



# The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## WINTER 2020 Newsletter



**HISTORY CENTER**  
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

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## JACOB DIETER: A MYSTERY EVEN AFTER DEATH

By Abby Currier, Community Engagement  
& Events Coordinator

Jacob Dieter was born around 1826 in Pennsylvania but by the time he was 36 years old he was living in Zumbro, Olmsted County, Minnesota. He had already married Martha Muir and together they had four children: John, Ella, Mary and Martha. [1] Jacob enlisted in Company F of the 9th Minnesota on August 20, 1862, in response to Lincoln's call for an additional 300,000 soldiers. Money was tight for the Dieter family and Jacob worried about how his wife would survive while he was away. His letters to her are filled with references to him anxiously awaiting the arrival of the paymaster so he could get paid and send some of the money home to help out. Unfortunately, things took a turn for the worse for the Dieter family in June of 1864. During the summer of 1864 Sherman was on his famous March to the Sea; a long attack stretching from Tennessee to Georgia in which Sherman fought a war of attrition, trying to bring the Confederacy to its knees. Because Sherman was making such a long foray into the Confederacy, he needed to ensure that his supply lines were well protected. Major General Nathan B. Forrest, one of the Confederacy's top generals, was making his way towards Tennessee and threatening the very supply lines that Sherman depended on to ensure the success of his campaign.

To help defend his supply line, Sherman sent Brigadier General Samuel D. Sturgis and about 8,100 troops to threaten Northern Mississippi and draw Forrest into attacking him and leaving Sherman's supply lines alone. Among those 8,100 soldiers was Jacob Dieter and dozens of men from Olmsted County. The two armies clashed near Brices Crossroads in northern Mississippi on June 10, 1864. Lieutenant Colonel Josiah F. Marsh led the 9th Minnesota and submitted a brief

**JACOB DIETER- continued on page 4**



**Christine Rule**  
President

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Stories from the past, historical references, and even vehement public history debates are more present in the news than I have ever seen before, and there seems to be a growing societal understanding of the importance of history education. This importance and relevance drive our board, staff, members, and volunteers to keep collecting, preserving, and educating even during the heart-breaking challenges of repeated closures of the museum and Mayowood mansion tours. Thank you to the whole HCOC community for your inspiring perseverance!

The HCOC board has turned our focus to preparing for a brighter 2021. Board and staff members have crafted a carefully planned budget that is also prepared for the unexpected. And we continued to push forward through the following efforts of our three committees:

**Expanding Our Foundations:** Actively created new partnerships in the community and developed revenue generating events for 2021.

**Extending Our Reach:** Created methods to both track key data and optimize our activities and use of resources - especially regarding social media, marketing, events, and other outreach.

**Upholding Our Legacy:** Accomplished several needed pre-winter repairs on the Stoppel Farmstead, created an ongoing maintenance plan for our historic structures and facilities, and obtained estimates and early research for restoration of the Stoppel Farmstead. Preliminary timelines have been generated to optimize grant application deadlines. All three accomplishments have been through the help of volunteers, partner organizations (including MHRT) and the generosity of local businesses such as Knutson Construction and A B Systems for which we are incredibly grateful.

**The passion and dedication of the HCOC community has been a true gift to everyone at the museum during this holiday season. I wish you a safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year and look forward to seeing you all in 2021!**

## UPHOLDING OUR LEGACY, CELEBRATING NEW BEGINNINGS

**By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director**

Those who are long-time residents of the county can't help but notice the disappearance of barns, farmsteads, and even cultivated fields. Agricultural surveys show a continuous decline of farms. In 1945 the state boasted 189,000 farms; in 1964 there were 58,000 fewer; by 2019 the number shrunk to 68,000 throughout the state. Of course, as the number of farms shrink, so do the number of historic farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings. A 2019 agricultural census question asked farmers if their farm included any pre-1960 barns: In Minnesota, 17,870 farmers said yes. Which led me to wonder: of those, how many were built before 1900 or even as early as 1874, when the "Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota" featured the George Stoppel farmstead? The American poet, Muriel Rukeyser, said: "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." The significance of our farmstead is less in the numbers and more in the stories it holds about Olmsted County's immigration and agricultural roots. For example, George and Joseph Stoppel (brothers who emigrated from Germany in the 1840s) and their families arrived at this site in 1856 with just enough time to dig out a cave in the sandstone hill before winter hit. They were among the thousands of immigrants rushing to settle Minnesota in the 1850s, after the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux of 1851.

