 free African Americans

1825 Opening the Erie Canal hastened European settlement in Illinois. Fifty-three Norwegian families settled in Fox River, by the way of the Erie Canal.

1827 Battles between the U.S. Army and settlers against the Potawatomi and Kickapoo tribes resumed in the

Winnebago War of 1827

1829: Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi ceded lands to the U.S.

1830: The Indian Removal Act passed by U.S. government.

1832: Black Hawk War - When Chief Black Hawk and some of his people re-crossed the Mississippi River in order to plant corn in the Sauk's old corn field, settlers killed an Indian holding a truce flag. Sauks led by Chief Black Hawk massacred settlers near Rock River. The Sauk and Fox warriors were defeated and driven from the state. Kickapoo Indians were removed to Kansas.

1832: The Department of Indian Affairs was established by the U. S. government.

1833: Chicago became a town on the former site of Fort Dearborn

1836: A second Norwegian settlement was established at Mission in LaSalle County.

1838–1856 Improvements in transportation hastened immigration to the northern counties:

- The National Road reached Vandalia, now in Fayette County, in 1838.
- The Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848. It ran from Chicago to LaSalle.
- The Illinois Central Railroad was completed in 1856, linking southern Illinois to Chicago.

1839: Cherokee Indians passed through Illinois on the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma

1840: The U. S. Census listed 331 slaves and 3,598 free African American in Illinois.

1839–1846: Latter-day Saints from Missouri and Ohio built the city of Nauvoo before their westward exodus.

1847: Hollanders arrived from Krabbenden and settled the area now called the city of Roseland on the south side of Chicago.

1861–1865: About 250,000 Illinois men served in the Union armed forces during the Civil War, although Southern Illinois contained many citizens sympathetic to the South.

1871: The *Great Chicago Fire* destroyed much of Chicago's downtown area and its public records.

1898: Over 300,000 Illinois men were involved in the Spanish American War.

Illinois Birth records

Before 1877 only 30% of the counties in Illinois recorded birth records.

Between 1877 and 1916: In 1877, Illinois required all births be reported to the county clerk; however, many were not reported because compliance was not enforced.

Birth Records After 1916: Statewide registration of births began in 1916; by 1922 all births were being recorded.

Obtain Illinois Birth Records

Birth records before 1916 to the present can be obtained from the County Clerk's Office. Call or visit the office or view their website for information about how to obtain a birth record.

Illinois Regional Archives Depositories –IRAD - have pre-1916 birth records for many counties. IRAD ordering information is found on the Illinois Secretary of State website.
Copies from IRAD are for genealogical purposes only. They may cost less than copies from the county.

The **Illinois Department of Public Health Vital Records Office has copies of birth records from 1916 to present day**.
To obtain a birth certificate of a person born within the last 75 years you must be:

- The person on the certificate
- The parents shown on the certificate
- A legal guardian or legal representative of the child. Written evidence of guardianship or legal representation is required.

Illinois Marriage Records

Colonial Illinois marriages: *The Kaskaskia Manuscripts: 1708 – 1816* include marriage contracts created during those years in the area settled by the French that they called Kaskaskia. View microfilms of the manuscripts at the History and Genealogy Department, St. Louis County Library and at Illinois State University in Champaign/Urbana.

Marriage records are kept by the County Clerks beginning with the year the county was created. A few records date from the 1790s, but couples were not required to obtain a marriage license until 1877.
Starting in 1877, pre-printed marriage register books in Illinois provided columns for ages, residences, birth places, and sometimes the names of the parents or guardians of the bride and groom.

Obtain Copies

- Call or visit the **County Clerk's Office** or view their website for information about how to obtain a marriage record.
- Copies of pre-1916 marriage records may also be available from **Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRAD)**.
  View a list of the years of marriage records held by the IRAD system for each county on the *IRAD Local Governmental Records Listing*
  Ordering information is found in each depository's section on the website.
  Copies from IRAD are for genealogical purposes only. They may cost less than copies from the county.

Illinois Death Records

Records from 1877 to 1916: Death records before 1916 were recorded by the county clerks. Most county clerks did not record deaths until 1877.

