

# The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## SUMMER 2023 Newsletter



**HISTORY CENTER**  
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

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

## HONORING THE PAST BY MAPPING OUT NEW OPPORTUNITIES

By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director

When I arrived at HCOC as the new executive director, a person familiar with our property admonished me, "you have to do something about that barn!" And it wasn't just the barn. Nature was poised to reclaim the smokehouse. To its credit, the HCOC board in 2020 endorsed rehabilitating the farmstead. That key decision allowed us, with the expertise of historical architects, to map out a vision for "doing something" about the farmstead buildings, namely, developing construction plans, specifications, and cost estimates for properly rehabilitating the smokehouse, barn, and stone house, following the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Knutson Construction, long time History Center supporters, was, and continues to be, instrumental in guiding us in that process.

But simply preserving buildings won't necessarily bring them to life for residents and visitors. That's where our interpretive planning comes into play. Thanks to federal grant funds, after two years of research and community engagement, we expect to complete the interpretive plan before August. This provides us with a road map for activating the farmstead as a historic site and educational facility.

On the topic of preservation work, the recent completion of work on the smokehouse is certainly a milestone worth celebrating. Preservation work on the Smokehouse started late September of 2022 after funds were raised through a

## HONORING THE PAST - continued

generous grant from The Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants program (also known as Legacy Grants) and donations from History Center members and supporters. Masons and carpenters recently completed the work, bringing new life and functionality to the historic structure. And yes, you can ring the bell!

Of course, this work also brings to light that the barn and stone house still need urgent attention. Thanks to our legislative delegation and invaluable advising from former Senator Dave Senjem, who is HCOC's Olmsted County Board of Commissioners representative, we were awarded \$500,000 of Legacy funds for the barn. The grant will help us get started on the barn's most urgent preservation needs, namely replacing the roof. Overall, our cost estimates for the complete rehabilitation of the barn, stone house, and landscape is around \$3 million.

One of our board members described the HCOC property in terms of a hub-and-spoke arrangement, with the museum and archives as the hub. The interpretive plan relates to that model by outlining five visitor experience zones throughout the property, each with complimentary but distinct visitor experience and operational goals.

Our work on the Stoppel farmstead will clearly strengthen an important spoke—but what is the condition of the hub? Built in the mid-1970s, the History Center building is clearly tired, both in its condition but also in its layout. Last year, a board committee developed schematic designs that would give the History Center a facelift while adding crucial archival and collections storage space. While necessary, these renovations will be a major investment.

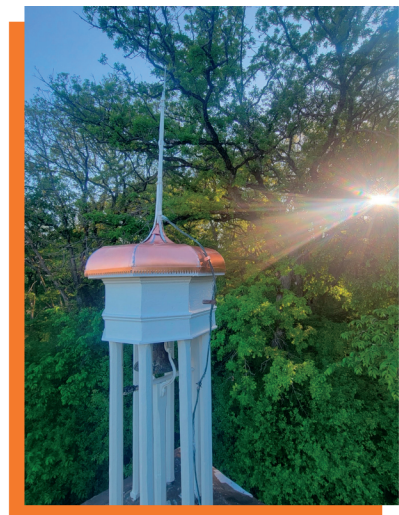
Finally, in another bit of interesting news, our board committee's work has placed us in a good position to consider a more recent opportunity, that of inviting SPARK Children's Museum as our neighbor on the HCOC property. We are very early in our discussions, but a partnership with SPARK as a neighbor could be transformational as we look to strengthen historical literacy among young and old alike. As we explore this opportunity, particularly on a board-to-board level with SPARK, we will confer with our campus stakeholders and members.



Envisioning the farmstead as a community space

Be sure to keep abreast of these and other exciting developments by reading the e-newsletter, attending member events and updates, and, above all, visiting the History Center.

**"The History Center building is clearly tired, both in its condition and its layout"**



A dramatic sunbeam falls on our restored smokehouse steeple.



# DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN: HCOC RENOVATIONS

By Krista Lewis, Archivist, CA

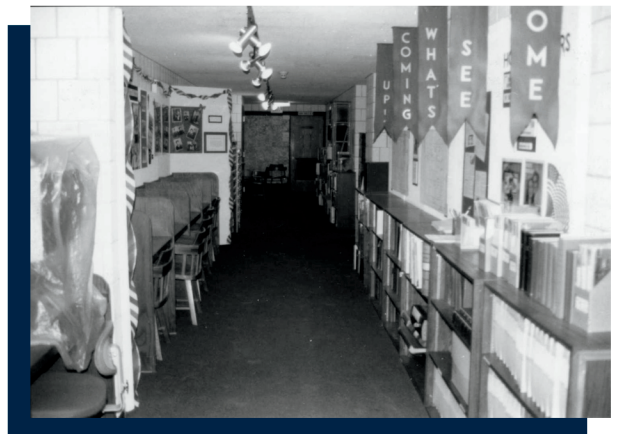
Regular readers of our newsletter should be well aware of all the work that's been going on at the George Stoppel Farmstead over the last couple of years. The smokehouse looks fantastic and many thanks must go to the team who completed the work, but also to all of you who supported the project financially and otherwise. We've made a good dent in what needs to be done, and there's plenty more to do.

The farmstead is only part of the story. We have dreams and ambitions for the rest of the campus, and especially for the main museum building itself. You've all read about our collections space issues, and part of the solution, if our dreams can come true, is a modest 3D storage and office addition adjacent to the Research Center and archives storage space, which would allow us to open back up part of the exhibit gallery that was closed off decades ago for the same purposes.

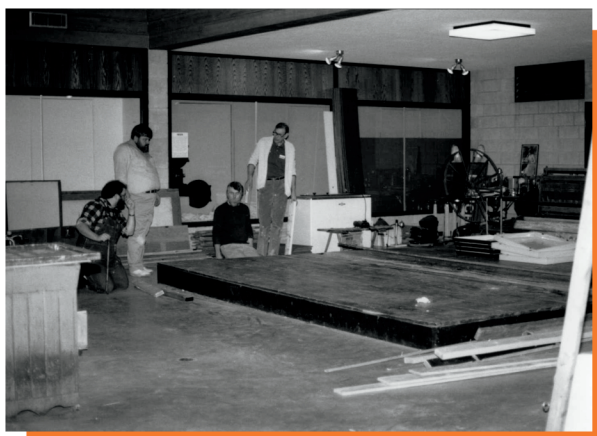
In recent weeks, we in the Archives have been going through our institutional photos and have come across several that show previous renovations. As Yogi Berra famously said, "It's like déjà vu all over again." Anyway, going through these photos has been part blast from the past ("Hey, look at the gallery from way back when!") and part head scratching mystery ("Where the heck was this picture taken from?"). I hope you enjoy the views as much as I did!



**One thing that hasn't changed is the breakroom kitchenette in all its Brady Bunch orange glory (July 1985)**



**When the archives storage addition was under construction, the Research Center moved out into the hallway and what we now call the Crawford Room (1994-95)**



**HCOC Staff dismantling part of the exhibit space to build new office space for the curator! (1990)**



# SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW RENTAL AND EVENTS COORDINATOR! AN INTRODUCTION

By Ashley Evansr



Creating fun events for communities to enjoy has always been a passion of mine, which is why I am excited to be the new Rental and Special Events Coordinator at the History Center. My name is Ashley Evans, and I cannot stress enough how much I am anticipating the amazing things we have in progress, those on the horizon, and those that are merely just a future seed to be planted.

To speak a bit about my background, I grew up in the Arrowhead Region of Minnesota before attending Gustavus Adolphus College. From there, I earned my Bachelor of Arts in English and Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies with minors in French and Comparative Literature. After

graduating, I served with the Minnesota Reading Corps as a Reading Tutor, spent time traveling, and realized I missed planning events for my friends to enjoy, as I had done throughout high school and college. So, here I am. I come from a large family, my mother having nine siblings, so I am no stranger to large groups; it would be more apt to say I have no experience with tiny gatherings. This has led me to love the feeling of community that can be created when people come together, and my research of different cultures has led me to appreciate the many ways people have learnt to foster this feeling. That is what I want to do at the History Center: bring together our current HCOC family and others throughout Rochester to create an even larger community that feels like home. In my opinion, there is no such thing as meeting too many people when those connections, the ones you never dreamt of, could last a lifetime.

On top of the exciting get-togethers that are in the works – such as the Hootenanny, Creepy Doll Cocktail Party, and much more – I have been working to revamp our rental program. We will still have the spaces you know and love, but we are able to offer Wedding Rentals once again! Whether you want to have a lecture in the Sertoma Room, a meeting in the Crawford Room, a picnic in the pavilion, or even a ceremony and reception with our gorgeous buildings as the back drop, it is all possible. My goal is to make sure History Center events are fun and inclusive, and our renters' functions go on without a hitch. So, regardless of which events you decide to attend, I look forward to seeing you there!

## UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

July 8	Drifters Car Club
July 11 - 13	HCOC Day Camp
August 13-14	Days of Yesteryear
August 19	Pickup Truck Opera: Romeo and Juliet
August 24	"Historic Disasters" Lecture
September 19	Hootenanny! At the History Center



# NEW EXHIBITIONS AT THE HISTORY CENTER!

By Jenna Collins



(Above) To Have and To Hold: Ten Years of Marriage Equality in Minnesota  
(Below) Wunderkammer: "Cabinets of Wonder"



## Rochester Recordings: Moshpits and Memories

Celebrating the bands & people of Rochester, Minnesota's underground music scene from the 90's and 2000's with posters, t-shirts, instruments, and more. This exhibit will open June 10.

## Life and Death in Olmsted County

Exploring society's views of death, mourning, and cemetery spaces throughout history through the lens of the 160th Anniversary of Oakwood Cemetery in Rochester, Minnesota. This exhibit will open at the end of June.

For those of you who haven't come by the History Center in a while, this summer is an excellent time to swing by! At the end of June, we will have 4 new exhibitions for you to explore, with more coming throughout the year. It's been a busy spring planning and writing these exhibitions, and we can't wait for you to see them all.

## Wunderkammer: "Cabinets of Wonder"

How do you show off your favorite things? Learn about some of the first museum exhibits in history, Wunderkammer, and see some of the interesting artifacts the History Center has in its collection that don't always get to be put on display. This exhibit opened April 1, and will be up the rest of the year

## To Have and To Hold: Ten Years of Marriage Equality in Minnesota

On August 1, 2013, same-sex marriage became legal in Minnesota. This exhibit examines the laws, activism, and legal cases that culminated in marriage equality for all people in Minnesota, as well as sharing the perspectives of Olmsted County's LGBTQ+ community. This exhibit opened May 18, and will be up the rest of the year.

**"It's been a busy spring planning and writing these exhibitions!"**

# MILDRED "MUFF" MAYO: THE PAINTER

By Dan Nowakowski

The Mayo's collected and were gifted various artwork from their travels. A unique feature of Mayowood is not only will you see the artwork they assembled, but you will also see artwork created by the daughters of Dr. Charlie and Dr. Chuck. These pieces of artwork cover a wide range of mediums, from sculptures and paintings to drawings.

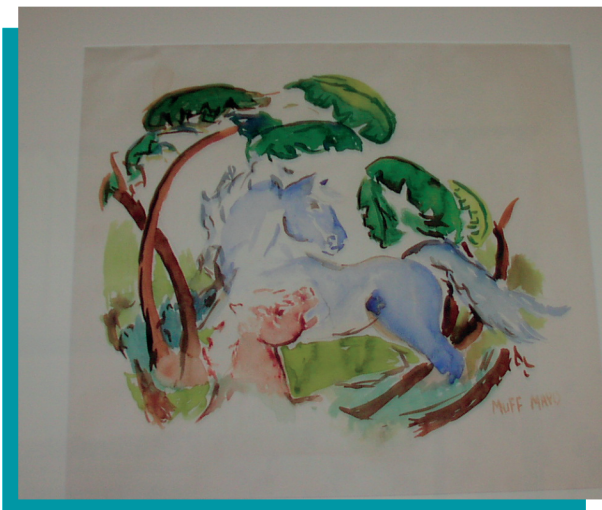
The daughters were all talented in different forms of art. Dr. Chuck's daughter, Mildred "Muff" Mayo, was a talented painter. Her subject of choice was horses; this could be because she grew up riding daily at the property. Muff's parents, particularly Alice, encouraged her to explore the arts.

Mildred kept an interest in painting and created several different pieces. These pieces have a range of styles because she experimented with different views, mediums, and paints. One unique piece featured at the house is a watercolor of a horse that she created in the tondo (circular painting) style. Out of her works, this is the only one in this style.

If you are interested in learning more about the daughters and other pieces of artwork at Mayowood, join our art tour, **Mayowood Hidden Gems: Art Edition**, on July 29th. Tickets can be purchased on our website under Mayowood and then the Specialty Tour tab.