**UPHOLDING OUR LEGACY - continued on page 8**

# WELCOME TO OUR NEW COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EVENTS COORDINATOR



My name is Abby Currier and I am so excited to start work here at the History Center of Olmsted County. I was born and raised in New Hampshire and went to Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania for my Bachelor's degree in History and Spanish. I then moved out to Indianapolis to attend graduate school at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis where I earned a Master's degree in Public History and a second Master's degree in Library and Information Sciences. I have recently moved to Rochester and am excited about making Minnesota my new home.

I have a strong love of history and am frequently caught with a book in my hands. When I am not reading I am usually working on different handicrafts. I am so excited to be here and cannot wait to get out and explore all that Rochester and Olmsted County have to offer!

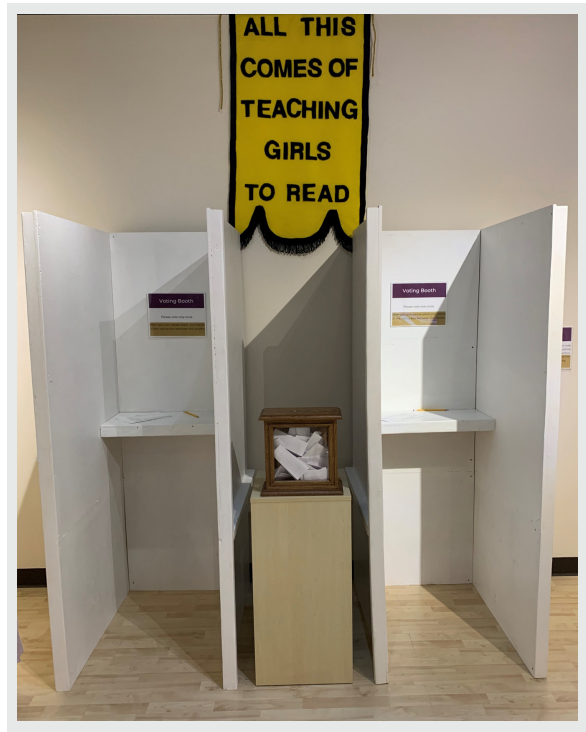
## FIGHTING FOR VOTING RIGHTS: FIRST FEMALE VOTES

By Dan Nowakowski, Curator

The election of 2020 saw an unprecedented voter turnout. Now, can you imagine if this election lost half of the population's right to vote? That is what elections looked like just over one hundred years ago. Before the 1920 presidential election, women in American did not have the right to vote.

The absence of representation in government led women around the country to insist that their voices be heard. In 1848, women met in Seneca Falls, New York, and started the suffrage movement. The movement struggled for 72 years until they won their right to vote with the passing of the 19th Amendment. In the first election after gaining the right to vote, over eight million women voted in the election that put Republican Warren G. Harding in the White House. Over 26 million people voted that year, meaning women accounted for approximately 31 percent of the vote. In the most recent election, it is reported that at least 161 million Americans voted. It is not yet known how many of these voters were women, but since 1980 women have voted at higher rates than men in every presidential election.

**This increase of votes shows how important it is to Americans that their voices are heard.**



▲ In our exhibit "The Onward March of Suffrage" you can learn about our local women who fought for their right to vote and cast your own vote in booths modeled after those used in the 1920 election.



