

News from the National Archives-Great Lakes Region
<http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/archives/>
February 2008

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 February E-News Comment."

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- 1. Upcoming "Second Saturday of the Month" Research Hours: Saturday, February 9 and Saturday, March 8.**

In addition to its regular hours of 8:00 AM to 4:15 PM Monday through Friday, the National Archives-Great Lakes Regional Archives in Chicago is open to the public the second Saturday of every month from 8:00 AM to 4:15 PM. 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. Upcoming closures.**

- a) **NARA-Great Lakes Region will be closed Monday, February 18, in recognition of Washington's Birthday.**
- b) **Temporary Closure of Microfilm Reading Room For One Week in February.**

Due to unexpected but important building repairs, our archival research rooms will be closed or relocated for one week in February or early March. The earliest the project may begin is the week of Monday, February 18 through Friday, February 22 . **During this time there will be no access to our microfilm collection or our public access computers** . Research with original records will still be possible at an alternate location in the building. Weather or construction delays may move the week we are closed to later in the month. **From February 18 through March 14, Make a research appointment by contacting a reference archivist ahead of time by phone (773-948-9001) or email (chicago.archives@nara.gov) . If our research rooms close on short notice, we will attempt to call you to reschedule.**

- 3. Researching African-American History Through Court Records and Railroad History.**

The modern Civil Rights Movement had origins in 1920s labor activism by African-American railroad workers,

but the railroads as carriers of people also brought to national attention the contradictions between the ideals of the nation that "all men are created equal" and the "local customs" of discriminatory practices. Beginning in the 1930s, African-Americans lodged a rising number of complaints against public discrimination by pursuing judicial remedies. Among the numerous individual Federal court cases about violations of civil rights that appear in records in the National Archives-Great Lakes Region, two deserve mention and greater research because of their historical significance and the persons who were involved.

Arthur W. Mitchell (1883 - 1968) served as the first African-American to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat beginning January 3, 1935. On April 20, 1937, Congressman Mitchell boarded an Illinois Central Railroad train in Chicago, then transferred at Memphis, Tennessee, to a Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway train to Hot Springs, Arkansas. While en route to Memphis early the morning of April 21, the porter-in-charge moved Congressman Mitchell and his baggage to the Pullman sleeper that would be switched to the Rock Island train. The Congressman paid the porter-in-charge for a seat on the Pullman car and held a ticket for drawing room in the car. When the Congressman's Pullman car crossed the Mississippi River and entered Arkansas, however, a new conductor refused to collect the Congressman's drawing-room ticket and forced the Congressman into a "filthy and foul-smelling" Jim Crow car. Congressman Mitchell's subsequent complaint to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) can be found in Interstate Commerce Commission Docket 27844, followed by his lawsuit in the U.S. District Court at Chicago in Civil Action Case 500 on April 20, 1939. The records in the civil action case file contain extensive narrative details, as well as legal citations for other court cases about racial discrimination in railroad transportation up to 1941. The outcome of the Congressman's precedent-setting lawsuit, which the U.S. Supreme Court eventually heard, can be found in the case file and court docket pages in the National Archives-Great Lakes Region, while the original ICC docket file, like numerous other discrimination complaints to the ICC, is preserved in the National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

George Neves Leighton (originally Leitao) (1912 -) is a retired Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, and the son of immigrants from Cape Verde. On December 19, 1948, George Leighton was a sleeping car passenger on a train from Chicago to Mobile, Alabama, when he entered the train's dining car. Upon entry into Mississippi, the dining car steward refused to serve Mr. Leighton unless a curtain was drawn around his table, then forced him from a seat in the lounge car and locked him in a compartment of another car. Seven months later, the future judge filed suit against the Pullman Company, the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad Company, and the dining car steward on July 27, 1949, in Federal court at Chicago, charging the companies with violation of his rights under the 14th Amendment, the Interstate Commerce Act, and other Federal laws. The story of Judge Leighton's personal protest against the injustice of Jim Crow railroad service can be found in Civil Action Case 49C1212 among records of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago.