Obtain Copies of **Illinois Death Records Prior to 1916 –** 2 Choices:

- Get copies of death records filed before 1916 from **IRAD (Illinois Regional Archives Depository)** if IRAD holds death records for that particular county.
  View a list of the years of death records held by the IRAD system for each county on the *IRAD Local Governmental Records Listing*
  Ordering information is found in each depository's section on the website.
- Get a copy of a death record from the **County Clerk** in the county where the death occurred.

Obtain Copies of **Illinois Death Certificates dated on or after January 1, 1916** – 3 Choices:

- Visit the **Illinois State Archives Reference Room** — the following information will be needed from the State Archives database: decedent's name; date of death; name of county, and death certificate number.
- Obtain certified copies from the **Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records**
- Contact the appropriate **County Clerk** in the county where the death occurred.

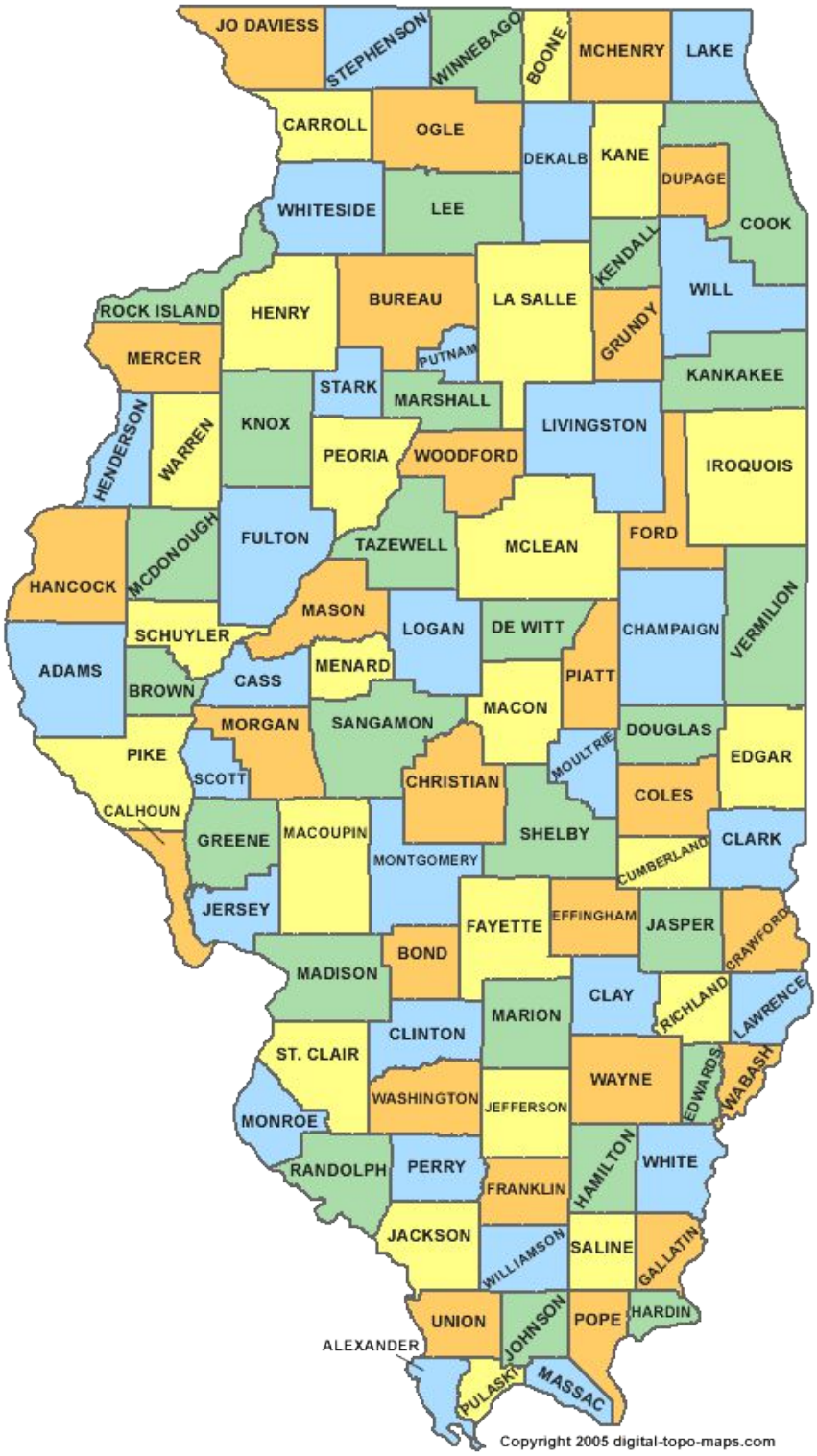
Other sources of Birth/Marriage/Death information:

Family Bibles - Church records - Military records - Newspaper articles/obituaries - Wills/Probate records/Funeral Home/Cemetery records

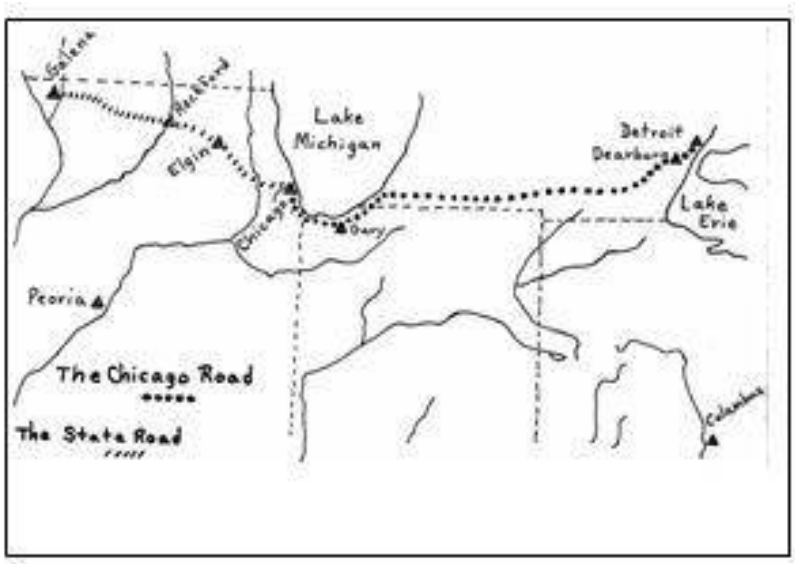
Major Genealogical/Historical Repositories in Illinois

- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
- Newberry Library – Chicago Public Library – Chicago Historical Society
- Illinois State Archives – Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD)
- Illinois State Genealogical Society
- Illinois State Historical Library (ISHL)
- National Archives Great Lakes Region (Chicago)

Illinois Counties



The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – Interactive maps and text covering the historical boundaries, names, organization, and attachments of every county, extinct county and unsuccessful county proposal from the creation of the first county through December 31, 2000. - http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html



Illinois Migration Routes

Illinois River Mississippi River Ohio River Wabash River Lake Michigan Buffalo Trace Chicago-Dubuque Highway Chicago-Kaskaskia Road Detroit-Chicago Road Kellogg Trail Mihoaukee Trail Nashville-Saline River Trail National Road (or Cumberland Road) Old Chicago Road Pecatonica Trail Russellville-Shawneetown Trail Illinois and Michigan Canal Santa Fe Railway Great Northern Railway (U.S.) Illinois Central Railroad Proposed Detroit to Chicago Road

Historic routes terminating in present day Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, or Wisconsin: http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tqpeiffer/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Webpage%20Folder/Routes%20to%20North%20Central%20Lakes%20Plains.htm

Illinois Genealogy Research Websites

Note: Look for the *GenWeb* and *Genealogy Trails* of any county in which your ancestor lived.

C. J. Jacoby Collection – historical information about the company which had stores in Bunker Hill, Jerseyville and Alton, including photos - http://alplm-cdi.com/chroniclingillinois/items/browse?collection=553
Clinton County GenWeb Project – baptisms, marriages, burials various churches, cemetery burials, county death records
Bellwood, Cook County Newspapers and Yearbooks – browse or search by keyword: Proviso Township Herald (1941-1945) - http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/mppl - the Proviso Star Progress (November 1939-December 1956), the Star Sentinel (1957-1973), the Proviso West yearbooks collection (1961-1964), and two commemorative local history books, Golden Jubilee and Bellwood History - http://bellwood.advantage-preservation.com/ -
Obituaries, Park Ridge, Cook County – search index of obituaries from the *Park Ridge Herald, Pine Ridge Advocate*, and *Park Ridge Herald Advocate*- https://www.parkridgelibrary.org/obituaries/
Cook County, IL, Naturalization Records – Search over 500,000 naturalization petitions from 1871 to 1929 - http://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/NR/
Greene County, Morgan Area genealogy – obits in Jacksonville newspaper; indexed names in Coroner's books, 1874 – 1919; death, military and naturalization information, early settlers - http://sites.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/index_greene.html
Illinois Digital Archives - oral histories, manuscripts, letters, photos, community histories, city directories, newspapers - from libraries - http://www.idaillinois.org/
Illinois Genealogical Society - links to Illinois research websites and societies
Illinois Railroad Maps- 39 railroad maps digitized from the Illinois State Library collection – http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16614coll7
Illinois State Archives Databases – *Marriage, Death, Land and Military Records* of all Illinois counties – search all databases at once (global database search) or choose a specific database to search -

