

The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

WINTER 2021 Newsletter



HISTORY CENTER
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

The Super Power You've Always Had: Old Photos, Family Memories, and That Mix Tape of '80s Classics	1
Letter from the President	2
Then & Now: Sleigh Rides & School Bells	3
A Creepy Night to Remember: The Creepy Doll Cocktail Party at the Castle.....	4
New Year, New Events: A Sneak Peek at 2022 Events.....	4
In Memoriam.....	5
Farewell to Our Mayowood Tour Coordinator Kathy Dahl.....	6
On the Horizon: Specialty Tours of Mayowood	6
2022 Events & Programs	7

REMINDER: Please make sure we have the most up-to-date email and mailing address for you. Thanks!

THE SUPER POWER YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD: OLD PHOTOS, FAMILY MEMORIES, AND THAT MIX TAPE OF '80S CLASSICS

By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director

Research on nostalgia suggests that reminiscing is not just pleasurable, it's also good for you.

This is a special time of the year. A time for meeting friends and family over egg nog and reminiscing. Most of us look back fondly on holiday memories. Perhaps we recall shopping for presents with mom at Dayton's or EA Knowlton's or of taking the family on an enchanted Christmas tour of Mayowood. Sometimes a TV show, like Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, or hearing Bing Crosby will transports our imagination into the past. It turns out, those moments of nostalgia are not mere sentimentality.

Through dozens of research studies, Dr. Clay Routledge of North Dakota State University, along with other social scientists, have found that nostalgia is an important psychological resource, "that helps individuals cope with life's stressors, build strong relationships, find and maintain meaning in life, and become more creative and inspired" (Harvard Business Review, April 2021). Of course, we all have memories we'd rather forget—let's face it, not every family gathering is fit for a Hallmark moment. But Routledge says that nostalgia "tends to follow a redemptive sequence in which negative feelings such as longing and loss give way to positive feelings such as happiness, social connectedness, gratitude, and hope. In other words, nostalgia is bittersweet, but more sweet than bitter."

SUPER POWER - continued on page 2



Christine Rule
President

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Many are finding more than the usual excitement at gatherings and holiday celebrations after those missed in 2020. We are feeling the same here at the History Center of Olmsted County with the joyous return of Mayowood Christmas Tours. Volunteer decorators and tour guides spent great effort “Puttin’ on the Ritz” to make this year memorable, and the increased attendance demonstrates how preserving and sharing the Mayo Family’s tradition of hospitality at Mayowood is a cherished part of our community’s Christmas tradition.

The HCOC Board is currently finalizing our 2022 budget. I always enjoy this process as we identify our goals and aspirations for the coming year and make a roadmap for how to achieve them. And we have some BIG goals for 2022! Restore the Stoppel Farmstead Smokehouse, manage currently pending funding cuts, increase revenue, and serve more people with “More History” have all been part of this discussion. But a solid budget is only part of our roadmap to success.

The best way to bring More History to more people is with more people! Mayowood Christmas Tours is an excellent example. Volunteers, partner organizations, sponsors, staff, donors, board members, and passionate community members spreading the word have collectively created an outstanding, historical, and educational Christmas celebration for our residents and visitors. THANK YOU to each of you who made 2021’s many programs and exhibits a strong and growing educational asset for our community.

Don’t forget to add trying something new at HCOC to your New Year’s resolutions! Attending programs and exhibits, becoming a member, volunteering, sharing on social media, telling others, and rating us on Google and Trip Advisor are easy and meaningful ways to provide Olmsted County with More History in 2022. We can’t wait to get started!

SUPER POWER - continued

So what do we do with this realization? First, we in the history community need to remind ourselves and others that the impact from one’s interactions with history (be it paging through a family photo album or going through an exhibit at the History Center) can have a real positive value, as social science shows. And most of us have access to those memories, even if we don’t have the family scrapbook or heirloom. But having historic photos (like those from our archives that we post on social media), artifacts (such as our IBM machines—even the punch cards—at the History Center), or historic places (like the Ear-of-Corn tower or the Downtown Commercial Historic District) are the touchstones that trigger good feelings, social connectedness. Frankly, as a supporter of history, you intuitively always understood the value in memory, the past, and history. Now, dispassionate social scientists are proving it through their research of nostalgia. As a historian, I was trained to be skeptical of nostalgia, that history is always more complicated than we imagine. Dr. Krystine Batcho of LeMoyne College makes a distinction between personal nostalgia, for example, reminiscing about that awesome summer in 1991, and historical nostalgia, where one has an “emotional attachment to or longing for times in history that predate their own birth.” That type of nostalgia should always be paired with a healthy dose of historical context.