## JACOB DIETER - continued

report of his unit's fighting. He reported that they joined the fighting at 2:00 pm with 30 commissioned officers and 635 enlisted men. By 7:00 pm, the 9th Minnesota left the field with only 22 commissioned officers and 356 enlisted men; less than 57% of their original numbers.[2] Among the 272 missing enlisted men was Jacob Dieter and several men from Olmsted County.

On June 15, Varnum Hadley, another enlisted man in Company F of the 9th Minnesota, wrote to Jacob Dieter's wife telling her that a number of men, including Jacob Dieter, were still missing but he was sure that Jacob would turn up shortly.

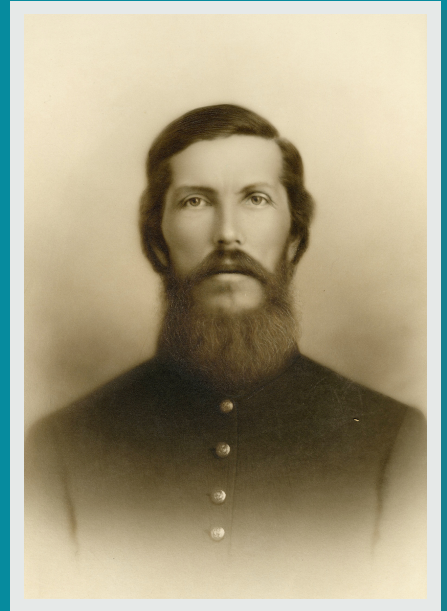
“*[T]he last that I can hear from Mr. Dieter he had got back within 20 miles of the railroad and I do not know the reason why he has not come in[.] I am in hopes that he will be in yet for he did not get a scratch in the battle [.] he might of straggled into the brush and is waiting for the excitement to be over a little [.] then he will not be as likely to be picked up by the bushwhackers [.]*[3]”

Hadley seemed confident that Jacob would appear shortly and that he was merely hiding in the underbrush until the fighting cooled down and it was safe to emerge again. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

One week later Jacob himself reached out to his wife to update her on his status. He and 15 other men from his company had been captured during the fighting at Brices Cross Roads and had been sent to Andersonville. He warned his wife that he would be unable to draw pay while he was imprisoned and hoped that her parents would be able to take care of her. He also made sure to list every single man that he had been captured with in his letter so Mrs. Dieter could tell the other wives and families what had become of their loved ones.

This is the last letter that the History Center of Olmsted County has from Jacob Dieter and here the information gets a little murky. We do know that Jacob Dieter never made it home to his wife. In the *Annual Report of the Adjutant General, of the State of Minnesota, for the Year Ending December 1, 1866 and of the Military Forces of the State from 1861 to 1866*, all of the soldiers are listed with a note stating what happened to the soldiers after the war. Jacob Dieter's note reads, "Died Nov 18, 1862, in Salisbury prison, SC".[4] Now, we know that this is partially untrue because Jacob Dieter was alive and writing letters in 1864, two years after he allegedly died. This is most likely a typo but it does make it difficult to also trust the location of his death. Additionally, Salisbury Prison was in North Carolina, not South Carolina. At this point, we have effectively disproved everything in the note attached to his name and are no closer to learning how he died.

▼ *Jacob Dieter, ca. 1862*



▼ *Martha Dieter, ca. 1890s*





However, Dieter's daughter remembered hearing several different stories about how he died.