Mildred "Muff" Mayo



One of Muff's works

**"If you are interested in learning more about the daughters... join our art tour!"**

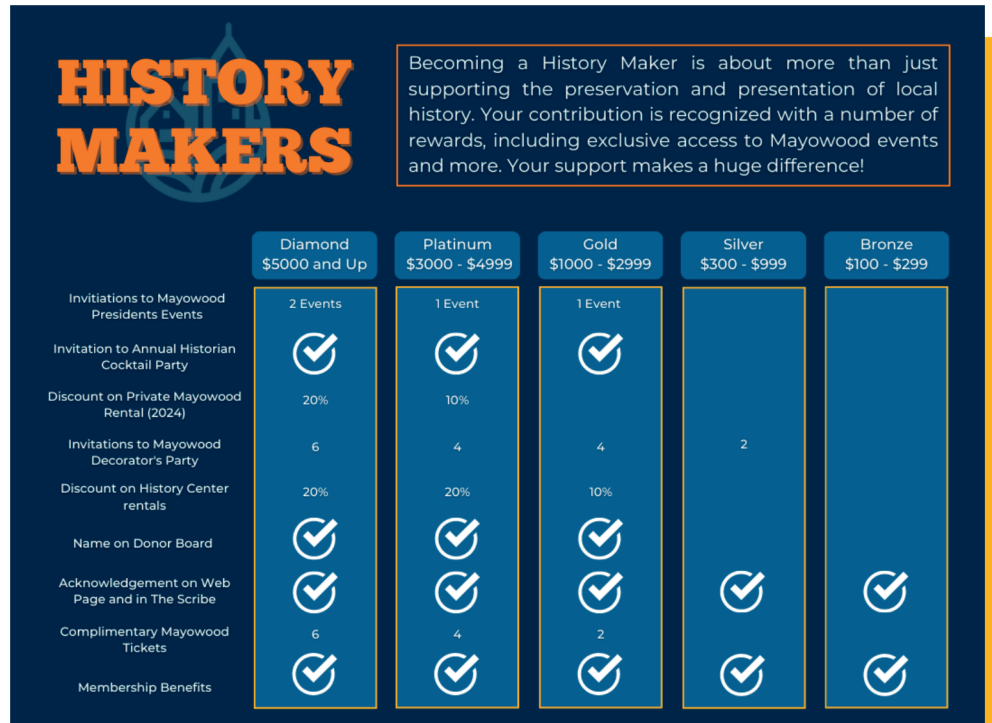


# RECOGNIZING OUR CONTIBUTORS: INTRODUCING THE HISTORY MAKERS PROGRAM AND ALAN CALAVANO LEGACY SOCIETY

At the History Center, we are always looking for fresh ways to recognize and reward our most steadfast supporters.

With that in mind, we've created two new programs which we hope will open the door for our supporters to feel the appreciation that we have for them.

First, our History Makers program gives our high-level supporters greater benefits for their donations. In addition to the discounts and other perks, high-level donors receive recognition through invites to our new Mayowood President's Event. These events are select evenings in which our donors are recognized with food, drink, and more.



**HISTORY MAKERS**

Becoming a History Maker is about more than just supporting the preservation and presentation of local history. Your contribution is recognized with a number of rewards, including exclusive access to Mayowood events and more. Your support makes a huge difference!

	Diamond \$5000 and Up	Platinum \$3000 - \$4999	Gold \$1000 - \$2999	Silver \$300 - \$999	Bronze \$100 - \$299
Invitations to Mayowood Presidents Events	2 Events	1 Event	1 Event		
Invitation to Annual Historian Cocktail Party	✓	✓	✓		
Discount on Private Mayowood Rental (2024)	20%	10%			
Invitations to Mayowood Decorator's Party	6	4	4	2	
Discount on History Center rentals	20%	20%	10%		
Name on Donor Board	✓	✓	✓		
Acknowledgement on Web Page and in The Scribe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complimentary Mayowood Tickets	6	4	2		
Membership Benefits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[Learn more about our benefits!](#)



## Our new legacy society

Our contributors are our greatest asset. Without your love of history and your amazing support, none of this would be possible. For all that you have done for us in the past, what you do now, and what we will accomplish together in the future, we say thank you!

To learn more about these programs, call Executive Director Wayne Gannaway at the History Center, 507-282-9447!

Additionally, we're excited to introduce the Alan Calavano Legacy Society, our planned giving society which gives us the opportunity to recognize in perpetuity our most significant contributors.

Alan was an amazing friend of the History Center who passed in 2016. He gave so much to our mission that when considering the creation of this legacy society, it was only right to name it for him.



**We're so grateful for our supporters!**

# THE OL' SWIMMIN' HOLE

By Lee Hilgendorf

Rochester city engineer Charles Armstrong stood in the middle of the Sixth Street SE bridge, staring into the waters of Bear Creek. The summer of 1930 had been unusually hot, and city aldermen had given Armstrong the task of finding a suitable place for a swimming and bathing pool.

