



## Champaign County Historical Archives

**Compiled by:** Cassie Ward, Spring 2019

**Creator/Corporate name:** Luker's Pan-O-Cake

**Inclusive Dates:** circa 1940-1960

**Physical Description:** 1 oversized box, 1.5 linear feet.

**Provenance:**

Luker's Pan-O-Cake materials were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives.

**Access:**

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

**Historical Note:**

Jackson M. Luker, a baker in Urbana from 1921-1960, discovered that his cakes could be kept for extended periods of time in 1939 when a Kroger grocery store opened across the street and started selling angel food cakes for well under what he could afford. The story goes that Luker was so upset he left his cakes in their pans and did not return to them until after the sale was over. Luker found his cakes still fresh and realized he could sell his cakes by mail as well as from his store front.

In 1940, he filed a patent for his cake pans and how they were transported and was granted that patent in 1942. In 1947, Luker was selling 400,000 cakes a year and it was noted that he could have sold more if there had not been a scarcity of materials due to World War II.

In 1955, he grossed an estimated 3 million dollars and his cakes were distributed in 22 states. He moved operations to Fithian, IL in 1956. The Fithian plant gave Luker 10 times as much space as his Urbana storefront. At the time of the move, Luker produced about 50,000 cakes per month and employed 75 individuals including drivers for his fleet of semi-trucks. Unfortunately, the move to Fithian turned sour soon afterwards and Luker decided to sell his Pan-O-Cake manufacturing process on a franchise basis.

The Luker Building, 112 W. Main Street, Urbana, was sold in 1962, and Luker died in 1971.

**Scope and Content Note:**

This collection contains undated materials that describe the frequency of use of the Pan-O-Cake, which are organized by state and by truck route. Also included is an undated newspaper advertisement.

**Arrangement:**

This collection is arranged into one oversized box, and the registers keeping track of Pan-O-Cake shipments are organized as found.



The Urbana Free Library

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Luker's Pan-O-Cake Records

Collection 184

**Related Material:**

See also "Luker's Pan-O-Cake Bakery (Urbana)" Vertical File Folder

**Names:**

Luker, Jackson M.

Luker's Pan-O-Cake Bakery (Urbana, Ill.)

**Subject Terms:**

Bakers and bakeries

**Container List:**

**Box 1**

Item 1: Pan-O-Cake Newspaper Advertisement, undated

Item 2: Illinois Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 3: Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 4: Piggly Wiggly Midwest Co. Madison, WI, Beloit, Rockford, IL Pan-O-Cake Register, undated

Item 5: North Illinois, Except Pigs (Rockford) Madison and Beloit. Iowa Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 6: South Illinois and Indiana Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 7: East Illinois and Indiana Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 8: Red Route Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 9: Green Route Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 10: Yellow Route Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 11: Blue Route Pan-O-Cake register by store, undated

Item 12: Unbound Registers, undated

**Sources:**

"Luker baking operations, here since '21, to Fithian," *Courier*, September 19, 1956

"Quiet end to a stormy era in Urbana," *Courier*, April 27, 1962

"Angel's Food," <http://ruthreichl.com/2015/06/a-pan-from-the-past.html/> Accessed 21 February 2019.

"Luker Bakery," <http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2016-02-12/toms-mailbag-feb-12-2016.html> Accessed 21 February 2019.

"Food Flashes," <http://www.gourmet.com.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/magazine/1940s/1947/08/foodflashes.html> Accessed 21 February 2019