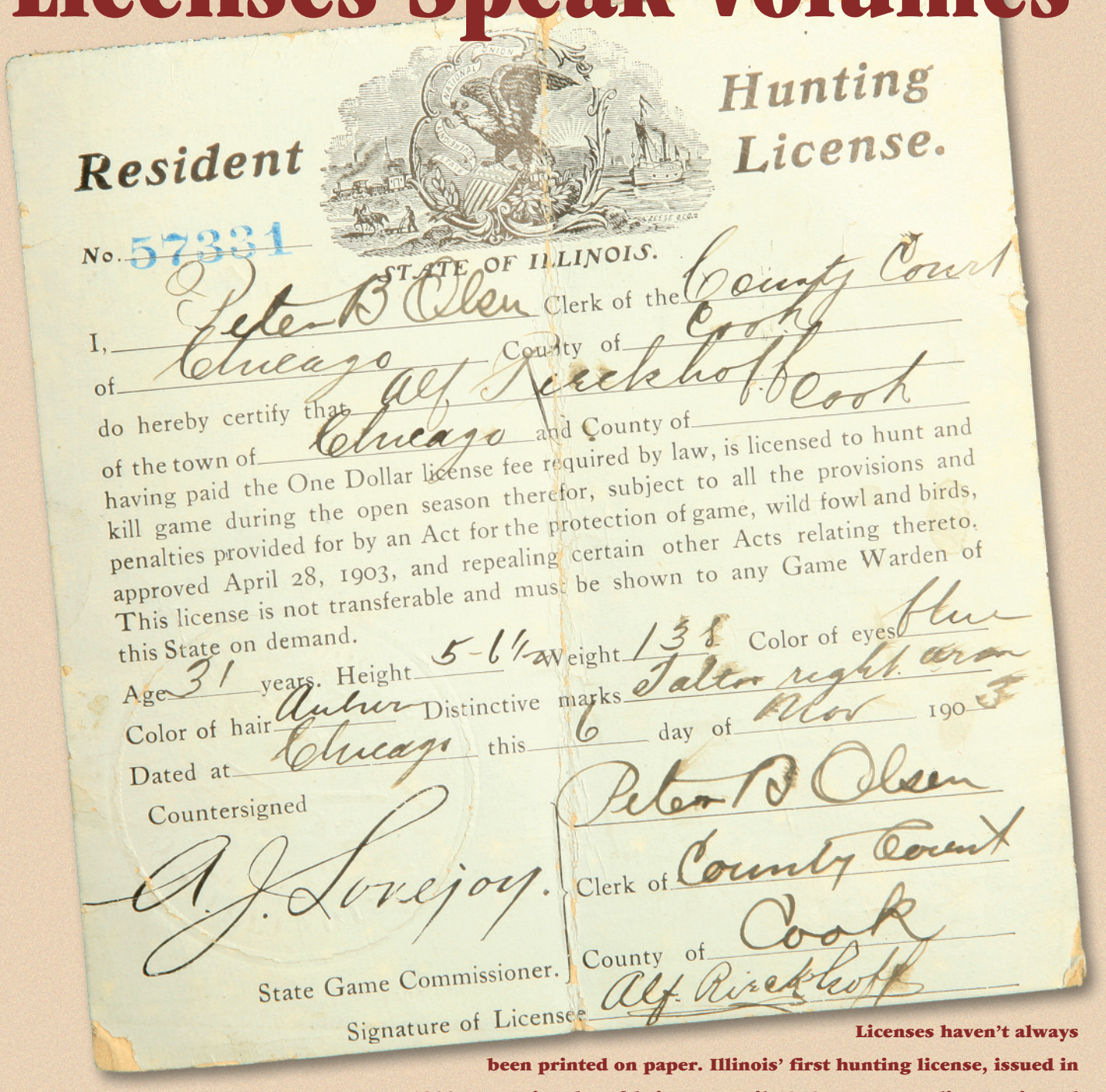
The recent authorization of increased license fees provides cause to reflect on 106 years of hunting license history.

Licenses Speak Volumes


Resident Hunting License.

No. 57331

STATE OF ILLINOIS.

I, Peter B Olsen Clerk of the County Court of Cook County

of Chicago do hereby certify that Alf Rieckhoff of the town of Chicago and County of Cook having paid the One Dollar license fee required by law, is licensed to hunt and kill game during the open season therefor, subject to all the provisions and penalties provided for by an Act for the protection of game, wild fowl and birds, approved April 28, 1903, and repealing certain other Acts relating thereto. This license is not transferable and must be shown to any Game Warden of this State on demand.