So dig out that high school year book and pop in the holiday mix tape (is that Bruce Springsteen, “Santa Claus Is Coming To Town” I hear?), and indulge in nostalgia.

Go to our blog for an expanded version of this article and links to cited sources.

THEN & NOW: SLEIGH RIDES & SCHOOL BELLS

By Kevin Whaley, Collections Manager

On a cold Minnesota winter day, cars make traveling very comfortable. However, people traveling in the mid-1800s went by sleighs and buggies, which did not come with heaters or even windshields. To make travel bearable, people would wear lots of layers and also use a lap robe, similar to the one pictured here and on display at the History Center. Lap robes were made of an animal fur with a cloth or wool backing. Often an animal with a thick coat was used, like bear, wolf, or buffalo. This lap robe is made out of buffalo fur with a red wool backing, and was owned by a famous Rochester citizen – Dr. William Worrall Mayo. He used this for thirty years while making house calls as a country doctor. Later, Dr. Mayo and his sons, Will and Charlie Mayo, would found the Mayo Clinic. This lap robe was donated to the History Center in February of 1940 by Phoebe Mayo, granddaughter to Dr. Mayo and daughter to Dr. Will Mayo.

An outing by sleigh, ca. 1900s. Notice the lap robe hanging out the side.



Ken Mueller looks on while Chuck Willihnganz inspects the steeple.



Dr. William Worrall Mayo's lap robe.



A Knutson Construction employee taking care of some flashing.

Over the fall, some work was done on the Hadley Valley Schoolhouse. Due to rotten wood caused by water getting inside the building and an industrious squirrel living in the attic, the steeple and bell were barely attached to the rest of the building. Two History Center volunteers, Chuck Willihnganz and Ken Mueller, fixed the bell and identified the issue with the steeple. They also cleared out the squirrel nest. To fix the steeple, Knutson Construction replaced a number of joists in the attic and strengthened the beams holding up the steeple. A little roof flashing work and caulk to keep the building watertight finished the job.

For helping us save the schoolhouse steeple, the History Center wants to once again send a big thank you to Chuck Willihnganz, Ken Mueller and



A CREEPY NIGHT TO REMEMBER: THE CREEPY DOLL COCKTAIL PARTY AT THE CASTLE

By Abby Currier, Community Engagement & Events Coordinator

The lights were dimmed, the music was jamming, and the food was fantastic. Our first in-person Creepy Doll Cocktail Party took place on October 23rd at the Castle in downtown Rochester and it was a blast. We brought all of the 2021 Creepy Doll Contestants and the pageant winners from 2019 and 2020 to the Castle and invited guests to meet the dolls 'in the flesh' while enjoying delicious food and drinks from Cameo. Audience members were serenaded by the jazz band, Equatis, and were invited to participate in a costume contest that was judged by the crowd itself. We also welcomed Willow Gentile, who did a live painting of last year's winner during the event that was auctioned off at the end of the evening.

The evening culminated with the announcement of the 2021 Creepiest Doll. Over a thousand votes were cast, both online and in person, and we are proud to add Gagool to our list of Creepy Doll Pageant winners. Gagool is a handmade cloth doll that was donated to the History Center by Marilyn Bierbaum Frost. We do not know a lot about Gagool, but we are happy to include her in our elite list of Creepiest Dolls. Stay tuned for the 2022 pageant and for updates on other off-campus events!



Guests enjoying the delightfully creepy evening.



The winner revealed!

NEW YEAR, NEW EVENTS: A SNEAK PEEK AT 2022 EVENTS

Somehow, 2022 is just around the corner and we are busy planning for what next year will hold. While things are always changing here at the History Center, we are excited to bring back crowd favorites while adding in new events. Are you excited to know what we have in store? Here is a sneak peek of upcoming programs:

The Hootenanny is coming back for its third year. This year will feature a main performer with an opening act. We have some fun ideas in store and hope to see you in the fall for another great time!

Believe it or not, there is more to explore at the Stoppel Farmstead. Stay tuned for more details about dates and topics.

FlavorFest, a celebration of Cambodian food and culture, kicked off last year and we are delighted to be welcoming them back this year.

We are happy to announce a new partnership with the Drifters Car Club, who will bring antique automobiles onto our campus. We look forward to co-creating an exhibit with them while learning more about this unique aspect of history.

Stay up to date
on all the happenings
at the History Center and
get your tickets to all
our great events at
[olmstedhistory.com/
events.](https://olmstedhistory.com/events)

IN MEMORIAM: MISS KATE, 1937-2021

In November the History Center lost one of its dedicated volunteers, Katharine (Kate) Bilodeau, or Miss Kate as we often referred to her. She had been volunteering in the Archives since 2007, where she devoted her time to cataloging and transcribing letters from the Mayo Family Collection. By the time she was no longer able to continue this feat, Kate had transcribed over 4,000 letters. Due to her dedication, she provided a tremendous resource at the History Center Archives and to the public.

