



Western Monroe Historical Society

Morgan-Manning House

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS – It was in the very warm dining room of the Morgan-Manning House that my intern Sydney Salisbury and I were working on this newsletter for you. As you may remember from the last newsletter, Sydney has been an intern at the House these past two semesters. She has now graduated and is able to give me a hand for a few hours each week.



Sydney reading 19th century etiquette books in the dining room

After spending last week reorganizing files, bookshelves, and artefact boxes on the 2nd floor of the House, we are now starting to transcribe family letters again. Sydney and I were especially curious to read about how the Morgan family may have managed the hot summer months in the House. They certainly did not have air conditioners in the late 1800s: how did they deal with the heat, especially with their thick and formal clothing? We must not forget that the belvedere, where we can now enjoy a beautiful view over the Village, acted as a conduit for the warm air and may have provided some welcome relief. Here is what Susan Morgan and her daughters discuss in their letters on this subject:

Brockport, June 14, 1891:

*“My dear Sara,
We have had two very hot days but this morning is very cool. I have to put my shawl partly on my head*

as I sit by the window. The air is so sweet. By the library window that syringa (lilac?) bush is in bloom and you know how sweet it is. Mrs. Gordon has just put up her baskets – they are beautiful. I told her she ought to put them on the veranda opposite us.”

Brockport, July 26, 1891:

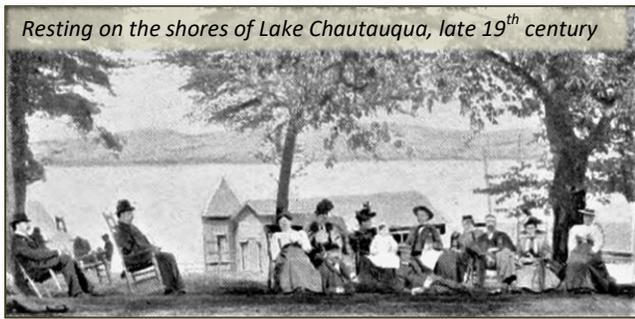
*“My dear Susie,
So far we have had a wonderful summer, not more than a week of very hot weather thus far – this very afternoon is beautiful.” [...] Well I must stop for awhile and look up Gladys or she will be melted, for it is hot this afternoon...”*

We also discovered that the family would occasionally travel to summer resort hotels. For instance, in August 1891, Susan Morgan, her two sons Harry and Gifford, and longtime servant Addie went to Kent House in Lakewood (NY), located on Chautauqua Lake.



Lakewood, N.Y. The Kent House, Chautauqua Lake

According to a brochure published by the hotel in 1897, “Lake Chautauqua is world-famed on account of its beautiful scenery and the numerous health and pleasure resorts located upon its shores. [...] The atmosphere possesses a freshness and bracingness born of contact with the undulating waves of the cool waters of the lake, that brings invigoration and health, drives away insomnia and defies malaria.”



With good fishing and the very best cuisine & service, guests wishing to stay more than two weeks would pay between \$17.50 and \$21 a week for a single room (we would pay between \$544 and \$653 today).

Kent House, Lakewood, Aug. 23rd

*“My dear Susie,
Finally I was ready to put on my dress + Addie took a large palm leaf fan + fanned me while I was hooking my waist – and we started on time [to head to the train station to start our journey towards Lakewood] [...]*

This [i.e., Kent House] is a beautiful hotel [...]. We are fourteen miles from the Chautauqua Assembly grounds and there are about 30 beautiful cottages on or near the hotel grounds. And a great many young people but unfortunately they are many Southerners + a little offish. If I only could form some acquaintance for the boys they would like it better. Flo Hooken + Luther Gordon¹ are here + they are the only ones we know. [...] Gifford is now down in the parlor sitting by a grate fire reading a book. Luther + Harry have gone for a walk...”

In the meantime, Sara Morgan tells her mother how hot it could also be in Europe:

Pension von Krueger – Rome, Italy
May 1, 1891

*“My dear Mama,
We had a lovely quiet pension. the only drawback was that it was on the third floor, but we had a nice little balcony all to ourselves and it was very acceptable as we had the warmest summer weather, Susie and I wished awfully to take off summer clothing (under things etc.) but we have learned to be very sensible...”*

¹ Luther Gordon was the Morgans’ neighbor, whose house was just across South Street.

Karlsruhe, May 30, 1891

*“My dear Mama,
It is so warm that one is able to wear summer dresses, and one commences to feel lazy...”*

According to the etiquette books of the time, it was acceptable to wear during the summer season “white and light tints [that] give an appearance of coolness in summer” (*Hill’s Manual of Social and Business Forms* (1888): 180). Costumes for the country and sea-side “may be somewhat brighter in tint than good taste would justify in the streets of a city, must yet be durable in quality and of material which can be washed. The brim of the hat should be broad to protect face from the sun. The fashion of making hats of shirred muslin is a very sensible one, as it enables them to be done up when they are soiled. The boots should be strong and durable. A waterproof is an indispensable article to the sojourner at country resorts” (*Manners of Culture and Dress of the Best American Society* (1894): 341).

When in France at Berck Plage,² Sara Morgan Manning and her son followed the customs of the time as shown in the picture below:



Seated beside the changing cabin, Sara, while not wearing the recommended broad brimmed hat, dons a long white and simple dress. As for Arnold, his bathing costume “should be made of flannel. A soft gray tint is the neatest, as it does not soon fade and grow ugly from contact with salt water.” He is lucky enough not to wear socks, as it was expected that

² Berck was renowned in the world for the treatment of tuberculosis, from which Arnold suffered most of his life. Sea bathing was seen as having some medical benefits.