Researchers can find additional instances of personal protest for the enforcement of civil rights in the National Archives-Great Lakes Region in other records of the U.S. District Courts (Record Group 21), the U.S. Courts of Appeals (Record Group 276), and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Record Group 403). Two essential guides to records in the National Archives and Records Administration about railroads and civil rights are *Records Relating to North American Railroads* by David Pfeiffer (Reference Information Paper 91, 2001) and *Federal Records Relating to Civil Rights in the Post-World War II Era*, compiled by Dr. Walter B. Hill, Jr., and Lisha B. Penn (Reference Information Paper 113, 2006).

4. Recently Digitized Records from the National Archives and Footnote.com Digitization Project.

The National Archives and Footnote.com have continued to digitize selected records from the vast microfilm holdings of the National Archives. The records digitized so far are available at no charge using public access computers found at the National Archives-Great Lakes Region (Chicago) as well as National Archives research rooms in Washington, DC and regional facilities across the country.

Recently completed collections available through this agreement include:

1) *U.S. Submarine War Patrol Reports, 1941-1945. Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Record Group 38, Publication Number M1752.*

The main purpose of these submarine war patrol reports was to keep the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, and others apprised of the records of submarines in carrying out their primary mission of sinking enemy ships. Most reports are typed mimeograph copies and include daily narratives of a vessel's locations and activities.

2) *Hesse Crown Jewels Case Court-Martial Case Files Relating to the "Hesse Crown Jewels Case," 1944-1952, Record Group 153, Publication Number M1899.*

Captain Kathleen Nash Durant, Major Jack W. Durant, and Colonel David F. Watson conspired to keep jewels of the House of Hesse and other property discovered in Schloss Friedrichshof at Kronberg, and smuggle them into the United States. The valuables were ultimately returned to the Hesse family and the three officers imprisoned. The trial documents include depositions, photographs, pleas and sentencing.

3) *JAG Case Files of Pacific Area War Crimes Trials, 1944-1949 Army JAG Case Files of Pacific Area War Crimes Trials, 1944-1949 (Iwanami Case), C73, and Navy JAG Case Files of Pacific Area War Crimes Trails, 1944-1949, C72; Record Groups 125 and 153.*

JAG is the acronym for Judge Advocate General. These records comprise legal case files relating to crimes committed during World War II by Japanese soldiers and sailors, prosecuted under U.S. military law. Not all of the accused were guilty. These records are sorted by case file titles. Some files are brief, while others may contain hundreds of pages of testimony, correspondence, and court documents.

4) *13th Naval District Public Information Department Press Clippings, 1942-1960, Record Group 181, Publication Number P2012*

A naval district is a military and administrative command that is a part of the Shore Establishment. A naval district is responsible for military coordination, and all naval activities in the district and waters. The 13th Naval District was established in 1903. By 1942, the headquarters was in Seattle, at which time the district consisted of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and the Territory of Alaska (which would become the 17th Naval District in 1944). The district was disestablished in 1980.

The press clippings relate to activities of naval personnel in the 13th Naval District and items of interest to the Public Information Department. The images are of newspaper articles taken largely from the *Bremerton Sun* and the *Daily News Searchlight* ..

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

a) Celebrate Black History Month with two presentations on the important contributions of African-Americans to the Illinois Legislature (10:00 AM, Wednesday, February 27, 2008).

The program will begin with, "**The Life and Times of John W.E. Thomas**," a discussion with David A. Joens, Director of the Illinois State Archives, about Illinois' first African-American legislator. Thomas was elected as the Representative of Chicago's Second Legislative District on November 7, 1876. His election victory was a high point in the history of post Civil War Illinois.

Our second presentation, titled, "**Illinois African American State Lawmaker's Impact on Public Policy**," will be given by Dr. Erma Brooks Williams, who serves as Senior Executive Director for Board and Governmental Affairs at Chicago State University.

Admission to both events is free. 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>

b) "How to Find and Use 19th Century Documents for Illinois Historical Research" (Thursday, March 13 at 10:00 A.M.) Decatur Illinois.

Archives Technician Martin Tuohy will join Elaine Evans from the Illinois State Archives and Dennis Suttles from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library to discuss ways of conducting research using 19th Century records in Federal, state, and other archival repositories. This free program is part of the 28th Annual Illinois History Symposium at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois and will be of interest to teachers, students, professors, local historical societies, historic preservations, genealogists, and independent researchers.

6. 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#directions>