Age 31 years. Height 5-6½ Weight 138 Color of eyes blue

Color of hair Auburn Distinctive marks Tattoo right arm

Dated at Chicago this 6 day of Nov 190 3

Countersigned A. J. Lovejoy. State Game Commissioner.

Peter B Olsen Clerk of County Court

County of Cook

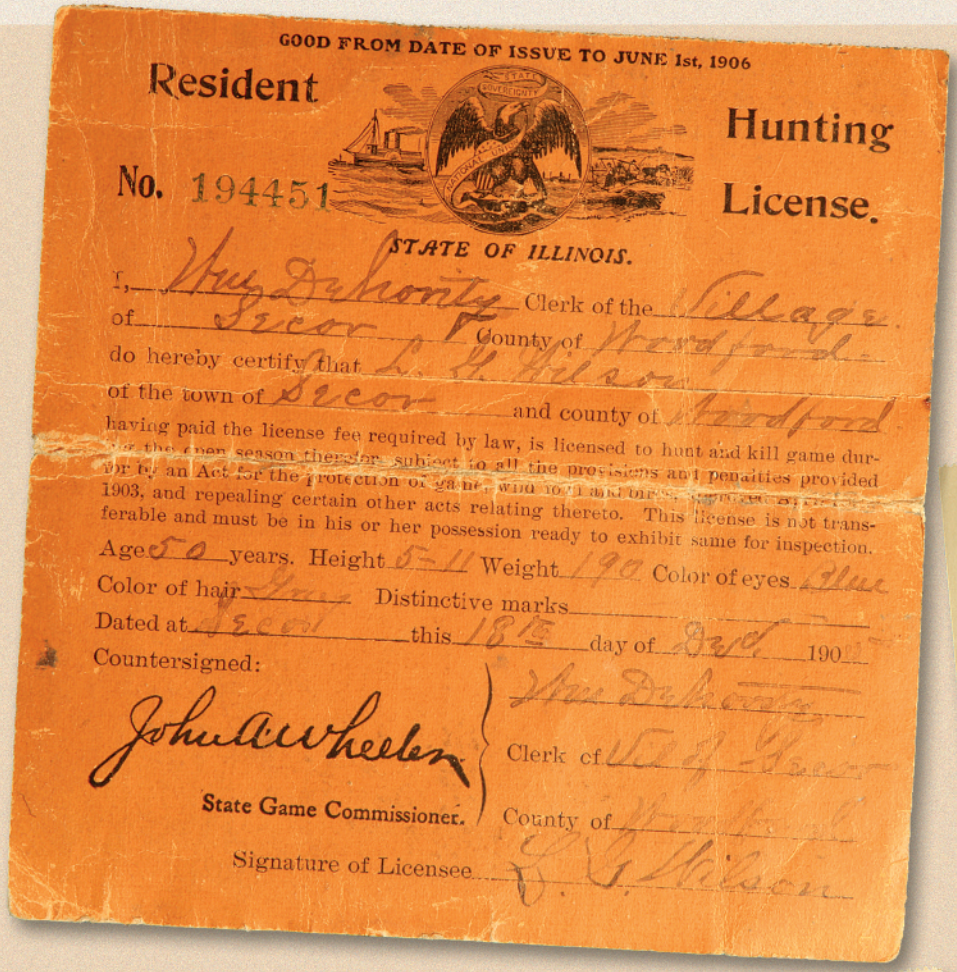
Signature of Licensee Alf. Rieckhoff

Licenses haven't always been printed on paper. Illinois' first hunting license, issued in 1903, was printed on fabric. Not until 1913 were paper licenses issued.

Story By Kathy Andrews, Photos By Adele Hodde

Phil Houser's collection of 106 years of Illinois hunting licenses started when he set aside his first license, purchased in 1963 at the age of 10. Each year, he saved his license and his father's, and over time picked up a few from friends or while visiting a sports show. Only recently did he start a concerted effort to fill in the gaps.

Many see the pages of Houser's binders as a collection of personal memories from strangers. Faceless people residing in distant corners of the


GOOD FROM DATE OF ISSUE TO JUNE 1st, 1906

Resident Hunting License.

No. 194451

STATE OF ILLINOIS.

I, Wm DeMonty Clerk of the Village of Secor County of Woodford do hereby certify that L. G. Wilson of the town of Secor and county of Woodford having paid the license fee required by law, is licensed to hunt and kill game during the open season therefor, subject to all the provisions and penalties provided for by an Act for the protection of game, wild fowl and birds, approved April 1903, and repealing certain other acts relating thereto. This license is not transferable and must be in his or her possession ready to exhibit same for inspection.

