Last spring, when the Hayes Home and museum normally would have been filled with students on field trips learning about President Rutherford and First Lady Lucy Hayes and Ohio history, the galleries and rooms were dark and empty. Families, presidential site enthusiasts, history buffs and other visitors, who normally would come to the museums' latest exhibits, tour the home and see the grounds, stayed home. Busloads of group tours and vacationers who normally visit the home or museum and pick up gifts and souvenirs canceled their trips. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hayes Presidential Library & Museums shut down from March 13 through June 23. It reopened for three days a week compared to its normal daily operations, and the reduced schedule is expected to continue into 2021. Fall and winter field trips have been canceled. The pandemic has caused an immense loss of revenue for Hayes Presidential, and staff have adjusted by cutting costs in numerous areas. Meanwhile, the staff continued to innovate and find ways to bring Hayes Presidential and its mission to people at home.

CBS, MSNBC film at Hayes Presidential

The Hayes Presidential Library & Museums was featured on two major news networks in October, giving national exposure to the historic site and President Rutherford B. Hayes’ history. In September, CBS News correspondent Mo Rocca and the CBS crew visited Hayes Presidential to record a segment on the election of 1876. He interviewed Executive Director Christie Weininger and Historian Dustin McLochlin about Hayes’ contested election for “CBS Sunday Morning.” The segment aired on Sunday, Oct. 25, and can be accessed at rbhayes.org/news/2020/11/03/general/cbs-sunday-morning-features-election-of-1876-interviews-hayes-presidential-staff/.

The segment gives a great overview of the election and the climate at that time. It shows that the United States has been through very divided and partisan times in the past. It also mentions the alleged Compromise of 1877, but time did not allow for detail. For the story on this topic, please visit rbhayes.org/news/2017/01/19/general/the-misconception-about-hayes-reconstruction-and-jim-crow/.

CBS News correspondent Mo Rocca interviews Hayes Presidential Historian Dustin McLochlin about the election of 1876 on Saturday, Sept. 19, for “CBS Sunday Morning.” The segment aired on Sunday, Oct. 25.

Families, presidential site enthusiasts, history buffs and other visitors, who normally would come to the museums’ latest exhibits, tour the home and see the grounds, stayed home. Busloads of group tours and vacationers who normally visit the home or museum and pick up gifts and souvenirs canceled their trips. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hayes Presidential Library & Museums shut down from March 13 through June 23. It reopened for three days a week compared to its normal daily operations, and the reduced schedule is expected to continue into 2021. Fall and winter field trips have been canceled.

The pandemic has caused an immense loss of revenue for Hayes Presidential, and staff have adjusted by cutting costs in numerous areas. Meanwhile, the staff continued to innovate and find ways to bring Hayes Presidential and its mission to people at home.
HPLM brings holiday cheer with two weeks of free train exhibit admission

This is my favorite time of year. I always look forward to the holidays of October, November and December for the pure joy and special meaning they bring to me and my family and friends.

While traditional celebrations this year will be a little different, I’m still planning for and anticipating them with the same enthusiasm as always. Actually, maybe even a little more enthusiasm than usual.

I’m finding that many others feel this same way. While conversing with folks, I have heard over and over how much they are looking forward to this year’s holiday season in particular because of the diversion it will provide. I know a handful of people who put their Christmas trees up in October! They needed something joyful to look at, they said by way of explanation.

Our country is facing struggles of great magnitude. I do not want to minimize the importance of resolving those difficulties, but I believe we all could benefit from carving out some respite time this season. We, at Hayes Presidential, are hurting right now in multiple ways. But we know we’re not alone. We feel a strong connection with all who are affected by current turmoil.

I have been inspired by many of the ways local businesses, organizations and individuals, as well as those in other parts of our nation and world, are working to boost the spirits of everyone from friends to complete strangers.

My co-workers and I have given some thought to how we could provide moments of joy to our patrons and our community.

