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Class of 2016

I became an intern at the Vanderburgh County Clerk's Records and Archives in the spring of 2015. As a History major at the University of Evansville, the department strongly encouraged us to go forth into the community and gain real world experience. At first glance, finding a career in the field of history can be a daunting task. However, the Evansville area and in particular the County Clerk's Office provide students with powerful opportunities to professionally delve into the past.

This internship appealed to me because it offered an avenue for making a tangible contribution to historic preservation, namely the written record of past lives. I have always been a lover of old paper. When I was small I would sit in corners of antique shops happily thumbing through books with elegantly faded covers, with their evocatively musty scent, eagerly searching the endpapers for a name or a note in soft brown ink. To me they held the essence of their former lives within their mottled pages. This fascination, combined with my interest in historical study, led me to apply for this internship without hesitation.

Being an intern at the County Clerk's Office is an immersive experience. The staff introduced me to all the myriad tasks that a government archivist undertakes on a daily basis. I formed an intimate knowledge of the collection from assessing and cataloguing hundreds of documents that span the history of Vanderburgh County. I learned how to assess the condition of books by sight and touch and microfilm by scent. I became so familiar with nineteenth-century script that I could differentiate between clerks by their handwriting. The full spectrum of human drama is recorded here. One of the most memorable books was a Civil War Pension registry from 1890. The striking section details how, when, and where each person was wounded or killed. I researched one soldier, whose entry led me down a rabbit-hole to envision the suffering of the Union forces at Harper's Ferry in 1862.

In addition to the strictly archival tasks, I also helped in developing strategies for promoting community awareness for the richness of the collection and solutions for the challenges it faces. The culminating project of the internship entailed an exhibit showcasing the Archive at EVPL partnered with the Indiana State Historical Society.

I consider this internship at the Clerk's Records and Archives to be an invaluable part of my education and an experience that I really enjoyed. I felt welcomed into an enthusiastic team that continues to work tirelessly to make strides in the accessibility and condition of the Archive. An internship of this nature is useful for any student who wants to pursue a career in the field of history but is unsure of where to start. My time at the Clerk's Office rekindled an old passion and gave it direction. In the fall of 2016 I will be studying archival science at East Tennessee State University to continue in a field I have fully embraced.