Age 50 years. Height 5-11 Weight 190 Color of eyes Blue

Color of hair Gray Distinctive marks

Dated at Secor this 18th day of Dec 1905

Countersigned:

John A. Wheeler

State Game Commissioner.

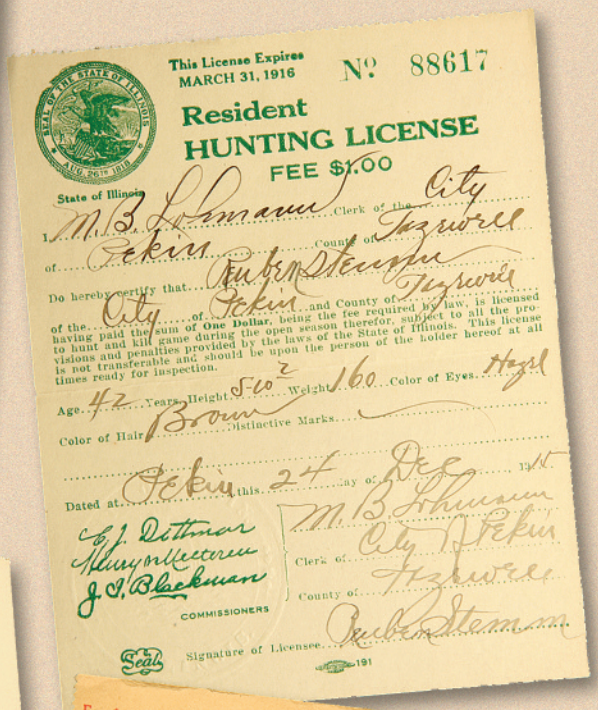
Wm DeMonty

Clerk of Vil of Secor

County of Woodford

Signature of Licensee L. G. Wilson

Two versions of the 1905 license were printed, the result of a mid-year change in the Illinois state seal. The wooden ship was replaced with a steam ship, the horse-drawn plow with a tractor and the eagle pose redesigned. In 1913 the seal was changed again—back to the original design.


This License Expires MARCH 31, 1916

No. 88617

Resident HUNTING LICENSE

FEE $1.00

State of Illinois

I, M. B. Lohmann Clerk of the City of Pekin County of Tazewell

Do hereby certify that Reuben Stemm of the City of Pekin and County of Tazewell having paid the sum of One Dollar, being the fee required by law, is licensed to hunt and kill game during the open season therefor, subject to all the provisions and penalties provided by the laws of the State of Illinois. This license is not transferable and should be upon the person of the holder hereof at all times ready for inspection.

Age 42 Years. Height 5-10½ Weight 160 Color of Eyes Hazel

Color of Hair Brown Distinctive Marks

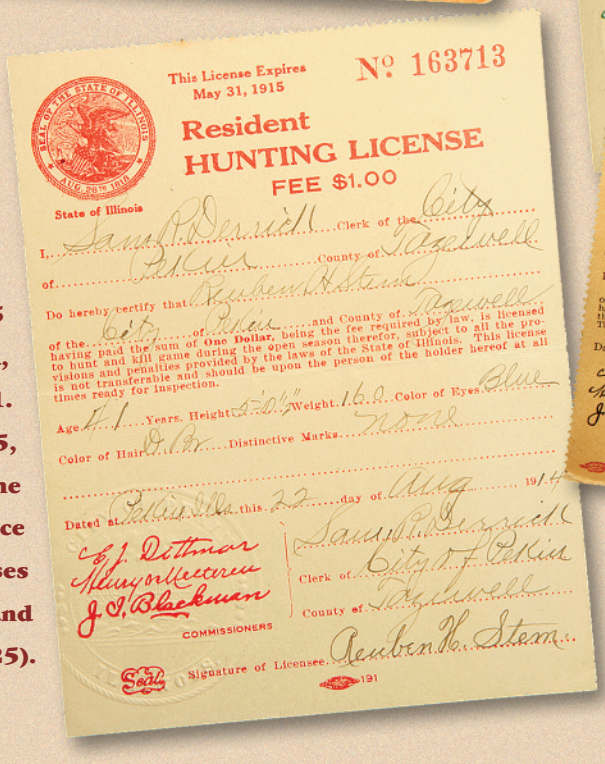
Dated at Pekin this 24 day of Dec 1915

E. J. Dittmar
Henry McCleren
J. I. Blackman
COMMISSIONERS

M. B. Lohmann
Clerk of City of Pekin
County of Tazewell

Signature of Licensee Reuben Stemm

The license fee—$1—was first printed on the 1914 hunting license. Only once in Illinois' history has the license fee decreased—in 1935 the fee was reduced to $0.75. A year later, a $0.25 clerk's fee was implemented, raising the price back to $1. The price doubled in 1945, and in 1954 an increase in the issuing fee brought the price to $2.25. Subsequent increases occurred in 1957 ($3.25) and 1979 ($7.25).


