



Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette

May 2020

PO Box 0455, Oberlin, OH 44074 (440)774-1700
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or send e-mail to members@oberlinheritage.org.*

Update from My Living Room

Dear friends:

I am drafting this knowing that what I write may sound outdated even a few hours from now. I can make plans for the future but all I can write is what I know now: I miss my coworkers, greeting visitors and volunteers, social outings, the trips I had planned, breathing without thinking about it, and more. I count myself very fortunate that my personal experience with the coronavirus is still distanced by several degrees of separation, although when I go out of my home I try to behave as if I might have it so I can protect others. I'm taking pleasure in virtually reconnecting with relatives and friends, focusing on projects without interruption, wearing fluffy socks while working, cooking, and safely supporting restaurants that are still open when my cooking fails.

I'm not usually much of a "sharer" but I think it's important to recognize that what we're all going through is not normal, our feelings are real, and that our experiences and emotional states vary and for vastly different reasons: the tragic realities of the coronavirus itself, the uncertainty of an invisible threat, job loss, supply insecurity, working and learning from home, still working among others, market drops, being stuck apart, being stuck together, technological frustrations, information overload and more. But hopefully there are also feelings of peace and hope: that what people are doing to reduce the spread is working, gratitude for everyone doing their part and more than their share, the providers, the problem-solvers, and the breaths of fresh air. Just know that even if we won't see you at OHC for a while yet, we care about what you're going through and how you're feeling right now.

How are we doing? As of this update, all of OHC's staff members are still working, but from home. We're taking turns going into the office to retrieve critical projects, check the mail, and ensure the buildings and collections are safe. Speaking of collections, check out the call for donations of writings and photographs later in this newsletter. If you haven't seen our "Staff Saturdays" updates on Facebook, here are behind-the-scenes highlights (I gave everyone 15 words to keep it snappy!):

Amanda: Staying up to date, creating new tour/program options, thinking "spring" with a pollinator garden

Bethany: Keeping the business side running (checks, deposits, and payroll) while adjusting to new furry co-workers

Katrina: AmeriCorps Member staying connected with the community through social media and outreach!

Liz: Keeping everyone on the same page and safe, coordinating Monroe House repairs, historian-turned-futurist

Maren: Collecting community stories, updating and improving things behind the scenes, staying connected to OHC friends

Mary: (Housekeeper & Sanitizer): So many doorknobs and switch plates!

Veronica: Staying in touch with everyone I can, grateful for wonderful people, writing-writing-and more writing!

What's Next? As in the last newsletter, we are still planning for some events and programs in the coming weeks and months, but are ready to make adjustments as needed for everyone's safety. There's no getting around the fact that being closed, cancelling some of our largest events, and market shenanigans have thrown our budget off course and will impact us for some time. Board and staff members are crunching numbers and formulating plans to ensure that the mission-focused work of the Heritage Center will continue. Please know that each membership renewal that comes in is more appreciated by us than ever, as are the Annual Fund gifts that have arrived early, and pledges from two new amazing Endowed Life Members. Programmatically, we're sharing a lot of history on our website and social media pages right now, and we're also taking steps toward connecting youth and adults with history in new ways. The mission continues!

P.S. Sorry for the unusual length. I'm spending too much time in my living room.

Liz

Since Gov. DeWine's announcement recently, please be aware that although the Oberlin Heritage Center may be allowed to physically open to the public in the coming weeks, we ask for your understanding as we need to make some changes behind-the-scenes and gather supplies that will ensure the safety of all personnel and visitors before we can open. Bear with us and watch for future announcements as we continue to ensure the safety of visitors, members, and staff.

Annual Meeting Changes

With the continued uncertainty regarding any larger scale events, and many members reluctant to attend social gatherings, the Oberlin Heritage Center will not host a dinner meeting on July 8th. Please watch for future announcements about OHC's plans to move forward. Anyone who has previously registered will be contacted directly about their reservation.

Allen Memorial Art Museum Tour on Friday, May 15th

With so many things unavailable, it's great to announce we are still offering the members only tour of the AMAM! Moving to a virtual tour, the AMAM's curators are generously offering a unique look at the collections via Zoom. Andria Derstine, John G. W. Cowles Director at the museum, and several curators are expected to share entertaining stories about highlights in the permanent collection on Friday, May 15th from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is no cost for this OHC member event, but you will need to make a reservation. Interested? Please email director@oberlinheritage.org to receive your linked invitation.

Memorial Day Weekend Activities

Given the announcement that Oberlin College's Commencement and Reunion Weekend celebrations are postponed until 2021, OHC has adapted its tour offerings for the weekend as well. The following schedule is dependent upon the status of Ohio's stay at home order and the ability of OHC to be open to the public and to safely serve patrons. Please note that all indoor tours and activities have been canceled. The Museum Shop may be open with a building capacity limit.

