



History Happenings

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Events

We are hoping to re-open the Exhibit Hall in a limited capacity beginning in July or August (YAY!). The Research Library will remain closed to the public through the end of the year, although individual research appointments can be made with the archivist starting in August or September. Please contact: archives@thehistorycenter.net

- **June 15th-July 4th - Path Through History Weekends** (Virtual events across New York State) - Local events TBA
- **July 10th - Walk This Play** is available for on-demand download!
- **July 11th & 25th - 11-1pm - Virtual HistoryForge** Transcription sessions of the 1920 Ithaca census over zoom. Email historyforge@thehistorycenter.net for details.

UPCOMING

- Screen Print the Ithaca Kitty - Youth Program - August TBD

Last Month at The History Center...



HistoryForge volunteers have been meeting bi-weekly over Zoom the last few months to enter Ithaca census records from the 20th century. Have you completed your census yet? You'd be doing a future historian a big favor!

Check out www.historyforge.net to explore their work!

Contact Eve Snyder at historyforge@thehistorycenter.net if you'd like to join in the virtual fun!

The History Center Awarded Two CARES Relief Grants

At the mid-point of June, The History Center in Tompkins County faced a great deal of short-term uncertainty. The ongoing public health crisis, and the economic consequences, have resulted in significant projected losses across all of our income streams. The Board of Directors and staff were tackling the challenges head on, but there were simply no easy solutions. However, the last two weeks have brought great news for the organization, and we are thrilled to finally share the good news!

The [National Endowment for the Humanities](https://www.nationalendowment.gov/) selected The History Center in Tompkins County

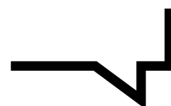
as one of 317 funded applications for the [NEH CARES relief grants](#). The successful *Youth Program Resiliency*, and *Community Archives and Exhibits* award will provide critical support for a selection of our fall humanities programs, ongoing archival work, and the creation of supplemental digital content for the Exhibit Hall. The total award of \$79,814 is primarily designated for staff expenses, occupancy, and programmatic costs. The NEH financial support fundamentally changes The History Center's outlook over the next 12 months. We are excited to continue serving the Tompkins County community and beyond with the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The History Center is also thrilled to announce we also received a separate [CARES relief grant](#) through [Humanities New York](#) (HNY). HNY has long supported programming and exhibits at The History Center, most recently providing support for the collaborative series entitled *Sisters of Change: Dorothy Cotton and Unsung Heroines for Racial Justice*. The new award of \$10,000 supports ongoing archival work for both our COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter collections, in addition to ensuring the Research Library remains accessible to the public. Our whole team is incredibly thankful for the continued support of Humanities New York during the current period of deep economic uncertainty.

Both of these relief grants strengthen the short-term financial outlook for the museum. The History Center will always be a part of your community, and will continue to build opportunities for everyone to engage with our local history. Stay tuned as we announce upcoming plans for the Fall – we're working on returning safely and supporting the continued health of our community. Although we don't know what specifics the next year will bring, we remain blessed to continue our exploration of Tompkins County with you.



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ENDOWMENT
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HUMANITIES



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NEW YORK

Make sure to like and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) for regular posts about local history.

[Black Lives Matter Archival Collection](#)

Protests are spreading across the world in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and we at The History Center are watching this history in the making, hoping to preserve the parts of it rising in Tompkins County. We are reaching out to the community and asking any of you to contact us with your experiences of this critical moment and send them to us. It could be an email, a diary, a blog, photographs, protest banners and signs, a video or podcast; any form of communication that works for you we would be grateful to receive.

The History Center's Black History Collection will be enhanced with an accompanying

Black Lives Matter Collection, and it will become part of the archived history of Tompkins County; used in exhibits, educational programs, and by researchers and students documenting the history of this county. We recognize the current Black Lives Matters protests emerge out of a long history of organizing, and community action in

The History Center in Tompkins County
**Black Lives Matter Archival Collection
in Tompkins County**

In recent weeks thousands of demonstrators have gathered across Tompkins County to protest police brutality and racism in the wake of the recent killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by law enforcement, and Ahmaud Arbery by white vigilantes. **These local protests are part of a global movement that has emerged to protest systemic racism and excessive force used by police departments across America on black and brown bodies.**

The problem of unjustified and horrific violence against black and brown people, often at the hands of the police who are tasked to serve the community, is not new. There is a long and grim history behind the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. This history is coupled with the black and brown community's heightened vulnerability to the effects of societal stressors, most recently seen in the disproportionate physical and economic effects of COVID-19. This moment in time has become an inflection point, and black and brown people, with allies of other groups, are seizing it and speaking out with righteous fury and saying, [no more](#).

Protests are spreading across the world in support, and we at The History Center are watching this history in the making, hoping to preserve the parts of it rising in Tompkins County. **We are reaching out to the community and asking any of you to contact us with your experiences of this critical moment and send them to us.** It could be an email, a diary, a blog, photographs, protest banners and signs, a video or podcast; any form of communication that works for you we would be grateful to receive.

