

State Historical Society of Iowa's Library and Archives Research Centers: Quick Facts and Introduction

The State Historical Society of Iowa's Library & Archives Bureau exists to collect, preserve, and provide public access to resources related to Iowa history. The Bureau is divided into three collecting areas:

- **The Historical Library** collects published materials relating to Iowa and its people, placing Iowa into a broader regional and national context. These materials include books, periodicals, newspapers, county records, city and county histories, city directories, and staff-curated subject files. Heavily used materials include:
 - **Book Collection:** city directories, family histories, cemetery surveys, county/city histories, school yearbooks, Iowa law and state government publications and much more
 - **Periodicals/Serials:** [SHSI publications](#) such as *Annals of Iowa* or *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, local and national genealogical newsletters, history journals from other states, etc.
 - **Newspapers:** microfilm for towns across Iowa available from 1836 - Present, including some foreign language newspapers
 - Newspaper microfilm can be ordered via Interlibrary Loan. See staff for more details.
 - **County Records on Microfilm:** Vital Records (births, deaths, marriages), Land Records (deeds, homestead records), Probate Records, Naturalizations, etc.
 - Holdings vary county to county and year to year and originals are held by the county courthouse
- **Special Collections** are privately donated materials documenting Iowa's development as a state and the experiences of its citizens. These include [manuscript collections](#) such as personal papers, records of organizations (schools, churches, clubs, businesses, labor unions), diaries, letters, scrapbooks, maps, sheet music, advertisements, other ephemera, and [photographic collections](#). Heavily used collections at our Des Moines facility include:
 - **Des Moines and General Photographic Subject Files:** photographs organized by topic such as railroads, city blocks, businesses, etc.
 - **Civil War Papers Collection:** collection of numerous Civil War diaries, letters, etc. organized by name of individual and/or regiment
 - **Dixie Cornell Gebhardt Scrapbooks:** scrapbooks relating to the DAR and creation of the Iowa State Flag
- **The State Archives** collects state government records, mainly generated from the official functions of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of state government. These records include but are not limited to: records of state agencies, the governor's office, state level military records, and territorial government records. Heavily used [collections include:](#)
 - **RG81, Secretary of State:** records relating to the Land Office (field survey notes and township plats), early legislative records, elections, corporations, etc.
 - **RG92, Veterans Affairs:** records relating to Armed Forces Grace Registrations, WWI and WWII Bonus Boards
 - **RG101, Adjutant General:** includes records of Iowa regiments in the Civil War including correspondence, military reports, order and roster books, etc.; Iowa National Guard Military Personnel Files

All Library & Archives Bureau collections are appraised and processed by professional staff and are made available to the public through the Research Centers in Des Moines and Iowa City (*Please Note:* State Archives are only available at the Des Moines facility) Both Des Moines and Iowa City have their own unique Special Collections and Historical Library materials. Library, Archives, and Special Collections materials can be searched in our online catalog:

<https://iowa.minisisinc.com/> however not everything is searchable or available online. If you are having trouble finding something, please ask staff for help navigating the catalog and finding aids available in the Research Centers.

Policies and Procedures

Many materials within our collection are one of a kind, rare, and sometimes fragile. To protect our collection and to ensure they will be available for use by future generations, we ask patrons to follow our rules for using the materials:

- All patrons must register upon entry of the Research Center
- All patrons must place all personal effects (bags, coats, etc.) in provided lockers before using the Research Center
- Pencil use only - no pens, highlighters, etc. Pencils are also provided in the space
- Food/drink is not allowed in the Research Center
- Most up to date information on policies, hours, and schedule is available on our website:
<https://www.iowaculture.gov/history/research/research-centers>

Remote Research:

- If on-site research is not possible, patrons may submit a remote research request via email at history.research@iowa.gov or submit a [Reference Request Form](#)
- Guidance on Questions:
 - Ask specific questions about Historical Library and Archives collections such as:
 - Requesting copies of specific images, pages from documents, books, periodicals, manuscripts, newspaper articles, or obituaries.
 - Requesting reproductions of entire periodical articles or a book chapter. (Note: Allowable only if the item requested for duplication is not currently copyright protected.)
 - For genealogical requests, please provide:
 - Name of Individual
 - County Individual Resided In
 - Type of Record (birth, marriage, death, obituary, naturalization, probate, etc.)
 - Date/Time Frame
- If your request requires extensive reference, additional charges may be incurred starting at \$20.00. You will be provided with a cost estimate to approve prior to our staff beginning the work. Included in the fee are up to 10 complimentary photocopies and shipping. Please do not submit payment until instructed to do so by staff.
- If the request is too lengthy, staff can provide a listing of independent researchers available for hire.

Locations:

Library and Archives Research Center – Des Moines
State Historical Building
600 E. Locust
Des Moines, IA 50319
515-281-6200

Library and Archives Research Center – Iowa City
Centennial Building
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, IA 52240
319-335-391

Have a reference question?

Contact us at History.Research@iowa.gov or submit our [Reference Request Form](#)
Explore online at: <https://www.iowaculture.gov/history/research>