Inquiring Minds and Loose Ends: Finding the Founding of Akron
by Jane Gramlich, Librarian

A seemingly simple question was posed to Special Collections recently: What is the exact date of the founding of Akron? The question itself isn’t complicated, but the circumstances behind the answer aren’t very straightforward. Digging into the depths of the historical record to answer a question like this can be fascinating and exasperating at the same time. Discoveries invite more questions, and it’s easy to get hopelessly lost in a sea of arcane detail treasured only by scholars and the staunchest of history geeks. But even if the result of the research isn’t quite clear, the knowledge gained in the process is no less valuable.

Joshua Henshaw’s plat map of Akron was created in June and July 1825, but there’s no known reference to a more specific date. July was the month of choice for the centennial and sesquicentennial celebrations held in 1925 and 1975. Yet several published histories point not to July, but to December 6, 1825 as the date when the plat map was recorded in the Portage County Courthouse. Was there a way to verify this as the exact founding date? Two approaches stood out. Since municipalities are generally incorporated by state law, one approach took a legislative angle. Did Ohio’s lawmakers leave a record of Akron’s founding in 1825? The second approach was the map itself and its custodial courthouses. Could their records give us any clues?

Early Ohio law specified how town plats were to be recorded, but municipal incorporation seems to have been a different matter left to the discretion of the Ohio General Assembly. Still, no mention of Akron’s establishment appears in the published proceedings of this governing body for 1825. It officially convened on December 6 that year, but nothing about Akron appears on that date; in fact, nothing at all appears on that date. The earliest acts are dated two weeks later. Expanding the search by a year on either side didn’t help. No mention of Akron can be
found in the tables of contents for the volumes covering acts passed between 1824 and 1826.

With no known legislation, it was necessary to turn back to the journey of the plat map. The Summit County Recorder holds a copy of the map with the notation that it was transcribed from Portage County records. In turn, the Portage County Recorder holds a copy of the map in its most original context - a deed. The map was drawn in a quitclaim deed from Paul Williams to Simon Perkins as part of the landowning partnership that was the basis for Akron. They appeared in the courthouse on November 28, 1825 to sign and seal the deed, and along with the map, it was recorded on December 6. Was that date chosen because they knew it was the date the General Assembly convened? Or was that just an insignificant coincidence? Without any mirroring record from the Assembly, it’s hard to tell. In the end, what has been preserved as the “founding date” is based on a single land transfer - but a crucial one in the city’s history, to be sure.

The deed led to another question. What kind of municipality was Akron when the plat map was recorded? Though the map is clearly marked “town plat,” the deed refers to Akron as a village. And while the standard published histories frequently call it a village, William Henry Perrin claimed that Akron was considered a town “by courtesy and general consent” between 1825 and 1836. Blurring the issue is the founding of Cascade, just to the north, in 1831. This little borough, sometimes called “North Akron,” feuded with the Akron to the south until both combined and were officially incorporated as a town on March 12, 1836. A century later, that centennial was a bit lost on the city’s residents. “Akron’s 100! Town Yawns,” announced the *Akron Beacon Journal*. “There should be trumpets and whistles blowing in celebration,” it protested. But maybe that was too much to expect in the middle of the Depression and at the tail end of a bitter rubber strike.

Even more confusing are claims of at least two other centennials based on completely different years. Neighboring village Middlebury, established in 1807, was eventually absorbed into Akron and prompted a 1907 issue of the *Beacon* to proclaim a centennial. Another milestone was Akron’s incorporation as a city in 1865. To mark this event, the Chamber of Commerce proposed a yearlong celebration punctuated by various festivities in 1965. But these seem to have been proverbial best laid plans gone awry. The most recent commemoration, the 175th anniversary, was officially observed in September 2000, but the city’s enthusiastic July 1925 centennial has become the historic touchstone. It seems that July 1825 has won out as the popular founding date, if not the formal one. How did it happen that the 1925 centennial occurred during the month the plat map was created, rather than the date it was recorded?

Here’s where the search trails off. Unless the answer is buried in an article or record that some intrepid researcher has time to uncover, we might never know. So we’ll just take a wild guess and leave it at that. Season and weather were probably more at stake in choosing a date than historical accuracy. Early December, after all, is not the best time of year to have an outdoor civic anniversary festival. July is a much better choice. That’s the theory, anyway, and we’re sticking to it until something better comes along. Perhaps we’ll know by Akron’s bicentennial, only nine short years away.