All scheduled history walks will continue to operate, but at limited capacity to allow for physical distancing. Please see our online Event announcement (<http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/whatsnew/?action=show&id=615>) for history walk capacities. **Reservations in advance are required to secure your spot.** History walks will also be adjusted to eliminate stops at indoor locations. Please know this will affect the potential for rest periods and exposure to current weather elements.

Friday, May 22

10am-5pm: Rent a Tablet for Self-Guided Tours of Oberlin

Saturday, May 23

10am-5pm: Rent a Tablet for Self-Guided Tours of Oberlin

11:00am-12:30pm: One Step More: Oberlin Women's History Walk

2:00-3:30pm: Freedom's Friends: Abolition and the Underground Railroad History Walk

5:00-6:15pm: Architecture History Walk

Sunday, May 24

10am-5pm: Rent a Tablet for Self-Guided Tours of Oberlin

11:00am-12:15pm: Architecture History Walk

2:00-3:30pm: Freedom's Friends: Abolition and the Underground Railroad History Walk

5:00-6:15pm: Scholars and Settlers History Walk

Please know that OHC also offers free self-guided tour content on its website, including a smartphone tour of the service men and women of Oberlin at Westwood Cemetery. Please visit: <http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/visit/yourselftours>. On Memorial Day (Monday, May 25), an OHC staff member will be present from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the cemetery to guide people on the use of the izi.TRAVEL tour smartphone app and the new mapping function of OHC's online gravestone database that can help visitors find specific monuments in the cemetery (weather permitting). If you have questions or concerns relating to our upcoming tour schedule, please contact Museum Education and Tour Coordinator Amanda Manahan by email at tourinfo@oberlinheritage.org or call 440-774-1700 to leave a message.

History Minute

May is National Preservation Month and we're celebrating by highlighting the preservation work done here in Oberlin and the work done with Oberlin roots!

While you may know Mary Burnett Talbert as a civil rights, suffrage and anti-lynching activist, the Oberlin born and educated Talbert was also an ardent historic preservationist. During her tenure as the President of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Talbert was instrumental in leading the charge to save the D.C. home of Frederick Douglass. Among many notable links to Oberlin, Douglass spoke at First Church, was friends with James Monroe, and sent his daughter to Oberlin to be educated in the preparatory department.

In August 1917, Talbert wrote an op-ed published in the Crisis Magazine, giving an impassioned call to preserve the Douglass house, proposing it as a moral imperative to rescue the home. Their campaign was successful and in 1972 the site passed into the ownership of the National Park Service. In 2014, the curator of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site said of Talbert “She was a forward-thinking woman in terms of what we think of when we think of preservation. What you have is her, along with other women of her day, preserving Mr. Douglass’ legacy by really seeing this home become a landmark”.

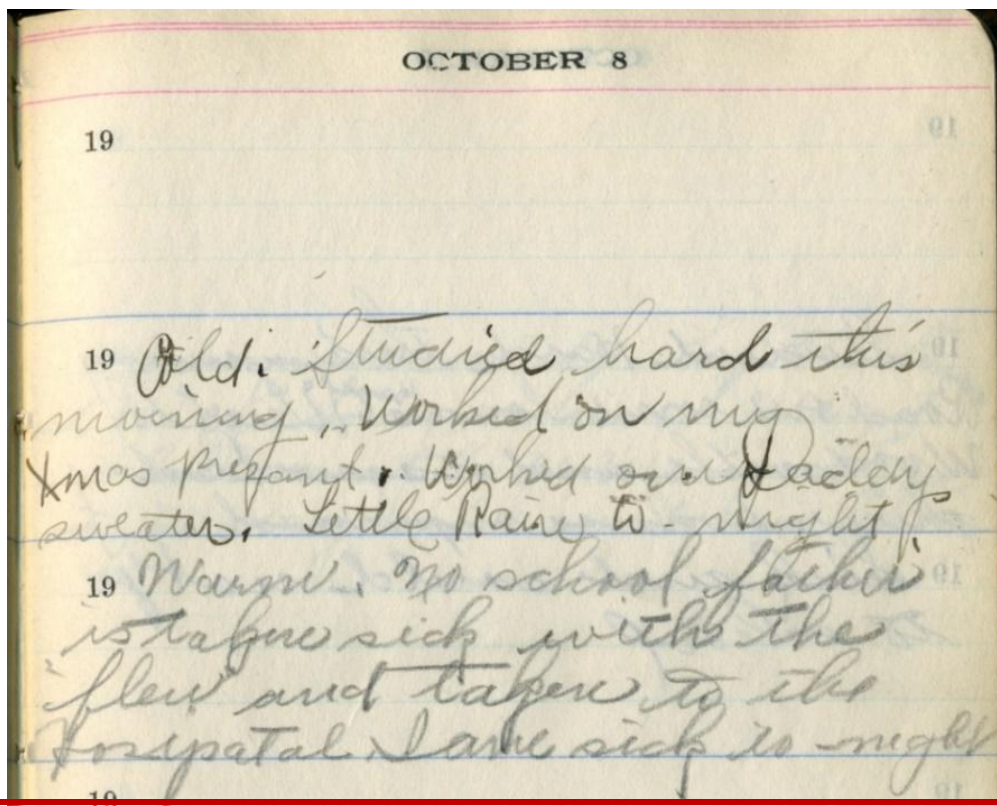
Making History Today!

