

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

The History Center in Tompkins County
110 North Tioga St
Ithaca, NY 14850
607-273-8284
www.thehistorycenter.net
archives@thehistorycenter.net

2020-2021 - Community Responses to COVID - Public History Initiative Fellowship - Cornell University

The ‘2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID’ project was part one of a three-year collaboration between The History Center in Tompkins County and the Public History Initiative at Cornell University resulting in the ‘Tompkins County Oral History Undergraduate Fellowship,’ funded by an Engaged Cornell grant.

With the arrival of COVID-19 in Tompkins County in March of 2020 (the second semester of the fellowship), the project was delayed and then re-structured to focus on interviewing community leaders in Tompkins County about the ways in which their organizations, institutions, personal life, and businesses were impacted by and responded to the global pandemic on a local scale. Interviews were mostly conducted over Zoom and other virtual conferencing software due to social distancing mandates and Cornell University’s transition to remote learning in the spring semester of 2020. Interviews were conducted by the undergraduate fellowship students between December 2020-June 2021.

This project was supervised by Professor Stephen Vider, Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Public History Initiative at Cornell University. From Summer 2019 to Summer 2020, Julia Taylor (Youth Education Director) was the staff contact and coordinator from The History Center. From Summer 2020-Fall 2021, History Center staff lead on the project was Benjamin Sandberg (Executive Director).

Interviews with:

Johanna Anderson (53 minutes) - *Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS)*

Johanna Anderson discusses INHS’s transition to a virtual setting and how that impacted the work they were doing in the area. Anderson goes on to explain how INHS adapted to the situation, including what groups were still active and to what extent. Anderson also addresses the new programs INHS developed to support the community, even programs beyond the scope of their purpose.

- *Recording Date: 4/21/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Audry Hong*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-21_Anderson-Johanna*
 - *Digital Format: M4A*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-21_Anderson-Johanna_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*

- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Aneda “Ned” Asta (43 minutes) - Moosewood

Ned Asta talks about their experience as an owner of Moosewood and how the pandemic impacted their business. Asta goes into the collective owners’ debate on closing for good and the many decisions that came into play due to the pandemic. Asta also discusses her personal losses and experience with the pandemic.

- *Recording Date: 6/15/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: David Marantes*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-06-15_Asta-Aneda*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-06-15_Asta-Aneda_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Sean Eversley Bradwell (58 minutes) - Department of Education at Ithaca College and Ithaca City School District Board of Education

Dr. Sean Eversley Bradwell discusses his experience as an educator and board member of Ithaca College and Ithaca City School District during the pandemic. Bradwell explains the many factors that played into the decision to reopen Ithaca College and resume in-person instruction. Bradwell also addresses how the shift to online learning impacted students, educators, learning strategies, and new proposed curriculum.

Trigger warnings: Systemic racism

- *Recording Date: 1/6/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Philly Latorre*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-01-06_Eversley-Bradwell-Sean*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-01-06_Eversley-Bradwell-Sean_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Dan Cogan (69 minutes) - City of Ithaca

Dan Cogan describes his experience as chief of staff to Mayor Svante Myrick, and how the pandemic affected his position, including shifting to online meeting platforms and monitoring the pandemic closely. Cogan also details challenges workers faced with the sudden changes, as well as community concerns regarding businesses, safety, and finances. Cogan also expands on the community response to the changes, and shares his hopes for the future of Tompkins County.

- *Recording Date: 12/22/2020*

- *Name of Interviewer: John Colie*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2020-12-22_Cogan-Dan*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2020-12-22_Cogan-Dan_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Kara Frost-Clapp (24 minutes) - Trumansburg Central School District

Kara Frost-Klapp, an 8th grade Social Studies teacher at Trumansburg Central School District (TCSD), details the experience of being a teacher navigating the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the lasting effects it has had in her classroom. She goes into discussion about how TCSD has been handling the current circumstance of the 2020-2021 academic school year, and especially how it has impacted her students and their relationship to school. Frost-Klapp, also goes on to mention how being a teacher has changed within a very short period of time, and how she and her fellow staff members are trying to best reach their students.

