

BUTLER COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

The Benninghofen NEWSLETTER

327 NORTH SECOND STREET • HAMILTON, OHIO 45011 • 513.896.9930

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Butler County Historical Society Recognition Awards

The Butler County Historical Society held their Annual Meeting on November 5, 2020. The meeting was very different this year, due to the Covid restrictions. While not being able to meet in person, the virtual meeting was still well attended via Zoom. The highlight of the evening was our guest speaker, Dr. Katherine Durack. Her presentation entitled, "Why Ohio" highlighted the passage of the 19th Amendment and suffrage movement in Ohio. Just prior to the presentation, a brief business meeting was held. The approval of our new Board Members, and the winners of the annual awards were announced. A copy of the Annual Report is included in this issue of the newsletter for all to read. Thank you to all who were able to join us that evening.



2020 Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Mary Royer. Mary was recognized for her dedication and countless hours of volunteering for the Butler County Historical Society and helping preserve the history for future generations.



2020 Distinguished Historian Award was presented to Dr. Curt Ellison. This award was in recognition of his many years of dedicated work on behalf of preserving the rich, local history of Butler County. His numerous efforts in writing, education, and leadership as well as his service to the Butler County Historical Society are greatly appreciated.



2020 Distinguished Historian Award was presented to Dr. Jeff Leipzig. This was awarded in recognition of his effort to preserve the ancient Hopewell Culture Fortified Hill earthworks located in Butler County.

The Butler County Historical Society Hours
Monday - Friday: 10 am - 3 pm
Saturday: By appointment only

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BCHS Annual Report

What a year 2020 turned out to be. At the beginning of the year, no one foresaw that the majority of our plans for the year would have to be canceled, or turned into virtual events.

BCHS started out strong in January with hosting Charles Rentschler's well attended talk "How the Rentschler Family Shaped Hamilton History". A sold-out public ghost hunt was also held in January.

In February, we received our Silver Certificate recognition from the American Association for State and Local History in its Mission, Vision and Governance category from the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS). This program offers a self-study format that allows history organizations to benchmark their work against nationally recognized standards of excellence.

Late in February, we began the renovation of the Emma Ritchie Auditorium. This four month project included remodeling the kitchen and restrooms; drywalling and painting the walls of the auditorium; installing new carpeting; a new audio-visual system; and a state-of-the-art wall hanging system. One of the biggest issues in this renovation was relocating the Mosler Safe exhibit and the grand piano. Several of the heavy safes were moved and temporarily stored in the hallway leading to the auditorium.

The renovation had just started when Covid-19 hit, and we closed for three months. Thankfully, construction continued while the daily work of the BCBS moved to the homes of executive director Kathy Creighton and administrative assistant Christina Beckett.



During the quarantine, we brainstormed about how BCBS could continue supplying quality programming to the public. The first program we developed was driving tours of Butler County. These tours are based on the 273 Ohio Historical Markers in the county. Five tours, Southeastern Butler County, Central and Northeastern Butler County, Western Butler County, Hamilton and Oxford, provided families a safe and educational outing, while maintaining social Covid-19 safety measures. Hundreds of people enjoyed the tours, which were recognized by the Ohio Local History Alliance for excellence in public programming.

Virtual exhibits and programming became the norm during the spring and summer. Two virtual programs were launched on our website: "The 1913 Flood", and "Lest We Forget" a Decoration Day/Memorial Day vintage postcard collection. Realizing that our summer multi-generational programs would have to be cancelled, we developed three virtual programs: "Victory Gardens"; "1800's Medicine"; and "Recycling the Pioneer Way". The last two programs were filmed outdoors and launched on our new YouTube site.

Although staff and volunteers returned to the BCBS in mid-June, tours and research remained limited throughout the rest of 2020. The public was required to make reservations for tours and research, while Covid-19 regulations, including masks, cleaning and sanitation were strictly enforced. Several home school groups and one public school group took advantage of the BCBS's Native American talk and exhibit to augment their lesson programs.



A major exhibit “Let Women Vote: Butler County’s Fight for Suffrage” was planned for 2020 in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment that granted women the right to vote. The exhibit officially opened in early August and several hundred people arranged for private tours of the exhibit, which remained open through the end of 2020. A booklet accompanying the exhibit was also printed and is still available to purchase.

Plans for a special event to unveil the newly remodeled Emma Ritchie Auditorium were put on hold, but the first exhibit showcasing the work of Butler County artist George W. White opened in early December, in the auditorium.

