

DEKALB COUNTY, ILLINOIS FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH GUIDE

Compiled by EvaAnne Johnson, June 2017



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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brief History

DeKalb County, Illinois is located in the Northern part of the state. DeKalb County was created out of Kane County on March 4, 1837. The county was named after Johann de Kalb, a German baron who fought for the colonies during the American Revolution. Sycamore was established as the county seat in 1840. The county seat was briefly located in Coltonville from 1839-1840. There has been no record loss throughout the years at the county courthouse. DeKalb County borders Boone and McHenry Counties to the north, Kane and Kendall Counties to the east, La Salle County to the south, and Lee and Ogle Counties to the west.

Before white settlers arrived, members of the Potawatomi tribe lived in the area. Chief Shabbona from this tribe is a well-known figure, who signed numerous treaties on behalf of several native tribes, and was a friend to the newly arrived settlers. European settlers started arriving to the area in 1834. The Railroad first reached the county in the 1850s, running through first the southern part of the county, and by 1875, the northern part of the county had a railroad reaching it as well. The largest waves of settlers arrived during that time. Most residents in the early years were from the Eastern U.S. (especially New England and New York), and later large numbers of immigrants arrived from Germany and Scandinavia, and some from England and Ireland.

Because of its very fertile and productive soil, agriculture has always been a central industry in DeKalb County. DeKalb County is credited with being the birthplace of the Farm Bureau movement, beginning with DeKalb County Soil Improvement Association, which became DeKalb County Farm Bureau and DeKalb Ag Research/Monsanto. Sandwich has hosted a large fair at the Sandwich Fairgrounds every year since 1888. Manufacturing is also a dominant industry. Prominent manufacturing companies throughout DeKalb County's history include Marsh Harvester Company, Sandwich Manufacturing Company, Wurlitzer Piano Company, DeKalb Fence Company, Gurler Brothers Pure Milk, and Illinois Thresher Company. DeKalb was central to the barbed wire manufacturing industry, and several kinds of barbed wire were invented there. Barbed Wire Barons Jacob Haish, Ellwood and Glidden were once pillars of DeKalb County society.

Research note: DeKalb may be spelled with or without a space, and can be found as "DeKalb" or "De Kalb" or "de Kalb" in various documents.

Border Changes

- 1795-1812 - part of St. Clair County
- 1812-1815 - part of Madison County
- 1815-1816 - part of Edwards County
- 1816-1819 - part of Crawford County
- 1819-1821 - part of Clark County
- 1821-1823 - part of Pike County
- 1823-1825 - part of Fulton County
- 1825-1831 - part of Putnam County
- 1831-1835 - part of LaSalle County
- 1836-1837 - part of Kane County
- 1837 - DeKalb County created from Kane County on March 4, 1837.
- (See the *Atlas of Historical County Boundaries* found on the Newberry Library website to further explore Illinois' county boundary changes:

<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>)



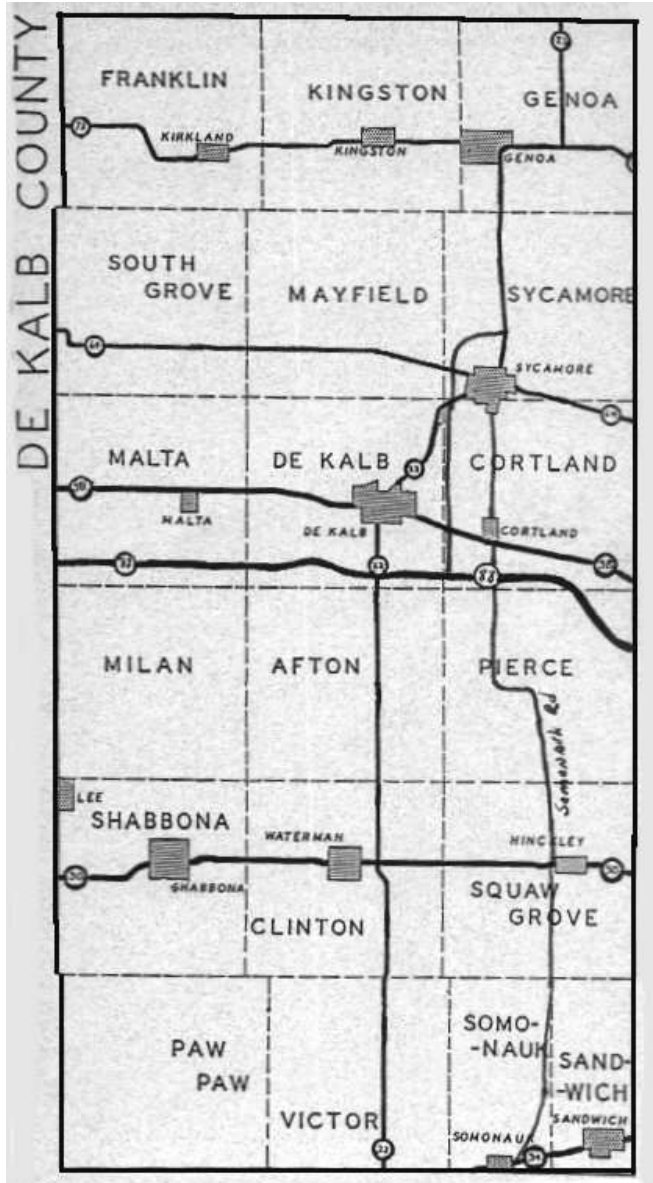
Illinois county boundaries in 1830. The white boundaries and text show the current county boundaries. Image Source: *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses 1790-1920*, by William Thorndale and William Dollarhide.

