



Lewis County Historical Society
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Press Release Concerning Lewis County Pandemic History Collection Project
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In Lewis County today, restaurants and bars are shuttered, schools and churches are closed, businesses and community organizations are struggling, and like much of the country, people are being asked to stay home, to avoid congregating and to wear facial masks. All because of something we can't see or even fully appreciate at this point: the worldwide spread of a pandemic virus.

The Lewis County Historical Society is beginning to document what it's like to live in this time and in the face of this pandemic, as we have been asked to do by New York State Historian Devin Lander – and we in turn are asking the community to participate and help.

The mission of the Lewis County Historical Society is to preserve, present and promote the history, works and stories of Lewis County – and to use our good offices, people, properties, programming, publications and partnerships to be the County's pre-eminent place for historical collection and preservation, community education and involvement, and heritage tourism. Through our efforts, and those of our members and volunteers, we seek to instill a greater appreciation for the history of this area (in good times and in bad), as well as the ideas, values, challenges, struggles, successes and failures that bind us together both as a County and as a community.

"This is a period of time that people are going to study for years," says Jerry Perrin, the Curator of the Lewis County Historical Society. "And we need to collect the voices of our community right now." To that end, the Historical Society is asking the public and other community organizations to collect, keep and ultimately submit to the Lewis County Historical Society videos, photos, recordings, art, songs, oral histories, journals, diaries, sealed letters to as yet unborn generations, and other writings that will help tell the story of this novel coronavirus pandemic.

Ultimately, these submissions will join the thousands of other documents and artifacts in the Historical Society's archives and be used for community research, education, exhibits, and programs, both online and within the halls of the Historical Society's facilities itself.

"It will be from the aggregation of all these individual stories and experiences and submissions that the County's historical narrative through this period will be created – and I expect it will be a rich narrative that says much about who we are and what we value," says Mr. Perrin. "We are open to all kinds of ideas," he says, "on how to best collect information and to preserve this period going forward and ideas are already beginning to come in. For instance, one of our directors just suggested doing online outreach asking both old and young alike to send us a letter of what life is like for them during this pandemic, with the word 'time capsule' and their age written on the outside of the envelop, and we would keep those letters for 10 or 20 years, and only open them then."

The Historical Society has already begun to develop a timeline of events leading up this pandemic and has started to reach out to County, public health and hospital personnel, news organizations, schools, churches and other community organizations in order to develop ways to chronicle Covid-19 cases in the County and to memorialize the impact of this pandemic on our citizens, businesses and community. Further information about what you can do to memorialize this period will be posted the Historical Society's website [www.lewiscountyhistory.org] and Facebook pages.

The offices of the Lewis County Historical Society are closed to the public at this time, but limited staff continue to respond to online, telephonic and email inquiries, to help with historical and genealogical research and just to answer questions. If you would like to participate in this project or even just have suggestions about it, please contact us at lewiscountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or (315) 376-8957.

One final word about all this: Remember first and foremost, your health and safety and that of our Lewis County community is the number one priority. Efforts to document or memorialize our community's response to this pandemic does not include risking your health or that of your family or friends. Please follow all rules for social distancing and any guidance of governmental or public health officials.