



National History Day 2012

Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History Topic Ideas from the National Archives at Chicago

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the nation's record keeper. We ensure continuing access to essential evidence that documents the rights of the American citizens and the actions of Federal offices. We keep only those federal records that are determined to have continuing value. This includes textual records (such as letters, reports, and memoranda), maps, charts, architectural drawings, and photographs.

BUT

You don't have to go to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Archives. Located in Chicago, Illinois, the Great Lakes Region of the National Archives preserves records dating from 1800 to the 1990s, created by Federal courts and government agencies in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

AND THESE RECORDS CAN HELP WITH YOUR HISTORY DAY SUCCESS

Selecting an interesting and researchable History Day topic will help you start on the path of History Day success. Therefore the staff at the National Archives in Chicago gathered our thoughts and assembled a few topic ideas related to our holdings and this year's National History Day theme: *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*.

THOUGH "NOT THE END ALL BE ALL"

Our ideas are just a small slice of possibilities. We encourage you to explore the topics below and think about others related to your community. In some instances, we pulled a specific topic out of a larger collection of records. Our complete holdings are available online at <http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/holdings/>

TO ACCESS NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT CHICAGO MATERIALS

Some materials related to the topics we suggested are available online through ARC, our archival research catalog, at <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>. For other items, you would need to visit our facility at 7538 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, Illinois. Though before you pay us a visit, we recommend contacting us first at 773-948-9001 or chicago.archives@nara.gov to save yourself time and ensure we have what you envision (some of our records are stored off-site).

And as always, make sure to review and thoroughly examine the secondary literature (textbooks, books written by other historians, and journal/magazine articles) related to your topic before delving into the primary source material.

Best wishes for a successful National History Day experience!

Select Topic Ideas from the National Archives at Chicago

- Explore the decisions made about the locations of public housing units in Chicago and subsequent actions in the court case *Dorothy Gautreaux vs. Patricia Harris, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Chicago Housing Authority*. (Record Group 21)
- How did women fight for their jobs in Indiana? Consider the case *Thelma Bowe, et al, vs. Colgate Palmolive Company*, that involved women being excluded from certain jobs at the plant based on their ability to lift boxes weighing more than 35 pounds. (Record Group 21)
- What was the reaction to World War II discrimination at home during the fight for democracy overseas? Look into the creation and activities of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice. (Record Group 228)
- What actions were taken by Michigan and Ohio residents when the Fugitive Slave Law was in place as a national law? (Record Group 21)
- Young women painted the faces of clocks with glow-in-the-dark paint made of radium with a steady hand and thin brush tips. They moistened the brushes in their mouths to keep them sharp. In the process they ingested dangerous radioactive material. (Record Group 326)
- African Americans actively fought for their civil rights after the passage of the 1875 Civil Rights Act. Explore related court cases from Ohio, such as *Salina Gray and William Gray vs. The Cincinnati Railroad Company* in our holdings. (Record Group 21)
- How did the U.S. Navy react to calls to integrate and investigate claims of discrimination in the Chicago area and in Hastings, Nebraska? (Record Group 181)
- Examine the work of Mexican labor activist and union organizer Refugio Roman Martinez. Martinez, who immigrated to Chicago during the 1930s, and faced deportation from the United States during the Cold War. (Record Group 21)
- An Illinois farmer, William Newby, listed as a Civil War casualty returns home after many years and applies for his government pension. He is denied and jailed on charges of fraud. Was this a case of stolen identity? Explore the William Newby / Daniel Benton story. (Record Group 21)
- Did the Chicago Public Schools intentionally maintain segregated public schools in the 20th century? Investigate court records that document civil rights activities in Chicago in the 1960s. (Record Group 21)
- The Pullman Strike, a Federal Government injunction, and Eugene Debs. (Record Group 21)
- After the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, eight well-known protesters were charged with conspiracy and crossing states lines with the intention of inciting a riot. (Record Group 21)