This License Expires May 31, 1915

No. 163713

Resident HUNTING LICENSE

FEE $1.00

State of Illinois

I, Sam P. Derrick Clerk of the City of Pekin County of Tazewell

Do hereby certify that Reuben H. Stem of the City of Pekin and County of Tazewell having paid the sum of One Dollar, being the fee required by law, is licensed to hunt and kill game during the open season therefor, subject to all the provisions and penalties provided by the laws of the State of Illinois. This license is not transferable and should be upon the person of the holder hereof at all times ready for inspection.

Age 41 Years. Height 5-10½ Weight 160 Color of Eyes Blue

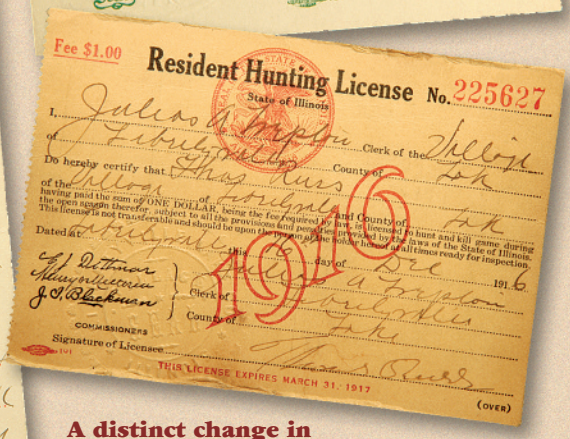
Color of Hair D. Br. Distinctive Marks None

Dated at Pekin Ills this 22 day of Aug 1914

E. J. Dittmar
Henry McCleren
J. I. Blackman
COMMISSIONERS

Sam P. Derrick
Clerk of City of Pekin
County of Tazewell

Signature of Licensee Reuben H. Stem


Fee $1.00

Resident Hunting License No. 225627

State of Illinois

I, Julius A. Tripton Clerk of the Village of Fabrilville County of Ink

Do hereby certify that Thos Russ of the Village of Fabrilville and County of Ink having paid the sum of ONE DOLLAR, being the fee required by law, is licensed to hunt and kill game during the open season therefor, subject to all the provisions and penalties provided by the laws of the State of Illinois. This license is not transferable and should be upon the person of the holder hereof at all times ready for inspection.

Dated at Fabrilville this 16 day of Dec 1916

E. J. Dittmar
Henry McCleren
J. I. Blackman
COMMISSIONERS

Julius A. Tripton
Clerk of Fabrilville
County of Ink

Signature of Licensee Thos Russ

THIS LICENSE EXPIRES MARCH 31, 1917

(OVER)

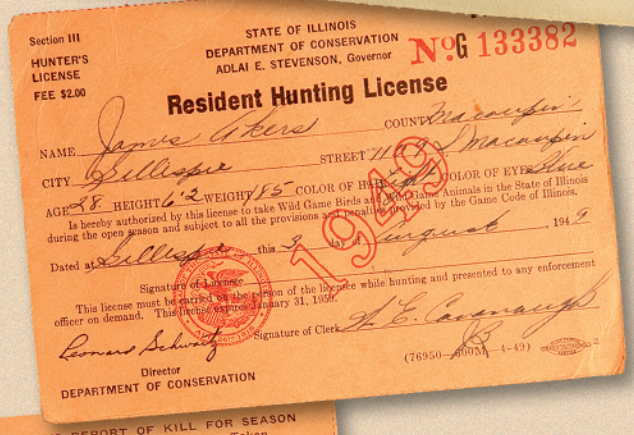
A distinct change in license size occurred in 1916, and that style remained fairly consistent until 1950 when the style used until 1989 was developed.

state, they doled out what may have been, for them, a significant sum of money for a simple slip of paper or a scrap of cloth, something they'd have to repeat the following year.