*Special Collections wishes to thank the many individuals and institutions who were involved with this perplexing question, including Kurt Minson; Regina Bell, Buckeye Library; Akron Law Library; University of Akron Law Library; Summit County Fiscal Office, Recorder Division; Portage County Recorder’s Office; and Trumbull County Recorder’s Office.*

*Past Pursuits*

*Spring 2016*
Getting to Know...Frances McGovern
by Rebecca Larson-Troyer, Librarian

Akron native Frances McGovern enjoyed a successful career in politics, policy and law, earning the respect of both her friends and opponents. Born Pauline Frances McGovern on April 18, 1927, her formative years came at a time when “Akron” and “rubber” were synonymous. McGovern’s father was a Goodyear man. The family cat was named “Wingfoot,” and McGovern recalled in her 2002 autobiography that the rubber industry was “woven into all our lives from childhood on.” McGovern’s father was also a Democrat and a precinct committeeman, which perhaps bore greater influence on her chosen path in life.

McGovern showed a keen interest in learning from an early age and an affinity for puzzles. She excelled at St. Sebastian and later Buchtel High School, and would continue her studies at The University of Akron. She went on to graduate from Western Reserve University Law School, where she earned a spot on the debate team and garnered honors in speech and law. Fresh out of law school, McGovern found herself with the bar exam under her belt, but no job prospects. In 1949, she landed a meeting with Clarence Motz at the law firm of Motz, Morris, Wilson and Quine in downtown Akron, a feat McGovern herself credits to her father’s connection to the Democratic party. Motz was Summit County Democratic chairman at the time. While Motz wasn’t in the market for another attorney, he recruited her for a position at campaign headquarters and would help to set the course for the next two decades of McGovern’s life.

In 1950, Motz approached McGovern to run as state central committeewoman for the 14th district, which she eagerly accepted. She suffered a monumental loss to opponent Mary Frances McGowan. The similarity in name was no accident. While Motz’s motives may have been to confuse voters – newspapers mixed up the two candidates at times as well – he ignited McGovern’s interest in politics nonetheless. She failed in a second race against McGowan in 1952, before going on to a successful bid for the Ohio House of Representatives in 1954 at the age of 27. She was one of five women serving at the time.

McGovern served three terms before being appointed to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). Her reappointment for a six-year term the following year was the first of its kind for a woman in the U.S., but it would be cut short when she resigned in protest of the firing of coworkers by the incoming administration. McGovern was elected to the Democratic National Convention in 1960 and 1964, then retired from politics following a failed bid for the U.S. Congressional seat held by seven-term Representative William Ayers. McGovern returned to the law and spent the remainder of her working years as an attorney for Ohio Edison until her retirement in 1989.

During her career, McGovern was named to Who’s Who in American Women, awarded Ohio Democratic Woman of the Year (1960) and the Woman of the Year Award from the Business and Professional Women’s Foundation (1957), and received honors from the Akron Bar Association and the Women Legislators Association. McGovern recounted her life and career in Fun, Cheap and Easy: My Life in Ohio
Politics, 1949-1964 (2002) – the title a reference to her frugal grassroots campaigns. Despite a wit and sense of humor that permeates her story, hers can’t have been an easy path to choose, particularly as a woman in the 1950s and 60s. Contemporary articles discussed her looks, gender and the fact that she was unmarried alongside her accomplishments. Prevailing sentiment, though, was that she was admired and respected by colleagues on both sides of the aisle, a commendable feat in politics.

Among her many contributions to Akron, McGovern served as president of United Way and a trustee for The University of Akron, as well as being a member of the Akron Charter Revision Commission. She served on the Sagamore Hills Children’s Mental Hospital Advisory Board and worked to support significant renovations to the historic Akron Civic Theatre. In 1996, she published a unique look at Akron’s story in Written on the Hills: The Making of the Akron Landscape, a book about the evolution of a city from geology to architecture and much in between.

McGovern died February 6, 2004, at the age of 76. An op-ed in the Akron Beacon Journal soon after stated that McGovern “blazed a trail, quietly.” She “made a habit of being the first woman to do lots of stuff around Ohio [but] simply went about her business, not giving much thought to all the ground she was breaking.” And best of all, she wrote it all down.

Share Your Family Recipes with the Library
by Judy James, Division Manager

Grandma’s braciole, Aunt Dorothy’s strudel, Dad’s famous BBQ sauce…do you have a favorite family recipe?