One of our events where I see people the most joyful is the “Hayes Train Special,” which we have been doing since 1994. I love hearing the laughter of children as they circle around the train platform, watching the trains disappear and reemerge as they wind their way through whimsical wintry displays. It is heartwarming to see adults turn into children again as they delight in making the train whistle blow or the little lighted merry-go-round spin and play music.

We know that the “Hayes Train Special” has become a tradition for many generations of visitors. And this year, we are going to make it free for a two-week time period. By giving back in this way, we hope more people are able to join us for some healthful holiday cheer.

So, if you find yourself in need of a little joy and delight, I hope you will stop by Spiegel Grove and let us put a smile on your face! For more information on how to register for a free time slot to experience “Hayes Train Special,” as well as information on our other wonderful upcoming events, see page 5.

Grants, donation fund replacement of Hayes Home back steps

Thanks to a grant and memorial donation, the crumbling steps at the back of the historic Hayes Home will soon be replaced.

Hayes Presidential staff use that staircase to enter the historic home to provide tours and maintain the home, and volunteers use it for various events. The public also enters through the steps during the special Backstairs Tours of the home, which focus on the Hayes servants and their experiences.

The Sandusky County Communities Foundation awarded Hayes Presidential with a grant for $9,100 toward the project, and the Eilene Perry family provided a $5,000 memorial for the work.

“We are so grateful to the foundation for this grant and to the Eilene Perry family for this memorial,” said Sue Berryman, Hayes Presidential director of development. “The installation of new steps at the back of the home will ensure a safe entrance and exit for guests, volunteers, staff, and vendors.”

The back steps of the Hayes Home are eroding and will be replaced. Staff and volunteers use these stairs regularly to enter the historic home.
Rocca, who visited Spiegel Grove in the past and recommended the site in his 2019 book, “Mobituaries,” loved the Hayes Home and estate. “And might I recommend a visit to (the Hayes Presidential Library & Museums) Home in Fremont, Ohio?” he tweeted after the segment aired. “The visit is worth it for the porch alone!”

Then on Saturday, Oct. 3, Ali Velshi of MSNBC and his crew recorded a roundtable discussion between locals regarding the 2020 presidential election on the grounds of Spiegel Grove in front of the Hayes Home for his show “Velshi.”

Velshi asked the group of Democrats, Republicans and Independents from varying backgrounds numerous questions about their thoughts on the presidential candidates and issues the country faces.

Clips from the roundtable aired on Sunday, Oct. 4, on Velshi’s show. He also mentioned Hayes Presidential as the setting, which he enjoyed visiting, several times.

“‘We are so grateful to Mo Rocca and the CBS crew and to Ali Velshi and the MSNBC crew for filming at Spiegel Grove and featuring our site,’” said Kristina Smith, Hayes Presidential marketing/communications manager. “They were all fantastic to work with. Through CBS, a national audience learned more about Hayes’ election and why it matters. Through MSNBC, Spiegel Grove was the site of important national conversation regarding the 2020 presidential election and important issues.”
In a year where the holiday season likely will be quieter due to COVID-19, the Hayes Presidential Library & Museums is offering its beloved annual Christmas events and a new celebration.

Although the pandemic has limited gatherings and time spent with friends and family, Hayes Presidential is continuing with its traditions, a series of events called A Presidential Christmas. Events have been modified to account for safety protocols while remaining festive.

Attendees at all events are asked to keep 6 feet of physical distance between their household group and other visitors. Attendees must wear face coverings unless they have an accepted exemption to the state of Ohio’s mask mandate.

“Hayes Train Special”

The holiday season at Hayes Presidential begins Saturday, Nov. 28, with the opening of the “Hayes Train Special” model train display. Several model trains run through a multi-tiered Victorian winter wonderland reminiscent of President Rutherford B. Hayes’ day.

As a gift to the community and Hayes Presidential visitors during what has been a wild and difficult year, the “Hayes Train Special” will be free to the public from Saturday, Nov. 28 – Saturday, Dec. 12. Attendees must reserve their free, timed tickets at rbhayes.org for their admission. Walk-ins will be accepted, pending availability.