The Oberlin Heritage Center is collecting and we need your help!

As our daily lives continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, OHC is looking toward the future. We are actively collecting firsthand accounts of Oberlinian’s experiences during the pandemic. As it grows, this resource will help future generations understand what life was like during the outbreak. We are currently looking for donations of writings and images that capture daily life during the pandemic. These can be as formal or as informal as you chose. For more information and some suggested writing topics, please visit OHC’s website www.oberlinheritage.org

If you are interested in learning more about this project or would like to donate please contact OHC’s Collections Manager, Maren McKee, at history@oberlinheritage.org. Include your full name and a phone number where you can be reached.

Margret Sperry documented her experience with the 1918 Spanish Flu in her journal, now in the collection of the Oberlin Heritage Center.



Collections Manager Maren McKee snapped this image of a closed Oberlin park in April, 2020.

Monroe House Work During the Closure



With the museum buildings closed to the public, this was an opportune time to do some repair work around the front of the 1866 Monroe House. Thanks to a grant from The Nord Family Foundation, OHC was able to hire a team from Grunwell-Cashero to complete several projects. This work included restoring deteriorated areas around the base of the house; sprucing up the front porch columns; and sealing off basement window areas bugs like to squeeze through. Replacement of two crumbling sandstone pavers that had become trip hazards, and an inspection of the standing seam metal roof were also completed.

Thanks to Steve, Ryan, and Javier for their hard work and McKay Lodge Art Conservation Laboratory for continuing to store our historic sandstone supply. The Nord Family Foundation, located in Lorain County, provided a \$5,400 grant to underwrite the cost of the repairs that took place in April. Grunwell-Cashero Company completed the work on time and within the budget!

CARES Act Support Giving Tuesday Now, May 5th

Are you ready to show your support of the Oberlin Heritage Center? Consider a donation to the Oberlin Heritage Center today or on May 5 for Giving Tuesday Now, a nation-wide initiative to support local nonprofit organizations through the current fiscal emergency. The recently passed CARES Act allows up to a \$300 charitable donation to be tax-deductible on your 2020 taxes, even if you don't itemize. Consult with your tax advisor if you have any questions regarding this deduction.

* Visit www.oberlinheritagecenter.org and use the "Make a Gift" link to donate today on your credit card or,

*Mail a check to: Oberlin Heritage Center, PO Box 455, Oberlin, OH 44074.

Please know your gift is much appreciated as we negotiate this uncertain time in history.

OHC Grounds Day – Saturday, May 16 from 9:00am-12:00pm

Please join us for an hour or two and help us spruce up the grounds for our busy summer season. Projects include trimming, weeding, planting, and general yard clean-up and will be safely distanced outdoors. Tools and supplies will be provided; volunteers are welcome to bring their own. Please contact Liz at liz.schultz@oberlinheritage.org or at 440-774-1700 to RSVP.

Pollinator Garden Update

The group construction activity and beekeeper visit that had been postponed to May 16 are being cancelled as a safety precaution.

However, OHC is delighted to announce that thanks to generous support from the City of Oberlin Sustainable Reserve Fund, we will be moving forward with the construction and planting of a pollinator garden on the museum grounds later this spring. The Sustainable Reserve Fund, with its purpose to provide funding for projects throughout the city that align with the City of Oberlin's Climate Action Plan, will support the creation of four raised garden beds to house Ohio native plants that are deemed beneficial to a variety of pollinators, including bees, birds, and butterflies. The fund will also allow OHC to construct supporting infrastructure for the gardens, including interpretive signage, a rain barrel to help offset reliance on city water utilities, and other small additions to attract and support pollinator life.



The raised garden beds will be constructed as soon as it is possible to do so safely. If you are interested in helping to build or plant the gardens, please contact Amanda Manahan at tourinfo@oberlinheritage.org.



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