Places/Localities

The townships of the county were established and named in 1850. Townships within DeKalb County include:

- *Afton Township* – Formed from DeKalb Township and Clinton Township on February 18, 1856. Includes the locales of Afton Center, Elva and McGirr.
- *Clinton Township* – Includes the village of Waterman.
- *Cortland Township* – First named Richland, then changed to Pampas on November 20, 1850 and to Cortland on February 1, 1865. Includes the town of Cortland and part of the village of Maple Park (most of the village is located in Kane County, Virgil Township).
- *DeKalb Township* – Name changed from Orange on November 20, 1850. Includes the city of DeKalb.
- *Franklin Township* – Includes the village of Kirkland and the community of Fairdale.
- *Genoa Township* – Includes the city of Genoa and the locale of New Lebanon.
- *Kingston Township* – Includes the village of Kingston.
- *Malta Township* – Formed as Etna from DeKalb in September, 1856; name changed from Etna in December, 1858. Includes the village of Malta.

- *Mayfield Township* – Name changed from Liberty on November 20, 1850. Includes the unincorporated locales of Clare, Five Points and Wilkinson.
- *Milan Township* – Formed from Shabbona Township and Malta Township on February 23, 1858.



- *Paw Paw Township* – Formed in March, 1850.
- *Pierce Township* – Formed from Squaw Grove Township and Pampas (Cortland) Township in 1850.
- *Sandwich Township* – Formed from Somonauk Township on July 14, 1896. Includes the city of Sandwich.
- *Shabbona Township* – Includes the villages of Lee and Shabbona, and the community of Shabbona Grove.
- *Somonauk Township* – Includes the village of Somonauk and the locale of Franks.
- *South Grove Township* – Name changed from Vernon on November 20, 1850. Includes the community of Esmond.
- *Squaw Grove Township* – Includes the village of Hinckley.
- *Sycamore Township* – Includes the city of Sycamore, the county seat, and the locale of Charter Grove.
- *Victor Township* – Formed from Clinton Township in 1850.

For a full list of places, communities and locales, visit:

<http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/places.htm>

DeKalb County, unknown year. Image from <http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/maps.htm>

II. WHERE SHOULD I LOOK FOR SOURCES?

Local Repositories and Research Centers

- Regional History Center and IRAD Depository
Northern Illinois Univ., Founders Memorial Library, Rm. 400. DeKalb, IL 60115
Phone: (815) 753-1779
Website: <http://library.niu.edu/ulib/content/collections/rhc/index.shtml>
The NIU IRAD includes birth, marriage, death, naturalization, probate, deeds, and circuit court cases. Most of these records are older than 72 years old. The Regional Collections include original manuscripts and records from individuals, institutions, and organizations from 1800 to the present day. In addition, the Center holds manuscripts, county and local histories, plat books, city directories, maps, broadsides, photographs, oral histories, genealogical journals, and core reference printed materials on the history of Northern Illinois. A searchable database of their collections may be found at <http://archon.lib.niu.edu/index.php>. A subject index of their holdings may also be found on their website.
- Joiner History Room
Sycamore Public Library, 103 E. State St. Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 895-7271 // Website: <http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/>
Resources include manuscript materials, area histories, plat maps and atlases, cemetery records, genealogy files, newspapers, photographs, obituary files, church histories, school records, poll books, military records, poor farm records, scrapbooks, city directories, and much more. Their website also offers many resources, including a *Cornsilk* index and an obituary database. See an index of their holdings at <http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/archives-and-subjects.html>.
- DeKalb Public Library
309 Oak Street, DeKalb, IL 60115
Phone: (815) 756-9568 // Website: <http://dkpl.org>
Has a Local History Room, which houses local and family histories, DeKalb city directories back to 1899, atlases and plat maps, DeKalb High School yearbooks back to 1924, cemetery records, census data, The Daily Chronicle on microfilm dating back to 1871 and more. Their virtual local history page on their website (<http://dkpl.org/virtual-local-history/>) includes digitized 1859 Plat Book of the City of DeKalb and a couple oral stories of local WWII veterans. Also provides free access in the library to the online databases Heritage Quest and AncestryLibrary.

- DeKalb County Clerk & Recorder of Deeds
County Administration Building, 110 E. Sycamore St., Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 895-7149 // Email: countyclerk@dekalbcounty.org
Maintains records of vital records and all records relating to real property in the county. Locate and request digital copies of birth, marriage, death, and naturalization records through their website: <http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com/>
Account is free; copies of most records are \$5 each. Locate land records through their website <http://lrs.dekalbrecorder.com/>.
- DeKalb County Clerk of the Circuit Court
DeKalb County Courthouse, 133 W. State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 895-7131 // Website: www.circuitclerk.org/
Maintains records of the Circuit Court, including court records, probate, adoption, criminal law, and more. Requests for copies are made via mail. Search for court records online: www.circuitclerk.org/online-records.html.
- DeKalb County Treasurer's Office
Administration Building, 110 E. State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 895-7112 // Website: <http://dekalbcounty.org/Treasurer/>
Maintains tax records for DeKalb County, dating back to 1851.
- DeKalb, Illinois Family History Center
675 Fox Avenue, Sycamore, Illinois 60178
Phone: (815) 895-0702 // Website:
https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/DeKalb_Illinois_Family_History_Center
Access the vast resources from the LDS Family History Library, including full access to FamilySearch.org. You can also request microfilm and materials from the Family History Library to use at this family history center. However, hours and staff are limited.

Remote Repositories and Research Centers

- Gail Borden Public Library
270 N. Grove Ave. Elgin, IL 60120
Phone: (847) 742-2411 // Website: <https://www.gailborden.info/research/genealogy>
Contains over 4,400 books and hundreds of reels of microfilm. Collection focuses on Elgin and Kane County, but is useful for pre-1837 research before DeKalb County was formed, and has some materials relating to DeKalb County as well. It is also an LDS affiliate library.

- Newberry Library
60 W. Walton St. Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: (312) 255-3512 // Website: <https://newberry.org/genealogy-and-local-history>
The Newberry's rich collections include family histories, local histories, censuses, probate, deed, court, tax, and cemetery records, military rosters, periodicals, genealogical guides, and reference works. They have a designated genealogy reading room, and genealogy librarians to help you find materials. Some materials pertain specifically to DeKalb County, and others pertain more generally to the state of Illinois.

