October proved to be an exciting month for staff in the Local History & Genealogy Division. New PT Library Assistant Dan Cody joined the staff early in the month and has already become quite adept at assisting patrons at the reference desk.

The opportunity afforded by this year’s Staff Day’s unstructured format was put to good use. While part of the staff worked on organizing materials amassed in the staff office area, including records and other items relocated from the former City Historian’s Office, others worked to relocate materials from the L16 storage room in Lower Stacks to more appropriate storage within the division. Primarily publication series, the material ranged from neighborhood newsletters to locally produced special interest publications. The simple activity of shifting a few dozen dusty series from one location to another allowed the staff involved to operate as a team and to interact with relatively novel material simultaneously. Everyone on this project had some broad familiarity with some of the material but this collaborative effort encouraged generated conversations about the material they were handling, ultimately resulting both a breadth and depth of knowledge that will allow staff to better serve patrons. It was a great way to tackle a project that helped preserve fragile material, deepen the sense of collaboration among staff, and collectively gain a better understanding of this part of our collection.

But the real excitement came on October 21 when City Historian/Historical Services Consultant Christine L. Ridarsky was notified that a time capsule had been discovered in the base of the Frederick Douglass statue when it was being moved within Highland Park. PT Library Assistant Emily Morry immediately began researching the statute’s history to determine when the time capsule was installed and what it might contain. Meanwhile, Ridarsky fields media inquiries and worked with City and County officials to ensure that the box and its contents were properly assessed and preserved.

Unfortunately, local conservator Ralph Wiegandt determined that the box was never sealed before being placed in the base of the statue in 1941 and that, as a result, water had been infiltrating it almost from the start. The contents amounted to a pile of wet pulp and could not be salvaged as individual items. Upon Wiegandt’s recommendation, Ridarsky contacted Document Reprocessors in Penn Yan, which agreed to pick up the box and to treat it using a vacuum freeze-drying process at no cost. That process safely and quickly removes moisture in a way that prevents mold growth and preserves the contents in situ. The box and its contents will be preserved as an artifact rather than an archival collection. Notably, Document Processors has conducted conservation treatment on numerous items recovered from the RMS Titanic.
On the bright side, due to the research conducted by Morry, we were able to trace the history of the time capsule and compile what we think is a fairly comprehensive list of its contents. Most of the items were printed ephemera, such as newspaper, pamphlets, and maps, that were mass produced, with copies existent in archives throughout the community. Of course, a few items, such as an original letter from the Haitian government, which donated a substantial sum of money to fund the statue, were unique and irreplaceable. We are in discussions with the City Communications Department about the possibility of mounting an exhibit in the future in which we would display the time capsule in its preserved state alongside copies of the items that would have been inside.

Once the box is returned from Document Reprocessors, the City intends to transfer it to the Rochester Museum & Science Center for long-term preservation. Wiegandt has recommended that it be stored and displayed in special argon-gas-filled case to sustain a stable environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials usage</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolls of Microfilm</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microfiche (NYS Vital Records)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Clipping Files</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs (boxes)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamphlet Files</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrapbooks</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archives/Manuscript Collections</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps (non-bound)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Programs**

PT Genealogy Specialist Barb Koehler presented the second session in the 2019–2020 season of her popular series, *Think Genealogy It’s Saturday* (TGIS). The session featured a very interactive discussion touching on online family trees, genealogy TV programs, and genealogy software. Several participants stayed afterward to conduct research on their own, making extended use of five of the six patron computers in the division.

Author Richard Chait presented a talk on “Claude Bragdon and His Rochester Legacies” as this month’s offering in the Rochester’s Rich History series.

The division’s Programming Team (FT Librarian II Gabe Pellegrino, FT Librarian I Brandon Fess, and Koehler) met once this month. Discussion focused on planning for a 2020 series marking the 19th Amendment centennial and Susan B. Anthony’s 200th birthday next year.
Exhibitions

The division’s well-received exhibit, *Everyday People: The Dinkle Family and Rochester’s African American Past*, remains on display until August 31, 2020. The team that planned the exhibit (Morry, FT Historical Researcher Michelle Finn, and PT Clerk Veronica Shaw) have been working with our Programming Team to schedule related programming. The first of these schedule programs is a public reception with members of the Dinkle family on Saturday, November 9, from 1 to 3 pm, in the Local History Exhibits Hall, 2nd floor, Rundel Memorial Building.

