

The Preservationist

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The June newsletter is usually filled with information about our upcoming summer season. This year is totally different due to the pandemic we are all experiencing. At the time of this printing it is difficult to determine when the "pause" will end. Museums fall under the Fourth Phase in the NYS's plan for reopening. Once the state has lifted restrictions, our museums will open again.

The NHS has made some changes for the next few months, so please be aware:

MUSEUMS: The two museums will open once restrictions have been lifted. The Knight-Sutton Museum's new exhibit will be "Akron through the Years". This exhibit promises to include something for everyone. This exhibit will run through 2021 since it will have a late start this year. I have viewed it partially and know it will be a great exhibit.

PROGRAMS: Unfortunately, the March, April, May and June programs were cancelled. The NHS Board of Trustees is very hopeful these programs will be presented in 2021. A decision has not been made for the September, October and November programs. Scheduling these programs will depend on social distancing regulations. Please watch for details on these programs on our website, social media and the *Akron Bugle*.

DANCING UNDER THE STARS: has been cancelled.

FOURTH OF JULY: See additional articles regarding the annual quilt sale and pie sale.

I need to thank Mark Saglian for his article on the Spanish Flu of 1918. He was very willing to write an informative article. I am sure you found it fascinating and educational; it gives us pause to compare this present situation with what people endured one hundred years ago. We will endure with patience and compassion.

Summer will be quiet in Akron this year. Please stay safe during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Patricia Pearce

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CENTURY HOMES PLAQUES

Do you have an original white Century Home Plaque? Many of the original plaques are old, faded and need replacing. When you received the original plaque there was no cost to the owner/applicant. The NHS board has decided to offer these homeowners an opportunity to replace these plaques.

If you are an NHS member, you may request a new plaque for \$30 with the society covering the other half. IF you are not a society member, you may replace the plaque for \$50 and the society will pay the rest. Suggestion: If you become a society member, you will save a few dollars with the replacement cost.

If you are interested in purchasing a replacement plaque, please contact Pat Pearce (542-4191) or Pat Rodrigues (585-478-2020).

FOURTH OF JULY



QUILT RAFFLE: Due to the pandemic, Dave Wakeman was not able to make his yearly spring trip to Cattaraugus County to purchase our annual quilt. Hopefully in the next few weeks, Dave will make the purchase and tickets will be mailed out to the membership. At this point the drawing will take place at the Harvest Dinner. Since we are living in uncertain times, it is difficult to determine a definite timeline. Deadline for returning the ticket stubs and money will be **September 30, 2020**. Information will be publicized so you will know when the drawing will be held. The quilt is always a beautiful prize and a tradition to continue.

PIE SALE: The annual pie sale will be replaced with “**Pick a Pie**” raffle this year. The Society board decided a pie sale would not be a prudent event this year and came up with a unique twist. We are asking *our loyal bakers and pie buyers* to consider a new opportunity: if you send in a donation of \$10 per pie-chance along with your favorite type of pie, your name will be placed in a drawing. The lucky winner will receive the pie of his/her choosing. You may enter as many times as you wish with a donation for each. **Deadline** will be **September 30, 2020**, same as the quilt raffle tickets. The drawing will be held at the Harvest Dinner hopefully. The board felt this was a unique way to replace our annual pie sale.

The quilt tickets and the pick a pie raffle ticket will be included in the annual letter. At this point, a letter should be mailed in early July. These two annual events are huge fund raisers for the society and need to be continued. The Board of Trustees is hopeful the membership will continue to support these two events.

Membership

As of May 31, 2020

We are saddened to report the recent passing of member Larry Hanley on May 28, 2020. We extend our sincerest condolences to his wife Mary, family and friends.

WELCOME to the following new ANNUAL members:

- Thomas Gibbs,
- Connor Nicometi
- Carlton & Dawn Sagerman
- Lorain Daniels given by Wynne Klingel

WELCOME to the following NEW LIFE members:

- Richard & Myra Hegmann
- Linda O Brien

Memorials and donations to the Society are always appreciated and can be made by mailing to Newstead Historical Society, PO Box 222, Akron, NY 14001

THANK YOU FOR A MEMORIAL DONATION

given for:

Kelsey & Dorothy Webster from Robert Webster

THANK YOU FOR DONATIONS received from:

Nicolas & Elizabeth Abraham, Faith Bassanello, Linda & Tom Cowan, Liza Dalrymple, Thomas Gibbs, Wynne Klingel, Kevin & Edna Scherf, and Anthony Zola

Get it Done by '91

By Pat Rodrigues

February 25, 2020 was the 25th anniversary of the Octagon House being named to the National Register of Historic Places. In light of this, while I was watching my gray hair grow in, and my waistline expand during the recent pandemic, I decided to start a new project - researching the history of the Octagon House. This required sorting through ten boxes of documents on the acquisition, restoration and personal files of the families that lived there.