- National Archives - Great Lakes Region
7358 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60629
Phone: (773) 948-9001 // Website: www.archives.gov/chicago
Is a regional depository for records generated by the federal government. Their vast collection includes U.S. census records, passenger arrival records, immigration and naturalization records, federal criminal, civil and bankruptcy files, farm ownership case files, photographs, maps, and more. They have an online microfilm catalog and finding aids on their website.

- Chicago History Museum Research Library
1601 N. Clark St. Chicago, IL 60614
Phone: (312) 642-4600 // Website: www.chicagohistory.org/visit/research-center/
Their collection includes DeKalb County newspapers, books, photographs and more.

- Illinois State Archives
Norton Building, Capitol Complex, Springfield, IL 62756
Phone: (217) 782-3556 // Website: www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/
The depository is for official, public records of Illinois state and local governments.
Their collection includes the Federal and State census records, military service records, veterans files, land sale records, and more.

- Illinois State Library
Gwendolyn Brooks Building, 300 S. Second St. Springfield, IL 62701
Phone: (217) 785-5600 // Website:
<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/about/home.html>
“The State Library serves as regional federal documents depository, maintains an authoritative collection of historic and contemporary Illinois documents, and houses more than 185,000 maps.” Also hosts the Illinois Digital Archives:
<http://www.idaillinois.org/>

- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
112 N. Sixth St., Springfield, IL 62701
Phone: (217) 558-8844 // Website: <http://www.alplm.org/>
This essential genealogy collection contains the collection of the Illinois State Historical Library, and includes many DeKalb County newspapers on microfilm, histories and genealogies, plat books, census indexes, military records, genealogical periodicals, letters, and is a DAR repository.
- Illinois State Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 10195, Springfield, IL 62791
Phone: (217) 789-1968 // Website: <http://www.ilgensoc.org/>
Their collection was given to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Their website is a helpful resource for general Illinois genealogy, including a few special databases and previous issues of their newsletter.

Regional Historical Organizations

- DeKalb County Historical-Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 295, Sycamore, IL 60178
Website: <https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/DekCoHistSoc/DekCoHistSoc.htm>
The society publishes the periodical *Corn silk* and currently has published over 35 genealogy and local history books. They also promote the erection of historical markers in the area.
- DeKalb Area Agricultural Heritage Association, Inc. (DAAHA).
111 South Second Street, Suite 204, DeKalb, IL 60115
Phone: (815) 756-8737 // Website: www.daaha.org
Is committed to promoting and preserving the agricultural heritage of Northern Illinois. Provides exhibits, educational programs and a their website, providing insightful historical background information on local agriculture, especially for organizations such as the DeKalb County Farm Bureau and DeKalb Ag. Publishes a newsletter called *An Ear Full*.
- Illinois State Historical Society
5255 Shepherd Road, Springfield, IL 62703
Phone: (217) 525-2781 // Website: <http://www.historyillinois.org/>
Supports the Illinois State Historical Library and publishes the Illinois Heritage Magazine and the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society.

- Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society and Museum
622 W. Park Ave., Genoa, IL 60135
Phone: (815) 784-5559 // Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/kvhsgenoail/home>
The museum and archive include antique exhibits, Genoa directories, photographs, genealogy family files, and materials relating to Genoa clubs, organizations, sports, businesses, and churches. Index of their archive is located at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5xFOKMjDp9GWjNvS1FsRIBxRjQ/view>.

- Kirkland Historical Society
Located in the Kirkland Public Library, 513 W. Main Street, Kirkland, IL 60145
Phone: (815) 522-6260 // Website: https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/KirklandHistSoc/KHS_Homepage.htm
The society was established in 2007, so their small collection of materials relating to Kirkland and the surrounding area is still growing. Their collection has some Kirkland historical items, photos, articles, family trees, maps, and newspapers.

- Malta Historical & Genealogical Society
127 N. Third Street, Malta IL
Phone: 815/384-3481 // Website: <https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/MaltaHistGenSoc.htm>
The Society operates a museum and historical library in the historical Old Town Hall building. Collection includes early Malta items, school items, 1859 Malta voter rolls, genealogical material on early settlers, and photographs.

- National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution
General John Stark Chapter, Sycamore, IL
Website: <http://ildar.org/chapters/generaljohnstark/index.html>

- North Grove School Association
26745 Brickville Road, Sycamore, IL 60178
Email: info@northgroveschool.org // Website: <http://www.northgroveschool.org/>
The association maintains the historic North Grove School, which has been restored as a one-room schoolhouse museum that is occasionally open for tours. Area children attended this school from 1878-1952.

- Sandwich Historical Society & Stone Mill Museum
315 E. Railroad Street, Sandwich, Illinois 60548
Phone: (815) 786-2513 // Website: www.facebook.com/sandwichhistory/

The society hosts the Stone Mill Museum, whose collection pertains primarily to Sandwich history. It includes Native American artifacts, photographs, Sandwich artifact and memorabilia, materials relating to the Sandwich Fair and much more.

- Sycamore History Museum

1730 N. Main Street / P.O. Box 502, Sycamore, IL 60178

Phone: (815) 895-5762 // Website: www.sycamorehistory.org/collections-archives/

Their rich collection includes historical artifacts from the Sycamore area, as well as archival resources such as genealogical materials, information about property, photographs, yearbooks, and general business records. Search their collection here: <http://sycamorehistory.pastperfectonline.com/>

- Waterman Area Heritage Society and Museum

180 West Lincoln Street / P. O. Box 265, Waterman, IL 60556

Phone: (815) 264-3461 // Website:

<https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/WatermanSoc.htm>

The society publishes the newsletter *Time Clock Timeline*. Museum exhibits include sports memorabilia, DeKalb Ag. artifacts, antique telephone collection, and other materials relating to Waterman and its residents. Their archive includes obituaries, family histories, photographs, property abstracts, and materials relating to local schools, businesses, churches, organizations, sports, and celebrations. A full index of their holdings is here:

https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/Waterman_Soc_Index.htm

Other Area Historic Sites

- Ellwood House & Museum

509 N. First Street, DeKalb, IL 60115

Phone: (815) 756-4609 // Website: <http://www.ellwoodhouse.org/>

Learn about Isaac Ellwood, his estate, and the role of the barbed wire industry in DeKalb and the Midwest. Museum includes the restored mansion and grounds, and four museum galleries. They also host workshops and lectures.