Trigger warnings: police brutality, descriptions of state sanctioned violence

- *Recording Date: 5/14/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nina Johnson*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-05-14_Frost-Clapp-Kara*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-05-14_Frost-Clapp-Kara_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Amy Fuhr (33 minutes) - The William Henry Miller Inn

Amy Fuhr discusses her experience managing an inn throughout the pandemic, and how it impacted her business and workers. Fuhr dives into the economic repercussions of shutting down, and the decision behind staying closed for slightly longer and reopening policies. Fuhr also explains the community’s involvement in helping her business stay afloat and her hopes for the future.

- *Recording Date: 6/3/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: David Marantes*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-06-03_Fuhr-Amy*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-06-03_Fuhr-Amy_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Juliana Garcia (54 minutes) - *Tompkins Mutual Aid*

Juliana Garcia discusses her experience working and co-founding Tompkins Mutual Aid during the pandemic. Garcia goes into the changes made by Mutual Aid to support more members of the community that would usually not qualify for more formal programs. Garcia also explains Mutual Aid's relationship with local group and government organizations, and how that was impacted by the pandemic as well.

Trigger warnings: Systemic Racism, violence against protestors

- *Recording Date: 3/24/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Audry Hong*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-03-24_Garcia-Juliana*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-03-24_Garcia-Juliana_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the "2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID"*

Karl Graham (47 minutes) - *Alternatives Federal Credit Union*

Karl Graham discusses how the Alternatives Federal Credit Union supported the community during the pandemic by using their existing programs and resources. Graham explains how the credit union adapted to the new COVID policies and supported employees during that transition. Graham also details his experiences living through the pandemic and his hope for the future.

- *Recording Date: 5/4/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nina Johnson*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-05-04_Graham-Karl*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-05-04_Graham-Karl_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the "2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID"*

Samantha Hillson (57 minutes) - *Tompkins County Health Department*

Samantha Hillson explains the Tompkins County Health Department's reaction to the pandemic and the spread of information regarding the dangers associated with it. Hillson discusses her role in keeping the community informed and releasing important updates as the pandemic progressed. Hillson shares her hopes for the future and experience living and working throughout the pandemic.

Recording Date: 12/16/2020

- *Name of Interviewer: Audry Hong*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2020-12-16_Hillson-Samantha*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2020-12-16_Hillson-Samantha_Transcript*

- *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Anna Kelles (67 minutes) - New York State Assemblymember, 25th District

Anna Kelles, a freshman Assemblymember of the 25th District of New York State, goes into detail the initial and following responses of Tompkins County with the news of COVID-19. Kelles depicts the situations that she had to navigate as a leader of the community, from food insecurity, to the return of Cornell students for the 2020 Fall semester. Through this interview, Kelles details the importance local governments and citizens have on their communities during times in and out of crisis.

Trigger warnings: mental health, mental illness, poverty, lack of food

- *Recording Date: 12/22/2020*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nabiha Qureshi*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2020-12-22_Kelles-Anna*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2020-12-22_Kelles-Anna_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Elizabeth "Liz" Klohmann (45 minutes) - Ithaca Youth Bureau

Elizabeth Klohmann discusses how the pandemic affected the Youth Bureau programming for children. Klohmann explains how the programs transitioned to a virtual then hybrid environment, and how this impacted the workers and environment. Klohmann also discusses the goals of the Ithaca Youth Bureau and how this has changed with COVID.

- *Recording Date: 4/15/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Audry Hong*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-15_Klohmann-Liz*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-15_Klohmann-Liz_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Tom Knipe (59 minutes) - City of Ithaca

Tom Knipe discusses how the City of Ithaca Office of Economic Development helped the community stay afloat during the beginning of the pandemic. Knipe details the different programs he worked on and how different groups in the area also came together to help the community. Knipe also reflects on the impact the pandemic had on different community groups and how he hopes things will change in the future.

- *Recording Date: 12/16/2020*
- *Name of Interviewer: David Marantes*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2020-12-16_Knipe-Tom*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2020-12-16_Knipe-Tom_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Beth Krause (27 minutes) - Ithaca City School District

Beth Krause discusses her experience working as a food service director for the Ithaca City School District during the COVID-19 pandemic. Krause details the district’s approach to reduce food insecurity during those times, and how the food service community came together to support those measures. Krause expands on the food distribution program, its development, and lessons learned in the process.