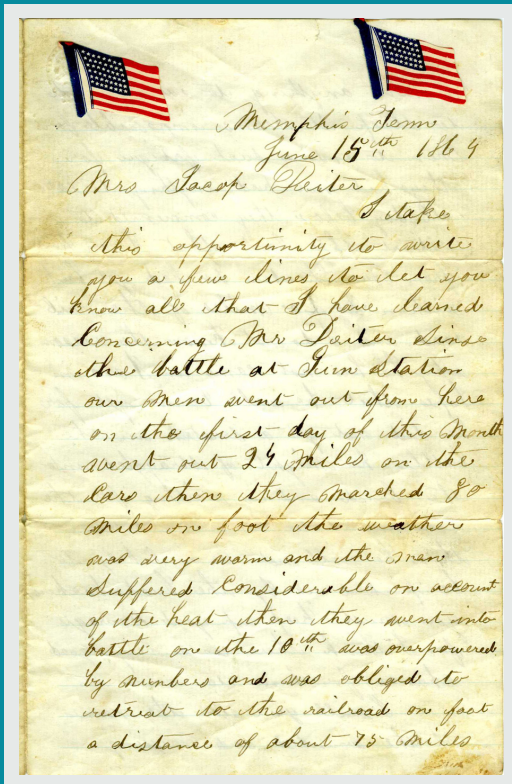
“First, the report was that Father was missing. Then, in a week or two the message came that blood hounds had killed him. Three months later we heard that he had died as he was being moved from Andersonville to Libby Prison. He was so nearly dead from starvation that he could not stand the trip.[5]”

And yet there are still other possibilities for how Dieter died. An article from the *Rochester Post* on June 4, 1870, listed Jacob Dieter as being a hospital casualty.[6] He is listed with other men from his unit as having died while in hospital. And, while this would not have been terribly unusual for the time, no location is given and it does not agree with any of the previous stories.

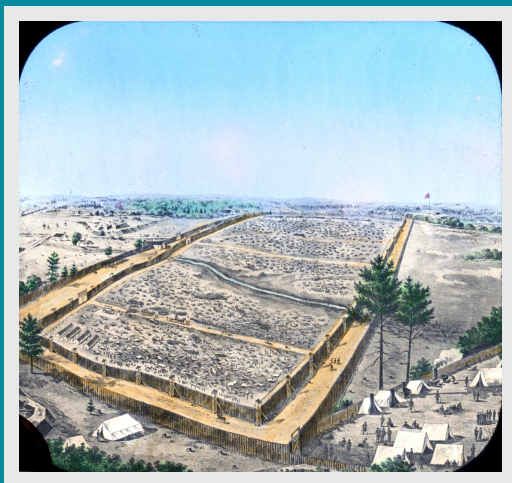
Unfortunately, we may never know what exactly happened to Jacob Dieter. There are a few things that we definitely know to be true. 1) Jacob Dieter served with Company F of the 9th Minnesota and was captured during the fighting at Brices Cross Roads around June 11, 1864. 2) He and 15 other men were transferred to Andersonville, Georgia. 3) Jacob Dieter never made it home to his wife and children. What happened after he was sent to Andersonville remains a mystery. While the record is not silent on what happened, it certainly can't agree on a single story either.

Sources:

1. "United States Census, 1860," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9BSS-R71?cc=1473181&wc=7QJZ-5SV%3A1589429125%2C1589429130%2C1589430609> : 24 March 2017), Minnesota > Olmsted > Zombro > image 4 of 8; from "1860 U.S. Federal Census - Population," database, *Fold3.com* (<http://www.fold3.com> : n.d.); citing NARA microfilm publication M653 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); *Know Rochester Better: A Series of Rochester Stories*, edited by Flora McGhee, The Bruce Publishing Company, St. Paul, MN, 1940, pg 14.
2. United States. War Records Office, et al. *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union And Confederate Armies*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 18801901. Volume XXXIX, PT I, pg 113.
3. Letter from Varnum Hadley to Martha Dieter, June 15, 1864. Jacob Dieter and Family Civil War Letters, History Center of Olmsted County.
4. Minnesota. (1866). *Annual report of the Adjutant general of the state of Minnesota for the year ending December 1, 1866, and of the military forces of the state from 1861 to 1866*. St. Paul: Pioneer Print Co. pg. 433.
5. *Know Rochester Better*, 18.
6. (1870, June 4) Memorial Day: A Grand Celebration. *The Rochester Post*, pg 3.



