



The Urbana Free Library

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Orphan Train Collection,  
1855-2000

Collection 233

## Champaign County Historical Archives

**Compiled by:** Izzy Westcott, August 2020

**Creator/Corporate name:** Barbara Roberts

**Inclusive Dates:** 1855-2000

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes, 1 lin. ft.

**Provenance:**

The Orphan Train Collection was donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives by Barbara Roberts, November 15, 1996.

**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:**

“Orphan Trains” refer to the practice of relocating orphaned and homeless children from the East Coast cities to rural areas, primarily in the Midwest, between the years of 1854 and 1929. Welfare organizations such as the Children’s Aid Society and the New York Juvenile Asylum transported children by trains to these areas, where they were placed in homes to work, primarily on farms, and be educated.

**Scope and Content Note:**

This collection offers information on the organizations responsible for the Orphan trains, such as the Children’s Aid Society and the New York Juvenile Asylum. The collection contains photocopies of articles, pictures, annual reports, census, and other accounts about the orphan train, as well as handwritten letters and notes documenting research on Orphan Train riders. Additional materials pertaining to the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America are included.

**Arrangement:**

The collection is arranged alphabetically at the folder level.

**Related Materials:**

See also Indenture Records of the New York Juvenile Asylum from 1859-1860 in the Champaign County Clerk Records Series. For materials related to the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America, see their newsletter, *Crossroads*.

**Subject Terms:**

Orphan trains

Orphans

Indentured Servants

Apprentices



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**Name terms:**

Children's Aid Society (New York, N.Y.)  
New York Juvenile Asylum  
Orphan Train Heritage Society of America  
Roberts, Barbara

**Container List:**

**Box 1**

**Series 1: Annual Reports**

Folder 1: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1855-1859  
Folder 2: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1860-1868  
Folder 3: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1870-1879  
Folder 4: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1880-1889  
Folder 5: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1898-1899  
Folder 6: Children's Aid Society Annual Reports, 1900-1918  
Folder 7: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1856-1859  
Folder 8: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1860-1867  
Folder 9: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1871-1875  
Folder 10: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1881-1889  
Folder 11: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1890-1894  
Folder 12: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1896-1899  
Folder 13: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1900-1905  
Folder 14: New York Juvenile Asylum Annual Reports, 1905-1914

**Box 2**

**Series 2: Personal Collection**

Folder 15: Articles Concerning Orphan Trains and State of Illinois, 1855-1994  
Folder 16: Articles Concerning the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America (OTHSA), 1988-1999  
Folder 17: Census New York Juvenile Association, 1880  
Folder 18: Correspondence — Barbara Roberts, 1986-1992  
Folder 19: Miscellaneous Articles about Orphan Train Riders, 1850-2000  
Folder 20: Miscellaneous Pictures Orphans and Institutions New York City, 1856-1992  
Folder 21: Orphan Train Research – Sources and Addresses, 1985-1998