

AUGUST 2020

OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAM CHANGES DUE TO THE PANDEMIC



The public health measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have required the Historical Society to make a number of changes. Our office, display, and archive are located within the Fitchburg Library, which has been closed to the public since mid-March. It is unknown when it will reopen. At present, the Board members do not have regular access to the Society's office or materials. Until further notice, the best method is email, woodedarchives@gmail.com. You may also contact us through our website, www.fitchburghistory.org, using the contact form under the "About Us" tab. If you do not have email or internet access, leave a message at 608-729-1783.

Our April 19 annual meeting was cancelled. The planned program for that meeting was the work of the late Ida Wyman, an internationally renowned photographer who spent her last years in Fitchburg. Our featured speaker, Melanie Herzog, dean and professor of art history at Edgewood College, has graciously agreed to present at our annual meeting in April 2021. Our current display case in the library features Ms. Wyman, and is highlighted on our homepage. The Board has transacted business via email and held its first Zoom meeting on August 1.



The Society's membership year begins April 1 and ends March 31. A renewal reminder is usually sent before the annual meeting. The dues help support the Society's activities, including the website and programs, typically two a year. Because we may not be able to hold programs this membership year, the Board voted to suspend membership dues for current members for a year. Any dues that were already paid for the 2020 membership year will be credited to the 2021 membership year unless a refund or designation of the dues as a donation is requested. Please email us if you have any questions about your membership.

ANNUAL MEETING BOARD MEMBER ELECTION

The Wisconsin Historical Society has released the local historical societies from holding in-person elections and annual meetings this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Four Board members, Eric Amlie, Adrienne Imilkowski,

Carole Kinney, and Barb Tereba, hold seats that end this year. All four have agreed to remain on the Board and the Board supports that they continue another term. If there is anyone else you would like to nominate, please let us know by September 5, 2020, and notice will be shared with the members. If no additional nominations are received by that date, these four members will maintain their positions on the Board for another three year term.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



It's been almost a year since our last newsletter, and we apologize for that. Similar to the duck who's calm on the surface and busy paddling underwater, the Fitchburg Historical Society Board members have been busy – so busy, the newsletter was delayed. You can learn more about the Board members and their interest in Fitchburg's history on our website, fitchburghistory.org under the "About Us" tab.

During the past year, Board president and webmaster Allan Tereba has made many changes and updates to the website, www.fitchburghistory.org. These include notices of additions to the Society's online obituary database, featured articles, new projects, and other informational pieces. Society members with email addresses on file automatically receive an email when new items are published on the website. Members may opt out of the feature, and non-members may opt in by emailing us at woodedarchives@gmail.com.

Throughout the year, Board members Adrienne Imilkowski, Carole Kinney, and Roger Tesch responded to email, phone and website submissions from individuals or organizations requesting information about someone or something in Fitchburg, although on occasion someone does confuse us with Fitchburg, Massachusetts. The website currently includes three databases (photographs, newsletters, and obituaries) that can be a good source of information. We welcome contributions to these, and encourage you to email us if you have an item of interest.

Another ongoing project were the monthly video interviews on Fitchburg's FACTv, which are organized by Board member Catherine Schneider. These short interviews, as well as videos of past programs, are available from the "Video Presentations" link in the sidebar on the right-hand side of home page.

The April 2019 meeting featured a video prepared by the Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce, and used to promote the city to businesses. It generated a lively discussion among the attendees about possible topics for future programs.

Our last newsletter promoted the November 3, 2019, meeting and program, "How the Great Battle for Woman Suffrage was Won." Dr. Bob Kann's informative presentation included a chronology of the national efforts, and included the role that Wisconsin's Belle LaFollette played. Winnie Lacy, a long-time Fitchburg volunteer election official, started the program with a history of the changes to the election process in Fitchburg and several election-related artifacts from the Society's collection. The Dane County Historical Society co-sponsored this event, which was attended by 51 people, who were greeted by Board member Eileen Kellor, wearing authentic period clothing that belonged to her late grandmother, Caroline Slinde Kellor, a former Fitchburg resident.



If you are on social media, please check out our Facebook page, Fitchburg Historical Society, for photographs from Fitchburg's past, information from other historical societies, topical news items, and events.

BECOME PART OF HISTORY: WISCONSIN PANDEMIC JOURNAL PROJECT



As noted on its website, "in 1861 Wisconsin Historical Society founder Lyman Draper asked soldiers stationed at Camp Randall in Madison, Wisconsin to help document the Civil War by keeping a diary. After the war, those diaries were mailed back to the Society, where today they are regarded as one of the most valuable collections in the Society's archives." The Wisconsin State Historical Society has

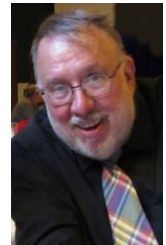
launched a project to allow the public to contribute their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about the project and how to contribute, at <https://wisconsinhistory.org/JOURNALPROJECT>.

THOUGHTS FROM THE BOARD ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

Two of our board members have shared some thoughts about their pandemic experiences for this newsletter. We will include others in future newsletters, and welcome your contributions as well. Email them to woodedarchives@gmail.com.

