

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Jim Staff

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Ag- School Reorganization Oral History project

Interview # AI-A-L_2012-038

Jim Staff, a career educator from Bond, Fayette and Effingham Counties from 1948 through 1989, was interviewed on August 14, 2012 as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Agriculture in Illinois - School Reorganization* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: August 14, 2012 Vandalia, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue ALPL Volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Interview being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:25 / 1.42 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 16, 2012.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Jim Staff, *Agriculture in Illinois*, AI-A-L-2012-038

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Jim Staff was born in Vandalia on October 8th, 1929. He graduated from Vandalia High School in 1948. His first job in 1949 was teaching in a one-room school in Williams Township, located in Fayette County, Illinois, with nine students in attendance. He left that job to play Professional Baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals Farm System. He then returned to Greenville College earning a degree in 1952. After graduation he taught and coached at Vandalia High School from 1952-1959. During that time he earned an MA from the University of Illinois. In 1958 he was elected as the Fayette County Superintendent of Schools. At the time it was reported that he was the youngest County Superintendent at age twenty-nine. Eventually his position was called Regional Superintendent of Schools when Bond and Effingham counties became part of his territory in 1976. As County /Regional Superintendent, he sold forty school buildings, closed one school district, and one attendance center. He presided over thirty-five detachments and annexations, with one going to the *Illinois* Supreme Court – a case he won. Staff also worked to create co-ops in vocational and special education. His interview covers teaching at a one-room school and the decline in the Fayette County School District from one hundred and fifty to five students. He discusses the issue of closing districts, selling schools, detachments, and annexations. His interview explains the reasons driven for irregular school district boundaries, economic matters, census data, and school opportunities which led to the district reductions.

Subject Headings/Key Words: County Superintendent; Regional Superintendent of Schools; one-room schools; closing of schools; selling school land; reasons for school boundaries; education in the 1950's; community unit school districts; detachments and school annexations; 1985 Educational Reform Act; educational issues and the Illinois Supreme Court; Educational Service Centers; Special Education Cooperatives; Vocational Centers; Community College; Kaskaskia Agreement; State Superintendent of Schools; Fayette County

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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