

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 Goes on the Road



Butler County Historical Driving Tours

Explore the official Ohio Historical Markers of Butler County from the safety of your car!

With the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Butler County Historical Society, like many other organizations, considered how to adapt and continue to provide services for their community despite the ongoing health crisis. The Board of Directors met via video conference in March, shortly after Governor DeWine issued an Emergency Response Order, As one of the first action items, Governor DeWine closed all Ohio schools for what would end up being the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. As the Board of Directors considered how to best serve the Butler County community over the coming months, they worked to generate ideas that would also help parents provide educational activities for their children during the quarantine orders. The programs would need to follow social distancing guidelines and be educational while not violating any quarantine measures. The logical solution was to develop driving tours of the 45 Ohio historical markers that can be found across Butler County!

Executive Director Kathy Creighton was responsible for writing the text, laying out the tours and gathering or taking pictures. After conferring with Andy Verhoff at the Ohio History Connection to gain permission to use some of the photographs and text from the Ohio History Connection / RemarkableOhio.org, as well as getting photography usage from MetroParks of Butler County, the project quickly took shape. Kathy, with help from her husband Ed, built the tours by driving to each marker, and developing the best path through the county. The Northwestern Butler County Tour was created through volunteer efforts from Valerie Elliott of the Smith Library of Regional History and Dr. Curtis Ellison, retired professor from Miami University. Once all of the content was compiled, Board Member Liesl Bauer developed the design and layout of the final tours.

Because there are currently 45 historical markers across Butler County (as of March 1, 2020), the driving tours have been broken into five separate tours based on geographic location:

- Western Butler County: Hanover, Morgan and Reily Townships
- Southeastern Butler County: Fairfield, West Chester and Liberty Townships
- Central and Northeastern Butler County: Lemon, Madison and St. Clair Townships
- Northwestern Butler County: Oxford, Oxford Township and Israel Township (Preble County)
- City of Hamilton

This project will continue to grow as new markers are added in Butler County. Recently, the Butler County Historical Society was awarded a History Outreach Award by the Ohio Local History Alliance in the category of Public Programming. The tours were initially developed as a response to the Covid-19 outbreak but will become a legacy of the pandemic.

The Butler County Historical Society Updated Hours

Monday - Friday: 10 am - 3 pm

Saturday: By appointment only

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Suffrage Exhibit

The long struggle to gain the vote for women started in the first half of the 19th Century and ended with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Butler County women joined in this fight at the beginning of the 20th Century. Women's clubs, church groups, and other staged events organized by local suffrage groups took place all over Butler County. The Butler County Historical Society is proud to recognize these local suffragists, and how they engaged both the local, and national, fight to get women the right to vote. Join us, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, and visit our exhibit "Let Women Vote: Butler County's Fight for Suffrage". There is also a brochure printed with more details about the movement for sale for \$2.00. The exhibit and brochure were sponsored in part by a grant from the W.E. Smith Family Charitable Trust. The BCHS would like to thank the Suffrage Exhibit Committee or their time and dedication: Sam Ashworth, Liesl Bauer, Sara Butler, Kathy Creighton, Rich Piland, and Mary Royer. To schedule your free tour of the exhibit, please call 513-896-9930.



Follow our Social Media Channels:

 @butlercountyhistory

 YouTube Butler County Historical Society

 Coming Soon!

History Repeats Itself: The Spanish Flu

INFLUENZA IS CROWD DISEASE

Capt. Sohngen Urges
The Closing of Schools

STRICT MEASURES TAKEN

To Check Spanish
Influenza In
Hamilton

ALL SCHOOLS

Churches. Theatres And
Places of Public As-
semblage Are Closed

CLOSING ORDER

The board of health today is-
sued its formal order closing all
rooms, buildings and halls used
for entertainment, recreation,
pleasure, instruction or worship.