When we teach our beginning genealogy classes we encourage new family historians to “get the family stories.” Names and places and dates are important, but family stories and traditions are what bring our ancestors to life. Our family food traditions are one of the most meaningful ways we connect with our families and our heritage. They are happy reminders of our past and those who are no longer with us. What is more comforting and evocative than that first bite of the casserole Grandmother brought to every family gathering? Do you have a favorite family recipe to share? If so, we would be honored to include it in our Akron Family Recipe Collection, a new project to create a collection that reflects the rich and diverse food heritage that has shaped our community’s culinary history.

If you have a recipe to share, you may send it to us via mail or email. Typed or handwritten recipes will be accepted. Along with your recipes, please be sure to tell us something about the recipe and the individual connected to it. Why is the recipe important to you and your family? Was it made for special occasions or simply a family favorite? Is it connected to your ethnic heritage? If you have a photo of your family member, please include it. We are also interested in recipes from local restaurants, so if you or your family operated a local eatery, we will happily accept those, too. Recipes and their stories may be mailed to Special Collections, ASCPL, 60 South High St., Akron, Ohio 44326. They may be emailed to speccollections@akronlibrary.org.

Questions? Contact Judy James, jjames@akronlibrary.org.
Hidden Sources: Newsletters and Periodicals
by Mary Plazo, Librarian

Newsletters and periodicals may not be the first sources that come to mind when doing genealogy or local history research. It can seem daunting to browse through multiple magazines and publications to find the subject or surname you’re looking for, but with the right resources, finding an article isn’t so difficult anymore. Many publications have cumulative indexes created annually as supplements to their hard copy issues. In addition, there are online resources that we can search quickly to find information.

Did you know that Special Collections carries a large genealogical periodical collection? Our titles range from large national genealogy magazines to periodicals that focus on a specific state or geographic area. We have over 100 genealogy magazines in addition to over 70 published newsletters from almost every county chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society.

We also order titles that are focused on specific regions of ancestral heritage. These include American Ancestors, Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, New York Researcher, Maryland and Delaware Genealogist, Virginia Genealogist, and many others. We also keep back issues of national genealogy periodicals that are no longer published, yet contain information that is still valuable and may not be found in any other source.

When researching periodicals, try the Periodical Source Index (PERSI). PERSI is considered the largest subject index to genealogy and local history periodical articles in the world. It was created by the staff of the Allen County Public Library Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana. PERSI indexes articles in over 11,000 periodical titles (including 3,000 defunct titles) published by thousands of local, state, national and international societies and organizations.

The PERSI project began in 1986 with annual volumes in print form that indexed both current and past issues covering 1847-1997. All of these print volumes can be found in Special Collections. For these years and after 1997, you can search PERSI online in databases available through the Library. PERSI Archive, covering up to 2009, is available on HeritageQuest, which is searchable remotely from anywhere with a valid library card. The current PERSI is also searchable with PERSI through HeritageQuest or FindMyPast.
through FindMyPast, which is accessible at Main Library only. Currently, PERSI has about 2.7 million articles indexed on these databases.

If you have family that worked locally, you might also want to check for a company newsletter. We have a small collection of selected issues of local company newsletters, found in our online catalog, that can be retrieved from our closed stacks area. A few of these titles include the Polsky News (Polsky’s), The Quaker (Quaker Oats Company) and the Seibeneer (Seiberling Rubber Company). Many of these newsletters include content that is strictly financial or business-related, but there might be a bit of information about a relative and his or her life in Akron.

Another place to check is Summit Memory. Here you can search digitized issues of the Wingfoot Clan newsletter created for Goodyear employees. You might be surprised to find a mention or two about a relative who worked for Goodyear. Periodicals like these are great resources to keep in mind when diving further into your research, whether it’s related to genealogy or local history.

Summit Memory Update
by Rebecca Larson-Troyer, Librarian

New enhancements to Summit Memory are making access to local history even easier. View collections on your mobile device by clicking “mobile search” from the Summit Memory homepage, or visit www.summitmemory.org/digital.

Summit Memory is now part of the Library’s mobile app. Download the free app to access a host of digital resources, including Summit Memory’s thousands of historic photographs, postcards, documents, newspapers, artifacts and audiovisual resources, conveniently on your mobile device. The app is available for Apple iOS, Android, Windows and Amazon Kindle.

Selection continues for photographs from the archives of the Akron Beacon Journal. To date, librarians have gathered over 8,000 images to be added to Summit Memory. Nearly 3,000 are already online, with more to come soon. Read more about this project in an article published by the Beacon.

In order to foster community interaction with Summit Memory, we have updated our system to allow tags and comments posted by users. We encourage you to share your knowledge of the sites and people featured in our collections by using these features. Don’t forget to share images with friends on social media by clicking the “share” option when viewing an image, located just above the image title. Questions and comments about the website are always welcome at info@summitmemory.org.
Pardon our Dust!