Because Kate was probably the person most intimately knowledgeable about the Mayo family, she also wrote an article about Dr. Charles (Chuck) W. Mayo recruiting nurses from St. Mary's School of Nursing and Kahler School of Nursing. This group became the 233rd Station Hospital in the New Guinea coastal area during World War II. Kate not only wrote the article but presented the information at Princess Café and Civil War Roundtable.

But Kate wasn't done yet; the History Center had 19 boxes of material related to the Naeseth family, including hundreds of letters written in Norwegian. Kate, being Norwegian herself, felt it was her calling to get those letters transferred to Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where they would be translated. She made that goal a reality.

Miss Kate and her sister, Liz, who died earlier this year, traveled extensively and lived interesting lives, which made any conversation with the ladies entertaining and engaging. Here at the History Center, we will miss all their adventurous stories and sense of humor.



At long last, transferring the Naeseth Collection to Luther College in July 2019. Miss Kate, in blue, with Hayley Jackson and Andrea Beckendorf of Luther College to the left and Kristen Heine of Vesterheim to the right.



Thank you
for all your
support this
year!



We couldn't do this without you.

FAREWELL TO OUR MAYOWOOD TOUR COORDINATOR



The wonderful
Kathy Dahl

It is with mixed feelings that I announce my resignation as Mayowood Tour Coordinator at the end of this year. My strong ties to the home and the Mayo family story won't completely let me go and my hope is to continue to serve as a Mayowood Guide in the future.

Uncertain in 2021 if Mayowood would reopen, I took a position as Tour Manager for Jag Tours, a local motorcoach group touring company. I enjoy group travel and the calendar flexibility it allows me at this point in my life.

Please join me in welcoming the new Mayowood Tour Coordinator, Dan Nowakowski. Dan's daily presence at the History Center will benefit the program, along with new ideas he has planned for 2022.

It has been my privilege to work with devoted Guides who have gone above and beyond in sharing their personal passion for Mayowood with our guests. I am also forever grateful to the History Center and Mayo Clinic staff and leadership for all your support, guidance, and encouragement along the way.

ON THE HORIZON: SPECIALTY TOURS OF MAYOWOOD

By Dan Nowakowski, Curator

I'm excited and looking forward to this new opportunity to be more involved with the operations at Mayowood. Coming from a collection background, I'm excited to work significantly more with the Mayowood historical pieces. As for my exhibit background, there are opportunities I see that we can do in the house during regular tours as well as expand on the specialty tours. I also look forward to working with our great guides and talking with them about how to improve upon our tours, especially when we get new information about the Mayo family.

This past year we developed three specialty tours designed to show different aspects of Mayowood and the Mayo family. Their focus was on arts and garden, conservation, and Christmas. Due to the success of these tours, we have decided to continue them and develop even more. One of the new tours will focus on guests who signed the Mayowood Guestbook while visiting Dr. Charlie or Dr. Chuck. These guests included friends, celebrities, politicians, and prominent businessmen.

In addition to new specialty tours, the rooms will feature different artifacts and artifacts from other rooms, along with pieces that haven't been on display in a number of years. With these changes we are hoping to bring a new feel to the house and show guests how the Mayos would rearrange spaces for the various events, meetings, and parties that they hosted while living there. Both Edith and Alice were known to do this and we would like to highlight that dynamic part of the house's history during the tour season.



Arts and Garden tour guided by Grace Curry.

We can't wait to see you next season!



2022 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

All teal events and programs are hybrid. More details can be found on our website. Please check our website and Facebook regularly as the schedule is subject to change, olmstedhistory.com/events.

- January 27 ● Why and How Can We Save Cultural Heritage?
- February 12 ● Dearest Anna
- February 19 ● The Call of Antarctica
- March 22 ● Quarter 1 Members Meeting
- April 23 ● Kalmar Tour
- May 12 ● Architecture of Mayowood
- May 21 ● Beer and Brats
- May 26 ● Annual Members Meeting
- June 15 ● Volunteer Appreciation Day
- July 9 ● Car Show
- July 23 ● FlavorFest
- August 13 & 14 ● Days of Yesteryear
- August 20 ● Cemetery Walk
- September 17 ● Hootenanny/Car Show
- September 27 ● Quarter 3 Members Meeting
- October 20 ● Fall Fest
- October 29 ● Creepy Doll Cocktail Party
- December 6 ● Quarter 4 Members Meeting

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Mayowood Christmas
Puttin' on the Ritz!



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