- Joseph F. Glidden Homestead & Historical Center

921 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, IL 60115

Phone: (815) 756-7904 // Website: <http://www.gliddenhomestead.org/>

Learn about another barbed wire baron and philanthropist from DeKalb County, Joseph F. Glidden. Their museum and collection contains relevant materials relating to the Glidden family and the invention of barbed wire.

- Shabbona - Lee - Rollo - Historical Museum
119 West Comanche, Shabbona, IL 60550
Phone: (815) 824-2597 // Website: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilslrh/>
The main floor is a historical museum, and upstairs is the research center and library.
The growing collection includes obituaries, cemetery books, marriage information, census records on microfilm, Shabbona newspapers (hard copies and microfilm), biographies, church, school, military records and more.
- Gurler House & Heritage Association
205 Pine Street, DeKalb, IL 60115
Website: www.facebook.com/gurlerhouse/ (Main website under construction.)
Learn about George Gurler, Gurler Dairy, the dairy industry, and one of the first frame houses built in DeKalb.
- Midwest Museum of Natural History
425 West State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 895-9777 // Website: <https://www.mmnh.org/>
Has a substantial collection of mounted and live animals from around the world.

Online Databases and Websites

- Certified Prairie Pioneers database (Illinois State Genealogical Society):
http://ilgensoc.org/cstm_prairiePioneerCerts.php
- Cyndi's List - DeKalb County: <http://www.cyndislist.com/us/il/counties/dekalb/>
- Family Search DeKalb County wiki:
https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/DeKalb_County,_Illinois_Genealogy
- GenWeb - DeKalb County: <https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/index.htm>
- Genealogy Trails - DeKalb County: <http://www.genealogytrails.com/ill/dekalb/>
- Illinois Digital Archives: <http://www.idaillinois.org/>
- Joiner History Room has several databases and collections online, including a searchable obituary database. <http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/databases.html>
- Kindred Trails - DeKalb County: http://www.kindredtrails.com/IL_De_Kalb.html
- Linkpendium - DeKalb County: http://www.linkpendium.com/de_kalb-il-genealogy/
- NIU Digital Archives, includes Regional Collection and University Archives:
<http://rhc.lib.niu.edu/>

III. GENEALOGICAL SOURCES – PUBLISHED RESOURCES

(Please note that the resources listed here are a selection, and should not be considered comprehensive. A link to a free digital full-text version is provided when known. Some texts may only be available in print. Check WorldCat.org for possible holdings.)

Published Historical Background Resources

- Boies, Henry L. History of DeKalb County, Illinois. Chicago: O.P. Bassett, Printer, 1868. (Digital full-text version available at HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009581967>)
- Kett, Henry F. The voters and tax-payers of De Kalb County, Illinois; containing, also, a biographical directory [...] a history of the county and state, map of the county, a business directory, an abstract of every-day laws [...] Chicago: H.F. Kett, 1876. (Digital full-text version available at HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008728828>)
- Portrait and Biographical Album of DeKalb County, Illinois [...] Also Containing a History of the County, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time. Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1885. (Digital full-text version available at HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008652225>)
- The Biographical Record of DeKalb County, Illinois. Chicago : S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1898. (Digital full-text version available at HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008652223>)
- Gross, Lewis M. Past and Present of DeKalb County, Illinois. Two volumes. Chicago: Pioneer Pub. Co., 1907. (Digital full-text version available at or Archive.org <https://archive.org/details/3893596>)
- Davy, Harriet Wilson. From Oxen to Jets. Dixon, Ill.: DeKalb County Board of Supervisors, [1963]. (Digital full-text version available at Archive.org <https://archive.org/details/fromoxentojetshi00davy>)
- Bigolin, Stephen J. and Beasley, Nancy M. Sycamore: a Walk Through History. Sycamore, IL : D.C. Lithographers, Inc., 1983.
- Mogren, Eric W. Native Soil: A History of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau. DeKalb : Northern Illinois University Press, 2005.
- Landmarks of the Barb City. DeKalb, IL : Daily Chronicle : Lee Enterprises Co., 2006.
- Beasley, Nancy M. The Underground Railroad in DeKalb County, Illinois. Jefferson, North Carolina : McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, [2013].
- DeKalb County Historical-Genealogical Society. Acres of Change. Evansville, Indiana: M.T. Publishing Company, Inc., [2013].

Maps and Plat Books

- A complete listing of plat books, atlases and maps can be found through local repositories such as the Joiner History Room and the NIU Regional Archives. Their collections contain more materials than what are listed here.
- 1859 Plat Book of the City of DeKalb: <https://dkpl.org/plat-book/> (DeKalb Public Lib.)
- 1860 Map of DeKalb County: www.loc.gov/item/2013593090/ (Library of Congress)
- 1871 Combination atlas map of DeKalb County, Illinois. Compiled, drawn, and published from personal examinations and surveys.
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Atlas/US/9836/DeKalb+County+1871/> (Historic Map Works, some fees apply)
- 1892 Plat book of De Kalb County, Illinois, drawn and compiled from personal observations, actual surveys and county records.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuc.3009880> (HathiTrust)
- 1892 DeKalb County Railway Map:
<http://usgwarchives.net/maps/illinois/1892rr/dekalb.jpg> (US GenWeb Archives)
- 1905 Standard atlas of De Kalb county, Illinois, including a plat book of the villages, cities, and townships of the county. <http://hdl.handle.net/10111/UIUCHICA:2473035> (University of Illinois)
- 1929 Atlas and plat book of De Kalb County, Illinois : compiled from surveys and the public records of De Kalb County, Illinois. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007626890/> (Library of Congress)
- 1939 Plat book of De Kalb County, Illinois. Published by the De Kalb Daily Chronicle.
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Atlas/US/10434/DeKalb+County+1940/> (Historic Map Works, some fees apply)
- 1947 Farm Atlas and Business Guide, published by Thomas O. Nelson.
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Atlas/US/9768/DeKalb+County+1947/> (Historic Map Works, some fees apply)
- 1955 Atlas of DeKalb County, Illinois, 1955. Compiled from surveys and public records.
- Boyd, Gregory A. Family maps of Dekalb County, Illinois : with homesteads, roads, waterways, towns, cemeteries, railroads and more. Norman, Ok. : Arphax Pub. Co., 2009.
- General Highway Maps for DeKalb County may be found from the Illinois Department of Transportation: www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/Network-Overview/highway-system/maps
- A more comprehensive listing of published plat maps and atlases can be found on the University of Illinois Library website:
<http://www.library.illinois.edu/funkaces/landownership/dekalb.html>
- Some DeKalb County maps may be on the Sanborn Maps website (subscription may be required): <http://sanborn.umi.com/splash.html>