Trigger warning: Discussions of food insecurity and child hunger

- *Recording Date: 6/9/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nina Johnson*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-06-09_Krause-Beth*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-06-09_Krause-Beth_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Heather and Bruce Lane (54 minutes) - Purity Ice Cream

Heather and Bruce Lane discuss their experience managing an ice cream shop in Ithaca throughout the pandemic. They discuss how they managed new policies, customer and worker safety, and involvement with the community in various ways. They also reflect on how COVID impacted their business, and what they are looking forward to for their business in the future.

- *Recording Date: 3/15/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: David Marantes*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-03-15_Lane-Bruce-and-Heather*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-03-15_Lane-Bruce-and-Heather_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Colleen Ledley (46 minutes) - Lansing Central School District

Colleen Ledley discusses her experience as a member of the Lansing Central School District and how her role was affected by the pandemic. Ledley expands on issues with the transition to online learning and the work to make it as smooth

of a transition as possible. Ledley also goes into attempts and inclusivity in the school district and how the events throughout the pandemic were catalysts for this change.

- *Recording Date: 6/22/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nina Johnson*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-06-22_Ledley-Colleen*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-06-22_Ledley-Colleen_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Doug Levine (34 minutes) - *State Theatre of Ithaca*

Doug Levine discusses the effects of the pandemic on the State Theater and how the team had to problem solve to keep the theater afloat. Levine explains different ways the State Theater stayed in touch with the community, like the “Save your Seat” campaign and online programming, and how this helped the theater maintain a strong presence in the community despite the circumstances. Levine also shares his insight into non-profits in the community, and his hopes for future projects in the State Theater.

- *Recording Date: 4/27/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: John Colie*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-27_Levine-Doug*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-27_Levine-Doug_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Dr. Douglas MacQueen (40 minutes) - *Cayuga Medical Center*

Dr. MacQueen, goes over his career as an infectious disease leader within Cayuga Medical Center prior and during the pandemic. He talks about how the hospital and county were faced with many difficult adversities like information spreading, hospital safety, and vaccine roll-out. Dr. MacQueen also talked in great detail about the current and future circumstances of telehealthcare, and what will be needed to make it more accessible to all.

[Trigger warnings]: mental health, mental illness

- *Recording Date: 4/14/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Philly Latorre*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-14_MacQueen-Doug*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-14_MacQueen-Doug_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*

- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (54 minutes) - Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC), Tompkins County Legislature

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne explains how she managed being a chair of the Tompkins County Legislature and GIAC throughout the pandemic, and the challenges she faced. McBean-Clairborne expands on efforts to alleviate the effects of covid and closures on the community, including food insecurity, testing, quarantining, and vaccinations. She also explains new projects developed to help families, and what she hopes these will accomplish after the pandemic as well.

- *Recording Date: 4/16/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Thomas Petluck*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-16_McBean-Clairborne-Leslyn*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-16_McBean-Clairborne-Leslyn_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Beth Pallace (56 minutes) - Discovery Trail

Pallace, goes into detail about how life was working with the Discovery Trail (as the newly appointed Executive Director) right before and during the pandemic. Pallace talks about the experience the Discovery Trail tries to bring to students, teachers, and community members overall, and how that was deeply impacted with the switch to the virtual world.

[Trigger warnings]: mental health

- *Recording Date: 1/8/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nina Johnson*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-01-08_Pallace-Beth*
 - *Digital Format: M4A & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-01-08_Pallace-Beth_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Kathy Schlather (51 minutes) - Human Services Coalition

Kathy Schlather, the executive director for the Human Services Coalition, thoroughly explains how the Coalition became an invaluable resource for people, businesses, schools, etc. at the start and for the whole first year of the pandemic. We get to hear about just how much the virtual and isolated world impacted the lives of others all around us, and how Schlather and her team worked 24/7 to make sure people got what they needed in times of need during this period.

[Trigger warnings]: poverty, lack of food, mental health, mental illness

- *Recording Date: 4/9/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nabiha Qureshi*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-09_Schlather-Kathy*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-09_Schlather-Kathy_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Sandra Sorenson (39 minutes) - *Second Wind Cottages*

Sandra Sorenson, a key leader and decision maker of the Second Wind Cottages covers just how much life was dramatically altered for their residents trying to recover from homelessness, and those of Ithaca’s homeless population community known as the ‘Jungle’, at the beginning stages of the pandemic. She details the struggles of resource shortages and influxes, mental health challenges, and how navigating this time period was particularly unique. Sorensen also speculates on the future of what will happen with Second Wind Cottages after a year into the pandemic.