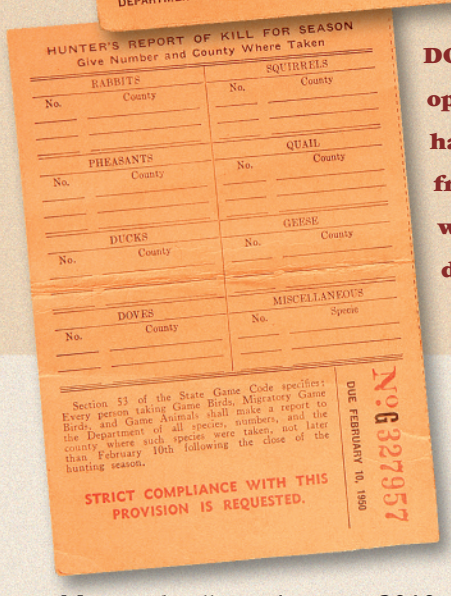
Yet John Doe benefitted enormously from that expenditure. It allowed him to put food on the table during the Depression and war-time rations. He valued the time spent and miles walked with family and friends, and passing hard-earned knowledge of the hunt and wildlife to the next generation. Some watched as Illinois' prairie-chicken population plummeted, yet were there to celebrate the long-anticipated return of the white-tailed deer and wild turkey.

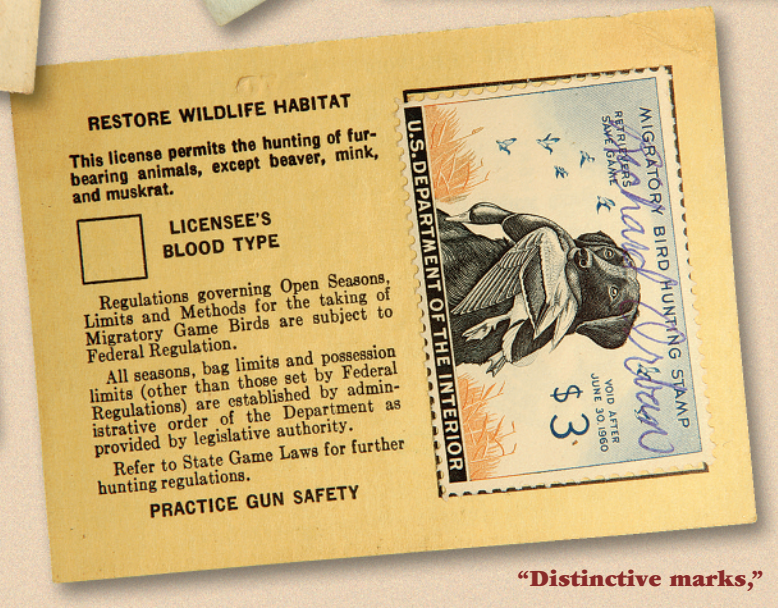
The federal duck stamp was implemented in 1934 and cost $1. Stamps were printed in various monotones through 1958, when full-colored stamps were introduced. Many consider the 1934-1936 federal duck stamps the most famous, possibly because for those three years hunters were not required to sign their stamp. In addition to being historically significant as the first full-color stamp, the 1959 version is the only federal duck stamp to include anything other than a duck or goose (a dog).

Licenses became a vehicle for spreading important messages in 1937 when "Be Cautious Prevent Fires" appeared on the back side. The following year the message was changed to "Help Prevent Forest Fires."



DOC recognized the opportunity to collect harvest information from sportsmen in 1941 when licenses included detachable "Kill Cards."





"Distinctive marks," such as tattoos, were noted on the personal information required on early licenses. Starting in 1956, hunters were encouraged to note their blood type.

Study each page of the binders closely and a surprisingly rich historical record of Illinois unfolds. Reading between the pages, stories emerge of war and peace, advances in technology and the structure of Illinois government. And, the books tell tales of the evolution of our understanding of managing natural resources.

"If it has to do with hunting or fishing and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources I probably have some

Illinois implemented a $5 state duck stamp in 1975, with an increase to $10 in 1990.

The combination Sportsman's License became available in 1979, allowing those who hunt and fish to purchase one license at $11.25 (a $0.50 issuing fee in 1980 raised the fee to $11.75; an increase in 1982 brought the fee to $13.75 and in 1994 the fee was raised to $19.25). The sportsman's license also included the salmon stamp, introduced in 1976 at a price of $2.

Illinois introduced two new stamps in 1990—the Pheasant Stamp and the Furbearer Stamp, both at $5. Three years later, those stamps were merged into a $5 Habitat Stamp. The Salmon Stamp evolved into the $6 Lake Michigan Trout and Inland Trout stamps in 1994.

The most important license in Phil Houser's collection always is his own. This dedicated outdoorsman bought his first hunting license in 1963.

type of collection put together," Houser remarked. "I enjoy everything about hunting and fishing, and things like licenses and stamps and pins are such an integral part of the sport."

Houser enjoys studying the licenses and learning what each can reveal.

"There's a lot of history about the state that people don't know, but can discover when they really look at all the information in these books," Houser concluded.