County and City Directories

- Directories exist for DeKalb County, and for several DeKalb County cities.
- Selected DeKalb County directories:
 - Prairie farmer's reliable directory of farmers and breeders, DeKalb County, Illinois. Chicago, Illinois : Prairie Farmer Publishing Co., 1917.
 - DeKalb County, Illinois Directory, 1854-1855:
<http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/HTMLs/Dir1854.htm>
 - The voters and tax-payers of De Kalb County, Illinois by Henry F. Kett, 1876.
 - Other DeKalb County directories are available at the Regional History Center and the Joiner History Room and other local repositories.
- Selected City/Local Directories:
 - DeKalb City Directory, 1899. Available at NIU Regional History Center.
 - DeKalb City Directories, 1899-1970s. Available at DeKalb Public Library.
 - DeKalb City Directories, 1948-1959: Available from Ancestry.com; U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2469> (\$)
 - Sycamore city directory, 1941. Available at Sycamore Public Library.
 - Sycamore city directories, 1957-1975. Available at Sycamore Public Library.
 - Sycamore City Directory 1906-1907:
<http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/sycamore-city-directory-1906-1907.html>
 - Genoa city directories, 1957, 1965 and 1976. Available at Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society.
 - Other city directories are located at the Joiner History Room and elsewhere.
- See also “Maps and Plat Books” section. Some of the plat books and atlases have brief directories included.
- See also “Religious information” section. Some congregational records may include congregation directories.

Historical Newspapers and Periodicals

- Some historical newspapers have been digitized and are available online. These are:
 - *True Republican* (Sycamore, IL; existed 1857-1970)
 - 1869-1968 available at <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/> (Free)
 - *DeKalb Daily Chronicle* (DeKalb, IL; existed 1885-present, has had slight variations of its name throughout the years)
 - 1918-1930 available at <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/> (Free)
 - 1879-1895 available at www.newspapers.com as The De Kalb Chronicle (\$)
 - 1895-2016 available at www.newspapers.com as The Daily Chronicle (\$)
 - *The World* (covering DeKalb and LaSalle Counties, IL; existed 1974-1979)

- 1974-1979 available at <https://news.google.com> (Free)
- 1974-1979 available at www.FindMyPast.com (\$)
- *The DeKalb County Express* (DeKalb, IL; existed 1929-19???)
 - 1929-1960 available at Shabbona-Lee-Rollo Historical Museum website: <http://slrhistoricalmuseum.advantage-preservation.com/> (Free)
- Chronicling America and GenealogyBank.com currently don't have any digitized DeKalb County newspapers.
- Other historical newspapers are partially available on microfilm or in their original format from local and state repositories. Check for holdings at WorldCat.org or contact one of the local repositories for guidance.
- A full list of newspapers in DeKalb County is located on Chronicling America: http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles/results/?state=Illinois&county=De+Kalb&city=&year1=1690&year2=2017&terms=&frequency=&language=ðnicity=&labor=&material_type=&lccn=&rows=20 and on DeKalb County GenWeb: <http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/Newspapers.htm>

Family History Periodicals

- In addition to the following journals, search for “DeKalb County, Illinois” or other specific names or locations in the Periodical Source Index (PERSI), which is located at <http://search.findmypast.com/search/periodical-source-index>. Other, broader periodicals may have published articles about DeKalb County. PERSI will provide a citation for the article.
- DeKalb County periodicals:
 - *Corn silk*- Published by the DeKalb County Historical-Genealogical Society. Indexed also on the Joiner History Room website. Issues found at area libraries.
 - *Twigs & Branches*- Published by the North Central Illinois Genealogical Society. Covers DeKalb County and nine other northern Illinois counties.
- Illinois State periodicals: (Search PERSI for articles about DeKalb County.)
 - *Illinois State Genealogical Society Quarterly*- Published quarterly since 1969 by the Society, surveying Illinois original source material, family genealogies, and research questions.
 - *Illinois Historical Journal* (Formerly *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*)- Published quarterly since 1908 by the Illinois State Historical Society. It has excellent articles on local and state history, as well as book reviews.
 - *Illinois Heritage*- Published bi-monthly by the Illinois State Historical Society, aimed at a general audience.
 - *Illinois Libraries*- Published monthly by Illinois State Libraries, often with genealogical collections information.