▲ Letter from Varnum Hadley to Martha Dieter



▲ Artist's rendering of Andersonville Prison

# LEARN & DISCOVER

Visit the past today,  
History Center of Olmsted County

[Buy Tickets](#)

3

1

2

3

## DIGITAL MAKEOVER: THE NEW OLMSTEDHISTORY.COM

By Krista Lewis, Archivist, CA

If you've wandered over to our website since the middle of November, you might have seen that things look a bit different. While it took just a few keystrokes one afternoon to implement our new look, the actual transformation began back in the spring. It started with our rebranding - our adoption of a new logo and color scheme, a welcome update as we moved forward into a new decade. But we couldn't stop there; our website needed a makeover as well. As a staff we assessed our existing website early in the spring and worked out a plan to improve its content and organization. Working from home during the first weeks of the pandemic prevented many of us from completing our usual tasks, but it afforded us the opportunity to focus our attention on developing the new website. With our content in place, the next step was to hand things over to our trusty logo designer, Tracy Tapp, and his team at Image Bridge. After several weeks of work and multiple meetings to hash out the details, we settled on a design. To make that design a reality, the work was then handed off to web developer Dan Kolz who built what you see today.

Among the new features are

1. A rotating banner on the homepage that will highlight the latest events and notices (no more scrolling!)
2. A dedicated and streamlined page for Mayowood and its tours (2021 start date TBD)
3. Online ticketing

2020 has been a year for the record books in pretty much every possible category. While the many unanticipated obstacles the year has brought have thrown us (and everyone else) for a loop, we haven't let them stop us from pushing forward. So, it took us a little longer than we expected to launch our new website, but good things come to those who wait, as the saying goes. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do. If you haven't seen it yet, what are you waiting for?

**Head on over to [olmstedhistory.com](http://olmstedhistory.com) today!**



# LIGHTING THE FUTURE: NEW LIGHTS IN THE GALLERY

By Kevin Whaley, Collections Manager

In 2019, the History Center of Olmsted County, through a strategic planning workshop, identified three strategic directions for the organization. These directions are Expanding Our Foundation, Extending Our Reach, and Upholding Our Legacy. Upholding Our Legacy is HCOC's renewed focus on caring for and maintaining the historical collections. To help meet this, and address an issue that literally affects all of our collections, this past summer the History Center applied for a grant through the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants program (also known as a Legacy Grant) to update the lighting in our gallery, collection workspace, and collection storage spaces. In October we received word that our application was approved and we had been awarded \$159,164.

These updates are actually the continuation of a two-year project. In 2018, under the care of the Curator of Collections and the Collections Manager, an informal survey of the collections conditions was done. The major takeaway from this survey was how much light was in the galleries and collection areas - too much. In a museum setting light is considered bad, because while it might help you see, it also damages the artifacts. As light hits an artifact it causes a chemical reaction which slowly changes the artifact. In most cases the

most obvious sign of light damage is the artifact losing its bright colors and becoming more muted over time or the artifact beginning to turn yellow. Other damage that can be caused by light is the artifact becoming brittle or unstable. All types of light, including visible, infrared, and UV, cause damage to artifacts. Once an artifact is damaged by light, there is no way to reverse it.

The first step to reduce the light levels was to have a contractor come out to HCOC and professionally evaluate the lighting situation and then make recommendations based on his findings. This was completed with the help of another Legacy Grant. From this report the History Center learned that a few things can be done to improve the lighting situation. The first is to replace the current lights with LED lights. This will help in a few ways as these lights produce more even light, are dimmable, and emit less harmful rays. The second is to put the new lights on motion sensors so that they only turn on when people are active in the space. In addition to helping the light levels in the museum, the new changes will help HCOC with its energy bill. LED lights use less power than traditional lights and motion sensors will eliminate unnecessary energy use.



