

## Historic German Township Records Final Grant Report

**Institution Name:** German Township (Fulton County) in partnership with Sauder Village  
**Project Title:** Historic German Township Records

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### Summary of Project Activities and Accomplishments

As planned work on this project began in early June after the site opened and was completed on December 31, 2013. The project began with the recruitment of Shelby Jo Phillips, a volunteer intern, from University of Wisconsin- LaCrosse who spent the summer back in Ohio. After Ms. Phillips returned to school and the end of the Sauder Village regular season, a trained Sauder Village collections volunteer joined the crew to assist with completion of the project.

After training in proper handling and cleaning techniques, we began the cleaning and sorting of the German Township Records. Initially, we used a hepa-filtered vacuum with adjustable suction control to clean the paper, but it quickly became apparent that this would not be adequate for the extensive dirt and soot on the paper. In late June, we added the use of Absorene Book and Paper cleaner to the process to gently “erase” the dirt, grime and soot residues from the paper.

This combined system of the Hepa-filtered vacuum and Absorene book and paper cleaner proved to be a more affective system than vacuuming alone, but nearly doubled the cleaning time required to process this large collection. In addition, staff also removed old, damaged or rusty paperclips, staples and straight pins. When appropriate or necessary, stainless steel paperclips were used to replace old fasteners.

During the process, staff discovered evidence of mold and mildew on some documents. These items were isolated for further evaluation and treatment. In late fall, staff cleaned and treated these documents with direct UV light exposure for 48 hours to kill all active spores. After treatment, staff found no evidence of active mold and the documents were incorporated into the collection.

Beginning with the stacks of bound records, receipt books and journals and then moving to the loose paper stored in nine 30-gallon plastic totes and an assortment of boxes, the staff has processed 73 linear feet of material that is now stored in 101 acid-free boxes. Over the 6-month period of this grant, Sauder Village staff and volunteers have logged 796 hours on this project. (The complete breakdown of hours and costs located in Appendixes A and B)

Although we had initially hoped to maintain as much original order as possible, it quickly became apparent that it would be impossible to do since so many of the records had been jumbled over time. Instead, records were sorted by type, topic and date. If some order existed in the form as a file folder or box, all attempts were made to maintain this existing order and fit it into the larger records group.

The final arrangement found the records broken into three series: German Township Records, School Board Records and Oversized documents and Bound volumes. Due to the quantity of records, the Township records were sorted further by document size (letter or legal) and topic. Due to the complex nature and quantity of records, we were not able to alphabetize fully the topics throughout each series. A complete finding guide is attached to this report.

Although still very searchable and usable, the collection could have benefited from full alphabetization and the use of ½ size records containers to merge the letter and legal size documents through the collection. Despite this criticism, we were thrilled with the breadth of information contained within the collection.

This project became much more complex, extensive and time-consuming than originally anticipated resulting in more than twice the projected hours invested into this project. This unexpected input of hours reduced the amount of time allotted to the final arrangement of the records, which resulted in no decision being made to remove any part of this collection at this time. Only duplicate information/forms and damaged/unsalvageable materials were removed from the original collection. Staff will be recommending to the Township Trustees that they consider if the township wants to continue to manage all of these records at their new facility or if those records that are of historic value should be placed into another repository.

In the next few weeks, these records will be moved to the new facilities of German Township with a room dedicated to the storage and access of these records. Although the process was perhaps more laborious than planned, the material will be of great importance to local historians and genealogists. The finding guide will allow researchers to access all the township records in a systematic way that was not possible previously.

The community is just beginning to learn about this wonderful collection. We were pleased that our local paper, The Archbold Buckeye, featured this project with a detailed front-page story in their January 1, 2014 edition. This was followed up the next week with an editorial on the importance of recognizing historical documents. (Copies of these articles located in appendix C)

This project provided an opportunity to make these records accessible to the public but also to alert researchers and the public about the existence of these valuable local resources. To alert local historical agencies about the availability of this collection, digital and printed copies of the finding guide will be provided to area historical agencies and libraries. Additionally, a press release will be going out to announce the completion and availability of this collection.