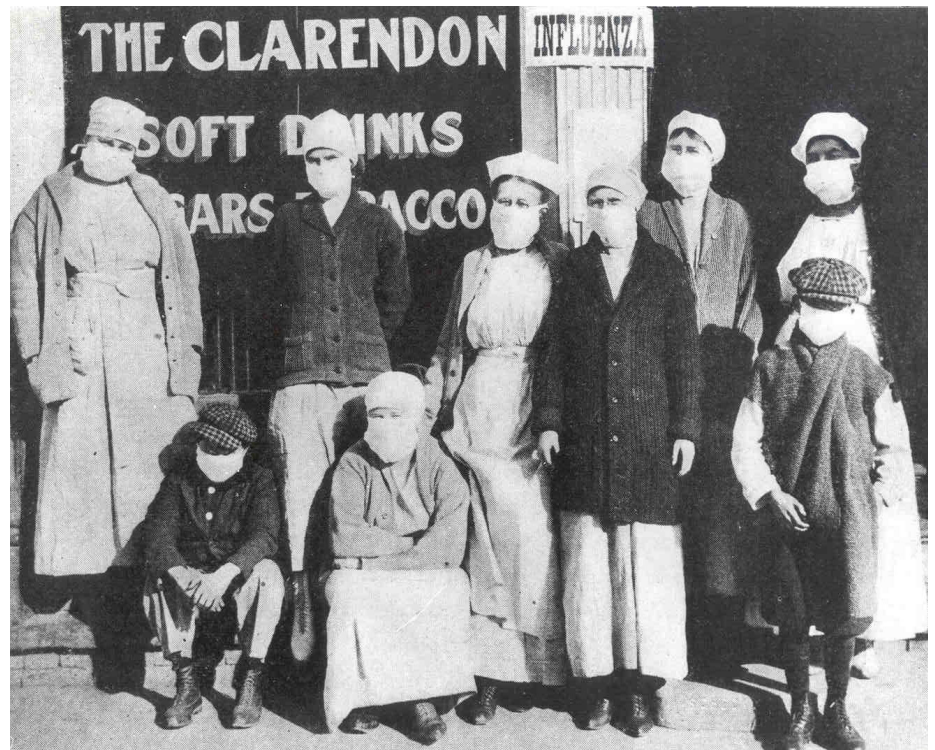
Mayor C. J. Smith also issued
a proclamation urging the people
of Hamilton to strictly comply
with the order of the board of
health.

OXFORD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO HAMILTON JOURNAL.

EPIDEMIC OF INFLUENZA
CLOSES THE UNIVERSIT

It's an eerily familiar scene: schools closed by Butler County's Board of Health, theaters and places of worship shuttered, and mask ordinances to protect the health of our community. But these headlines aren't from the current COVID-19 Pandemic, but from more than a century ago when the Spanish Influenza came to our communities. During uncertain times, we often turn to our history to see how we can learn from the past, and our current COVID-19 Pandemic is no exception: we went into our archives to learn how Butler County dealt with the Spanish Influenza of 1918.



Despite the fact that more than a hundred years have passed, the pictures and headlines tell a very similar story. People were asked to wear gauze masks in public and Hamilton's Mayor C.J. Smith issued a proclamation for all to "strictly comply" to these orders. On October 24, 1918, the unanimous opinion of physicians from the Federal Public Health Service and local Hamilton politicians led to the erection of tents behind Mercy Hospital to provide extra bed capacity for the influx of patients. Prior to that measure, there was only room for 40 more patients in the hospital itself, and to use another location within the city would diminish the nursing staff. There were over 1500 cases in Hamilton, with 247 deaths in Hamilton alone, and about 100 elsewhere in Butler County. Miami University saw 340 cases and 8 deaths, causing the university to cancel classes and football games. At least 34 Butler County soldiers died while in service from the Spanish Influenza. Funerals for those who passed were limited to 15 minutes, and caskets had to be closed or have a glass covering over the deceased. The lack of grave diggers led to bodies not being able to be buried in a timely manner as well.

