Berkshire COVID Collecting Project Brings Three Organizations Together to Document the Global Pandemic, Locally

The Berkshire Athenaeum, Berkshire County Historical Society, and Berkshire Museum invite the community to add to the historical record

[Pittsfield, MA] – Beginning July 20, Berkshire residents will have an opportunity to add their own experiences to the historical record as a new partnership between the Berkshire Athenaeum, Berkshire County Historical Society, and Berkshire Museum seeks to collect artworks, songs, videos, photographs, letters, stories, and artifacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The project, which brings three trusted wardens of the community’s history together aims to document this remarkable period in history and the many ways in which the global health crisis has impacted the region.

“This pandemic is an historic chapter in human history which will be remembered and studied for generations to come,” explained Jeff Rodgers, Executive Director at the Berkshire Museum. “We have lost friends and loved ones and seen our daily lives and livelihoods upended. At the same time, we’ve seen a community come together to save lives, educate our children, and support one another. By contributing to this effort, you are not only helping us to document a remarkable period in world and local history, you are ensuring that future generations will be able to learn from our experiences.”
For now, all submissions will be collected digitally to protect the health of the community. Individuals interested in submitting are encouraged to visit https://explore.berkshiremuseum.org/berkshire-covid-collecting-project to upload virtual versions of their materials. Accepted file formats currently include:

- .jpg, .tif, .png, and .gif images
- .mp3 and .wav audio
- .mp4 and .wmv video
- .pdf, .txt, .doc, and .docx text files

The Collecting Project plans to gather original artifacts when it becomes safe to accept physical materials in person.

“We are so pleased to be able to work together with our colleagues to make this project happen,” said Lesley Herzberg, Executive Director of the Berkshire County Historical Society. “We believe that the stories of Berkshire County residents during this pandemic are unique and should be preserved. The archive that is compiled will help us tell the story of this period in our shared history through future exhibitions and will be made available to the community for research purposes.”

Every submission will be archived as part of the Berkshire Museum’s collection and shared with the Berkshire Athenaeum and Berkshire County Historical Society. Participants will be asked to share their name and address to be archived with their submissions; however, all donors have the option to appear as anonymous when their materials are used for programmatic and research purposes including future exhibitions or publications.

At launch, the Berkshire COVID Collecting Project has no end date. Collaborators on the project intend to continue gathering submissions for as long as this unprecedented period of our history lasts.
“Looking back even now to those early days in March, we see how our hindsight shifts what we remember about what we were feeling” mused Library Director Alex Reczkowski. “This platform preserves what we ourselves feel and permits us to be in community with each other’s experiences. Together we can create a collective story. The pandemic shall fade into the past, but the community we build through this project – how we preserve the way we care about each other – that will carry us through the future.”

About the Berkshire Museum
Located at 39 South Street in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the Berkshire Museum combines art, science, and history to create thought-provoking experiences for the whole family through interactive programs, interdisciplinary exhibitions, and engaging online series. The museum building will reopen its doors beginning August 1, 2020. Plan your visit at berkshiremuseum.org or go to explore.berkshiremuseum.org to enjoy the Berkshire Museum wherever you are.

About the Berkshire Athenaeum
The Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield’s Public Library, is a place where people of all ages have the resources they need to satisfy their appetites for information. The Library supports people from around the world with the resources to explore personal, historical, and cultural heritage. Located at One Wendell Avenue and online at www.pittsfieldlibrary.org, the Berkshire Athenaeum is a place where all people are welcomed to meet, interact with others, and participate in open discourse about community issues.

About the Berkshire County Historical Society
The Berkshire County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the history of Berkshire County in western Massachusetts. In addition, the Berkshire County Historical Society is committed to the preservation and interpretation of Arrowhead, home of author Herman Melville, designated a National Historic Landmark. The Berkshire County Historical Society provides tours of Arrowhead seasonally and hosts programming that fits the history
of western Massachusetts year-round. Visit them at 780 Holmes Rd., Pittsfield, or their website at www.mobydick.org.