

In the Midst of Every Crisis Lies Great Opportunity

CONTRIBUTED BY JANE M. ELIASOF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER

WHEN THE WORLD shut down last March, the Montclair History Center began canceling programs and events. By April, when it became apparent that life would not be returning to normal any time soon, like so many others, we turned to Zoom to stay connected.

On Thursday, April 3, at noon and 7 pm, we aired our first, free, History at Home program about groundbreaking women from Montclair. We learned a lot that first program – how to organize a Zoom call, how to mute someone, how to use the chat room – many things that have become second nature to us after a year of connecting via Zoom and other online conferencing services. We also realized we needed to record these programs for people who couldn't join us live.

The first program was so well received, we began to offer History at Home weekly, lining up speakers on parks, people, architecture, books, neighborhoods, music, cemeteries, maps, the pandemic of 1918, and more. We're archived almost all of these one-hour programs – about 25 and counting – on the Montclair History Center's YouTube channel where they've been viewed more than 1,500 times.

While many of the programs are Montclair-centric, there's interest beyond the town's borders. In fact, in a recent survey, about 70% of the viewers said they tuned in from different towns, states, and even countries.

As Albert Einstein once said, "In the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity." We were clearly in the midst of a crisis but these weekly educational programs have been an opportunity for people to connect and a way for us to continue our programming. As one reader said, "your programs make history come alive, while [being] entertaining. They have been wonderful, produced under trying circumstances."

We offered the History at Home weekly through June 2020, then moved to every other Thursday schedule, which we continue today. Our website, www.montclairhistory.org, has all the upcoming programs and a link to join the Zoom call. Registration is not required. You can also sign up to receive email notifications about upcoming programs on the website. "Thanks to the History at Home programs, we're able to continue to fulfill our mission of sharing stories about Montclair's history despite COVID restrictions that have kept our doors mainly closed," says Elizabeth Hynes, President of the Board of Trustees. In addition to the History at Home programs, the Montclair History Center also offered a 5-week History Happy Hour program, Through the Looking Glass, an in-depth view of Montclair history through a national lens, and other online programs.

With the success of these programs, the Montclair History Center is confident it will continue to offer them even after the COVID crisis has passed.



The Pittsburgh Crawfords, a team that dominated the Negro Leagues Baseball in the early '30s.



This train station built in 1904 was the third one built at Watchung Avenue, then known as the Park Street station.

MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER'S HISTORY AT HOME

**Thursdays at noon and 7 pm
Free via Zoom**

■ **MARCH 4: The Negro Baseball League**

Ray Doswell, VP of Curatorial Services at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, joins us for an expert, deep dive into the fascinating history of Leagues that were finally and officially recog-

nized by Major League Baseball as major leagues. The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM) in Kansas City and the Yogi Berra Museum & Learning Center are partnering with us for this History at Home.

■ **MARCH 18: Montclair's Train Stations**

Montclair's history is inextricably linked to the two rail lines that came through town in the 1800s. Board Trustee Helen Fallon has researched the six Montclair train stations, uncovering some great drawings, maps, and photos beginning with the early days of photography.

■ **APRIL 1: A Past Future of Bloomfield Ave.**

- **APRIL 15: Take a Virtual Walk along South Mountain Avenue**
- **APRIL 29: Montclair Seen through a Magic Lantern**
- **MAY 13: Montclair Homes in Scientific American (The Sequel)**
- **MAY 27: Montclair's Art Colony** ■

Go to www.montclairhistory.org for the program link.