

News from the National Archives-Great Lakes Region

<http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/archives/>

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This is the National Archives-Great Lakes Region (Chicago) monthly E-News announcement. Please feel free to share this with anyone you feel may be interested in learning more about the National Archives-Great Lakes Region. Reader feedback on what you may like to see in future issues or any other comments is encouraged. Send any comments or suggestions to chicago.archives@nara.gov with the subject line of "NARA-Great Lakes December E-News Comment."

In this issue:

- 1. Change in Saturday Hours Beginning in January**
- 2. Holiday Closures**
- 3. Records of the U.S. Army Department of the Platte at the National Archives-Great Lakes Region.**
- 4. Upcoming Great Lakes Region Events for the General Public.**
 - a) The Life and Times of John W. E. Thomas, Illinois' First African American State Legislator**
- 5. Ongoing Exhibit: "Cinema in the Stacks."**

1. Change in Saturday Research Hours - From the "First Saturday" to the "Second Saturday."

The National Archives Great Lakes Region will be open to researchers on Saturday, December 1st from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. However, beginning in January, the National Archives-Great Lakes Region will be changing its Saturday hours to the second Saturday of the month. Saturday, January 12th will be the inauguration day for the new "Second Saturday of the Month" research hours. Researchers interested in using original historical records or microfilm held by the Regional Archives are encouraged to contact a reference archivist ahead of time by phone (773-948-9001) or email (chicago.archives@nara.gov).

2. NARA-Great Lakes Holiday Closures

The Great Lakes Region will be closed Tuesday, December 25th for Christmas and Tuesday, January 1st for New Years Day. The Regional Archives will be open during its regular hours on Monday, December 24 and Monday, December 31.

3. Records of the U.S. Army Department of the Platte at the National Archives-Great Lakes Region.

One of the recurrent pleasures of working in an archives is encountering records that one does not anticipate finding. One such collection are the Records of the Engineer Officer of the Department of the Platte, which is part of the holdings of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE), formally designated as the Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers (Record Group 77), held at the Great Lakes Region unit of the National Archives and Records Administration.

What makes this collection intriguing is the Department of the Platte was a geographical command, created in the 1860's and terminated in the early 1900's, which included Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as portions

of other states at one time or another. The department was headquartered in Omaha and subordinate to the Division of the Missouri which had headquarters in Chicago.

The Department of the Platte records contain a variety of series such as: Letters, Reports and Graphic Material Received, 1868-1903; Field Books of Routes of March of Reconnaissance Parties From Various Forts and Posts in Western Areas, 1875-1889; Records of Training and Field Operations at Camp George Crook, Nebraska, August, 1889-September, 1889; and Copies of Survey and Ordinance of Conveyance of Jefferson Barracks Tract from City of Carondelet, Missouri to United States, 1854-1856.

Some Department of the Platte records appear to be unique to the collection and are not found at other National Archives units. For instance, in the series "Letter, Reports, and Graphic Material Received . . ." there are maps, scout reports, and plats of forts and posts not known to be in other collections. A few of the highlights of this series are five maps depicting an March, 1876 attack on an Indian village (Cheyenne) during the initial stage of the Great Sioux War, several of which were not previously known. There is a map of a scout in southeast Colorado in 1868 that contains the earliest cartographic record of the site of the November, 1864 Sand Creek Massacre. This map led to an archaeological survey that resulted in the site becoming a National Park Service site. Among the plat maps is one for Fort Laramie, Wyoming, made in the 1870's, which provides information on structures previously not known to have existed. This series also contains reports of scouts in New Mexico and material related to the 7th and 10th Cavalry Regiments in Indian Territory.

The department had no functional or command relationship with the USCOE District of Chicago. Why the Department of the Platte became part of the records of the USCOE District of Chicago is undocumented. It can be speculated that when the department was closed down its records were conveyed to the headquarters of the Division of the Missouri at Chicago. It appears the division, which could have sent the records on to the War Department, for some reason transferred them to the District of Chicago, perhaps because the material included maps. All that is known for a certainty was when the records were transferred from the legal custody of the USCOE to the National Archives the Department of the Platte material was included. To add complexity to the matter, the records of the department contain material concerning areas outside of the geographic borders of the command and before it was created.

4. Upcoming National Archives Great Lakes Region Events for the General Public.

The Life and Times of John W. E. Thomas, Illinois' First African American State Legislator (10:00 AM Wednesday, February 27, 2008)

Come join Illinois State Archives Director David Joens for a presentation on John W. E. Thomas, who became Illinois' first African-American State Representative in 1876. This is a free event open to the public in celebration of Black History Month. Continuing education credits are available for teachers who attend the program.

For additional information on upcoming programs, visit our public programs calendar at: <http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/public/programs/calendar.html>

5. Ongoing Exhibit (Chicago): "Cinema in the Stacks."

In conjunction with our Cinema in the Stacks film series, Archives staff mounted a three-panel exhibit relating each film to Great Lakes Regional Archives' holdings. Each panel highlights one of the films in the series (*Tucker: The Man and His Dream*, *The Great White Hope*, and *Anatomy of a Murder*). Each panel has an 11" x 17" reproduction of the theatrical release poster of the film, as well as production stills.

Highlighted records from the Regional Archives holdings include: Records from a civil lawsuit by one of the individuals represented in the film against the studio that produced *Anatomy of a Murder* and the publishing company of the novel; the criminal case file, *U.S. v. Jack Johnson* ; and records from various civil and criminal cases involving Preston Tucker, including patent drawings of the Tucker Torpedo, as well as records from the War Assets Administration detailing the sale of Tucker's plant.

The National Archives and Records Administration-Great Lakes Region is at 7358 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, approximately 2 1/2 miles southeast of Midway Airport. The entrance is located one block west on 75th Street, just north of Richard J. Daley City College, and parking is free. Maps and travel directions can be found on our web site: <http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/contact/directions-il.html>