“As is the case with many businesses and organizations, we have been hit hard financially by the COVID pandemic. But community spirit is about more than a budget number,” said Christie Weininger, Hayes Presidential director. “Our community has been so supportive of us through the years and especially during the pandemic. We wanted to give back and this seemed a great way to do it. 2020 has been a rough year for everyone, so it feels good to offer up a little bit of joy this year in particular.”

From Dec. 14 – Jan. 2, there will be an admission fee to the display, and timed tickets for these dates also are available at rbhayes.org.

This year, the display will be placed in the museum auditorium, which offers more room for physical distancing.

Also new this year, Hayes Presidential is offering timed admission tickets for the train only to accommodate visitors who just want to see that exhibit. Tickets for the train exhibit only are good for one hour. “Hayes Train Special” only tickets are $3 for ages 6-12, $6 for ages 13 and older and free for ages 5 and younger.

Admission to the train exhibit is also still included with a site pass or regular museum admission. Those with site passes or museum-only admission can access the display throughout the day. All tickets are available at rbhayes.org. They also will be sold at the museum front desk, pending availability. Hayes Presidential members are admitted for free. The display will be open through Saturday, Jan. 2.

The “Hayes Train Special” is sponsored by Croghan Colonial Bank and the Gordon W. Knight Family.

A Presidential Christmas: Tree Lighting, Sleigh Rides and “Hayes Train Special”

New this year, Hayes Presidential will decorate one of its large pine trees in a nod to the White House Christmas tree and light it during an evening of holiday events from 4 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 10.

A Presidential Christmas: Tree Lighting, Sleigh Rides and “Hayes Train Special” will include a visit from Kris Kringle, the 18th-century name for Santa Claus, a gingerbread house contest and raffle for a gingerbread house kit, Hayes Presidential passes and gear. Admission to the tree lighting, gingerbread house contest and visits with Kris Kringle are free. The full event schedule is at rbhayes.org.
Local veteran’s company fired last ‘legal’ shots of World War I

Roy Whitaker Whitney was born May 3, 1898, in Toledo, Ohio. As a young man, Roy worked for a local newspaper known as the Toledo Blade.

He enlisted in the Army on May 28, 1917, at the age of 19. Roy was assigned to Battery “B” 2nd Field Artillery with the 37th Division Ohio National Guard, known to many as the “Buckeye Division.”

He was later transferred to Battery “B” 135th Field Artillery. The division organized at Camp Sheridan, Montgomery, Alabama, in August 1917 until October of that same year and was built around the 1st – 10th Ohio Infantry Regiments, 1st Ohio Field Artillery, 1st Ohio Cavalry and 1st Ohio Engineers.

Soon after he enlisted, Whitney became a bugler and was promoted to private on Feb. 4, 1918. Once training was complete Battery “B”, along with the rest of the 135th Field Artillery, was sent to Camp Upton, Long Island, New York, until shipping out for England.

After a brief stay in England, the 135th crossed over into France, and the 37th Division’s artillery regiments made their home at Camp DeSouge for further training on French weaponry. They were assigned to the 1st Army in the Argonne offensive, serving successively with the 1st American Corps, 2nd American Army, 2nd French Colonial Army and 17th French Corps.

At one time, the three regiments of the Brigade served with three different divisions, the 28th, 33rd, and 92nd and only joined the division just prior to its return to the United States. Battery “B” was moved to the front line and setup camp in a valley in France. After two guns were positioned and coordinates taken, the men of Battery “B” fired their first shots of World War I.

The 135th Field Artillery and Battery “B” made several trips to the front line and back during fall 1918. This included the areas in and around Pierrefitte, Leognan, DeSouge and Pont-a-Mousson, France. They also participated in an attack on the German fortress of Metz. A ceasefire was ordered for 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, 1918. Although all firing had stopped as scheduled, a jammed round in Battery “B’s” number two gun forced the men to fire the artillery at approximately eight minutes past 11 a.m. Some believe this to be the last “legal” shot of World War I because it was loaded prior to the ceasefire.

Whitney and Battery “B” were in the defense sector of France from June 28, 1918- March 24, 1919. During this time Roy was promoted to bugler 1st class on Jan. 5, 1919.