On the north side of the bridge, about 100 neighborhood kids splashed in the water, seeking relief from the mid-July heat. As Armstrong looked to the south, a plan became clear. If the city built a 5-foot flash board dam, using the bridge abutments as an anchor, it would create a 500-foot-long pool. The pool would be 5 feet deep on the north end for adults and 18 inches on the south end for the younger children. The flash board construction would be low-cost, would wash out in case of a flood, and could be easily removed for the winter.

"The children of Rochester," Armstrong said, "are entitled to a place to bathe and swim. This is the place to give it to them."

The Rochester city aldermen said they would take Armstrong's plan under advisement.

On July 15, three days later, on the other side of town, members of the American Legion Post 92 were also looking for a suitable place for a swimming pool. They felt they had found it in Cascade Creek, a block and a half west of the Eleventh Ave NW bridge.

Their plan was to use the concrete curb and gutter wreckage from the city's street widening projects to create a dam across Cascade Creek. The city was already planning to dredge and straighten the creek in that area, and the concrete rubble had to go somewhere. The Legionnaires were so certain of their decision that they had already raised \$500 toward a \$900 goal for construction of the pool, the creation of a sand beach, and the building of a bathhouse.

On July 22, back on Bear Creek, a third bathing pool plan was announced. L.D. Williams, who owned land near the Tenth Street SE bridge, would build a pool and a park. There would be an area for parking, and Williams would charge admission for adults to swim.

All of the plans were studied by the city street and alley commission. Its chairman, Fred Miller, found no fault with any of the three. Alderman Miller did, however, seek to repeal an ancient ordinance that he had uncovered which provided that there shall be no bathing in the Zumbro River between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Miller pointed out "someone might start something and have someone arrested."

As work began on the Cascade pool, the William T. McCoy legion post had a building bee. In one day, 35 post members erected, shingled, and painted a 12 x 24-foot bathhouse on the site. Work was also progressing on the

**"The summer of 1930 had been unusually hot, and city aldermen had given (Charles) Armstrong the task of finding a suitable place for a swimming and bathing pool."**



## THE OL' SWIMMIN' HOLE - continued

dam which led project manager Johnathan Feller to speculate that the pool would be open in a week.

That's when the city stepped in with their plan to straighten Cascade Creek. During the first week of August, heavy equipment was moved into the area and as the work continued, the swimming season slipped away.

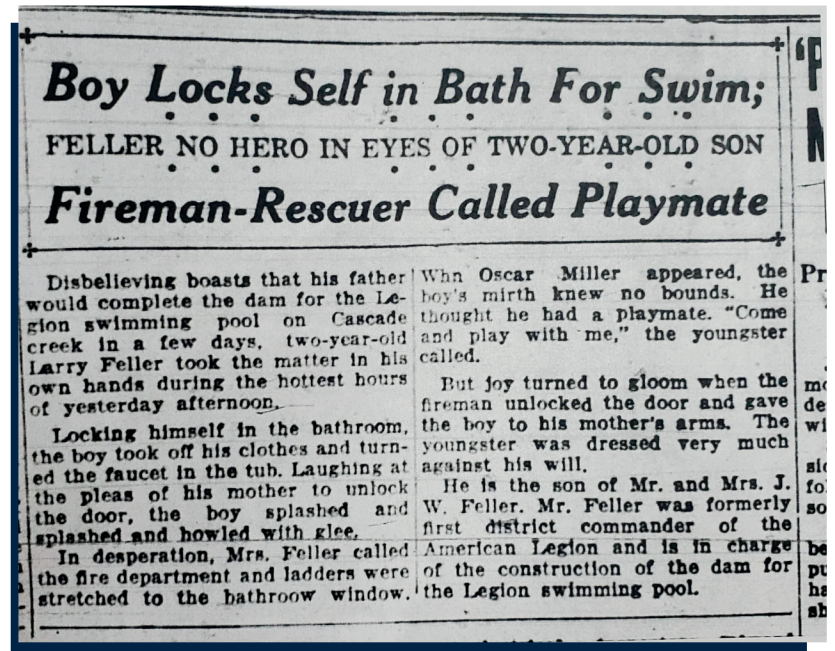
Finally, on August 29, 1930, 1000 people attended the dedication of the new Cascade bathing pool. American Legion Commander Erwin Briese presented the 55 x 180-foot pool to city officials. Mayo J.T. Lemmon thanked August Kutsky for his donation of 9 acres of land to be used for the park. Mr. and Mrs. Owen McCoy, after whose son the legion post was named, donated an American flag to fly over the beach.