Rich Eggleston, Chicago native, Fitchburg resident

In mid-March, there were only a few dozen known coronavirus cases in Wisconsin. The pandemic itself was psychologically distant. On March 16 I attended a board meeting of the Dane County Historical Society in the basement of the Lussier Family Heritage Center in Lake Farm County Park. It seemed like an ordinary day when I arrived for the 1p.m. meeting, but when we adjourned at around 3, we were the only people left in the building. We hadn't gotten the memo, if there was one. There was no fire alarm. That brought home to me the reality of the pandemic.



I drove home, and except for one trip to the pharmacy, my pickup truck rarely comes out of the garage in the days since. The days blend together when you're retired, but more so when you're quarantined in a pandemic. First, my exercise classes were canceled. Then the community lunch. Then the plays downtown and out of town. Of course, my favorite bars were closed, a social hardship more than a chemical hardship since I'd quit drinking. My Friday lunch group, the Has-Beens of Wisconsin, switched to Zoom and e-mails.

While the National Football League continues to discuss what to do with its business, politicians who are adept at tossing around political footballs have been having a field day. Having no close family nearby, I've resorted to social media, newspapers and the network news to keep informed.

Pity poor me.

Catherine Schneider, Fitchburg native, Verona resident



As a person who enjoys history and hearing about how things were "in the old days", a pandemic brought to mind for me the killer influenza that struck the world in 1918 leaving countless casualties in its wake. It was beyond my imagination that by March of 2020, the United States would be in the grip of a new and deadly virus sweeping the world that was named COVID 19. My first hint about the seriousness of this virus was a phone call from my oldest son on Sunday, March 15th, warning me to stay home. He said, "This virus is real. We're shutting down everything for your age group not to get infected. We're sacrificing for you. Do your part and don't go out."

I certainly paid attention to that warning. By Monday, the schools were closing as well as most businesses, offices were shuttered, and people were told to only venture out for what is necessary in order to stop the spread of the virus and "flatten the curve" of those being infected. All we could do was practice "social distancing" meaning staying at least six feet from others. The use of masks was not encouraged at first so that supplies could be saved for hospital and emergency personnel.

On a personal level my husband and I canceled all the events on our calendar. We took turns getting our groceries early in the morning just as the store opened in order to avoid other people. Two of our sons are teachers; both started teaching on line. Our son's engineering firm began working online at home. One daughter-in-law was laid off from retail work, another was temporarily laid off as a surgical technician when hospitals geared up to receive

COVID 19 patients, and the third began working for her non-profit organization on line from home. Our older grandchildren began taking their classes on line while our preschool grandchildren needed full time care at home with no preschool facilities open.

Day to day life is much different and quieter these days of living with COVID 19. My husband and I are getting more exercise with an hour's daily walk or bike ride now part of our schedule. Many more neighbors are walking or biking by our home during the day with fewer cars on our street. I have met with friends for outdoor visits in my yard. Most of my contacts with family and friends are through phone calls, Facetime, or Zoom meetings. Medical visits opened up for me again in May with clinics requiring masks, check ins with temperatures taken and questions about any exposure to COVID 19 with hand sanitizer everywhere. A sister and brother-in-law live in an assisted living facility which shut down to all visitors in March. During the summer, family may now make appointments for visits with residents on the patio outside; residents and visitors all wear masks. When the warmer weather ends, it will again be difficult to be able to see family in the facility unless they are going for medical appointments.

The normal ways we relate to one another on a physical level have now become ways we are aware could result in someone being infected with the virus. Funeral services are now mostly limited to immediate family or a visitation with a small number of people allowed at a time. It's also much more common to refrain from hugs or handshakes as gestures of sympathy due to the fear of giving or receiving the virus.

It has been a time for much more noticing and awareness on my part due to the slower pace of life. As spring began, I loved watching the new buds appear, the birds starting to sing, and the trees and shrubs grow greener each day. In the summer, the longer days with picnics and bike riding are deeply enjoyable. There have been surprises with a cousin phoning from Texas and more check ins with neighbors. I'm seeing more smiles and hearing more greetings during walks as we all step aside for each other on the sidewalk to make room for social distancing. It's good to see people trying to keep each other safe. We've all been in this together.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We believe that the Historical Society can play an important role by promoting a sense of engagement among Fitchburg residents, including "newcomers" who want to know more about their community as well as "old timers," who have helped Fitchburg become what it is today. The goals of the Fitchburg Historical Society are to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of the City of Fitchburg, Wisconsin and its environs. We value the support of our members, whether through membership dues or donations, attending our programs, using our website, contributing information, or simply saying "thank you" to a board member. Although dues are suspended for 2020, we hope you will continue your membership and support in 2021. A membership form is available on our website at <https://fitchburghistory.org/registration-form/>.

Share your thoughts and ideas about possible Society activities or programs, and ways that we can engage with the community, by email woodedarchives@gmail.com, or leave a message at 608-729-1783.

Stay well!
We hope to see you soon.