



Virgil C. Wikoff
Papers, 1960-1982

Collection 21

Champaign County Historical Archives

Compiled by: Erica Fair, October 2011
Creator/Corporate Name: Virgil C. Wikoff
Inclusive Dates: 1960-1982
Physical Description: XX box(es), (XX linear ft.)
Language: English

Provenance:

The Virgil C. Wikoff papers were compiled and donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives by Virgil Wikoff in two separate accessions, December 2007 and October 2009.

Access:

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Biographical Note:

Virgil Wikoff was a City of Champaign Council Member from 1963-1967 and Mayor from 1967-1975. He also served as Representative of the 52nd District in the Illinois State General Assembly from 1977-1982.

Wikoff was born February 6, 1927 in Decatur, Illinois, and spent most of his childhood on a farm outside of Maroa. Upon graduation from Maroa Township High School, he enlisted in the United State Navy and spent the final two years of the Second World War (1944-1945) in the Pacific Theater. Discharged from the Navy in 1946, he enrolled in the University of Illinois the following year and graduated with a B.S. in Architectural Engineering. After being recalled into the Naval Reserves during the Korean War, Wikoff returned in October 1952 and founded Lyman-Wikoff, Inc. General Contractors, a construction company he ran until his retirement.

Always civic minded and interested in public office, Wikoff ran for Champaign City Council in 1963, and utilizing his contacts from the many civic minded organizations to which he belonged, he gained the third highest vote total of all candidates and captured a seat on the council. Unhappy with the leadership of long-time mayor Emmerson Dexter, Wikoff tossed his hat in the ring for the 1967 Champaign Mayoral election. Again calling upon his impressive array of business community contacts and civic organization members, Wikoff won in decisive fashion, and then easily won re-election in 1971.

Wikoff faced several trials during an age of intense upheaval in Champaign. During his administration, the city started its first attempts at Urban Renewal, which generated a great deal of controversy, especially in minority and poorer neighborhoods on the city's north and east side. Shortly after the



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assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Wikoff presided over the passing of the Champaign Fair Housing Ordinance, one of the broadest and most encompassing in the entire country. Unrest dominated the later years of Wikoff's administration. As the Vietnam War intensified, a growing anti-war movement on the campus of the University of Illinois culminated in a series of protests in March 1970 that pushed Wikoff to authorize the deployment of Illinois Army National Guard troops to the campus town area for the first time in the history of the city. Racial tensions abounded in the period, especially exacerbated by the shooting of Edgar Hoult, an African-American Follett's Bookstore employee shot and killed by police on April 22, 1970 (Hoult was unarmed at the time).

Discouraged by this strife and by the leftward political tilt of the Champaign City Council during his second term as Mayor (Wikoff was a staunch conservative), he declined to run for another term and instead attempted to broaden his sights by running for the Illinois State General Assembly as Representative from the 52nd District. It was here that Wikoff suffered his first political defeat however, coming in fourth in a race for three seats in the 1975 state elections. Undeterred, he ran again in 1977 successfully, becoming the third of three representatives of the district. A reliable ally of Governor James R. Thompson, a fellow Republican, Wikoff served in the House as Chairman of the Cities and Villages Committee and the House Subcommittee on Education. Additionally, he dealt with many issues facing the state and society at the time, including the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1980 the size of the House was reduced from 177 to 118, forcing Wikoff to run directly against the popular Helen Satterthwaite for a seat in the newly created 103rd district in 1982 for a third term, and he was soundly defeated.

Wikoff continued to operate his construction firm for several years and served on many city, county, and state boards in an official and honorary capacity.

Scope and Content:

This collection spans the entirety of Wikoff's political career, from his election to the Champaign City Council to his last term as State Representative. Materials are from two accessions—the first comprises the initial four boxes of records, and the bulk of the collection (boxes 5-21) is material from the second accession.

The material documents Wikoff's political career, including his two terms as mayor of Champaign (1967-1975) and a State Legislator (1977-1982). Subjects of note include the Fair Housing Ordinance of 1968, race relations within the city (including the dealing with the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), and the student protests and unrest at the University of Illinois in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The operations of the General Assembly, including Wikoff's work and views on proposed legislation and correspondence with constituents are well represented. Additionally, Wikoff's involvement with the Illinois Municipal League and the National League of Cities are documented in the collection.