In addition, a small exhibit celebrating Archives Month opened in the second-floor lobby at the beginning of the month. Curated by City Records Manager Michele Rowe with assistance from Finn, the exhibit features items from the City’s Municipal Archives relating to Frederick Law Olmsted’s design for Seneca Park. This exhibit will be up through at least mid-November.

The library’s traveling woman suffrage exhibition, *Because of Women Like Her…Winning the Vote in New York State*, remains on display at the Richardson-Bates House Museum in Oswego, NY; 85 people visited in October.

Community Outreach/Meetings

Finn gave a talk on “A Brief History of the Rochester Public Library” at the Rochester City School District’s Office of Adult & Career Education Services (OACES). This program offers continuing education and English language classes for adults, many of whom are newly arrived in the country and are seeking high school equivalency degrees. Finn distributed library card applications to the students. She will bring back library cards for those who submit them before her next presentation at the school in November.

Finn and Educational Consultant Andrea Geglia presented on our grant-funded Erie Canal for the Classroom project at the 2019 Annual Conference of the Rochester Area Council for the Social Studies. See below for more information on the project and the feedback we received from conference goers.

Ridarsky visited three classrooms in two schools within the Rochester City School District (RCSD) to work with students who are preparing projects for the local National History Day (NHD) for Rochester City Schools contest in February, as well as the regional NHD competition at the Genesee Country Village & Museum in March. The project, a result of a partnership between the library, the RCSD Social Studies Department, and the Rochester Institute of Technology Archives, is funded by the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library (FFRPL). It has been at least 20 years since RCSD students have participate in the regional competition.
A group of students from the Rochester Institute of Technology’s Museum Studies program visited the Rundel Memorial Building this month to tour the Crafting Democracy exhibit in Hacker Hall. The group then made its way up to the 2nd floor, where Finn led them on a tour of the Municipal Archives exhibit, the Everyday People exhibit, and the Local History & Genealogy Division.

A tour group of about 15 senior citizens from Valley Manor, accompanied by Rebecca Fuss of FFRPL, visited the division early in the month. Pellegrino provided an overview of the division and our services. Pellegrino was excited to make a personal connection with Lucretia McClure, Valley Manor Librarian, who was on the tour. Lucretia retired from the University of Rochester’s Edward G. Miner Library, where Pellegrino worked in the mid-1980s. Sadly, we learned that the 94-year-old McClure passed away on October 17.

Finn, Pellegrino, and Cody worked with many of the 120 numerous fifth- and sixth-grade Hilton Central School District students this month as they explored the resources available in the Local History & Genealogy Division during a field trip to the library. Pellegrino explained that the “wood drawer thing” was originally for catalog cards and explained how the cards were used. Students also made use of our maps and research databases.

Fess represented the division at the annual Rochester Archives Fair, sponsored by the Rochester Regional Library Council’s Rochester Area Special Collections, Archives, and Libraries special interest group. The event is an annual opportunity to show the public the variety of materials held by local institutions. The library’s display featured materials from the George F. Rafter Photomicrography collection and the Obed Hussey papers in line with this year’s science and technology theme. Rafter was a pioneer of the process of photographing objects under a microscope; Hussey invented the first successful mechanical reaper.

Pellegrino gave a 45-minute tour and discussion on the Local History & Genealogy Division for the Monroe County Library System’s Adult Services Librarians group, which met at Central this month.

WROC-TV Channel 8 reporter Maureen McGuire interviewed Morry about her research on the Manhattan Street neighborhood, which was demolished during construction of the Inner Loop and an Urban Renewal initiative. The news segment is expected to run in late November.

Ridarsky met with Daniel McCabe, historian of the Wadsworth Square Neighborhood Association, to discuss support for a GIS mapping project that will allow historical data and resources to be linked to locations on maps. Ridarsky will serve as an advisor on the project, which is being framed as a partnership between the City’s Maps & Surveys Office and the neighborhood association.
Ridarsky and Finn attended the semi-annual meeting of Monroe County Historians. Finn serves as secretary for this group.

Fess continues to represent the division on the Anthony Mascioli 2020 Rainbow Dialogues planning team and met with the group once this month.

Ridarsky participated in conference call with chairs of the National Council on Public History’s various committees. She serves as co-chair of the organization’s Committee for Government Historians.

Several staff members attended the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon hosted by the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library. Local History is grateful to have volunteers from Rochester Genealogical Society as well as others who contribute their talents for various projects.

The Local History and Genealogy Division’s staff met once this month.

