



Black Rock
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

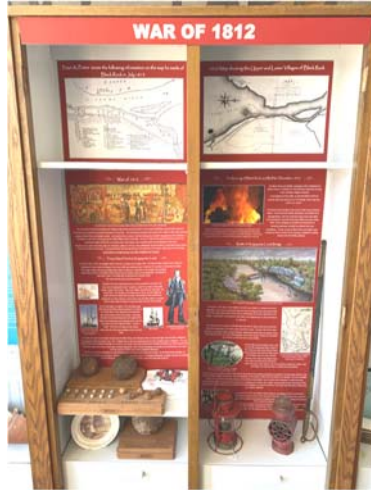
2nd Quarter Newsletter
April-June 2020

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Chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York

Our Museum in Action by William Butler

The temporary pause in our normal operations has not discouraged our volunteers from taking advantage of this unscheduled downtime to improve the composition, layout and visibility of our exhibits. Where time and social distancing have permitted, Museum Curator and Exhibits Coordinator Doreen DeBoth has recruited the help of her husband Richard and son Doug along with volunteers Jeanine Baran and Rebecca Torres to reconstruct, paint and reconfigure our display cabinets. Doreen has also researched and composed informative narratives telling the story of Black Rock and northwest Buffalo that will accompany our artifacts.



With the unfortunate and unprecedented disruption to Buffalo schools, we feel a vital need to honor our students who have had their academic year so seriously impacted. At this time we wish to honor all participants and winners in our annual Art as History program. In partnership with the Westside Youth Development Coalition, students participated in artistically expressing our 2019 theme - *Envisioning what a leader looks like in your future*. Using a variety of media including clay, paint, yarn, beads, stencils, markers and crayons, the students creatively presented their personal vision of themselves as a future leader and what their compelling characteristics should be. BRHS Board Members Michele Graves and Doreen DeBoth coordinated the art project with



Riverside High School (Carol Cureo), Public School #3/Bell Center After-School Program (Allison Hernandez), and West Side Community Services (Sarah Turnbull). With over 100 students participating, prizes were awarded to the following 2019 winners: **Riverside High School:** Jesselin Padovavi (1st), Tanya Bellevue (2nd), Tyler Navarro (3rd), Alanstar Hunt and Deborah Bellevue (Honorable Mention); **PS #3/Bell Center:** Zoie Ramirez (1st); **West Side Community Services:** Alexichal Lopez (1st), Paw Blay (2nd), Moe Kuh (3rd), Quinn Guzman and Leia Durante (Honorable Mention). Congratulations, students! Keep up your great work!

In May, through a partnership between the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and Museum Association of New York, the Pomeroy Fund for NYS History provided assistance grants to history-based organizations to be used for the acquisition of computer hardware and software, acquiring internet access or expanding bandwidth, paying for utilities, and securing facilities and collections. Of the over 170 applications received, the BRHS was one of only 18% of the funding requests that were approved. We have received \$1287 to purchase PastPerfect 5.0 software and training materials to help us archive and conserve our collection as well as manage other administrative functions such as managing memberships, enhancing public outreach, and fundraising. This grant will also fund our membership in the American Association for State and Local History.

In 1994, the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier and Western New York Heritage Institute at Canisius College, including friends of BRHS Edward J. Patton and Paul Redding, were commissioned by the Common Council to inventory city structures built prior to 1860. The resulting list included approximately 215 buildings, with the oldest from 1818. Preservation Buffalo Niagara recently acquired this 25-year old survey and has found that nearly 30% of the structures then identified have been lost in the intervening years. Of the remaining structures, over 80% have no formal historic designation or protection. In response, PBN formed the 1850 Project and solicited help from the preservation community to research these buildings and put proper preservation protections in place. In quick response, Mary Ann Kedron and the BRHS Preservation Committee have identified over 50 properties from that original list and have begun research work. The very high concentration of 1850 era buildings again speak to the importance of the village of