Battery “B” was withdrawn in stages through the French villages of Thillombois, Segre and Pierrefitte. The U.S.S. Vermont brought the 135th back to Newport News, Virginia, in the spring of 1919. Whitney received an honorable discharge from the Army on April 11, 1919.

Whitney’s story and photo are part of our manuscript collections. His story is being shared in honor of Veteran’s Day, which was Nov. 11.

Holidays, continued from page 4

Horse-drawn sleigh and trolley rides by South Creek Clydesdales will be offered during the event for a fee. For pricing, advance tickets, visit rbhayes.org.

Access to the “Hayes Train Special” also is free during this event. However, attendees should reserve a time slot at rbhayes.org. Walk-ins will be accepted, pending availability.

Mosser Construction is the title sponsor for this event. Partial funding by Valley Electric. In-kind donation by AEP.

A Presidential Christmas: Hayes Home Holidays

The popular Hayes Home Holidays evening tours of the Hayes Home will be offered Saturday, Dec. 19; Sunday, Dec. 20; Tuesday, Dec. 22; and Wednesday, Dec. 23. For details and to purchase advance tickets, visit rbhayes.org.

Horse-drawn sleigh and trolley rides

In addition to offering sleigh rides during the tree lighting, rides will again be offered after Christmas on Saturday, Dec. 26; Sunday, Dec. 27; Tuesday, Dec. 29; Thursday, Dec. 31; and Saturday, Jan. 2. For pricing and advance tickets, visit rbhayes.org. Walk-in tickets will be sold the days of the rides, pending availability.

Model Train Clinic

Model train enthusiasts will help participants with train maintenance and repair questions during this annual clinic from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 2, in the museum auditorium. Admission is $5 per person ages 6 and older and free for kids 5 and younger. Tickets are available at rbhayes.org.
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Gateway, continued from page 1

They put together online experiences for people of all ages, including a virtual museum tour for school kids, a virtual tour of the Hayes Home, a scavenger hunt in a 3-D scan of the museum, and many other online offerings allowed people to enjoy and learn from Hayes Presidential while staying at home.

This year, a donation to Hayes Presidential’s Gateway to the Future campaign will help staff continue creating distance-learning and virtual experiences and help reduce the budget deficit. Earlier this year, the deficit was projected to be $280,000. That number is expected to be reduced to a loss of $110,000, thanks to donations received, grants and the staff have made.

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Gateway to the Future will fund additional virtual education programs; care of Spiegel Grove, an official arboretum and the 25-acre estate of Rutherford and Lucy Hayes, as well as its 1,700 trees; and the purchase of additional manuscripts, books and research materials.

“We are so very grateful for the financial gifts we have received from members and supporters during the past months,” said Sue Berryman, Hayes Presidential director of development. “As we move forward to create new digital educational programs, your donation today will make those programs possible.”

To make a donation to Gateway to the Future, please visit rbhayes.org.
Trump letter updates Hayes Presidential’s collection of POTUS-signed documents

The Hayes Presidential Library & Museums has a letter from every U.S. president in its museum after it obtained a letter from President Donald Trump.

Congressman Jim Jordan hand-delivered the letter, signed by Trump, on Monday, Oct. 5, to the museum. It is displayed with Hayes Presidential’s collection of documents signed by U.S. presidents in the museum Presidents’ Gallery.

“This letter is a welcomed addition to our presidential manuscript collection,” said Julie Mayle, curator of manuscripts. “An integral part of the Hayes Presidential Library & Museums’ mission is to interpret the American Presidency, and this document certainly helps us achieve that goal.”

President Rutherford B. Hayes collected documents signed by presidents of the United States. After his death, the Hayes family kept adding to the collection. Today, Hayes Presidential continues the collecting tradition.

The letter congratulates Hayes Presidential on preserving and sharing America’s history.

“Civic engagement is paramount for a strong and vibrant republic,” Trump wrote. “One of our Nation's greatest strengths is the unwavering commitment of our citizens to celebrating our incredible past and ensuring that America continues to shine as a beacon of hope around the world.”