The swimming season at Bear Creek didn't progress during the Summer of 1930. However, during the following winter, meetings between eastside civic leaders and city park officials led to the purchase of 12 acres of land from Roland Slatterly creating a park complete with bathing pool and bathhouse for the 1931 season.

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Slatterly Park Bathhouse (1931)



Post-Bulletin - 25 July 1930

### STAFF

**Wayne Gannaway**  
Executive Director  
**Darla Buss**  
Member Services  
Coordinator  
**Ashley Evans**  
Rental and Special  
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**Madeleine Lawler**  
Education Coordinator  
**Krista Lewis**  
Archivist  
**Caleb Baumgartner**  
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# COMMUNICATING THE NEED: THE ARGUMENT FOR PERSONALIZING HISTORY

By Caleb Baumgartner

It may be a controversial take to declare that, like many academic endeavors, the field of history takes pride in being, in some ways, inscrutable. The ever-changing approaches to categorization and the shifting emphasis on different facets of history make for interesting discussions in certain circles, but can make communicating the importance of history intimidating for lay people. There is a need in the academic world to specialize and compartmentalize, a need which makes the knowledge in those fields richer and deeper, but makes communication across fields (and to the completely uninitiated) infinitely more difficult.

For many historians, history is broken down into periods of time (ancient, medieval, pre-modern, etc.) and areas of study (military history, economic, social, etc). Across this spectrum there are many stories to tell, but it can be difficult to generate interest in history when people are confronted with these sorts of categories. As much as those who love history like ourselves may find it difficult to believe, there are many who express little interest in “great people” of history or the broad categories like those previously mentioned. They have neither the desire nor the time to approach the traditional frameworks of names, dates, achievements, etc that they have come to think is the totality of history from their experience in school



**From the archives: "Mike Welp (left), and Joseph Lynn relax during an Army Delayed Entry program picnic and baseball game held at Cooke Park" (1991) - Connecting people to smaller formative moments may lead to more extensive connections later on.**

**"When we make history personal, we make it accessible."**

What if, then, we were to look at history from a different perspective? To step back from our niche studies and try to take a broader view in the hopes of developing a framework with which to approach people of all ages and levels of interest? What if we were to break history down into its component parts to allow people to see that this field is as capable of telling a deeply personal and relatable story as it is telling a story that seems too large and distant to have individual meaning?

Often people discuss history from “the top down” or “the bottom up,” but this tends to imply a troublesome hierarchy. What if we instead reference history from the inside working out? From the individual to the larger world?

Each of us live a singular life, filled with experiences that shape us and determine the course we take. Just as historians may point to certain decisions or events early in the life of a historic figure to hypothesize that these formative moments may have affected a decision down the line, we each individually have our moments that shape ourselves. Terry's big loss in the homecoming game may have made him more competitive for the rest of his life. Shelly's grandmother showing her how to mix paints and prepare canvas may have turned her towards the arts. Cliche as these examples may be, they're illustrative of the sort of moments that serve as landmarks in our lives, moments that have little meaning for individuals outside but shape the person we become and how we interact with our world.



## COMMUNICATING THE NEED - continued

From drawing on our personal histories, it becomes easier to move slightly outward to our local history and to examine what shapes the world immediately around us. What factors were present that may not have been there for others? How did growing up in a rural or urban environment shape what was possible? Examining the setting in which our personal history occurs begins to broaden our insights and awakens a sense of curiosity about the factors which shape our world.

From these personal perspectives we can begin to move ever outward, to how our national history or even world history shaped our experiences today. But most importantly, taking these steps creates a process for individuals of all backgrounds to take a step towards developing an interest in the study of history and of expanding their sense of empathy and connectedness through this engaging field.

Assessing history from a personal perspective is less an exercise in selfishness and more an exercise in building an awareness of differing experiences. Honest assessments of our own lives and the events and opportunities which shaped them can lead to curiosity about the experiences of others and an eagerness to learn the stories that shaped those lives as well.

When we make history personal, we make it accessible. And when we foster a sense of curiosity and exploration for people of all ages, we show, rather than tell, exactly what the value of history can be.

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***SPREAD THE WORD! NOW OPEN SUNDAYS AND  
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***JUNE 1ST TO AUGUST 31ST, THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS AT***



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