Preserving the Past: Flag Restoration Project



One of the most important pieces of Civil War History from Butler County is being brought back to life through a meticulous restoration and cleaning process. An American battle flag from the 35th Regiment of Ohio Volunteer Infantry - known as the "Butler Boys," as many of the volunteers originated from Butler County - is currently in Cleveland, Ohio, where it was unfurled for the first time since the Civil War.

It took nearly five hours to unfurl the flag, which had been sitting in the basement of the Butler County Historical Society since the 1950s. This particular flag was the second unit flag for the 35th, after the original was retired following the Battle of Missionary Ridge (that initial flag continued to be carried by the regiment and referred to as "The Old Invalid" throughout their service in the war). The unit received their replacement flag in either late 1863 or early 1864 from the Ladies of Lebanon, Ohio, and it remained with the 35th for about a year, throughout the Atlanta Campaign, and was retired when 35th mustered out at the end of their 3 year contract. Following the war, the flag was presented to General VanDerveer, who returned the treasure to Hamilton, where it was carried in parades and present at unit reunions, but never unfurled. Eventually, a great grandson of VanDerveer donated the flag to the Historical Society between 1955 and 1957, where it has been kept since.

The Butler County Historical Society engaged the ICA-Art Conservation, the oldest non-profit art conservation facility in the Midwest, to complete the arduous task of preserving the flag. Jane Hammond, the Textile Conservator in charge of this project, was one of two people to unfurl the flag, and described the fragile silk material as having a texture similar to wet tissue paper. The project will span about 18 months, and will require much work piecing together the strips of fabric. Even after all the detailed work is complete, a broad stripe will remain across the flag where twine was used to cinch the flag for over 150 years, resulting in the silk to deteriorate into almost a powder. Once completed, the restored remains will be framed and encased in glass to further preserve it. Originally, the hope was that the flag could be displayed prominently at the Soldiers, Sailors and Pioneers Monument; however, as the flag is quite large, it cannot be displayed at the monument without obstructing the names of Butler County veterans on the walls. Instead, it will be given a prominent position at the Butler County Historical Society in the recently renovated Auditorium. The Historical Society is raising money privately and seeking grants to fund this important project.

Renovations

The long awaited updates to the Emma Ritchie Auditorium at the Butler County Historical Society have been completed! In addition to the updated auditorium, the restroom facilities received a much-needed face-lift. In the auditorium itself, a new artwork hanging system has been installed to allow easy rotation of exhibits and pictures. Additionally, new presentation equipment, including a large portable flat screen and sound system, will help make our auditorium the perfect location for future lecture series and presentations. We can't wait for the opportunity to host future speaking events in the space!



Annual Meeting in the time of COVID

A pandemic won't stop the Butler County Historical Society from holding our Annual Meeting - with the gift of technology, we'll be bringing the Annual Meeting to you in the comfort of your own home! If you haven't yet received your invitation, along with ballots for members and officers of the Board and options for device sign-in, please contact the Historical Society as soon as possible. RSVPs are needed by October 30th.

Butler County Historical Society's Virtual Annual Meeting & Speaker Thursday, November 5, 2020 - 7:00PM

Just over 100 years ago, thanks to the passage of the 19th Amendment, women in Butler County voted for the first time in the 1920 Presidential election. Please join us for a presentation by Dr. Katherine Durack on the suffrage movement in Ohio entitled "Why Ohio." Prior to the presentation, we will have a very brief business meeting.

Virtual Annual Meeting Options:

\$19 - Butler County Suffragist: Device sign-in

\$50 - Ohio Suffragist: Patron recognition, device sign-in, a copy of "Let Women Vote: Butler County's Fight for Suffrage" book

\$100 - National Suffragist: Patron recognition, device sign-in, a copy of "Let Women Vote: Butler County's Fight for Suffrage" book and a hand-made commemorative pin



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



Tours and research by
appointment only. Call
(513) 896-9930 for more
information