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Please send all materials to Donna Eschenbrenner at archives@thehistorycenter.net with information about the date, time, and location of images and author attribution of any written pieces.

Visit www.thehistorycenter.net to learn more, and follow us at @TompkinsHistory on your preferred social media platform for posts about local history.

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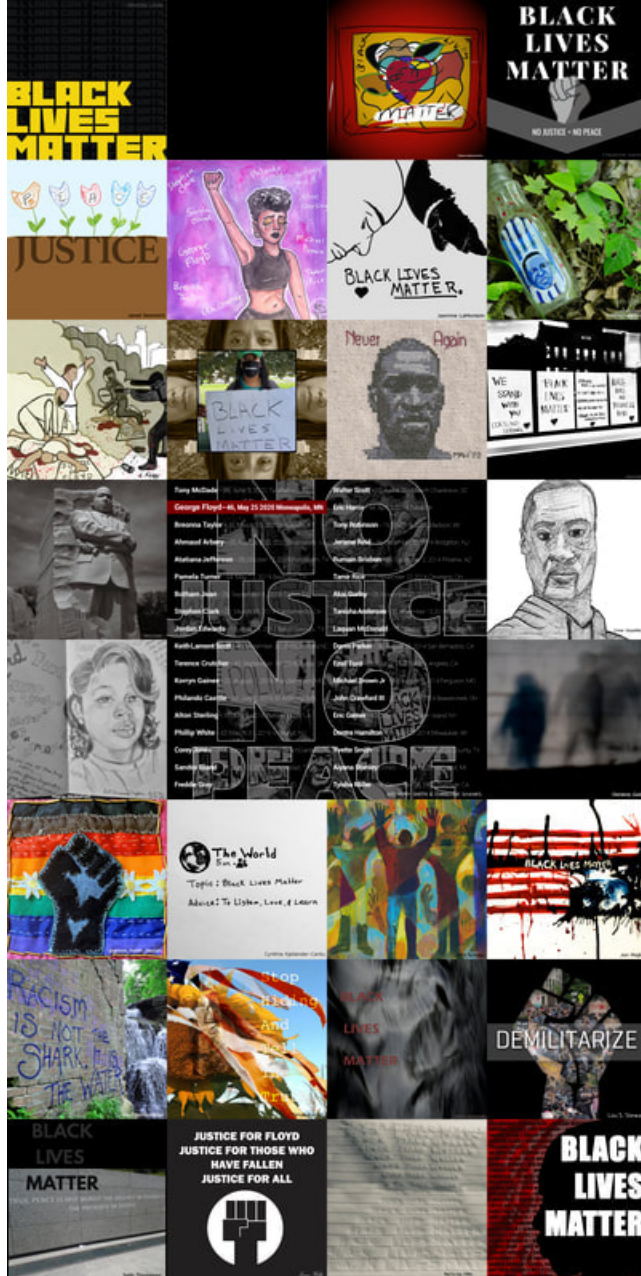
Please email archives@thehistorycenter.net with your input at this historic time.

We are also still accepting submissions for the COVID-19 in Tompkins County collection. These can also be submitted to Donna Eschenbrenner at archives@thehistorycenter.net.

Black Lives Matter Digital Quilt from TC3

Tompkins County, along with communities across the world, has responded with outrage and distress to the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black and Brown people too numerous to mention. There have been protests around the county in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and in response to this we at The History Center reached out to the community asking people to share their experiences of this tumultuous time. The contributions will become part of a new Black Lives Matter Collection, an accompaniment to our permanent Black History Archival Collection..

The first donation we received was an extraordinary digital quilt created by the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Tompkins Cortland Community College, in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement, and completed on the day of George Floyd's funeral in Houston, Texas on June 9th. Spearheaded by Christine J. Shanks, the graphic design program chair, it is



the first of four quilts that they hope to create, gradually adding donations from other members of the College community. The quilts are 20 x 40 inches and are made up of 5 x 5 inch squares surrounding a 10 x 10 inch central square. This creative process has generated serious and meaningful discussions among the student participants and fostered the kind of dialog that is needed at this critical time in our history. The voices of all the contributors, including non-visual artists, are featured in a vibrant format that is powerful and inspirational. The result has been a dramatic tribute to this transformative movement.

Submissions by TC3 students, staff, and faculty are still being accepted for the digital quilt. Learn more about the project [here](#).

Walk This Play - Self-Guided Theatrical Experiences

Ithaca NY's Cherry Arts and Wharton Studio Museum, in collaboration with the History Center in Tompkins County, proudly present **WALK THIS PLAY**, a download hub where two unique local walking-audio theatrical experiences can be accessed for the first time without advance tickets and experienced whenever audience members desire.

In both *Storm Country* and *The Missing Chapter*, audience members walk about a mile over the course of an hour, while

For Immediate Release: June 29, 2020
Contact: Sam Buggeln, sam@thecherry.org, 646-734-2740



The Cherry Arts, Wharton Studio Museum and History Center in Tompkins County invite Ithaca-area audiences to

WALK THIS PLAY!