IV. GENEALOGICAL SOURCES – ORIGINAL RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

Vital Records - Birth Records

- Birth records begin in 1878, but in the early years not everyone had a record registered with the county. Birth certificates were required starting in 1916, but counties were not fully compliant until 1922. There is a 75 year moratorium on birth records for privacy reasons, except for immediate family members.
- Indexes: (*Search WorldCat.org for book holdings.*)
 - 1831-1937 - Ancestry.com; DeKalb County, Illinois Births, 1831-1937 <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=5339> (\$)
 - 1837-1890 - Some Early Births in DeKalb County, Ill. and vicinity, 1837-1890 by Florence Houghton Marshall. Sycamore, Ill. : Genealogical Society of DeKalb County, Ill., 1987.
 - 1878-1903 - Index to birth record books of DeKalb County, Illinois by the Genealogical Society of DeKalb County, Illinois. Sycamore, Ill. : The society, [198-?]. (2 volumes)
 - 1902-1903 - IRAD NIU; Birth and Death reporting accounts
- Records available from:
 - 1870 - 1942 - DeKalb County Online Genealogy; Locate a name and certificate in their free index, then order a genealogical copy of the certificate for \$5 each. Contact the DeKalb County Clerk's office if you are not able to locate the necessary certificate on their online genealogy index. <http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com/> (Free / \$)

Vital Records - Marriage Records

- Marriage records begin in 1837, since the creation of the county. There is a 50 year moratorium on marriage records for privacy reasons, except for immediate family members. IRAD-NIU does not have any DeKalb Co. marriage records.
- Indexes: (*Search WorldCat.org for book holdings.*)
 - Marriage records of DeKalb County, Illinois by the DeKalb Co. Historical and Genealogical Society. Sycamore, Ill. : The Society, 1979.
 - 1837-1850 - De Kalb County, Illinois marriage records, 1837-1850 by Robert L. Steenrod. Belvidere, Illinois: s.n., 1960. Now searchable online at <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2515894>
 - 1837-1900 - Illinois State Archives; Illinois Statewide Marriage Index. Only males are listed in the index from 1878-1900. (Free) www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/marriage.html

- 1864-1962 - Ancestry.com; DeKalb County, Illinois Marriages, 1864-1962
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=5377> (\$)
- 1815-1935 - FamilySearch.org; Illinois Marriages, 1815-1935
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1680829> (Free)
- Records available from:
 - 1872-1967 - DeKalb County Online Genealogy; Locate a name and marriage license in their free index, then order a genealogical copy of the certificate for \$5 each. Contact the DeKalb County Clerk's office if you are not able to locate the necessary certificate on their online genealogy index.
<http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com/> (Free / \$)

Vital Records - Death Records

- Death records begin in 1878, but in the early years not everyone had a record registered with the county. Death certificates were required starting in 1916, but counties were not fully compliant until 1919. There is a 20 year moratorium on death records for privacy reasons, except for immediate family members.
- Indexes: (*Search WorldCat.org for book holdings.*)
 - 1885-1916 - Alphabetical index to the death register of DeKalb County, Illinois, 1885-1916 by Florence Houghton Marshall, 1996.
 - 1878-1903 - Index to Death Register I, January 1878-June 1903 by Marian Anderson. Sycamore, Ill.: Genealogical Society of DeKalb County, Ill., 1982.
 - 1902-1903 - IRAD NIU; Birth and Death reporting accounts
 - 1843-1992 - Ancestry.com; DeKalb County, Illinois Deaths, 1843-1992
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=5388> (\$)
 - 1916-1947 - FamilySearch.org; Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1438856> (Free)
 - 1935-2014 - Ancestry.com; Social Security Death Index
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=3693> (\$)
 - 1916-1950 - Illinois State Archives; Illinois Statewide Death Index
www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/idphdeathindex.html
(Free)
- Records available from:
 - 1870-1997 - DeKalb County Online Genealogy; Locate a name and certificate in their free index, then order a genealogical copy of the certificate for \$5 each. Contact the DeKalb County Clerk's office if you are not able to locate the necessary certificate on their online genealogy index.
<http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com/> (Free / \$)

Census Records

- Federal Population Schedules are available for 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940. No fragments of the 1890 census exist for DeKalb County.
 - The DeKalb County Non-population Schedules (Mortality, Industry, and Agriculture Schedules) are available for the years 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880.
- State Census records are available for DeKalb County for the years 1855 and 1865.
- Census records have been digitized and are searchable through several online resources, such as FamilySearch, Moosetracks, FindMyPast, HeritageQuest, and Ancestry. In addition, several local repositories hold copies of the census on microfilm or in print.
- Census returns are released when they are 72 years old; new census records will be released once they meet this criteria.

Land Records

- Land records for DeKalb County begin in 1837. Copies of deeds can be obtained from the County Recorder's office or from NIU IRAD (for years 1838-1930). War Patent records from 1845-1856 are also available from the DeKalb County Clerk and Recorder. Also search for records on their website <http://lrs.dekalbrecorder.com/>.
- Land in DeKalb County was originally sold by the federal government. Search for land patents at Bureau of Land Management website: <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/>
- FamilySearch has some DeKalb County land records available from 1838-1927. This searchable collection has digital images of deed books, grantor indexes and grantee indexes from the DeKalb County courthouse. Find the collection at: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2043772>
- Groves, Pat Riley. Records of DeKalb County, Illinois, Census, Taxable lands School lands, year 1840. Sycamore, Ill. : Genealogical Society of DeKalb County, Illinois, 1980.
- See also the "Maps and plat books" section.

Probate and Related Records

- Probate records for DeKalb County begin in 1859. Request probate files by mail from the DeKalb Clerk of the Circuit Court. Some recent probate records can be searched online at www.circuitclerk.org/online-records.html.
- Joiner History Room has some early wills: www.joinerhistoryroom.org/early-wills.html
- Ancestry.com; Illinois, Wills and Probate Records, 1772-1999. Searchable. <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=9048> (\$)
- FamilySearch.org; Illinois Probate Records, 1819-1988. Browseable DeKalb County probate records for 1837-1924. <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1834344> (Free)

Obituaries

- The Joiner History Room has an obituary database: <http://obits.mirusresearch.com/> They also have additional obituary clippings in binders on-site.
- Genealogy Trails has a few obituaries posted: <http://genealogytrails.com/ill/dekalb/obits.html>
- Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society has compiled a list of deaths and obituaries that occurred in the Genoa area: <https://sites.google.com/site/kvhsgenoail/resources/obituary>
- See also the “Historical Newspapers and Periodicals” section. Obituaries that have not been indexed may still be found in the original newspaper that they appeared in.