“socks of the color of the dress complete the costume.” (*Manners of Culture and Dress of the Best American Society* (1894): 341).

In addition to Sydney, I want to thank Jack Bowser and Chris Mazzarella for helping me with the transcriptions of these letters and for gathering some of the background information provided above. If you too would like to participate in this transcription project, contact me at mmhhistorian@gmail.com.

May you and your loved ones be well and safe.

Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer, Historian

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Members,

Back in early March I offered to take the role of Acting President for the final year of Gordy Fox's term. He was stepping down (just as President) as of May 1. Sure, I was aware of COVID 19's appearance in other countries, but had no idea how drastically all of our lives would be affected in such a short time. Many of us sheltered at home in the mostly cold weather, coming out perhaps just to shop. We've now had some warmer (hotter) weather, and we are looking forward to fewer restrictions on our activities. Yeah! Obviously, we are facing new, unpredictable norms, but we can adjust and do so carefully.

Although programs and other activities have been cancelled, and our Annual Meeting postponed until May, 2021, our organization is not just languishing. There is some socially distanced activity at the House. Rozenn and her intern have been working on parts of the collection. Gordy has kindly been mentoring me, as well as paying bills and depositing donations. Dan Hawken and Gordy have taken care of some building and grounds chores. Rozenn and Erica Linden have met to discuss the grants we have received and the interviewing/hiring of consultants who will conduct assessments of our buildings, collection and processes. Dan hung bunting with the help of Will Hawken and Daniel Dailey. Our gardener, Cindy Graves, has been doing some needed maintenance on the gardens, and is looking forward to other projects. We have been accepting some great donations for our Carriage House Sale. Some of this is business as usual, but not in the usual way.

This time will actually allow our Board of Trustees, meeting via Zoom, to take a breath, take a look at the past and look ahead to the future. What has worked for us in the past that still works? What has worked for us in the past that doesn't work for us

now? How can we best tap the talents of our volunteers? What needs can be fulfilled by volunteers, and which are best left to professional? How can we reach more people and engage groups of all ages? What value do we add to the individuals and community? These are heavy questions that will be addressed in the months ahead.

Thank you to all who have been supportive of this transition, and to all who have been patient while our office is closed. It is difficult to definitely schedule anything right now, but we want to keep you all informed as time goes on. Please check social media and your e-mail for updates, and share the information with friends and family.

Sincerely,

Mary Lynne Turner, Acting President



- We were very sorry to have to cancel our **Old Fashioned 4th of July celebration** this year. However, we have to think of the health and safety of our community above all. We will enjoy it even more in 2021!
- We hope to reopen the House for **Sunday Tours** this summer. This will only be possible when the State of New York is in Phase 4 of reopening. We will email you with updates.

PLANNING FOR PEDDLERS MARKET – We are optimistically planning to be able to have **The Peddlers Market** this Fall. The event will comply with New York State guidelines to ensure the safety of all. Traditionally taking place in early September, we will keep you posted as to the exact date as soon as it is possible for us to do so.

In the meanwhile, we have started to **accept donations for the Carriage House Sale**. The contactless donations may be dropped off at the Carriage House **Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 10 am to noon, until June 20, 2020**. Here is the suggested list of accepted donations. Note that we cannot take large appliances, large sofas, or clothes & shoes. Thank you in advance for your donated items!

Antiques & collectibles	Glassware
Art work and frames	Jewelry
Baskets	Kitchen utensils (pots, pans, silverware)
Books	Lamps
Christmas and Seasonal decorations	Linens (sheets, quilts, blankets, throws)
Dishes and china	Small appliances in working order
Furniture	Toys

SAD NEWS: We are sorry to once again be the bearer of sad news, as two members of our community committed to the cultural life of the Village, passed away these past few weeks:



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◆ **Arnold “Arnie” Monno**, the Treasurer and long-time trustee of the Brockport Community Museum (BCM), passed away on April 27.

Allan Berry, president of the BCM, shared a few thoughts with me: “It is with great sadness that the Brockport Community Museum acknowledges the passing of Arnie Monno. He was an active participant who faithfully attended meetings and was available to provide support whenever needed. His knowledge of the history of the Greater Brockport community was evident and valuable to our many discussions of projects under consideration. [...] We all saw Arnie for what he was at heart, which was a man with a great sense of humor, who loved people and was committed to his community. He was such a genuinely kind man and will be missed by those of us on the Museum Board and the community that he served.”

◆ **Helen R. Maier**, dear friend of the Society, passed away on May 15th after a difficult struggle with a major illness.



As recorded in her obituary, “If there is beauty in every inch of someone’s soul, it is she. [...] Helen is particularly well known in the community for her beautiful soprano voice. She participated in several events at the College of Brockport and enjoyed singing at the First Presbyterian Church.” She faithfully attended our Society events and programs with her husband John, a former member of the Board of Trustees. We will miss her smile and kind words.

Our sincere condolences go to Arnie’s and Helen’s families & love ones.

WE ARE VERY THANKFUL FOR DONATIONS FROM:

- Bill and Hanny Heyen, in honor of the work done by Gordy Fox as President;
- The Schmitt Foundation;
- Andrea and Skip Perry;
- Lori and Gary Skoog.

Their generosity reminds us that there is support for the work done here at the Morgan-Manning House.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Western Monroe Historical Society is committed to educating the community and future generations on the history of the Morgan-Manning House, celebrating our heritage, and preserving this local landmark that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.