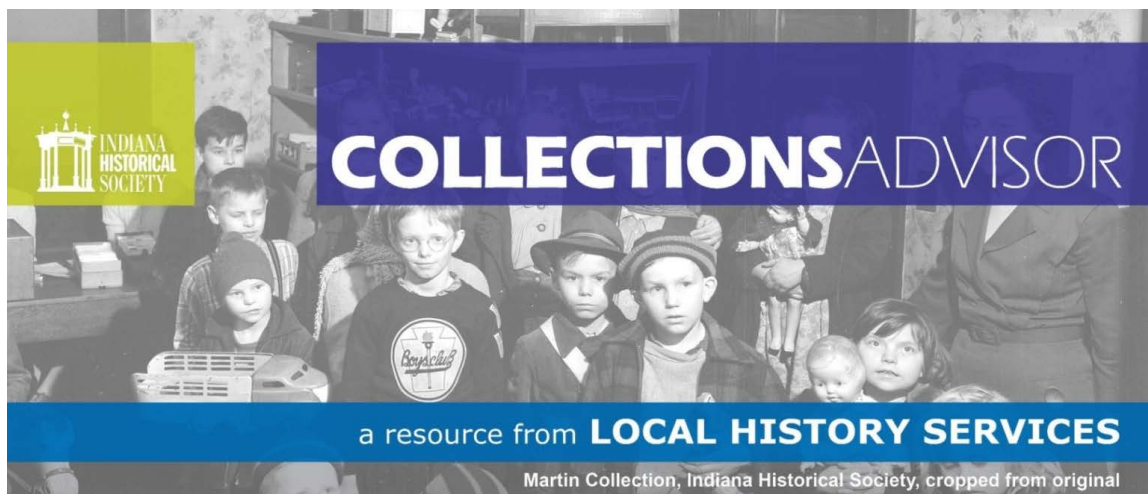


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Connecting to Collections project.



Issue 46, August 2015

Promoting Awareness for Collections Care, Part Two: Getting Out of the Building and Into the Community

by Amber Gowen, archivist/internship director, [Vanderburgh County Clerk's Office](#)

In the July 2015 issue of *Collections Advisor*, archivist Amber Gowen shared the Vanderburgh County Clerk's plans for an internship program and a blog as a way to promote the historical value and preservation needs of the Clerk's Archives. In the second installment, exhibits and public programs are highlighted as an effective way to continue the conversation about collections care with new organizational partners and audiences.

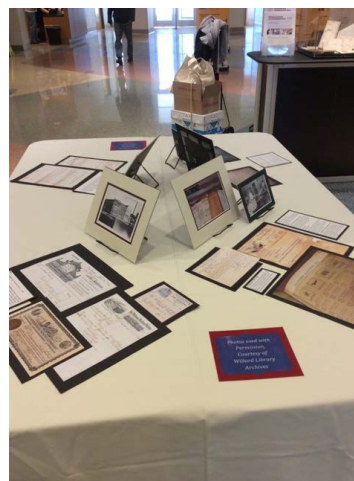
Traveling exhibit

The Indiana Historical Society's [Local History Services](#) department visited the Clerk's Archives in January and made several helpful suggestions to address our collections care challenges. They introduced us to their traveling exhibits program, and we decided to request the [Endangered Heritage](#) exhibit to go along with our community's national Preservation Month efforts in May. *Endangered Heritage* sheds light on the importance of good collections stewardship and offers practical solutions to common collections care problems. The Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library's Local History Librarian co-sponsored the *Endangered Heritage* exhibit and provided us with a high visibility facility.

We displayed material directly relating to our collection's needs with the corresponding exhibit panels as a way to bring the message home. We also set up table displays with photocopies of the most interesting items we have inventoried so far, highlighting key periods of community history and records from our collection that relate to them. Willard Library Archives provided access to their photographs, which we used to give our documents additional historical context and reiterate that collaboration leads to a much fuller picture of our community's past. For example, the Clerk's Archives holds a rare Soldier's Pension registry that



Endangered Heritage traveling exhibit on display at the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library.



Copies of material from the Clerk's Archives that accompanied the *Endangered Heritage* traveling exhibit.

documents the injuries of local Civil War veterans. We selected a photograph of a Civil War soldier from the Willard Library Archives who later became a local banker to accompany copies of pages from the Soldier's Pension registry. Court records held in the Clerk's Archives that were notarized by the same man in his capacity at the bank were also included in the display, adding another layer of documentation. Together, the combined collections of the Clerk's Archives and the Willard Library provided a richer look at this man's life.

Public program

We also took the opportunity to plan a public program at the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library called *Untapped Treasures* that served as our institution's reintroduction to the community. Over time, public awareness of our collections diminished, so the program served as a fun and informative reminder that the Clerk's Archives exists and what types of records that we hold. More than 40 people turned out to participate on a sunny Derby Saturday, and since the date of the program we have noticed a perceptible increase in records requests from the community and enthusiasm for our collection.

Collaborating with the Willard Library Archives and the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library raised the profile of our event and highlighted the diverse local history resources available in our community. The program and exhibit were featured in traditional and social media by the Clerk's Archives, other branches of county government and the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library. On the Saturday of the Untapped Treasures program, the *Evansville Courier & Press* featured our exhibit and programmatic efforts on the front page. Coupling the exhibit with a program allowed us to keep this issue in front of the community for a longer period of time and has provided the perfect launching point to increase our facility's profile and advocate for additional resources within local government.

Plans are in the works for additional programming, an expanded Clerk's Archive online presence and eventually posting research guides online to increase the accessibility to our collection and highlight the "hidden collections" that contain so much forgotten history.

Resources

[Be it Remembered: blog of the Vanderburgh County Clerk's Archives](#)

[Connecting to Collections Care: Outreach Activities for Collections Care](#)

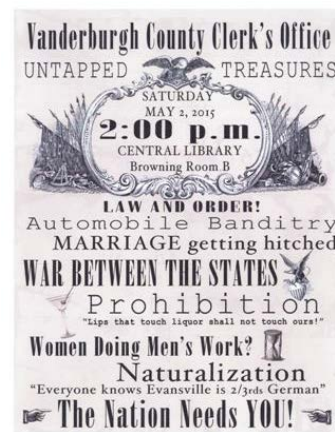
[The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts: Collections Advocacy Toolkit](#)

[Society of American Archivists: Advocacy Toolkit](#)

"Like a Good Neighbor: Community Advocacy and Outreach for Small Museums," Small Museums Toolkit, Book Four: Reaching and Responding to Audience, available in the [Lending Resource Center of the Indiana Historical Society](#)



Presenting archival materials to the public during the *Untapped Treasures* program.



Promotional material prepared for the *Untapped Treasures* program. Kayla Smoot, graphic designer.

Images provided by Vanderburgh County Clerk's Office



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