

## Local History Room FAQs

The Local History Collection and Archives Room provides materials and support for those interested in doing research on the history of the City of Rockford and Winnebago County.

1. Did you know RPL's oldest item is a **1491 Bible** donated by Rockford citizens to Rockford citizens?
2. One of our most requested resources is our **Rockford City Directories**. Our oldest City Directory was published in the year 1857 and we have them up to the current year. The directories contain annual city summaries, government official lists, residential addresses, residents' employment positions, businesses list, and more.
3. We have access to two amazing newspaper digitized databases that are available remotely:
  - **Newsbank** offers Rockford newspapers back to the year 1855. Researchers often use this database to find articles on their homes/properties, family research and obituaries, notable Rockford events and people. If you are an RPL library card holder, you can access this database on your device using your card number and PIN. Or stop at any of our library locations for direct access on our computers.
  - ***The Crusader*** was published in the 1950s by Mr. Joseph Scott Saunders, Jr., to bring balance to Rockford's news offerings to report the African American experience within our community. Editions of *The Crusader* were donated to the Rockford Public Library by Mr. Saunders in the mid 1970's and have been digitized and are now proudly available for all to access at any time through our website.
4. Did you know Rockford was the second city in the nation to publish yearbooks? We have an impressive collection of **Rockford School** Yearbooks with the earliest yearbook being from 1892. Researchers utilize yearbooks to find pictures of family members and school memories. Our collection includes various schools: Auburn, Boylan, East, Guilford, Jefferson, Muldoon, Rockford High School, West High/Middle, St. Thomas, and more.

5. Another frequently requested resource is our collection of historical **Rockford atlases and maps**. From county, plat, and street maps, our map collection assists researchers in locating Rockford places and properties of the past. For example, a homeowner may be interested in seeing maps that include the location and footprints of their house and other buildings.
6. **We have an extensive LH Archives, Rockfordiana Files, and Vertical Files** collection. These contain historical Rockford documents, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, etc. organized by topic.
7. Our special **Potter Collection** is named after Andrew Morrill Potter, who was born in Rockford in 1843. In September 1862, he enlisted in the 74th Illinois Volunteers Infantry, rising to the rank of lieutenant. After the Civil War, he began collecting books about the war. After passing away in 1900, his collection of 509 Civil War volumes was donated to the Rockford Public Library. The collection includes regimental histories, mainly Illinois, campaign histories, various states' roles in the war, scarce or obscure memoirs, as well as a multi-volume set of the Reunions of the Army of the Cumberland.

To communicate with Local History staff for a research request, please complete a **Research Request Form** found on our website or email [localhistory@rockfordpubliclibrary.org](mailto:localhistory@rockfordpubliclibrary.org)