So, what did I discover?

To my delight there was a huge collection of over 1400 photographs of the whole process, taken by the Restoration Coordinator, the late Jim Stapleton. He was a professional photographer in his private life and of the restoration, a prolific chronicler. My favorite photograph is of the racks of hooks for coats he removed from each closet as they prepared to repaint. He lined them up like little soldiers, numbered and photographed them.

He photographed everything - (lucky for us), even his boxes of nails and screws. All the photos were in brown paper lunch bags labeled in red magic marker. The most memorable to me was the bag labeled "Exterior - Top to Bottom". That bag contained over 300 photographs, in no order, of gutted rooms that all looked pretty much the same to the naked eye.

In addition to the photographs there is a collection of 228 pencil sketches, done by Mr. Stapleton, of the many aspects of reconstruction and restoration during the many years before the house was opened to the public as a finished project.

His drawings were equally interesting, as well as whimsical. One was of the parts of a door - labeled from A-G with the footnote, "from the Winston Dictionary". He also sketched his wrench, as well as a most interesting one to me of each floor of the house with all the rooms and closets numbered. All of this on the back of grade school ditto sheets. (His wife was a teacher.)

Fascinating to me were the early letters of the society reflecting interest in purchasing the house as far back as November of 1972. In a letter to Mrs. Twinn, the last private owner of the house, J.T. Hart, Jr, (NHS President at the time) suggested the house be "contributed to the community and society under the jurisdiction of NHS and the Newstead Town Board", when Mrs. Twinn no longer had a use for it.

The Octagon House wasn't the only building under consideration. On Feb.22,1975 NHS expressed interest in the former Newstead Hotel, now the American Legion, on Franklin Street and Eckerson Avenue. That building was going up for auction in March of that year.

In July of 1980 they also proposed leasing, with an option to purchase, the former Odd Fellows Hall on Buffalo Street. It was for sale for \$30,000 and the society wanted to use the main floor as a meeting room, the 2nd floor for exhibits and the 3rd floor as a storage and workroom.

While all these options were being explored negotiations were still ongoing with Mrs. Twinn, through her attorney. Finally, in September of 1981 an agreement was reached, and the historical society purchased the house. What would follow would be many years of fundraising and strong community involvement in the restoration with the slogan "Get it done by '91" expressing everyone's hope.

In a newspaper article of the time, when asked why the restoration was taking so long, Mr. Stapleton said, "Give me \$100,000 and I'll get it done faster."

Next time - " When was that house actually built and for which wife?"

Echoes of the Past

We've included a few news stories from 1918 that illustrate just how bad it was in Akron. Perhaps they show just how lucky we are today despite the limits under which we are living. These were furnished by Mark Saglian accompanying his article on the flu epidemic in the early 20th century.

Special Telegram to The Buffalo Enquirer 10/14/1918

Akron, N.Y. - Owing to the number of cases of diphtheria and Spanish influenza in the village and town all public places have been closed. All children must be kept at home.

The Buffalo Commercial 10/18/1918 ***QUARNATINE RULES***

Official orders to be observed by the health inspectors to check the spread of influenza, issued by Dr. Gram, are:

To see that all schools are closed.

To see that all churches are closed.

To see that all saloons are closed.

To see that all theatres and movies are closed.

To see that there are no gatherings of people in buildings except those who hold permits from the health commissioner.

To see that all bars are closed.

To see that restaurants are properly conducted (scalding dishes and no drinks are sold and are kept clean and not crowded).

To see that all soda fountains are closed.

To see that there are no funerals in churches.

To see that there are no public funerals.

Advise the disinfection of all telephone receivers.

Special attention to the general sanitary conditions.

Notify managers of all stores, factories, etc., that any person suffering disease be sent home.