Kane County Genealogy Online – search indexes of birth, marriage, death records by name or year – purchase a genealogical copy of the record online and download a copy directly onto your computer! - http://genealogy.kanecountyclerk.org/

Madison County Circuit Clerk's Office – indexes, images, of immigration, naturalization, probate records, and slave emancipation registers

Madison County Genealogical Society – www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilmadcgs/

Madison County, Illinois Digital Archives – images of burials, atlases, biographical sketches, Madison County History, "The Stalker" - http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/search/collection/edpl

McHenry Plaindealer Obituary Indexes – obituaries 1875 to 1890 - death notices 1949 to 1984 (1950 Missing) - http://www.mchenrylibrary.org/index.php/find-it/genealogy-local-history-help

My Genealogy Hound – *biographies* extracted from *pre-1900 county histories* of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee – vintage county maps from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma (including Indian Nations), and Tennessee -

Obituaries from Southern Illinois Newspapers - links to transcriptions of obituaries and death notices in Jonesboro and Cairo newspapers and in Pulaski County newspapers for various years - https://ilgssi.org/cpage.php?pt=7

Online Chicago & Cook County, Illinois Death Records & Indexes – links to indexes of obituaries, death records, probate records and cemetery burials - https://www.deathindexes.com/illinois/cook.html

Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il

Park Ridge, IL, Obituaries – search an index of newspaper obituaries 1929 - 2020 by name and by month and/or year - https://www.parkridgelibrary.org/obituaries/

SIU-Edwardsville, IL, Online Databases - free

Shurtleff Retrospect Yearbooks – 1911 to 1932, 1938 to 1942, and 1948 to 1956. It also includes a supplement featuring the graduating class of 1957.
http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_sie_shurt.php?CISOROOT=/sie_shurt

William R. Townsend Civil War Diary - images of the complete Civil War diary of Union soldier William R. Townsend, who enlisted in the 42nd Illinois Infantry. The diary covers the period from April 11, 1863, to February 2, 1864. The full text of the diary has been transcribed and is searchable.
http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_sie_diary.php?CISOROOT=/sie_diary

Wabash Valley Visions and Voices Digital Memory Project - artifacts, administrative and personal papers, manuscripts, photographs, texts, yearbooks, maps, oral histories, and other audio/video files of the Wabash Valley region in west central Indiana and east central Illinois - http://visions.indstate.edu/

Illinois African American Research

AfricaMap – track the slave trade with historical overlays and geographical data - http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/

AfriGeneas – slave records, death and marriage records, censuses, surnames – chat or send messages to other researchers - http://afrigeneas.com/

Free African Americans in the Southeast - Free people of color in the colonies of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware – plus a few families in Illinois, Tennessee and Indiana - http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/

International African American Museum – growing collections of African American funeral programs, obituaries, marriage records, photos, historical documents and family histories – military records of the U.S. Colored Troops – records of free people of color - https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/records/

Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery - search thousands of "Information Wanted" advertisements taken out by former slaves in all states searching for family members lost by sale, flight, or enlistment – the

collection currently includes newspapers from 1853 to 1911 in GA, IL, LA, MD, OH, PA, SC, TN, VA, Washington DC, and Canada - http://www.informationwanted.org/
Slave Voyages - the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* documents vessels along the Atlantic slave routes from 1514 to 1866; *Intra-American Slave Trade Database* documents vessels traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific ports ranging from the United States to Brazil; the *African Names Database* gives names, ages, possible origins of slaves liberated from captured slave ships between 1808 and 1862 - https://www.slavevoyages.org/

