

A Stroll Down Memory Lane can come easily to a patron of the Charlestown Clark County Public Library. The Indiana Memory Project is a state-wide project that allows citizens to research their family history, history of their hometown or just have a history lesson.

Michelle Adams, Library Associate/ Genealogy at the Charlestown Branch of the Charlestown Clark County Public Library, began working on the Indiana Memory Project for the historical documents at the Charlestown Branch in 2007.

“Originally the first project was the ‘Jesse G. Dorsey World War II Correspondence.’ He worked for Louisville Cement Company in Speed as the Recreation Director. He was in World War I and knew how important it was to get letters and news from home,” Adams explained. “There were so many men being called up from the plant that he knew. At the time Speed was a company town. He wrote a monthly letter for the plant and mailed it to the soldiers with the ‘Speedometer Newsletter’.”

The Jesse G. Dorsey World War II Correspondence Collection contains 1,606 letters and postcards. According to Adams, most of the collection is from soldiers.

“He (Dorsey) wanted his collection given to the Sellersburg Library. He was passionate about it,” Adams added.

Adams has scanned in over 11,000 documents for The Indiana Memory Project since its inception. Some of the items include: old post cards, old pictures, old programs, ledgers, civil war letters and the oldest document, Records Pages stating “Indiana Territory” dated 1816.

The beginning of the Indiana Memory Project Adams was using a borrowed scanner from the State Library.

“We were to have the scanner for 2 months. I was scanning non-stop to get as much done as I could. We had volunteers that transcribed letters and ledgers so it was all search-able,” Adams

stated.

The library ended up buying the large professional grade scanner needed for the Indiana Memory Project in September 2011. Having the scanner on site has allowed Adams to continue to add Clark County history to the state-wide project.

Charlestown Clark County Public Library Director June Kruer stated, "We borrowed the state scanner and had it longer than the recommended borrowing time. We needed to purchase one."

Adams, added, "I am working on the rest of the library collection of historical documents. The Memory Project will be never ending. We will always be adding to it."

Adams tracked the documents scanned in the beginning of the Indiana Memory Project. From July 2011 to March 2012 she had scanned 3,741 images.

Many of the historical documents being scanned for the project are coming from the Special Collections Room at the Charlestown Branch. Currently the Special Collections are stored in several filing cabinets and boxes.

"Many items included in the Indiana Memory Project are recent donations to the library. We are always adding stuff. We also have items that are coming from families wanting to protect their own family history," Adams said.

Some of the documents included in the Special Collections Room are an old opera program, civil war letters, letters from Borden native Ernest Sclicher written to a lady friend, Harriet "Hattie" Jackson.

"These letters are truly a treasure. He did not think it was right to marry a woman and then go off to war not knowing if he would return. So he didn't marry her before he left. He came back and they ended up marrying after the war and having children. This is basically a love story in

these letters right here,” Adams explained as she scanned over the treasured letters.

“The Powder Horn,” a semi-monthly newsletter from Indiana Ordnance Works. The Indiana Ordnance Works changed its name to the Indiana Army Ammunition Plant in August 1963. There is a turn of the century book from Theodore Eitol, “About a Town in Southern Indiana.” The book is a series of black and white mounted photographs depicting the everyday life in Utica. There is an old picture of Tunnel Mill donated by Clarence Curtis with a hand-written message left on the mounting board. A ledger from EB Guernsey from his store in Memphis is also in the library’s collection.

Other jewels in the collection are old newspaper clippings from 1945 discussing the German Prisoners of War (POW) in Charlestown. It was originally reported there would be 1,000 POWs but 500 were brought to build the Rocket Plant north of Charlestown Landing Road.

Many pieces of the Special Collection have found their way to the Indiana Memory Project and many will be added in the future. There are historical documents from all over Clark County.

The Indiana Memory Project has documents from libraries, historical societies and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

“It’s not just libraries using the project. The State Library hosts the Indiana Memory Project for institutions wanting to have a digital collection,” Adams added. “Some libraries or universities like IU, Purdue and the Allen County Library in Fort Wayne have their own digital collections. They are big enough for that, we are not. That’s why the Indiana Memory Project was set up. It provides content to not just Indiana residents but for the world. That’s what it’s about, content for the world!”

Adams enjoyed looking through some of the older historical documents that she has scanned for the Indiana Memory Project.

A link to the Indiana Memory Project can be found on the Charlestown Clark County Public Library website. The link is under the Resources tab on the library homepage. Then click on the

Genealogy and History Page. You may also go directly to the Indiana Memory Project at <https://digital.library.in.gov/>.

Adams concluded, "We are preserving history here."

Another area the Charlestown Branch of the Charlestown Clark County Public Library is preserving history is in the "Indiana Room." The room is located in the back corner of the library and is filled with local and state history. Currently, the display case is filled with pictures of days gone by in Charlestown. The walls are decorated with large pictures of the old Indiana Army Ammunition Plant as well as a old senior class photo from Charlestown High School. The Indiana Room allows patrons to research items from local and state history including old newspapers.