

OHRAB Final Project Report January 2020

Institution/Organization Name: Clark County Historical Society

Project Title: Oral History Digitization Project

Project Director:

Natalie Fritz

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Summary of Project Activities and Accomplishments:

The Clark County Historical Society was founded in 1897 by a group of the county's leading citizens who wanted to preserve artifacts of earlier lifeways. In the 120+ years since, the Society has accumulated collections similar to those of many Midwestern historical societies. The Society's collections reflect virtually every facet of life and work in this unique yet representative community, and the same holds true for our oral history collections. While they are valuable records of factual information about Clark County's wider history and development, these interviews are also a treasure-trove of recollections about every-day life in our community. The people, stories, and experiences found in the interviews help create a well-rounded picture of Clark County's history. These interviews, done between 1986 and 2002 include: Caro Bayley Bosca, a pioneering aviator who served as a WASP during WWII; famed jazz vibraphonist Johnny Lytle and educator Ernestine Lucas, both who provide inside into the African American experience in the community; roundtable interviews on the YWCA, with local jazz musicians and with business owners and employees, and more. These interviews provide first-hand information that might not be found elsewhere in the archives and literally give voice to local history, also preserving something of the personality of the interviewees.

In August 2019, we were grateful to receive grant funds in the amount of \$1,043.00 to allow us to have those vital interviews transferred to a digital format that would allow them to be used and shared more widely. While digitizing the collection has been a goal for years, it became a much

higher priority following a disastrous pipe burst and flood in April 2019. We felt incredibly fortunate that archival materials were not severely affected by the disaster. However, after seeing the water damage done to our artifact collections housed just below the archives, and knowing that the pipe burst dangerously close to where the oral history collection was stored, it made us realize just how easily that entire collection could have been wiped out. Their physical vulnerability to possible disaster, age, and importance to our local history made us so grateful for the opportunity to be able to do more to preserve and share that history.

On August 16, Natalie ordered from Amazon a Western Digital 2TB Elements Portable External Hard Drive with USB 3.0 for \$63.90. It arrived on August 20. On August 29 Natalie delivered the cassette tapes to Curtis Media Transfer in Huber Heights and provided a spreadsheet with all the known info on each recording (interviewer/interviewee, length, amount of tapes, etc). A check for \$2,174.40 was mailed to Curtis Media Transfer in the first week of September and they began work on September 15, which they anticipated would take 6-8 weeks. The additional cost not funded by the grant was funded through a trust.

In the meantime, while the interviews were offsite being digitized, we continued work at the Heritage Center in collections care and recovery following our spring water disaster. Through the month of September, we rebuilt and readjusted over 100 shelving units and began to move collections materials back into the collections storage area out of the temporary public space that was used out of necessity. Once that public space was cleared, workers replaced the water damaged flooring and Natalie and other staff turned their full attention to preparing for two major wizard themed events held in that space the first two weeks of October. We did not hear from Curtis Media Transfer during any of that time, but, with our focus on collections care and the events, we would not have had time to do anything in October even if the transfers even if they had been completed in the original estimated 6-8 week time frame.

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The first week of November, we were finally past our events and all collections had been moved back into the second floor storage area, so Natalie was able to officially reopen the research library to the public for regular weekly hours for the first time since April and resume normal archival projects. When she contacted Curtis Media Transfer to get an update on progress on November 6, 2019, they said that the transfers were continuing and did not give an estimated completion date. On December 31, 2019, we received notice that the transfers were completed. Natalie picked them up on Monday, January 6. The transfer of the files to our server on January 7 took about 6 hours. Two volunteers, Thomas and Cathie, then spent several hours between January 10 and January 24 listening to the audio files and matching them up with the corresponding transcripts in our files. On January 17, Thomas, the volunteer who has been editing and indexing the 1,400+ page transcript of the audio for the past two years, finally completed the index. On January 30, Cathie began another edit of the transcript, mostly correcting errors in surnames and locations. As a longtime local, there were errors that she has been able to catch that non-locals might not. Aside from mentions on social media, and in our upcoming newsletter, a photo of the transferred oral histories with a caption about the project will be in the local newspaper in February, perhaps with a longer article if we are able to get a reporter.

On January 16, Natalie met with a CCHS board member from the Outreach Committee and a Clark State student who will be working with us through May 2020 to create videos for marketing and sharing of our collections. We will be working with the student to pull audio from the interviews to use portions of the oral histories in short videos that marry the audio with images and artifacts from our collections to tell snippets of local history. We envision this to be an ongoing series. Over the next few months, we will do what we can to upload the audio to various online outlets and look forward to exploring the new opportunities for sharing local history that are now open to us.

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PROJECT HOURS

Staff

Natalie Fritz 15

Volunteers

Thomas Yeater 45

Cathie Kuss 10

TOTAL 75

Cost match: \$1,516.95

Link to Oral History Content List:

http://collections.heritagecenter.us/images/upload/oral_history_collection.pdf

Link to Oral History Survey:

<http://collections.heritagecenter.us/images/upload/OralHistoryCollectionSurvey.pdf>

Link to Indexed Transcription of All Interviews:

<http://collections.heritagecenter.us/images/upload/OHCollectiveTranscript.pdf>

COLLECTIONS CORNER

Virginia Weygandt-Director of Collections ~ Kasey Eichensehr-Senior Curator
Natalie Fritz-Curator of Library and Archives



There are many stories to be shared about local African Americans who made an impact on their community both locally in Springfield and Clark County and sometimes nationally. At the Heritage Center through the month of March, there is a lobby exhibit that tells some of those stories. The display features video clips and oral history interviews from the community, provided by The Springfield Links, Inc.



History Madness

Clark County Historical Society
Showdown

On March 14, 2020, Virginia, Kasey, and Natalie will be attending the spring Region 7 meeting for the Ohio Local History Alliance, which will be hosted by Armstrong Air and Space Museum in Wapakoneta. These regional meetings are a wonderful opportunity each year to meet with people from other local historical societies and share ideas, stories, discuss problems, and come up with solutions together! We've spent the past year dealing with a major disaster and have come out on the other side still standing and still protecting and preserving our local history, so we can offer a unique (and probably terrifying) first hand perspective. At that meeting we will be sharing a bit of the story about our year and how good collections management practices and a disaster plan helped to mitigate damage. Our hope is that we can help other historical sites by sharing our story and lessons learned.

Over the last few years we brought you a different kind of March Madness. In 2015 we had 32 artifacts in a showdown. In 2016 we put together a historical figure matchup between 64 local people, then we put local places head to head! In 2019 we highlighted new items donated to the collection over the past few years, all things that help tell the story of OUR local history. For our 2020 March Madness, we are matching up some of the fascinating historical figures that you can look forward to meeting at our annual Night at the Museum, which will be on Saturday, April 4 from 6-10pm. We'll release the bracket matchups in March, be sure to vote for your favorites and make sure to join us for an exciting Night at the Museum when those characters bring history to life!!



In August 2019, we were grateful to receive grant funds from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) to allow us to have over 100 oral history interviews in our collection transferred to a digital format that would allow them to be used and shared more widely. While they are valuable records of factual information about Clark County's wider history and development, these interviews are also a treasure-trove of recollections about every-day life in our community. The people, stories, and experiences found in the interviews help create a well-rounded picture of Clark County's history. These interviews, done between 1986 and 2002 include: Caro Bayley Bosca, a pioneering aviator who served as a WASP during WWII; famed jazz vibraphonist Johnny Lytle and educator Ernestine Lucas, both who provide inside into the African American experience in the community; roundtable interviews on the YWCA, with local jazz musicians and with business owners and employees, and more. These interviews provide first-hand information that might not be found elsewhere in the archives and literally give voice to local history. We look forward to finding new ways to share these wonderful stories in the future.

In April, Virginia, Kasey, and Natalie will be teaching a four week class for the United Senior Services SAILL program on preserving your own family heirlooms, collections, and digital materials. Contact USS for more information.