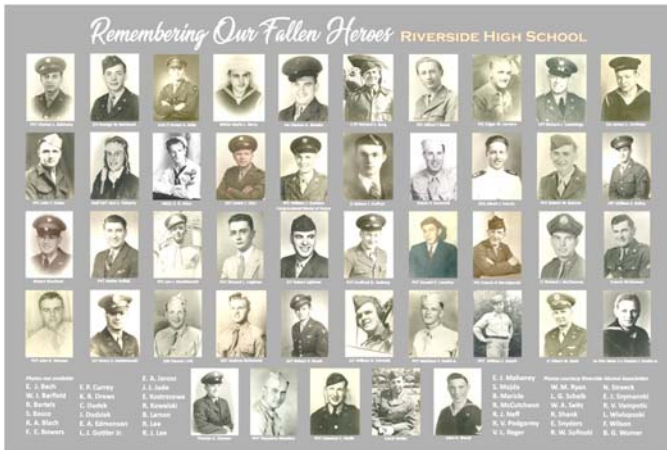
Our Museum in Action (cont'd)

Black Rock in our early history. Ten of the properties have been submitted to the PBN for review and another six are in progress. We will continue to work on the properties over the next few months. If anyone is interested in this project, please contact the BRHS to see how you can become involved.

The BRHS Preservation Committee has also submitted the Precinct 13 police station building to the City of Buffalo Preservation Board for official designation as a local landmark. Police Station No. 13 (346 Austin St) is a former police station erected from 1894 to 1895 and designed in the Romanesque Revival style by Frederick C.H. Mohr. It is the second oldest surviving police station in Buffalo.

It is famous for holding Leon Czolgosz, immediately after he assassinated President William McKinley on September 6, 1901. The station operated until 1954. The City Preservation Board has reviewed and approved the application for completeness. Final review will occur within the next few months. The Preservation Committee is also evaluating similar landmark designations for St. John's United Church of Christ (85 Amherst St) and the Ukrainian American Civic Center (205 Military Rd).

In a tribute to Memorial Day, BRHS saluted the brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedom. Using portrait prints donated by the Riverside High School Alumni Association, Museum Curator Doreen DeBoth has created a poignant photo montage of Riverside HS alumni who lost their lives during World War II. To honor our fallen heroes during our shutdown, the poster was displayed in our front window.



On the 154th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgeway (June 2), Black Rock welcomed the Ancient Order of Hibernians-Thomas Carroll Erie County Division 1 for their annual commemoration of the Fenian Invasion of Canada. The

ceremony took place at the site of the former Pratt Ironworks, now Towpath Park, where Irish-American Fenian forces boarded barges and canal boats to cross the Niagara River into Upper Canada. To commemorate the invasion, Ray Ball Jr. from the AOH recited the Fenian Proclamation which was delivered prior to the Fenian Rising of 1867 in Ireland. Participants at the commemoration also included NYS AOH District 2 Director Craig Speers.



Ray Ball Jr.

New Acquisitions

Riverside High School 25th Anniversary Plate

BRHS Member Kay Brown donated a wonderful gold-trimmed commemorative plate from the 25th anniversary (1955) Riverside High School (51 Ontario St). The "Sabina Line" china plate has a sketch (in purple) of the school on the front and a brief history printed on its reverse. The inscription notes that the school opened in September 1930 with C. W. Whitney as principal. In 1944, Whitney was succeeded by Ray W. Spear who served until 1957. At the time of the anniversary, the school had over 5,500 graduates. The plate also notes that of the school's original faculty, 22 were still active in 1955. The final Riverside High School class graduated in 2019 and the school was permanently replaced by the new Riverside Academy (Grades 9-10), which opened in Fall 2017.



USHCO Mfg. Co. Wrench

In response to our article on the U.S. Hame Co. in our previous newsletter, BRHS member Steve Lakomy donated a Lawson six-inch adjustable pipe wrench produced by the USHCO Manufacturing Co. "Lawson" is in reference to Gottfrid C. Lawson (Cleveland, Ohio), the patent holder. You may recall that USHCO is the acronym for the U.S. Hame Co. that operated at 135 Tonawanda Street. Dr. Lakomy also generously donated a letter of receipt from the U.S. Hame Co. dated February 25, 1908.



Norton House Archive (1239 Niagara)

BRHS Member and local historian Paul Redding donated his archive of interesting documents concerning his research on the "Norton House" formerly located at 1239 Niagara Street. Mr. Redding's records includes his notes, title searches, survey plats, and newspaper articles. The former "Upper Black Rock" residence is now the site of the Sugar City Arts Collaborative.

Alice Lord O'Brian (1880-1972) by William Butler

If there ever was a woman who was designed to face today's challenges, that woman must be Alice Lord O'Brian. Born in Buffalo on September 26, 1880, Alice attended St. Margaret's School but unlike her Harvard-educated brothers never attended college. Her brother John Lord O'Brian was a successful lawyer and former Assistant Attorney General of the United States in whose honor the University at Buffalo's law school building was named. For her own path, Alice chose a life of public service and took a job in Black Rock as a social worker with the Prison Gate Mission and worked with women (and their children) adjusting to life after prison. As part of the Charitable Organizations Societies (first founded in the US in Buffalo in 1877), the purpose of the mission was "to establish a temporary home, to provide employment, and to promote the spiritual, moral, mental and physical welfare of discharged prisoners; and to promote prison reform." In part, Alice conducted her work in Black Rock at St. John's United Evangelical Church (now St. John's United Church of Christ) on Amherst Street.

At the outbreak of World War I, Alice applied to the Red Cross to support the war effort in Europe. When the US entered the war, she became a member of the first contingent of American Red Cross workers to reach Paris at the age of 37.

In 1917, she was assigned to *Le Cantine des Deux Drapeaux* (The Canteen of Two Flags) at St. Germain-des-Fosses in central France. Red Cross canteens were sited along railroad lines that transported troops across the country and were essential to providing soldiers with



Alice Lord O'Brian

adequate meals, entertainment, and first aid. Although she was disappointed that she was not selected to serve in the "War Zone," Alice eagerly accepted her roles in requisitioning provisions, bookkeeping, tending to the wounded, and raising morale. Only three months into her service, she was promoted as *Directrice* (Director) of the canteen.



Le Cantine des Deux Drapeaux

After ten months at *Le Cantine des Deux Drapeaux*, she was transferred to a new canteen near Puy-de-Dome. At the end of the war, Alice accepted a post assisting in a Red Cross hotel for enlisted men.

For her dedicated service, Alice was decorated twice by the French Government. Ms. O'Brian was the first American to receive the *Medaille de la Reconnaissance*. She also was awarded the *Medaille des Epidemies* decoration usually reserved exclusively for nurses. Her World War I letters home to her family in Buffalo formed the basis of a book which repudiated war. In the forward of her book *No Glory* (1936), Alice explained a reluctance to make her private letters public. However, with a forecast of new winds of war, she explained, "But a new generation has grown up, apparently inclined to experiment with the same futility into which we all plunged a score of years ago, and it seemed to me that perhaps a few might find a deterring influence in the simple account of daily happenings in a background of grave events and profound tragedy." During World War II, Alice returned to serve the country, this time as Director an Officers' Club in New York City.

Ms. O'Brian died in 1972 at the age of 92 and is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery alongside her family (Section 8, Lot 170).

(SOURCES: Anna Wachtel, Buffalo State College-Museum Studies Program; Patrick Kavanaugh, History of Women in Forest Lawn Cemetery)



Black Rock HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1902 Niagara Street
Buffalo, New York, 14207-2775

Hours

Thursday & Friday 11 am – 3 pm
Group visits/tours by appointment

We apologize but our museum is closed until further notice. We will see you soon!

Find us online:
www.blackrockhistoricalsociety.com



@blackrockhistorical

The BRHS Seeks Volunteers

Your interest and love of history are the best reasons to volunteer! Students, seniors, and everyone in-between are welcome to share your various areas of interest. Every volunteer can make a difference. To volunteer, contact us via email (info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com) or call

Artifact Donations

We continue to seek historic objects, documents, or photographs that tell the story of our community. Please call to schedule an appointment or discuss your finds. (call 716-913-5447).

Welcome New Members!

◇ David DeBoy

Thank You for Renewing Your Membership!

◇ William Ayler III
◇ Jeanine Baran
◇ Mary + Paul Buchanan
◇ Steve Lakomy
◇ Cheryl Lyles
◇ Michael Zielinski

Thank You for Your Donation!

◇ Michael Zielinski
◇ James Lee

Thank You, Collection Donors!

◇ Kay Brown
◇ Charles Chapman
◇ Mary Ann Kedron
◇ Steve Lakomy
◇ Paul Redding
◇ Rebecca Torres



We wish to extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Joey Giambra.

(Joey Giambra Jazz Combo, BRHS "Music of the Ages" Fundraiser, 2019)



MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
OF NEW YORK



Submissions:

Are you knowledgeable about historic people, places and events in the Black Rock, Riverside, Grant-Amherst or West Hertel neighborhoods? We always welcome members to submit articles to the BRHS newsletter. If you wish to include your stories in our next newsletter, please provide your submission via email (info@blackrockhistoricalsociety.com) no later than September 15, 2020. Thank you.