▲ *A dress from the HCOC collection faded due to exposure to light.*

**Work for this project, which will enhance HCOC collections care and visitor experience, will be carried out in 2021. See if you notice the difference on your next visit!**



## BUSINESS SPONSORSHIPS

It's no secret:  
The History Center offers  
businesses great marketing  
and visibility opportunities.  
Pass it on!

### UPHOLDING OUR LEGACY - continued

Joseph's work in Germany as a stonemason probably influenced their choice to dig into stone for shelter. They would go on to build a farmstead that reflected not only the local materials available to them, or the state of agriculture at the time, but also their place of origin, with its unique building traditions.

Over the coming months and years, you are going to see more attention paid to this farmstead that has so much to tell us about our community. In January, architectural historian Diane Trout-Oertel will give a Zoom presentation entitled "New World Opportunities, Old World Skills: The Historic Spangenberg Farmhouse," about a stone house in St. Paul with remarkable similarities to our Stoppel farmstead. (See the calendar of events in this issue.) We're having the second annual Hootenanny at the farmstead again. We're also planning guided interpretive tours of the barn, the caves, and the exterior of the house and smokehouse. Perhaps most importantly, in 2021 we are hoping to hire an historical architect to create the necessary architectural drawings and construction documents that will allow us to begin restoring the farmstead to the highest standards of historic preservation.

**2020 has been a challenging year, but with so much work to do we need to keep our plans ambitious for 2021. I hope you will join us!**



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OF OL MSTED COUNTY

**Make History with Us:  
Become a Sponsor!**



Help build our community while  
**enhancing your  
marketing & visibility.**

### Why sponsor HCOC?

- > Great exposure. Between signage at major events, print advertising, and social media tags, there's a lot of opportunity to get your name out, and make an impact!
- > Goodwill and good PR. By sponsoring the History Center exhibits and events, you're contributing to the vibrancy of our community.
- > Your customers trust museums. According to the National Attitudes, Awareness, and Usage Study, Americans continue to trust museums more than federal and state governments, other types of nonprofits, and even newspapers.

### Levels of Sponsorship:

<b>Founding</b> <b>\$5,000</b> (limited to 2)	<b>Champion</b> <b>\$2,500</b> (limited to 4)	<b>Advocate</b> <b>\$1,500</b> (limited to 6)	<b>Supporter</b> <b>\$500</b> (limited to 12)	<b>Business</b> <b>\$150</b> (limited to 20)
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### Marketing and Visibility Opportunities:

- > Headline Banner on History Center
- > Banner Display in the History Center
- > Acknowledgement on Lead Exhibit or Featured Event
- > Inclusion on Promotional Materials
- > Featured on History Center Website
- > Acknowledgement in the Scribe Quarterly Newsletter



To learn more, visit our website  
[olmstedhistory.com](http://olmstedhistory.com)



or call Wayne Gannaway, History Center Executive Director  
507-282-9442

# WE WANT YOU! CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Whether you're an introvert or an extrovert; an outdoor person or will do anything to keep away from bugs; or are a total history nerd or just kind of interested, we have a place for you as a volunteer.

We have volunteer opportunities for teens, adults, corporations and organizations in just about every capacity – from restoration and preservation to archives and collections; from education and visitor services to marketing, fund raising and special events; and from programming and exhibits to general office and administration work.

Know that there is something here for you, and you will find them all rewarding and satisfying.

## 5 Reasons to Become a Volunteer at the History Center of Olmsted County

1. You're an extrovert and you love meeting people and sharing stories.
2. You're an introvert and you are just fine working on your own researching old photographs and documents.
3. You are incredibly handy and want to put your ingenuity to work, building and fixing stuff.
4. You love to be outside, either doing yardwork, taking tickets at an event, or giving tours.
5. You think history is pretty cool and a great way to get involved in your community.