Illinois Cemetery Research

Bronswood Cemetery, Oak Brook, DuPage County – search the index of burials by name, section in cemetery, inscription, etc. – on home page click on *Bronswood Cemetery* link - http://www.oakbrookhistory.com/bronswood/
Cook County Burials – search the list of remaining records of burials of the poor, residents of the old insane asylum and consumptive hospital, etc. – many original records were lost - records are still being transcribed - http://cookcountycemetery.com/database.aspx?x=45&y=124
Dodge Grove Cemetery, Mattoon, IL – link to a searchable list of burials, including last and first name; age; death date; section; division; grave space; lot owner; and funeral; link to cemetery map - http://mattoon.illinois.gov/government/publicworks/dodgegrove
DuPage County Cemetery Index – indexes of burials in cemeteries in Addison Township, Downers Grove and Lisle Township, and York Township – https://dcgs.org/cpage.php?pt=79
Elmwood Cemetery Burials, Flora, Clay County, IL - http://florapubliclibrary.org/local-history/
Greenmount Cemetery, Quincy, IL: searchable transcriptions of burial and tombstone information; and a link to burial location - http://www.greenmountqcy.com/website/biographies.html
Illinois Ancestors Tombstone Project – Illinois headstone photos, along with obituaries and related portraits
Illinois Cemetery Locations – list and location of cemeteries in Illinois - http://ilgensoc.org/cstm_cemeteryIndex.php#

Illinois Immigration Research

Cook County Naturalizations - more than 500,000 naturalization petitions covering 1871 to 1929, primarily declarations of intention - search by name, birth date, birthplace and occupation – **includes residents of other counties** - http://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/NR/

Illinois Maps Online

Atlas of Historical Boundaries - interactive maps showing county border changes in all states - http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html
Federal Township Plats of Illinois 1804 – 1894 – images of all township plats in the state - http://landplats.ilsos.net/
Illinois Digital Archives – read wide variety of plat maps

Illinois Military Research Websites

Grand Army of the Republic Records Project – developing database - histories of posts, reports of officers and members if available, search by state
Illinois Genealogy Trails Military Databases – lists of veterans, regiments, histories, military prisons, etc., Revolutionary War through the Korean War - http://genealogytrails.com/ill/military.htm
IL State Archives Databases – Illinois veterans, War of 1812 to Spanish American War – residents of soldiers and sailors homes

Illinois War of 1812 Veterans – search index of Illinois militiamen listed on the War of 1812 muster rolls in the Adjutant General's Report, 1902 - http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/war1812.html
Jersey County, IL, Veterans – veterans of many wars – http://jersey.illinoisgenweb.org/veteran/military.htm
Morgan Area, Greene County, IL, Genealogy – variety of military information: http://sites.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/index_greene.html
Park Ridge, IL, WW2 Veterans – Oral Histories and Photos - http://parkridgelibrary.wix.com/veterans-project

Illinois Native American Research

Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center – student records, cemetery information, info about Lakota, Ojibwe, Seneca, Oneida, Cherokee, Apache, Cheyenne, and Alaska Native tribes - http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/
History of Illinois Tribe: http://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/history-of-native-americans/history-of-illinois-indians.htm
Madison County, IL, African American History: African American History and Research in Madison County, IL - https://madison.illinoisgenweb.org/african_american.html
Native American Tribes of Illinois - http://www.native-languages.org/illinois.htm

Illinois Newspaper Research Websites

Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections 1831 – 2011 – website created by the University of Illinois History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library - browse or search a variety of Illinois newspapers and trade journals - most published in the early 1900's , some earlier in the 1800's - http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/
Illinois Newspaper Project Database – titles and publication dates of Illinois newspapers, and where they are archived – www.library.illinois.edu/inp/database.php
Illinois Online Historical Newspapers – names, publication dates, links to online databases of Illinois newspapers - https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/il
Argus Newspaper Obituary Index, Villa Park, DuPage County, IL – search a name index of obituaries published in the *Villa Park Argus* beginning in 1931 - order a copy of an obituary from the Villa Park Public Library - http://www.vppl.info/research/argus-obituary-index/

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

- *FamilySearch.org* Wiki
- Family Tree Magazine
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; Genealogy Gems*
- *History of Illinois Native Americans*: http://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/history-of-native-americans/history-of-illinois-indians.htm
- *Online Military Indexes and Records* - http://www.militaryindexes.com/index.html