Cemeteries and Burial Records

- There have been about 105 cemeteries located in DeKalb County, some of which no longer exist. Fairview Cemetery in DeKalb is the largest and most active. Other large and noteworthy cemeteries are Elmwood Cemetery in Sycamore, Oak Ridge Cemetery in Sandwich, and Genoa Township Cemetery.
 - The Illinois Genealogical Society has a fairly complete list of all the cemeteries that do or did exist in DeKalb County. Search for DeKalb County, then select a cemetery to read a brief description: http://ilgensoc.org/cstm_cemeteryIndex.php
 - The DeKalb County GenWeb page also has a list of most cemeteries, with descriptions and some links to histories or transcriptions: <http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/Cemetery2.html>
- Also there are cemetery books for each township written by Florence Marshall and area Historical society. The DeKalb County Genealogical and Historical Society walked and transcribed every cemetery in DeKalb County in the 1970s and 1980s. The transcriptions were assembled into books, which were organized and published by Florence Houghton Marshall and the society. Several books have been updated since then. These books can be accessed at several public libraries in the area, including Sycamore Public Library, and Marshall’s manuscripts and notes about each cemetery are held by the NIU Regional History Center.
- Other online transcriptions:
 - FindAGrave.com has listings for most cemeteries in DeKalb County: <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=csr&CScty=708>
 - BillionGraves has very few listings for graves in DeKalb County: <https://billiongraves.com/search/>
- *Burial Records*: If the cemetery is still active, contact the individual cemetery offices to find out if they hold the burial records that you need. If not, contact the Joiner History Room or the NIU Regional History Center for assistance. Both of these depositories hold original or transcribed cemetery records.

Religious Information

- Church records may contain birth, marriage, and death records, or other records such as confirmations and membership lists.
- Protestant Churches are the most common religious organization in the county. Catholic churches are also found throughout the county. For a list of churches in DeKalb County, along with churches no longer existing, see the book, From Oxen to Jets. The periodicals Cornsilk and the Illinois State Historical Society Journal also have published articles, histories and abstracted records from local churches. Check PERSI for citations for specific articles, and see the “Selected History Periodicals” section for information about these periodicals.
- The Regional History Center has church records for several churches in the area, including materials from Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church (Sycamore and Sandwich churches), First Congregational Church (DeKalb), DeKalb First United Methodist Church, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (DeKalb), First Methodist Church of Kirkland, Mayfield Congregational Church, Malta Congregational Church, and others.
- The Joiner History Room also has materials relating to churches in DeKalb County, as well as a complete listing of area churches.
- Other active churches may have their records stored in their church offices or church archives. Contact specific churches to inquire about their holdings.
- The Methodist Movement in Northern Illinois by Almer Pennewell. Sycamore, Ill. : Sycamore Tribune, 1942.
- Selected Church Histories: (Search WorldCat.org for book holdings.)
 - History of the Somonauk United Presbyterian Church near Sandwich, De Kalb County, Illinois by Jennie M. Patton and Andrew Graham. Tucson, Arizona : W.C. Cox, 1974. (Digital version can be found at Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=20923>)
 - Jubilee album : a short history of the Swedish Ev. Lutheran Salem Congregation of Sycamore, De Kalb Co., Ill. 1870-1920 by Albert Okerstrom. Sycamore, Ill. : Swedish Ev. Luth. Salem Church, [1920?].
 - History of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, DeKalb, Illinois, 1854-1984 by Don V. Duncan. DeKalb, IL : Johnson Printing, 1984.
 - 100 years: An Inspiration for the Future: Hillcrest Covenant Church, 1883-1983. DeKalb, Illinois: Published for the Centennial Celebration, 1983.
 - The Centenary of the First Lutheran Church, DeKalb, Illinois 1858–1958. DeKalb, Ill.: The Congregation, 1958.
 - 90th Anniversary, 1854-1944, May 7-14, 1944, First Methodist Church DeKalb, Illinois. DeKalb, Illinois: 1944.

Naturalization Records

- Records begin in 1837, and are released when the record is 100 years old.
- Indexes:
 - 1860-1908 - Naturalization records of DeKalb County, Illinois by the DeKalb County Historical and Genealogical Society. Sycamore, Ill. : The Society, 1981.
 - 1840-1950 - FamilySearch.org; Illinois, Northern District Naturalization Index, 1840-1950. Pre-1906 inquiries require the use of a surname's soundex code.
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1838804> (Free)
 - 1800-1999 - Ancestry.com; DeKalb County, Illinois Naturalizations, 1800-1999
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=5392> (\$)
- Copies of records:
 - 1837-1917 - DeKalb County Online Genealogy; Locate a name and certificate in their free index, then order a genealogical copy of the certificate for \$5 each.
<http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com/> (Free / \$)

Military Records

- General military resources:
 - Military service records, WWI draft registration records, and Veterans' Homes, Pension, and Burial Records available from the Illinois State Archives.
 - Illinois State Archives guide to military record research in Illinois:
https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/ard126.pdf
 - FamilySearch.org, Fold3 and Ancestry.com provide many military indexes, such as enlistment records, WWI and WWII draft registration records, pension indexes, and much more.
 - Military records can be ordered from the National Archives. See more at:
www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records
 - There are some online resources provided by the Joiner History Room (<http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/military-records.html>) and the DeKalb County GenWeb page (<http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/military.htm>).
 - The Honor Roll of Veterans Buried in Illinois. Springfield, Ill. : State of Illinois General Assembly, 1956. Covers 1774–1955 for veterans buried in Illinois.
 - Databases for Illinois Veterans:
<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/home.html>
 - Illinois Veterans History Project, Illinois Digital Archives:
<http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/ivhp>