To see that all pool rooms, bowling alleys and swimming pools are closed.

No one afflicted with influenza to leave Buffalo.

Special to the Buffalo Times 10/19/1918

Dr. Edward Clark, sanitary inspector for Western New York of the Department of Health, is in Akron every day assisting Dr. F. A. Helwig to get control of the epidemic existing here. There are about 70 cases in town. The Red Cross will make soups and other dishes for the sick, as whole families are affected and have no one to care for them. Mrs. Helwig is assisting in every way to care for the sick here.

Special to The Buffalo Express 11/4/1918

Akron, N.Y. – The quarantine placed on the Village by the board of health on account of the epidemic of Spanish influenza and diphtheria will be lifted on Monday morning. Schools will be open on Wednesday. The influenza situation here is improving

AVAILABLE:**EPSON PRINTER**

WF 7510

8 years old

new black cartridge

new color cartridge

Call Pat Pearce (542-4191)

if interested in having this

free printer

SURVEY

There is an additional insert in this newsletter. The survey was intended to be distributed at our March and April program meetings. The NHS board is interested in having some feedback from our members and non-members who attend program meetings. The survey is intended to give the Board of Trustees some insight into our programming, membership costs, etc. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and then return it. You may mail it to us or place it in the drop box which will be located on the KSM porch. Your comments will be greatly appreciated and assist the society's mission.

YOU CAN HELP

by Annette Komroy

Do you order items from Amazon? If so, please help support the Newstead Historical Society by placing your orders through the AmazonSmile link. It's very easy to do and the organization earns .5% on every order that designates the NHS as the donor recipient.

The next time you order, go to smile.amazon.com
You will be asked what Charity you wish to support-
enter **Newstead Historical Society**
Select it and then place your order



Another option is to use our unique charity link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/16-1118504>

We really appreciate your support! Due to the pandemic, many of our fund-raising activities and delayed Museum Tours/admissions will be affected.

Thank you!

Out of the Darkness: Lessons from the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 By Mark Saglian

On the morning of March 4, 1918, a soldier reported to the infirmary at Fort Riley, Kansas with a sore throat, fever, and a headache: By noon, there were over 100 cases. This was the first wave of the influenza epidemic of 1918. The disease killed more Americans than all the wars of the 20th Century combined. During the ten months of the epidemic, over 675,000 souls perished – 195,000 in October alone. It was the worst epidemic in American history. The disease spared no one – not the young and healthy nor the old and infirm – no one was safe.

In the summer of 1918, 1.5 million Americans had crossed the Atlantic for war: Some of the soldiers from Kansas carried with them an invisible, deadly companion. Almost as quickly as they arrived, the “Kansas Sickness” re-surfaced in Europe. The virus did not respect borders and it didn’t care about politics. Americans, English, French and Germans all fell ill and died. As it swept across Europe, the virus mutated becoming ever more deadly; by the time it came back to America, it was a ruthless killer. In September, the Surgeon General of the Army, Dr. Victor Vaughan received orders to report to Camp Devens, Massachusetts. On the day Vaughan arrived, 63 soldiers died. The illness spread quickly down the coast - soldiers on leave carrying it with them. The virus, which spread just by breathing, claimed its first civilian victims on September 11th at Quincy, Massachusetts. What came to be known as the “Spanish Flu” - what had been thought to be nothing more than a “Camp Illness” - was uncontained.

The 1918 epidemic of influenza was a rolling catastrophe. In August, Buffalo newspapers had made light of the threat: “Kiss Through a Handkerchief or Influenza May Get You”. Children jumping rope sang, “I had a little bird...her name was Enza...I opened up the window and in flew Enza”. On September 23rd, Buffalo Health Commissioner Franklin Gram announced that there were three cases in the City. A program of ‘contact tracing’ was initiated and the Commissioner urged teachers to “watch when children show signs of illness”. On October 8th, authorities continued to downplay the threat and decided *against* a ‘general closing’ – there were now more than 300 cases in the city. “We can’t close schools...it would be a serious loss to the pupils. They won’t learn.” The Mayor of Buffalo asked, “Do you think the longer the street cars do not run, the better off the public will be? Yes, street cars are great spreaders of the influenza, but the lack of cars is a great inconvenience”. On October 12th, the Enquirer reported that twenty-five City Firemen had influenza. Dr. Gram immediately ordered that every doctor, undertaker, policeman, fireman, and letter-carrier to wear a mask to stop the spread. The death toll was now 220 and climbing. On October 15th, the tone became even more urgent, “Persons failing to mask who contract influenza can lay the blame on their own carelessness or stupidity...new cases would cease if all wore masks”. On October 18th, just three months into his term as new Superintendent at