According to the By-Laws of the BCHS, our annual meeting is held in early November. Dr. Katherine Durack’s talk of the suffrage movement in Ohio entitled “Why Ohio” had originally been scheduled for August in conjunction with the opening of the 19th Amendment exhibit, but was rescheduled as the keynote for the Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting became a virtual event, with members being able to live-stream it to their home computers. There were a few minor glitches, but the event was an overall success.

BCHS undertook a major restoration project in 2020. One of the National flags from the 35th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, known as the “Butler Boys”, has been in our collection since the 1950s when it was presented to us by the great grandson of General Ferdinand Van Derveer. The flag was delivered to ICA-Art Conservation in Cleveland, the oldest non-profit art conservation facility in the Midwest. It took them nearly five hours to unfurl the heavily damaged flag. The project of preserving it will take between 12 to 16 months. Even after the detailed work is complete, a broad section of missing fabric will remain across the flag where twine was used to cinch the flag for over 100 years, causing the silk to deteriorate to a powder. Eventually the flag will be displayed in the Emma Ritchie Auditorium.

With the Covid-19 restrictions, visitor numbers were down. Cancellations of our multi-generational and members only programs, the Butler Rural Electric Annual Meeting, Butler County Fair and German Village Christmas Walk greatly reduced our visibility in the community. We did, however, welcome 294 people to the BCHS for business; 92 people for research; 344 people for tours; and 645 people reached through the virtual speaker’s bureau.

The BCHS continued to operate the Soldiers, Sailors and Pioneers Monument for Butler County. The Monument was closed due to Covid-19 for several months, but reopened on Memorial Day.

Several grants were received by the BCHS in 2020: US Bank support for programming; Michael J. Colligan History Fund support for the Soldiers, Sailors and Pioneers Monument; and W.E. Smith Family Trust for the 19th Amendment exhibit, curatorial supplies, programming and sizable support for the flag restoration project.



New Board Members 2021

The New Year brings us a new board. This year, we welcome a new president in Greg Young. The rest of the executive Board is Vice President Sara Butler, Treasurer Ted Hunter, and Secretary Chris Carroll. First Time Board Trustees are Valerie Elliott and Kelsey Stryfee. Returning trustees for the 2021 year are: Liesl Bauer, Linda Benninghofen, Joshua Braun, Patty Fawns, Doug Fraits, Gayle Niehaus, Joanne Williamson, and Katie Wright. Brian Smith will stay on as Immediate Past President.



Valerie Elliott



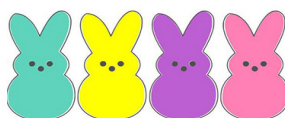
Kelsey Stryfee

Upcoming Events

The Butler county Historical Society is excited to offer two more Members Only Events in our Virtual Lecture Series. These events will be held via Zoom meetings. Both programs begin at 7:00 PM. Please contact the office to RSVP and the link for the meeting will be emailed for you to join.



Groundhogs, April Fool's
Mardi Gras, Peeps
and the Easter Bunny -
What?????



March 25th: "Groundhogs, April Fool's, Mardi Gras, Peeps and the Easter Bunny - What????"



April 22nd: "Let Women Vote: Butler County's Fight for Suffrage"
Presented by Dr. Sara Butler and Mary Royer

Flag Restoration Update

ICA-Art Conservation is hard at work preserving the Civil War battle flag from the 35th Regiment of Ohio Volunteer Infantry - better known as the "Butler Boys". The project is expected to take 18 months total. The 150 year old silk material of the flag is extremely fragile, and requires slow, meticulous work to piece it back together. Once completed, the restored flag will be framed to protect and preserve the delicate fabric. The flag will be displayed in the Emma Ritchie Auditorium. The restoration is funded by grants from the W.E. Smith Family Trust, and Michael J. Colligan Fund at the Hamilton Community Foundation.



Follow our Social Media Channels:



@butlercountyhistory



Butler County
Historical Society



bhistoricalsociety.com

Butler County Historical Society
327 North Second Street
Hamilton, OH 45011

We've Missed You!

The Butler County Historical Society is now open for tours and research by appointment only. Please call to schedule a time so we may practice the best safety measures at this time. Our hours are Monday - Friday 10:00am - 3:00pm. We ask if you would like to schedule a Saturday visit, that you call with at least a 48-hour notice.

COVID-19 SAFETY POLICIES



Hand Washing Areas
and Hand Sanitizer Available



Face masks will be required
for all visitors



Please respect proper Social
Distancing guidelines by
staying 6 feet apart



Regular cleaning of
surfaces that are high
touch areas.