

# will county historical society

**will county historical society** plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the rich history and heritage of Will County, Illinois. Established to collect, maintain, and exhibit historical artifacts, documents, and records, the society serves as a key resource for researchers, educators, and residents interested in the county's past. Through various programs, exhibits, and events, the Will County Historical Society fosters community engagement and education about local history. This article delves into the origins, mission, collections, educational initiatives, and events organized by the society. It also explores how the society contributes to heritage preservation and community involvement in Will County. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the Will County Historical Society's impact and offerings.

- History and Mission of the Will County Historical Society
- Collections and Archives
- Educational Programs and Community Outreach
- Events and Exhibitions
- Preservation Efforts and Heritage Sites

## History and Mission of the Will County Historical Society

The Will County Historical Society was established to safeguard the historical legacy of Will County, a region with a diverse and influential past dating back to the early 19th century. The society's mission focuses on collecting, preserving, and sharing materials that document the county's cultural, social, and economic development. By maintaining an accessible repository of historical records and artifacts, the society ensures that future generations can learn about the experiences and achievements of local communities.

## Founding and Development

The society was founded by a group of local historians and community leaders who recognized the need to protect Will County's historical resources. Over time, it expanded its facilities and programs to accommodate growing collections and public interest. The organization operates with the support of volunteers, members, and local government partnerships, emphasizing collaboration to fulfill its mission.

## **Core Objectives**

The primary objectives of the Will County Historical Society include:

- Preserving historical documents, photographs, and artifacts related to Will County.
- Providing educational resources and programming for schools and the public.
- Promoting awareness of the county's historical significance through exhibitions and events.
- Supporting research initiatives that explore various aspects of local history.
- Encouraging community participation in heritage preservation efforts.

## **Collections and Archives**

The Will County Historical Society maintains an extensive collection of artifacts, photographs, manuscripts, and records that chronicle the county's development from its founding to the present day. These collections are crucial for historical research and provide valuable insights into the economic, social, and cultural evolution of the region.

## **Artifacts and Memorabilia**

The society's artifact collection includes everyday items, tools, clothing, and household goods that represent the lives of Will County residents throughout history. These tangible objects offer a glimpse into the daily experiences and traditions of past generations.

## **Photographic and Documentary Archives**

A significant portion of the society's holdings consists of photographic collections and written records such as letters, diaries, newspapers, and public documents. These archives help preserve visual and textual histories that are indispensable for understanding local events and personalities.

## **Genealogical Resources**

The Will County Historical Society also provides genealogical resources to assist individuals tracing their family histories. The archives contain census data, cemetery records, and other vital statistics that support genealogical research.

## **Educational Programs and Community Outreach**

Education and community engagement are central to the Will County Historical Society's activities.

The organization offers a variety of programs designed to foster historical awareness and appreciation among diverse audiences.

## **School Programs and Workshops**

The society collaborates with local schools to provide curriculum-based programs, field trips, and workshops that enhance students' understanding of regional history. These initiatives encourage hands-on learning and active participation in heritage studies.

## **Lectures and Speaker Series**

Regular lectures and speaker events feature historians, authors, and experts who present on topics related to Will County's history. These gatherings serve as forums for education and discussion among community members and history enthusiasts.

## **Volunteer and Internship Opportunities**

Community involvement is encouraged through volunteer and internship programs that allow participants to contribute to archival work, event planning, and educational outreach. These opportunities support the society's mission while building local stewardship of historical resources.

## **Events and Exhibitions**

The Will County Historical Society organizes a range of events and exhibitions that showcase the county's heritage and engage the public in meaningful ways. These activities highlight various historical themes and anniversaries.

## **Annual Heritage Festivals**

One of the society's hallmark events is the annual heritage festival, featuring reenactments, craft demonstrations, and cultural performances. This festival celebrates the county's diverse cultural roots and historical milestones.

## **Rotating and Permanent Exhibits**

Exhibits at the society's museum and visitor center display artifacts and stories from Will County's past. Rotating exhibits focus on specific topics such as early settlers, industrial development, or notable local figures, while permanent displays provide an ongoing narrative of the county's history.

## **Special Commemorations and Anniversaries**

Throughout the year, the society marks significant historical anniversaries with special programs and exhibitions. These commemorations often involve partnerships with other cultural organizations and community groups.

## **Preservation Efforts and Heritage Sites**

Preserving historic buildings, landmarks, and landscapes is a key component of the Will County Historical Society's work. The organization advocates for the protection and restoration of sites that embody the county's heritage.

## **Historic Building Conservation**

The society supports efforts to conserve and restore historic structures, including homes, public buildings, and industrial sites. Preservation projects often involve fundraising, grant applications, and collaboration with preservation agencies.

## **Heritage Site Designations**

By promoting official recognition of historically significant locations, the society helps ensure their long-term protection. These designations increase public awareness and encourage responsible stewardship.