This summer the critically-acclaimed headphone walking plays *Storm Country* and *The Missing Chapter* will be available for on-demand download for the first time.

This perfect socially-distant summer art and history experience launches at 10am on Friday, July 10, 2020

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In both *Storm Country* and *The Missing Chapter*, audience members walk about a mile over the course of an hour, while listening to original headphone-plays based in the hidden histories of Ithaca's neighborhoods. Hundreds of audience members enjoyed the original runs of these unique open-air theater experiences, and now for the first time those who missed out can experience these works on their own phones or digital devices, and on their own schedule.

The projects of **WALK THIS PLAY** can be downloaded for a \$5 suggested donation at thecherry.org, OR whartonstudiomuseum.org, OR thehistorycenter.net

Called a "beautiful" and "haunting" "audio adventure" by the *Ithaca Journal*, *Storm Country* immerses the audience in a world of voices, music, and environmental sounds as they travel among the ghosts of Ithaca's West End. Inspired by Ithaca author Grace Miller White's turn-of-the-20th century novel *Tess of The Storm Country*, the play interweaves strands of *Tess*' over-the-top melodrama with



listening to original headphone-plays based in the hidden histories of Ithaca's neighborhoods. Hundreds of audience members enjoyed the original runs of these unique open-air theater experiences, and now for the first time those who missed out can experience these works on their own phones or digital devices, and on their own schedule. Click the press release to the left to learn more about each play!

The projects of **WALK THIS PLAY** will be available on June 10th for download with a \$5 suggested donation at thecherry.org, OR whartonstudiomuseum.org, OR thehistorycenter.net.

Who Can You Find on HistoryForge?

Levi Spaulding, the free son of two parents who had been enslaved in Georgia, was the first African-American member of the Ithaca Police Department. He joined the department on October 12th 1919 and served the City of Ithaca for 11 years.

If you search for Levi Spaulding at www.historyforge.net he appears in the 1910 census at the age of 37, and his profession is listed as "barber" (this is 9 years before he joined the Ithaca Police Department). He and his wife Ora were lodgers at [427 N. Cayuga St](#), and had been married for 16 years.



Spaulding died unexpectedly of a heart attack on September 11th 1930 at the age of 58, following a 36-hour search for a man who had murdered his wife on Cleveland Avenue.

In 2016 the Ithaca Police Department created a [plaque honoring Patrolman Spaulding](#) which can be seen on East Seneca Street (by the E. Seneca Street Parking Garage - the site of the Ithaca Police Department when Spaulding served).

HERSTORY & Local Sisters of Change - Oral History Collections



HERSTORY WOMEN'S LIVES IN TOMPKINS COUNTY

In collaboration with the Dorothy Cotton Institute and the Cornell Anthropology Department, in the fall of 2019 undergraduate students from Cornell University explored the racial and social justice work of nine local women through oral history interviews. Also last fall as part of our youth program 7 young women interviewed 7 adult women about their lives and work in Tompkins County. These interviews are now part of the History Center's Oral History Collections and will serve to

educate, inspire, and inform future exhibits and generations looking at past experiences and stories of Tompkins County.

Director of Youth Education Julia Taylor was able to spend a sizable portion of her remote work time during quarantine transcribing these interviews, and the interviews will be available in our Research Library. Interviews were conducted with: Dr. Nia Nunn, Leslyn McBean Clairborne, Nancy Bereano, Audrey Cooper, Candace Edwards, Marcia Fort Baum, Dr. Patricia Rodriguez, Amy Somchanhavong, Ned Asta, Betsy Darlington, Cory Foster, Elaan Greenfield, Liz Bogel Ryan, Melissa Tuckey, and Yen Ospina.

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The Southside Loop Ithaca's African American Heritage Walking Tour

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Then & Now - Ithaca Journal Column

James L. Gibbs Sr. - Tompkins County Trailblazer

By Donna Eschenbrenner

"...Mr. Gibbs left the Southside in 1944 and embarked on another chapter in his full life of community service. He was the first African American to work at the Ithaca Post Office. He later became a district representative for Mohawk Airlines, where he was instrumental in Mohawk's hiring of the first black stewardess in the United States. He was a community relations consultant for Tompkins County Trust Company.

During his "retirement years" Mr. Gibbs performed even greater service to both the



African American and broader community in Ithaca. He was chairman of the Ithaca Civil Service Commission, a member of the board of directors for the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, vice president for the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, the first black member of the Ithaca Rotary Club, and later its president. He and his wife Hortense were active members of the NAACP. "

[READ MORE](#)

The History Center in Tompkins County

Exhibit Hall, Research Library, Archives, and Staff Offices are located at 110 North Tioga St. (Inside the Tompkins Center for History & Culture) Ithaca, N.Y. 14850

Web: www.thehistorycenter.net

Phone: 607-273-8284

Email: Staff emails can be found [here](#)

Hours: *Currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Follow us on social media
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[Contact Us!](#)