[Trigger warnings]: mental health, mental illness, substance use, discussion of relapse, housing insecurity, unhoused population of Ithaca

- *Recording Date: 4/26/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Nabiha Qureshi*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-26_Sorenson-Sandra*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-26_Sorenson-Sandra_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

George Tamborelle (57 minutes) - *Cayuga Heights Fire Department (CHFD) & Bangs Ambulance*

George Tamborelle speaks on his experience as a Cayuga Heights fire chief and paramedic as the pandemic developed. Tamborelle explains new protocols CHFD and Bangs implemented, including increased disinfecting protocols and limiting personnel responding to calls, and how these impacted the work environment. Tamborelle goes on to share how his personal life was impacted, especially since his family members also worked high-risk jobs, and how they adapted to the circumstances.

- *Recording Date: 4/12/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Philly Latorre*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-04-12_Tamborelle-George*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-04-12_Tamborelle-George_Transcript*

- *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Jennifer Tavares (24 minutes) - *Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce*

Jennifer Tavares, CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, goes into detail about the specific impacts Covid-19 had on business owners from Spring 2020 up to the time when she was interviewed in January 2021. She talks about the transition to remote meetings and services, and how some businesses had great hardships trying to adapt. She also talks about how the Chamber viewed Cornell opening its campus back up during this time period, and the reasoning behind that.

- *Recording Date: 1/8/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Thomas Petluck*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-01-08_Tavares-Jennifer*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-01-08_Tavares-Jennifer_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Scot Vanderpool (44 minutes) - *Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT)*

Scot Vanderpool shares details about his experience as a general manager for the Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit. Vanderpool explains different strategies employed to keep workers and riders safe, including free fares and providing masks and hand sanitizer for riders. Vanderpool also expands on TCAT’s plans to achieve a fully electric bus fleet and efficiency goals for the organization as a whole.

- *Recording Date: 3/12/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: Thomas Petluck*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-03-12_Vanderpool-Scot*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-03-12_Vanderpool-Scot_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

Jessica Wickham (they/them) (43 minutes) - *Tompkins Weekly*

Jessica Wickham explains their role as managing editor of Tompkins Weekly, and how the position was affected by the pandemic. Wickham describes how the newspaper handled the sudden need to inform the public about the pandemic and concurrent social justice movements, and what that meant for workers and the community alike. Wickham also expands on the controversies surrounding vaccines, and their hopes for vaccination efforts to positively affect the community.

- *Recording Date: 3/25/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: John Colie*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-03-25_Wickham-Jessica*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-03-25_Wickham-Jessica_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

David Winitsky (41 minutes) - *Kitchen Theater*

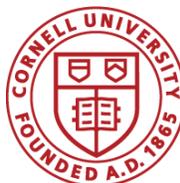
David Winitsky explains his perspectives of the pandemic working as both a professor and interim director of a theater company. Winitsky offers perspectives on how the art world was impacted, including shifting to virtual performances and using their work to make a social statement. Winitsky focuses on his own experiences and where he sees the art world headed after the pandemic.

- *Recording Date: 6/17/2021*
- *Name of Interviewer: John Colie*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2021-06-17_Winitsky-David*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-06-17_Winitsky-David_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: Word Doc & PDF*
- *Recorded as part of the “2020-2021 Community Responses to COVID”*

CITATION FOR THE PROJECT

“Community Responses to COVID” Public History Initiative Fellowship, twenty-six oral histories recorded between December 2020 - June 2021 by undergraduate students in the Public History Initiative Fellowship at Cornell University, The History Center in Tompkins County. Oral Histories of Tompkins County Audio Archives, Ithaca, NY, 2022.

This project was a collaboration of the Public History Initiative at Cornell and The History Center in Tompkins County, funded in part by Engaged Cornell.



Generous support for processing these collections came from a one year grant 'Preserving Community Oral Histories' from the American Historical Association and National Endowment for the Humanities between 2022-2023.

AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES