



Let's Make History

The Project:

Given the historic nature of this global pandemic, History Museum staff will be working to document events as they unfold. The Museum encourages community members to keep a personal journal or diary about his/her experiences throughout the pandemic. Future generations may be interested to learn:

- What ways did your daily life change? How did that make you feel?
- With much of the community staying home, how did your personal relationships with family members, friends, and/or colleagues change?
- Are there particular activities or "simple pleasures" that you miss during this time period, or have you found new pursuits throughout this ordeal?
- Have you, a friend, or a loved one become sick with COVID-19 or another ailment? What, if any, medical treatment did you seek? How have you dealt with the illness?

When the threat from COVID-19 passes, the Museum will ask that community members donate their journals and diaries to the History Museum for safekeep. Future generations will learn from our experiences.

Update March 19, 2020

Thank you to everyone who has committed to keeping a journal or diary during the pandemic. Your writing will be invaluable for historians working to reconstruct the human experience. Historians call these personal stories of everyday life "history from below." By comparison "history from above" analyzes the actions, or inactions, of national governments and institutions, large corporations, and the like. Both types of history are important, the difference is in scope and influence.

Here's some tips to help make your journal stand the test of time:

- Be honest. Historians prioritize sources that are truthful and disregard those that are not.
- Start with the basics. Include your name, age, occupation, where you live/work, and who you live with. Then, date each entry to establish a timeline. Every historian, like a good journalist, must begin with the five Ws.
- Providing detail and context is key. The most compelling histories connect us through time. The more future generations can project themselves into this moment through your words, the more meaningful your writings will become.

If you haven't begun a journal but would like to, it's not too late! Simply pick up a pen and get to work.



The History Museum will continue to post suggestions for your journals and welcomes your comments. Thanks again and be well.

Update March 24, 2020

The outpouring of interest and support for this project has been overwhelming. The History Museum appreciates your efforts. To answer some of the common questions we've received:

Q- Who can participate?

A- Anyone and everyone. The History Museum's collection policy focuses on Appleton, the Fox Cities, and Outagamie County. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is a global event that affects us all. Please feel free to adopt and modify the project for your personal use, class assignment, etc.

Q- Anyone can participate, even kids?

A- Yes! Historians often struggle to document children in the historical record because they are less likely to record their actions and feeling and have limited representation in legal documents. Although your child may not journal regularly, he/she can still participate. Have him/her draw a picture and describe to you what is depicted. Record his/her thoughts in your journal or on a separate document and keep it with the artwork. This will help create a historic document and provide a healthy form of self-expression and bonding moment for the two of you.

Q- Can we, should we, include pictures or videos?

A- Again, yes. Putting a face with a name is always a welcome addition for historians. The overall goal of this journaling project is to track change overtime. Writing down your thoughts and feelings is the best way to accomplish that, but pictures and videos are an awesome supplement.

Q- Is it too late to start?

A- No, it's never too late to begin your journal. Start today and reflect on the past couple weeks. Record your experiences and then try to journal regularly.

Thanks for participating, stay well, and remember #SaferAtHome

Update April 6, 2020

How are your journals going? In addition to creating a sound historical record, the History Museum hopes that you can find some comfort and peace of mind through this process. We appreciate your efforts and want you to know that you are not alone. The Wisconsin Historical Society has even caught on and begun a journaling project of its own.

Here's a couple things to consider as we begin a new week. Historians generally specialize in a particular field like social, economic, or political history. Writing journal entries dedicated to



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those subjects will be useful for scholars someday.

Social history topics—

- Have you been practicing social distancing? If so, what has been the hardest part? If not, why have you made that choice?
- How do you follow developments in the news? Are you watching nightly news broadcasts, reading stories online, or have you chosen to disengage from the news cycle?

Economic history topics—

- What, if any, economic impact has the pandemic had on your finances? Millions of Americans are now unemployed and millions more have had their hours reduced. Has the economic downturn had personal ramifications for you?
- What are your hopes or fears for the \$2 trillion dollar relief bill Congress recently passed?

Political history topics—

- Has the pandemic changed your opinion on local, state, or national political leaders? Why or why not?
- Today Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers postponed the state's primary election until June 9. Do you support this decision?

Update April 17, 2020

It's been one month already since the Museum introduced "Let's Make History" and people across Northeast Wisconsin and beyond started keeping a journal. The time and effort you dedicate to this project is an investment in future generations. Thank you for that! We hope you have found the experience worthwhile and even therapeutic in these trying times. With Wisconsin's Safer at Home order recently extended until May 26 now is a good time for reflection.

- How are you feeling about the time you have spent at home to this point?
 - Describe the challenges you've faced and the successes you've had.
- Are there things that you have learned about yourself, your family, or our community?
 - How have those discoveries impacted your experience during the pandemic?
- What are your thoughts about the extension of the Safer at Home order?
 - Does it present new hardships or opportunities?

Keep up the good work and stay healthy!

Update May 18, 2020

The past month has been a whirlwind of activity, or inactivity, breaking news, and drastic changes. Thank you for participating in "Let's Make History" documenting your experiences



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through all of it. The Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the governor's Safer at Home order and some businesses have quickly reopened. This is a drastic turn of events, and certainly worth journaling about. Here's some inspiration to get you writing:

- On May 13 the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down the Safer at Home order. What impact does that decision have on you personally and professionally?
 - Are you excited that some businesses are reopening and/or are you worried this may lead to more widespread cases of COVID-19?
 - Will you reopen your business or return to work sooner than anticipated? How are you feeling about that and will you take increased precautions?
- Much of the country is in the process of reopening while the severity of the pandemic intensifies.
 - What are your hopes and fears for the next 3, 6, or 9 months?
 - Do you anticipate life returning to "normal"?
 - What, if any, plans do you have to keep yourself and others safe?

As always, thank you for writing and stay healthy.

Update July 21, 2020

You've been "making history" documenting the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time to save it for posterity! Please donate your journal(s) or diary to the History Museum for safekeeping.

Your journal will become part of a new History Museum collection dedicated to chronicling the community's experience during this unique time. Other items to consider donating may include small household objects, personal effects, COVID-19 signage, or even a bread recipe, anything that can help tell future generations our story.

For more information on how to donate please contact Chief Curator Dustin Mack at dustin@myhistorymuseum.org