the Buffalo State Hospital, Dr. George T. Gorrell died of influenza. The Hospital was immediately quarantined to protect patients and staff. On October 20th, the State Health Commissioner urged New Yorkers to “Put Kissing on the Shelf” and urged an end to handshaking. The City issued an urgent call for doctors and nurses and a makeshift hospital was set up at Central High School. Newspapers advertised all types of crank cures: “To regain health and strength after Spanish Influenza... restore your blood with Gude’s Pepto-Mangan: The Red Blood Builder”. Caskets were placed on street corners at nightfall - Buffalo families were instructed to see to their dead.

In Akron, things were worse. On September 24th, a four-year-old boy died at his home on Cement Street; the next day, a second child perished. The cause was not influenza, but something else. By the time influenza reached Akron, an outbreak of the illness diphtheria was already killing Akron’s children. On October 12th, Akron sent out an urgent call of its own: “We are without a physician and many cases of influenza have now developed”. On October 14th, an order was issued that all children must stay home: Akron was placed under quarantine and the Red Cross was summoned to assist Dr. Frank Helwig. The American Red Cross served “soups and other dishes for the sick, as whole families are affected and have no one to care for them”. By mid-October, Akron had 75 cases of influenza. The Buffalo Times reported, “One Death, Many Are Ill. All Public Places in Akron Closed”. Dr. Helwig ordered closed “all schools, churches, saloons, pool rooms, bowling alleys, and motion picture shows”: State Troopers were called in to enforce the law. Most of the diseased “seem to be confined to the foreign district east of the village”, the newspapers reported. By October 30th, there were 125 cases of influenza reported and 9 members of the community were dead.

The Akron quarantine remained in place for four weeks. By early November, Dr. Helwig was beginning to see signs that the twin-epidemic of influenza and diphtheria was waning; but while there were fewer reported cases, people continued to die. On November 4th, the day the quarantine was lifted, the community learned that an Akron-born physician, Martin F. Nolan, had succumbed to influenza while treating soldiers for the disease at the American Military Hospital in France. Martin Nolan, brother of famed Brigadier General Dennis E. Nolan, was only thirty-four years old.

It was the worst epidemic in American history. It seemed to those who lived through it, that the horror would never end. By the summer of 1919, the virus that had stoked so much panic and mistrust, began to slowly ease. Now more than a century later, as we face a similar health crisis, the ‘echoes’ of 1918 are undeniable. It has been written that faith “comes by hearing”. While there are many lessons to be learned listening to the ‘voices’ of 1918, the most important lesson is this: We *will* heal. Citizens of Akron and of the World re-emerged from those dark days over a century ago and we will too. With science, compassion, and the lessons of 1918 as guiding principles, we *will* endure.

2020 NHS Executive Board

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Treasurer	Annette Komroy 542-4714
Recording Secretary	Kimberley Burg 907-2720
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Collections Manager	Jannette Potera
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Website	Colleen Salmon/Patty Buckley
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Century Homes & Landmarks	Pat Rodrigues
Newsletter	Donald Holmes/Julie Brady
Town and Village Historian	Donald Holmes

If you would like to receive notifications and information by e-mail, please send a note to Carole Borchert with NHS in the subject line to caroleborchert@gmail.com. Rest assured - You will *not* receive numerous messages; this is meant to be a convenience for those who would like it.

Please donate your bottles & cans to NHS by dropping them off at:

BOTTLE & CAN
RETRIEVAL CENTER
52 Cedar St.
Akron, NY



Tell them you want to donate to NHS!

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

The 2020 NHS Scholarship winner is *Devin Scotch*.

Best wishes to Devin and all the applicants who applied for this scholarship.



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Visit us on the Web:
www.newsteadhistoricalsociety.org

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The Newstead Historical Society deeply appreciates the support of the County of Erie, the Town of Newstead, our members and the community at large.



