



Phyllis Hamner Room

321 South 4th Street
Ironton, Ohio 45638
740-532-1124
www.briggslibrary.com

Hours

Monday through
Thursday
9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Friday and Saturday
9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Closed Sunday

Researching Church Histories

Does your church have a history? All churches do. The question you need to ask is, does your church have records of its history?

Even a new church has a history. You just need to discover what it is. Here is a list of questions you will want to answer in your history.

1. Why was the church organized?
2. Who began the process of organizing or creating the church?
3. What did those people have to go through? (i.e. weather, prices)
4. Where were the first meetings held? Most early churches did not have an official church building for meetings. Some meetings were held in homes.
5. How did they establish the church?
6. How did they gather new members?

Now that you know what questions to ask, you can begin your research.

Step 1:

Write down what you know.

- Address of the church
- When was the church founded
- What denomination is it

Step 2:

Discover the churches history by contacting the church. Most churches keep records on their church and their congregation. Ask to see the records. Be sure to explain why you would like to see the records. From these records you can get:

- Congregation members
- Pastors or priests
- Church statistics (membership number)
- Baptism and other records

Step 3:

Talk to members of the church. Especially seek out the older members of the church. They will be able to give you first hand accounts of events. Their memories will add a personal touch you won't find elsewhere.

Step 4:

Try to locate pictures of the church, its members, and events within the church. The church records may have some pictures, so will church members. If you have pictures with no names, place the pictures on a board in the church and ask members to identify people.

Step 5:

Look for historical information by searching land records, family histories, and published church histories.

Sources located in the Phyllis Hamner Room

- Vertical Files—The Hamner Room has two files cabinets, One has files on local history. In that cabinet you will find files on Lawrence County and Ironton churches. In the files, you may find newspaper articles or pamphlets.
- History of Lawrence County, 1990 and 2nd Edition—These two books published by the Lawrence County Genealogical Society contain information on local churches. The 2nd Edition in particular has a large section on churches. Pictures are sometimes included with the articles. You might even find family histories of church members within these books.
- Pictorial History of Lawrence County, Ohio 1998—The Pictorial History was published by the Lawrence County Historical Society and the Ironton Tribune. In this volume you will find pictures of local churches and a short history.

- Historical Preservation Survey of Lawrence County, Ohio—These two binders have historical homes, churches, and businesses included in the Ohio Historical Inventory produced by the Ohio Preservation Office, a division of the Ohio Historical Society. Ironton and Upper Township homes can be found in the black binder. The rest of Lawrence County is covered in the forms located in the red binder.

Some churches have already published their histories. The Phyllis Hamner Room has the following church histories in book form:

- Center Point Church Centennial, 1888-1988 prepared and written by Louise Skelton and Betty Fowler
- A History of the First Baptist Church of Ironton, Ohio, 1814-1989 by Virginia S. Bryant
- Lebanon Church Records
- St. Mary's Catholic Church Pine Grove, Ohio 150th Anniversary 1848-1998
- St. Mary's of Pine Grove, Ohio 1849-1898
- St. Paul Lutheran Church Centennial Anniversary, 1859-1959
- St. Paul Lutheran Church Records, 1866-1892
- Welsh M. E. (Methodist Episcopal) Church, 1852-1881
- Zoar Missionary Baptist Church, 1843-1951 edited by Florence Haney Zinser

Website sources for church histories:

- Congregational Library -<http://www.congregationallibrary.org/resources/historians/church-records>—This site give guidelines and helpful information for church historians.
- Cyndi's List—<http://www.cyndislist.com/religion.htm>— Cyndi's List is a one-stop place for genealogy links. The site has a special section on religion and churches, including links to different denominations.
- Lawrence Register— <http://lawrencecountyohio.com/churches/index/index.htm>—This site lists the location on many local churches and links to some histories.
- Ministry Helps from the Kentucky Baptist Convention—[http://www.westernrecorder.org/kbc/welcome.nsf/files/churchhistory/\\$file/churchhistory.pdf](http://www.westernrecorder.org/kbc/welcome.nsf/files/churchhistory/$file/churchhistory.pdf)—This site is a PDF file of instructions on how to research a church and the information you might find.
- Ministry Helps from the Kentucky Baptist Convention—[http://www1.kybaptist.org/kbc/welcome.nsf/files/celebratehistory/\\$file/celebratehistory.pdf](http://www1.kybaptist.org/kbc/welcome.nsf/files/celebratehistory/$file/celebratehistory.pdf)—This PDF file tells you how to celebrate your churches history.
- PCA Historical Center—<http://www.pcahistory.org/publications/writinghistory.html>—The site discusses how to start a church history, organize it and publish it.
- Preserving Your Churches Archives-<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/chaw.htm>—This is a transcript of a workshop discussing church archives and histories. It also lists some common problems.