## **Community Preservation Initiatives**

Engaging local residents in preservation efforts is a priority. The society organizes workshops and informational sessions to educate the public on the importance of preserving Will County's historical environment for future generations.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the mission of the Will County Historical Society?**

The mission of the Will County Historical Society is to preserve, document, and share the history and heritage of Will County, Illinois through education, exhibitions, and community programs.

### **Where is the Will County Historical Society located?**

The Will County Historical Society is located in Joliet, Illinois, which is the county seat of Will County.

## **What types of exhibits can visitors expect at the Will County Historical Society?**

Visitors can explore exhibits featuring local history artifacts, photographs, documents, and displays related to the cultural, industrial, and social development of Will County.

## **Does the Will County Historical Society offer educational programs?**

Yes, the Will County Historical Society offers a variety of educational programs for schools, families, and adults, including guided tours, workshops, lectures, and special events focused on local history.

## **How can individuals get involved with the Will County Historical Society?**

Individuals can get involved by becoming members, volunteering, donating artifacts, participating in events, and supporting fundraising efforts to help preserve Will County's history.

## **Additional Resources**

### *1. Will County: A Journey Through Time*

This book offers an extensive overview of Will County's rich history, from its early Native American inhabitants to modern developments. It highlights key events, influential figures, and the evolution of the county's communities. Packed with rare photographs and archival documents, it's an invaluable resource for history enthusiasts and residents alike.

### *2. The Founding Families of Will County*

Delve into the stories of the pioneering families who shaped Will County's landscape and culture. This book explores genealogies, personal letters, and anecdotes that reveal the trials and triumphs of these early settlers. Readers gain a personal connection to the county's past through detailed narratives and family portraits.

### *3. Historic Landmarks of Will County*

Discover the architectural gems and historic sites that define Will County's heritage. This guidebook provides detailed descriptions, historical significance, and preservation efforts of landmarks ranging from 19th-century farmsteads to downtown commercial buildings. It serves as both a travel companion and an educational tool for those interested in local history.

### *4. The Railroads and Roads That Built Will County*

Explore how transportation networks spurred growth and development in Will County. The book chronicles the construction of railroads, highways, and canals that connected communities and boosted commerce. Rich with maps and photographs, it illustrates the transformative impact of infrastructure on the county's economic and social fabric.

### *5. Will County in the Civil War Era*

This volume examines the experiences and contributions of Will County residents during the Civil War. Through letters, military records, and newspaper excerpts, it paints a vivid picture of local involvement and the war's effects on the home front. It also highlights memorials and

commemorations that honor veterans from the area.

#### *6. Agriculture and Industry in Will County's Development*

Focusing on the economic backbone of Will County, this book traces the rise of farming and industry from the 1800s onward. It discusses crop cultivation, livestock farming, and the emergence of manufacturing enterprises. The narrative emphasizes how these sectors shaped community life and sustained the county's growth.

#### *7. Native American Heritage of Will County*

This work sheds light on the indigenous peoples who lived in Will County long before European settlers arrived. Covering cultural practices, archaeological findings, and tribal histories, it honors the legacy and ongoing presence of Native American communities. The book is a respectful tribute to their enduring influence on the region.

#### *8. Women of Will County: Pioneers and Leaders*

Highlighting the often overlooked contributions of women, this book profiles influential female figures in Will County's history. From educators and activists to entrepreneurs and artists, it showcases their roles in shaping social and cultural landscapes. Through interviews and historical records, readers gain insight into their impact and challenges.

#### *9. Will County Historical Society: Preserving Our Past*

An insider's look at the Will County Historical Society's efforts to collect, preserve, and share the county's history. The book details significant projects, exhibitions, and archival collections that have enriched public understanding. It also encourages community involvement and support for ongoing preservation initiatives.

## **Will County Historical Society**

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**will county historical society: Will County** David A. Belden, 2009 Later that same year, workers broke ground for the nearly 100-mile-long Illinois and Michigan Canal between the Illinois and Chicago Rivers. The opening of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and the movement of industry away from Chicago caused manufacturers to turn their attention to Will. As the county's population grew, the unincorporated area between Joliet and Chicago's southern suburbs continued to shrink. The transportation ties linking Chicago with the communities of Will County traces, paths, wagon roads, canals, rail lines, plank roads, and highways helped create an expanding metropolitan region. The early history and unique growth of Will County is showcased in this book. Over 200 vintage postcards provide an interesting glimpse into the social, material, and cultural history of Will County in the early 20th century.

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Canada American Association for State and Local History, 2002 This multi-functional reference is a useful tool to find information about history-related organizations and programs and to contact those working in history across the country.

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subject areas, but get an understanding of what materials are being collected and housed in specific map libraries, geospatial centers and their related websites. Of particular value are the sections that offer directories of cartographic and GIS libraries, as well as comprehensive lists of geospatial datasets down to the county level. This volume combines the traditional and historical collections of cartography with the modern applications of GIS-based maps and geospatial datasets.

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