## Examples of volunteer work



Outdoor Work	Lawn mowing; seasonal clean up; tilling; snow plowing
Storytelling	Museum gallery docent; Stoppel Farm docent; Mayowood docent and tour assistant; trolley tour docent
Indoor Work	Front desk assistant; gift shop assistant; assist with mailings; data entry; gallery and archive light cleaning
Archives & Library	Record gathering and computer entry; scanning and digitizing; inventory; and patron assistance
Exhibits	Research; proof reading; construction and fabrication
Collections	Inventorying and cataloging; artifact rehousing and cleaning
Ambassador	Greet visitors at History Center events; represent the History Center at the county fair and other events; ticket takers

Visit [olmstedhistory.com/volunteer](http://olmstedhistory.com/volunteer) to apply.  
We look forward to having you join our volunteer team!



## ON SALE NOW AT THE HCOC GIFT SHOP

The holiday season may be nearing an end,  
but that doesn't mean the gift giving has to end!



If you're in need of a unique gift for the holidays, a birthday, or just because, we've got you covered.

Visit our Redbubble page where you'll find a variety of items to choose from (search for "History Center of Olmsted County" at [redbubble.com](https://www.redbubble.com)).

Much more can be found at our gift shop, including vintage and used books at unbeatable prices (visit the Museum Shop on our website for a complete list of titles) and beautifully framed photos of historic Rochester - you won't find these anywhere else! Prints are limited. Be sure to get yours before we're sold out!

Contact us for pricing and to reserve your gift today.  
Curbside pickup is available.

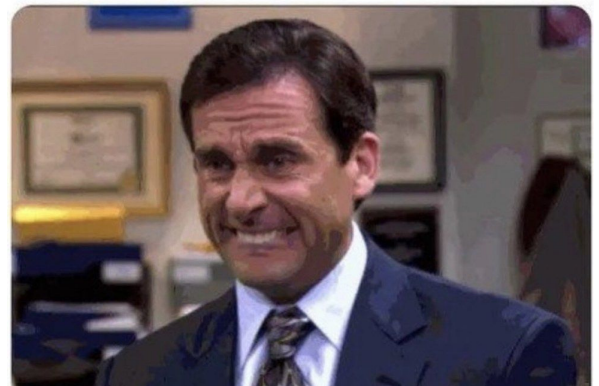
## 2020 REVIEW: DO NOT RECOMMEND

Several words come to mind when thinking about how to describe 2020: **doozy, train wreck, roller coaster, tumultuous, dumpster fire.**

To be fair, the year wasn't all bad. Maybe you reconnected (albeit virtually) with friends and family. Maybe you tackled that home improvement project you'd been putting off. Maybe you learned how to bake bread. Maybe you binge watched all 14 available seasons of *Supernatural* (okay, probably not the best use of your time).

Regardless of how you may have made lemonade out of lemons, we think it's safe to say 2020 still presented all of us with some challenging moments.

Time traveler: What year is it?  
Me: 2020  
Time traveler:



▲ 2020 in a nutshell

All of us at the HCOC are wishing you a  
happier, healthier, and brighter 2021!





# 2021 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

All **orange** events and programs are virtual. More details can be found on our website. Please check our website and Facebook regularly as the schedule is subject to change in the event of public health concerns.

- January 7 ● *Lecture Series: New World Opportunities, Old World Skills: The Historic Spangenberg Farmhouse*
- February 2 ● *The Hidden Fort Pulaski (in partnership with the LIFE program)*
- February 11 ● *Lecture Series: Norwegian Immigration and Health Care*
- February 13 ● *Dearest Anna: A Dramatic Reading of Love Letters*
- March 18 ● *Lecture Series: The Mayo Clinic Wax Models and Medical Museum*
- March 23 ● *Quarterly Members Meeting*
- March ● *Mayowood VIP Tour*
- April 10 ● *Workshop: Genealogy 101: Establishing the Roots of Your Family Tree*
- May 8 ● *Trolley Tour: Visiting Kalmar*
- May 15 ● *Annual Members Meeting*
- May 22 ● *Roosters Base Ball vs. La Crescent*
- May 29 ● *Mayowood Conservation Tour*

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