- Civil War:
 - The Civil War journals of Wilson E. Chapel, March, 1861 to January, 1863 : Company "F" Illinois Infantry Volunteers from Cortland, Malta and Sycamore, DeKalb County, Illinois by DeKalb County Historical and Genealogical Society. [Sycamore, Ill.] : [DeKalb County Historical and Genealogical Society], 1998.
 - Past and Present of DeKalb County, Illinois. Two volumes. Chicago: Pioneer Pub. Co., 1907. (Contains lists of Civil War soldiers, many with very brief descriptions of rank or mustered out date, and descriptions of most DeKalb County regiments.)
 - Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Illinois: Transcription of the Death Rolls 1879-1947 by Dennis Northcott and Thomas Brooks. St. Louis, Mo. : Dennis Northcott, 2003.
 - Civil War rosters from DeKalb County:
<http://civilwar.illinoisgenweb.org/county/dekalb.html>
 - Index of names of DeKalb County Civil War Soldiers:
<http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/military-soldier-names.html>
 - Index of photographs from the GAR Potter (DeKalb) post:
<https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/Potter.htm> Original photographs held at the Joiner History Room.
 - Civil War List of DeKalb County Pensioners on the Roll, 1883.
<https://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/Pensioners.htm>
 - The Voters and tax-payers of DeKalb County [...] lists DeKalb County Veterans, 1877: http://genealogytrails.com/ill/dekalb/bios_veterans1877.html
 - Illinois During the Civil War website: <http://civilwar.lib.niu.edu/>
 - National Parks Civil War Soldiers and Sailors database:
<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
 - The Joiner History Room holds Civil War Bounty Records, Civil War soldier papers, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Roster Book for DeKalb County (Civil War), and Illinois Adjutant General's Reports (Civil War). The NIU Regional History Center holds other GAR records.
- World War I:
 - An Honor Roll containing a pictorial record of the gallant and courageous men from DeKalb Co., Ill., U.S.A., who served in the Great War, 1917-1918-1919. [DeKalb, IL: DeKalb Chronicle Publishing Co., 1920].
 - Index of WWI discharge records for DeKalb County:
<http://www.joinerhistoryroom.org/world-war-i-service-records.html>
- World War II:
 - Sycamore, Illinois during World War II: a small midwestern community's contributions and sacrifices during the years 1940-1945, by Thomas E. Woodstrup. [Sycamore, IL]: T.E. Woodstrup, 1991.

Postcards and Photographs

- Many original photographs and postcards can be found at the Regional History Center at NIU and at the Joiner History Room. Part of the Ritzman photo collection from the Joiner History Room is available on Flickr at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/niudigitalibrary/sets/72157662003631594>. Part of the postcard collection of the Regional History Center can be found in their Digital Collections here: <http://digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/rhrc%3A199>.
- Looking Back: Historic Images of DeKalb County by DeKalb Chronicle and the MidWeek. [Illinois] : Pediment Pub., 2002.
- DeKalb, DeKalb County, Illinois : interesting views of public buildings, schools, clubs, churches, residences, parks, street views and industries of the city by Albert W. Lewis, C.O. Hamilton and Florence Houghton Marshall. [De Kalb, Ill.] : F.H. Marshall, [1983].
- Sycamore (Images of America) by Phyllis Kelly. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Pub., 2007.
- DeKalb (Images of America) by Jo Fredell Higgins. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Publishing, 2004.
- Genoa and Kingston (Images of America) by Denise Moran. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Publishing, 2010.
- Sandwich (Images of America) by Joan Bark Hardekopf. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Publishing, 2008.
- Around Shabbona (Images of America) by Nancy Fleming Partridge. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Publishing, 2012.
- The Lincoln Highway across Illinois (Images of America) by David A. Belden. Charleston, S.C. : Arcadia Publishing, 2013.
- DeKalb County Postcard images from Penny Postcards: <http://www.usgwarchives.net/il/dekalb/postcards/ppcs-dekalb.html>
- Smaller physical collections of photos and postcards may be found in local historical societies and museums, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

Schools and Universities

- Some schools that are still open may have enrollment records, yearbooks, class photos, or other useful sources. These records may be restricted under privacy laws.
- Northern Illinois University (NIU), DeKalb, IL
 - Many records relating to NIU are located at the Regional History Center/University Archives, and at the DeKalb Public Library.
 - The Regional History Center owns a complete record of the student newspaper Northern Star (1899-present) and NIU yearbooks.

- The Joiner History Room has NIU News, 1881-present.
- Kishwaukee Community College, Malta, IL
 - The Kishwaukee College Archives is located in the Kishwaukee College Library and collects materials relating to the history of Kishwaukee College. The Joiner History Room also has some materials relating to Kishwaukee College.
- Primary and Secondary Schools
 - A list of one room schoolhouses (most of which are now gone) in DeKalb County can be found here: <http://dekalb.illinoisgenweb.org/HTMLs/Schools.htm>
 - Joiner History Room and the Regional History Center have lots of materials pertaining to specific schools, public, private and rural. Yearbooks may be available at local public libraries.
 - Rural school journeys : a legacy of learning : histories of the one-room schools in DeKalb County, Illinois. By Lucy Townsend and Marcia Gudmunsen Wilson. Evansville, Ind. : M.T. Pub. Co., 2006.
 - Fire! : Kingston school destroyed, 1896-1954 by Alice A. Paulson. [Sycamore, Ill.?] : Alice A. Paulson, 2005.
 - Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society has many yearbooks and archival materials related to Genoa-Kingston schools:
<https://sites.google.com/site/kvhsgenoail/resources/yearbook-information>

Miscellaneous items of interest

- A digitized edition of the 1892 DeKalb Chronicle, Illustrated Souvenir edition:
www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~scwhite/DeKalb1892Chronicle/
- Jacob Haish Manufacturing History website: www.jacobhaishmfg.org/index.htm
- DeKalb County Poor Farm; brief history and list of poor farm deaths:
www.joinerhistoryroom.org/poor-farm.html

This guide was compiled by EvaAnne Johnson, June 2017. Information was sourced from the IRAD website, DeKalb County GenWeb, the FamilySearch DeKalb County wiki page, local organization websites, and many other sources.