Some of you might have noticed that the Special Collections blog page is no longer active. Due to unanticipated circumstances, our blogs were recently suspended. The first piece of good news is that all of those wonderful genealogy and local history resources you have come to depend on are still available via a temporary page: http://www.akronlibrary.org/specialcollections. The other good news is that they will also be available once the library unveils its new public website later this year. In the meantime, if you have our blog URL bookmarked on your computer or other electronic device, please replace it with the URL above, and, as always, if you need assistance or have questions about our resources, we are just a phone call or email away: 330-643-9030 or speccollections@akronlibrary.org.

Family Reunions, Then and Now
by Jane Gramlich, Librarian

As summer approaches, many families will be planning and attending those large gatherings of extended kin that we call family reunions. Today, reunions are not just a time to have fun catching up in person, but they can also be a full-blown genealogical event with family members sharing photos, charts, stories, even DNA test results. Are you considering a reunion? For planning ideas, take a look at guides like Your Family Reunion by George G. Morgan or A Family Affair by Sandra MacLean.

If you think the concept of the family reunion is fairly new, think again. Reunions were held frequently in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Newspapers of the time were full of announcements and recaps of these popular “cousin conventions.” Did your ancestors hold a family reunion? Chances are they did.

Akron Daily Democrat, August 15, 1902.

Stark County Democrat, October 7, 1886.

Images from Chronicling America, Library of Congress.
Ohio Obituary Index Update  
by Cheri Goldner, Librarian

The Akron-Summit County Public Library joined the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums’ Ohio Obituary Index in 2013. Since then, library staff members and a wonderful group of volunteers have been busy entering information from current obituaries as well as citations from the Akron Beacon Journal (ABJ) newspaper indexes, 1841-1939 and the Obituary only indexes, 1937-2012.

Our work on the Ohio Obituary Index serves two purposes. First, it gathers all of our obituary citations into one searchable database. Secondly, it makes our obituary data available to a much wider audience. With 65 contributing libraries and more than three million database entries, the Ohio Obituary Index is a well-known resource for Ohio genealogy research in its own right. Its inclusion in the subscription databases Ancestry, Archives.com, and FindMyPast is bringing it (and Special Collections) even more users on a daily basis.

So far, we have entered citations from the following years into the Ohio Obituary Index: 1841-1889, 1891-1893, 1896, 1898-1904, 1940-1984, 2013-current. Data entry will likely continue over the next few years.

Until all of our data has been entered, feel free to contact Special Collections or visit the Hayes website to check which years are covered in the Ohio Obituary Index, and continue to use the indexes on our website as needed. Note that the Hayes website is in the process of being overhauled. Both the website and the Ohio Obituary Index should be sporting a new look with improved search capabilities later this year.

New Books

Calvin Rydbom’s Akron (Images of Modern America Series) bursts with full-color images of some of Akron’s best-known twentieth-century figures in business, politics, sports, and culture, such as Swenson’s, Art Arfons, and the Kenley Players.

In Norton (Images of America Series), Lisa Merrick, the Assistant Curator for the Norton Historical Society, has compiled photos and detailed descriptions of families and institutions of the area, such as the Millers, the VanHyning, Loyal Oak School, and the Barberton Speedway.

Eric Eugene Johnson is vice president of Member Services for the Ohio Genealogical Society and served in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as lieutenant colonel. His military interest and expertise are behind this compilation of Ohio’s black Civil War soldiers, giving service data as well as birth, death, and burial details.

Special Collections is committed to procuring a large selection of local history and genealogy titles. For a list of new books we’ve added to our collection in the past few months, please see our website.
Northeast Ohio Local History Fair

Get to know your local history organizations at the Northeast Ohio Local History Fair, a collaborative effort to bring local historical societies, museums and related organizations to the public for a one-day, educational event. The schedule includes exhibitors, music, arts and crafts, and a genealogy help center. The FREE event will be held on Saturday, April 30, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Ellenwood Recreation Center, Bedford, Ohio. Sponsors include the Bedford Historical Society, the City of Bedford, and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. For more information, see the Fair’s website.