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Arrangement:

The Virgil C. Wikoff Papers are arranged into the following subgroups and series:

Series 1: Mayoral Files

- Subseries 1: Correspondence
- Subseries 2: Subject Files
- Subseries 3: Council Agendas and Memos
- Subseries 4: Unpublished Reports, Speeches, Statements
- Subseries 5: Event Invitations and Publications
- Subseries 6: Certificates
- Subseries 7: Appointment Books
- Subseries 8: Political Campaign Materials
- Subseries 9: Ephemera/Memorabilia

Series 2: State Legislator Files

- Subseries 1: Correspondence Files
- Subseries 2: Legislative Files
- Subseries 3: Subject Files
- Subseries 4: Campaign Files

Container List:

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Series 1: Mayoral Files

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- Folder 3: Letters to the Editor, 1962-1982
- Folder 4: Chanute Air Force Base, 1967-1968
- Folder 5: City of Champaign, 1967-1972
- Folder 6: Constituents, 1967-1975
- Folder 7: Constituents—Congratulations, 1963-1970
- Folder 8: Constituents—Campaign Contributions, 1967-1971
- Folder 9: Constituents—Fair Housing Ordinance, 1967-1968
- Folder 10: Constituents—Martin Luther King, Jr., 1968
- Folder 11: Illinois Municipal League, 1967-1982
- Folder 12: Jay Wertheimer Endorsement Incident, 1971
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- Folder 15: Reports—City of Champaign Election Results by Precinct, 1963-1971
- Folder 16: Reports—League of Women Voters Candidates Surveys, 1963-1971
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Folder 19: Reports—Report on the City of Champaign, 1970

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Folder 23: Invitations and Programs—Wikoff Family Events, 1962-1966

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Folder 28: Invitations and Programs—State Government and Inaugurations, 1972-1978

Folder 29: Invitations and Programs—Lyman-Wikoff Built Facilities, 1974-1978

Folder 30: Invitations and Programs—Representative Virgil Wikoff Pig Roast, 1981

Folder 31: Invitations and Programs—Illinois State General Assembly and Gubernatorial Inaugurations

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Folder 4: Publications—Resolutions and Proclamations, 1971

Subseries 6: Certificates

Folder 5: Certificates—Honorary Certificates, 1967-1982

Folder 6: Certificates—Nomination and Election Notices, Illinois General Assembly, 1976, 1982

Folder 7: Certificates—Notice of Election, City of Champaign Mayor, 1971

Subseries 7: Appointment Books

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Folder 9: 1967

Folder 10: 1968

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Subseries 8: Political Campaign Materials

Folder 17: Specimen Ballots, 1963, 1967

Folder 18: Statement by Mayor Emmerson Dexter Regarding His Political Status, 1967

Folder 19: City of Champaign Candidate Filing Documents, 1970-1971

Folder 20: Press Releases, 1967-1982

Folder 21: Pamphlets—Virgil Wikoff Campaigns for City of Champaign Offices, 1963-1971



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Folder 22: Pamphlets—Virgil Wikoff State Representatives, Illinois General Assembly, 1975-1982
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Folder 24: Campaign Contribution Solicitation Letters, 1971, 1978
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Folder 26: Campaign Finance Reports, 1963-1970
Folder 27: Campaign Strategy Documents, ca. 1962-1963
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Folder 2: Calendar—Gift from Japanese Friends, 1977
Folder 3: Ceremonial Ribbons, 1970-1973
Folder 4: Nametags—Illinois Municipal League 59th Annual Conference, 1972
Folder 5: Nametags—National League of Cities—Congress of Cities
Folder 6: Bracelets—POW/MIA memorials—Donald Casey and Joseph Rose III, ca. 1970
Folder 7: Business Cards—Virgil Wikoff—City of Champaign Mayor and State Representative
Folder 8: Matchbooks—Virgil Wikoff for Mayor [Champaign, Ill.] and State Representative
Folder 9: Golf Ball Markers—Virgil Wikoff for State Representative
Folder 10: Key to the City—Champaign, Ill. [three copies]
Folder 11: Tie Tack with City Seal

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Series 1: Mayoral Files, cont. [Oversized Materials]

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Political Campaign Materials—Campaign Posters—Virgil Wikoff for Mayor, 1967

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[Begin Accession 2]

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- Folder 9: Regionalism in Illinois, 1974
- Folder 10: Rail Abandonment, 1974
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- Folder 14: Miscellaneous Testimony and News Releases, 1971-1975
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- Folder 4: Bicentennial Steering Committee, 1973-1974
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- Folder 8: Central Illinois Mayors Association, 1968-1975
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- Folder 12: Downtown Develop, 1972-1973
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- Folder 8: Illinois Municipal League Board of Directors Meeting, September 1973
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Series 2: Legislative Files

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Folder 7: Pig Roast, 1981, cont.
Folder 8: Pig Roast, 1981, cont.
Folder 9: Wikoff Questionnaires, 1978
Folder 10: Municipal Finance Officers Speech, 1977-1978
Folder 11: Pig Roast, 1982