The team researching Digital Asset Management solutions for the division met once this month in preparation for submission of a preliminary report due on November 1.

**Professional Development**
Finn attended a workshop at Irondequoit Library on Understanding Privilege, offered as part of the MCLS Diversity, Intersectionality, and Privilege Speaker Series.

**Special Collections**
The division accepted an accrual (additional materials) of two cubic feet of additional materials from Hugh Mitchell to be added to his existing environmental activism collection. This material has been accessioned and Fess has begun rehousing and describing it.

Fess also accessioned materials recent transferred from the Out Alliance as part of our ongoing partnership to preserve materials documenting the history of Rochester’s LGBTQ+ communities. The most recent transfers include collections from and/or about Ellen Yacknin, Margaret Mary Lau, Helping People With AIDS, and the Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS.

Our special collections continue to benefit from the work of several volunteers. Their work this month has included completion of a finding aid for the *Daily Record* records, which includes documentation of that newspaper’s operating history from 1910 to 1945, integration of loose newspapers into the collection, and continuation of our inventory and assessment of maps and ephemera.
Digital Projects
Rochester Voices
The Erie Canal for the Classroom project to develop educational tools on the Erie Canal for 4th grade remains on track for successful completion in January 2020. Educational Consultant Andrea Geglia is developing classroom curricula, while Finn works to gather and upload more than 100 original primary resources—digitized maps, photographs, broadsides, articles, a travel journal, and more—to support student learning. The materials and resources that come out of this project will be mounted on RochesterVoices.org in a new Erie Canal topic section, and in the Classroom Connections section for 4th grade.

As noted above, Finn and Geglia introduced the project to teachers at the 2019 Annual Conference of the Rochester Area Council for the Social Studies this month. Although the current project is geared primarily towards 4th-grade teachers and students, conference attendees taught everything from Kindergarten to high school. The group was very engaged and responded enthusiastically to the project and the classroom resources being developed. They had good suggestions for ways we might expand the project in the future, including the suggestion to offer the classroom materials in Spanish. Finn will investigate the possibility of pursuing a grant to do this.

Social Media
Staff from the Local History and Genealogy Division contributed content for 11 social media posts in October: 3 on Twitter, 3 on Facebook, 2 Facebook Events, and 3 blog entries on www.rochistory.wordpress.com. These posts reached 5,228 people: 1,949 on Facebook, 736 on Twitter, and 2,552 on our blog; 102 people engaged with our posts on Facebook, 18 on Twitter, and 50 on our blog. Morry contributed one blog entry this month: “Kool Things: The History of the J. Hungerford Company.” This blog had a reach of 982, engaged 33 viewers, and generated 12 link clicks by the end of the month. Substitute Librarian Christopher Brennan contributed a blog entry “Knit and Purl: The Rochester Knitting Works,” which had a reach of 1,023, engaged 21 viewers, and generated 27 link clicks. PT Clerk Hope Christiansen contributed a third post in her newsletter series: “Haunted Books,” which had a reach of 547, engaged 11 viewers, and generated 9 link clicks. In this post she highlighted 11 books in our collection on ghosts and other paranormal activities in Rochester, the Finger Lakes, Western New York, and the state.

Volunteer/Intern hours
Docents from the Rochester Genealogical Society contributed 24 hours of service to the division and assisted six patrons this month. In addition, we were aided by five unaffiliated volunteers (Ira Srole – 27.25 hours, Kevin Allen – 8 hours, Noeme Liestman – 6.75 hours, Ciara Arnold – 20 hours, and Karen Knoll – 4.5 hours) and one intern from the Rochester Rehabilitation Employment Connection (Dakota Spinner – 64 hours). In all, volunteers contributed 154.5 hours.
Upcoming Programs/Events

February 1, 2020 – National History Day (NHD) for Rochester City Schools Local Competition
Kusler-Cox Auditorium, 3rd Floor, Rundel Memorial Building, Central Library of Rochester & Monroe County. Students from 2-3 Rochester City Schools will showcase their history projects in preparation for the Regional NHD content at Genesee Country Village & Museum in March.

February 14, 2020 - Dedication of a historic marker at 271 Hamilton Street, the site of the only one of Frederick Douglass’s Rochester homes still standing. Time TBD. (Justin Roj has already put a hold on the mayor’s calendar for this.)

February 15, 2020, Susan B. Anthony’s Birthday. Birthday parties to be held at various locations throughout the city. Details to come.