Looking for Lizzie: The True Story of an Ohio Madam
(Chapter meeting)
Presented by Debra Lape
Saturday, April 16, 1:30 pm
Tallmadge Branch Library

The Very Basics of DNA
(Chapter meeting)
Presented by Julie Wilson
Saturday, May 21, 1:30 pm
Main Library

Cemetery Invasion
Led by Kelly McKnight
Saturday, June 18, time TBA
Northfield-Macedonia Cemetery

On Display: Renovation and Repurpose

Last fall, the University of Akron’s Institute for Human Science and Culture at the Cummings Center of the History of Psychology announced a new program to offer an undergraduate certificate in museums and archives. This eighteen-credit program is taught by instructors and practitioners from several departments, as well as the Cummings Center and University of Akron Press. Special Collections hosted a student in the program in the fall. This spring, we will host a display created by students enrolled in the program. The display will examine buildings on the University of Akron campus that have been renovated or repurposed, and how they have affected the surrounding community, including the Polsky building, Quaker Square, and the Roadway Express records building, current home of the Cummings Center. This display may be seen from mid-May through mid-August.

Summit County OGS Events

For more information, see http://summitogs.org.

Researching European Ancestry? Save the Date

Are you interested in tracing your European family roots? You won’t want to miss “Our Ancestors from Europe: How to Discover Their Individual Stories,” held in the Main Library Auditorium on Saturday, August 27, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm. John Philip Colletta, Ph.D., a nationally renowned genealogy lecturer, will be the featured speaker for this event covering topics on passenger arrival records, naturalization records, Italian records, and discovering the real stories of immigrant ancestors. This program is FREE and open to the public, and parking is free in the High-Market parking deck. It is sure to be a day of enlightening information that just might help provide a piece of the puzzle or open up a door to a genealogical road block. To register, contact Special Collections at 330-643-9030 or speccollections@akronlibrary.org.
The Special Collections Division offers several recurring genealogy classes to help you with your family research. All classes are free of charge and open to the general public. **Registration is required for all classes held at Main Library. Please register by calling us at 330-643-9030 or emailing us at speccollections@akronlibrary.org.**

**NEW CLASSES!**

**Dig Into Databases**
Go beyond Ancestry and discover other genealogy databases the Library has to offer. Join us to learn more about these great resources, including what they contain, how to access them, and how to do effective searches. Sessions will include an hour of demonstration and another hour of practice time with staff on hand to help.

**Access Newspaper Archive:** Digitized newspapers from the U.S. and abroad.  
Saturday, April 16, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Computer Lab 2

**HeritageQuest:** Revolutionary War pension files, Freedman’s Bank records, books and more.  
Saturday, April 30, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Computer Lab 2

**Fold3:** Military records, city directories, naturalization records and more.  
Saturday, May 7, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Computer Lab 2

**My Heritage – World Vital Records:** A variety of indexes and digitized records from the U.S. and overseas.  
Saturday, May 21, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Computer Lab 2

**Identifying Your Family Photographs**
A picture may be worth a thousand words, but unlocking the stories of unidentified photographs requires some sleuthing. This class includes tips and techniques for identifying historic photographs. Learn to read clues, such as the type of photograph, clothing and hairstyles, and even whether or not subjects are smiling, to reveal the stories behind every photograph. This workshop will also take a look at how genealogy databases and local history resources can be used to identify your family photographs.  
Saturday, June 4, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Meeting Room 1

**Getting Started in African American Genealogy**
Do you want to trace your African American family tree? Not sure how or where to begin? The Special Collections Division presents a two-hour session for genealogy beginners who have a specific interest in African American ancestral research.  
Saturday, June 18, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Meeting Room 1
We would like to thank the following for their generous donations:

Angelo Coletta for Mathews Hotel letterhead and envelope.


Suzie Graham, Downtown Akron Partnership for historic documents, press clippings, specs and blueprints of Greystone Hall/Masonic Temple.

Paul Harvey for photograph of the dedication of the South Main Street bridge; copy of photograph of Ash Street.

David Hyer for booklet, Greater Akron, 1927, and sixteen postcards of Akron, Ohio.

Janice Kelly for early twentieth-century photographs of various Akron-area residents.

The Louise Sumner Board for organizational and historical records of the Louise Sumner Board.

Joyce McKnight for New Historical Atlas of Summit County, Ohio, 1874.

E. Paul Morehouse for two mugs from Nick Anthe’s restaurant.


Cindy Hickson Robinson for 1950s O'Neil's Department Store children's menu.

Joseph R. Pinotti for Two Families from the Lunigiana: The Pinotti's and the Piagneri's.

Mike Shannon for color slides of Akron, Ohio.

Karen Stadler for Norton High School 1966 class photograph and East High School 1939 commencement program.

This Isaly’s ad was a whimsical sign that spring had arrived at last. Akron Beacon Journal, April 7, 1965.