- “This war is unjust.” Explore draft resistance and other instances of wartime conscientious objectors and activists. Consider:
 - The work of Eugene Debs and his Canton, Ohio speech during World War I (*Record Group 21*)
 - The activities at Kent State University on Monday, May 4, 1970 (*Record Group 21*)
 - William Haywood and Helen Gurly Flynn’s opposition to World War I (*Record Group 21*)
 - Peace activist David Dellinger (*Record Group 21*)
 - Records of local draft boards in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin (*Record Group 163*)
- What can be sent through the U.S. mail? Explore the government's efforts to legislate morality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. How did individuals, specifically women, respond? Consider Ida Craddock as one example. (*Record Group 21*)
- Members of the Potawatomi tribe brought lawsuits to court to address land claims in northeast Indiana and Illinois. What is the complete story? (*Record Group 21*)
- In 1951 a multi-night riot in Cicero, Illinois, involved approximately two to five thousand white protestors. (*Record Group 21 and Record Group 276*)
- Court cases stemming from the Iroquois Theatre Fire demonstrate the severity of the disaster. What happened after the loss of so many lives? (*Record Group 21*)
- What began as a leisurely boat ride turned deadly for more than 800 Chicagoans when they boarded the *Eastland* steamer in July 1915. Investigate the full story. (*Record Group 21*)
- During times of war, each side conspires to gain the edge, often times making plans to deceive the other side. Consider this topic by investigating the Hindu Conspiracy or the case against Hans Max Haupt. (*Record Group 21*)
- Fred Hampton, the 21-year-old chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party, was shot dead in his bed during a police raid on December 4, 1969. Why did his mother and other family members bring a civil rights lawsuit before the court? (*Record Group 21*)
- The East St. Louis Riot took place on July 2-3, 1917, in East St. Louis, Illinois. Mobs ravaged the city, burned homes of African Americans, and assaulted numerous men, women, and children. Estimates of the number of people killed range from 40 to 150. (Microfilm: *Record Group 233*)
- What happened to German-Americans during World War I? Case files on detained enemy aliens from Cincinnati and criminal case files related to draft evasion from Detroit highlight the result of activities undertaken in response to the war. Food Administration records from Illinois also add to the story. (*Record Group 21 and Record Group 4*)
- How did the federal government assist Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin farmers during the 1930s and 1940s? Why was assistance needed? Review the Farmers Home Administration files. (*Record Group 96*)

- The United States led the effort to develop the first atomic bomb during World War II. Known as the Manhattan Project, the University of Chicago's Metallurgical Laboratory was a key participant in these efforts. *(Record Group 326)*
- During the Cold War, the United States Army built and operated a series of Nike missile sites in the U.S. These sites were designed to be the last line of defense against Soviet bombers. *(Record Group 291)*
- Investigate postwar housing in the city. After World War II, Chicago and the rest of the country had rent-controlled apartments. Investigate the reasons why and the consequences and results of this federal program. *(Record Group 252)*
- After the Civil War, maritime trade and shipping increased on the Great Lakes followed by numerous shipwrecks and disasters. In 1871 the U.S. Congress established the Life Saving Service to assist ships in distress. *(Record Group 26)*
- During World War I the War Department's Military Intelligence Division, Plant Protection Section, investigated suspicious individuals, sabotage, and general manufacturing plant security. *(Record Group 165)*
- During World War II, the United States used airships built at the Goodyear Airdock building in Akron, Ohio. Why would airships be used instead of traditional airplanes? *(Record Group 72)*
- After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese cut off approximately 90% of the United States' rubber supply. The federal government began to look towards alternative sources for latex, including dandelions, and established test plots in Wisconsin and Michigan. *(Record Group 95)*
- The Office of Price Administration (OPA) rationed foods and fought inflation by freezing wages, prices, and rents during World War II. *(Record Group 188)*
- Both Representative Arthur Mitchell, the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat, and George Leighton, a retired Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, suffered discrimination while traveling on the railroad. Both men fought this injustice and a remedy through the court system. Investigate their fight for justice and equality in our court records. *(Record Group 21).*