



The COVID-19 Journal Project – A Bridgeport History Center Initiative

“This is an unprecedented historic moment.” You’ve probably heard that sentence too many times over the past several years, or even over the past several days as COVID-19 continues to change the social fabric of our lives. You’ve also probably seen one too many listicles of suggestions of what to do while quarantined -- and done them all already. So the Bridgeport History Center would like to suggest one more: keep a journal, and donate it to us when all is said and done.

We at the Bridgeport History Center know that in this time of crisis, this sort of suggestion might sound absurd. Why are we thinking about the future when we barely know what’s going to happen tomorrow? [This Twitter thread](#) is a great read about why this matters.

Long version? The archivists here at BHC get a lot of research requests and sometimes can guess what future historians will want to know. That includes what Bridgeport did while under quarantine. How people survived. How the residents our city looked after themselves. There will be statistics and numbers and newspapers and press releases, but that means nothing to the future if there aren’t documents about individual’s experiences. For that, we - and every other archive - must turn to the public and ask them to think about the future.

What follows are some general guidelines for a quarantine journal but there are no particular rules to what to include. If your kids are absolutely dying for something to do, encourage them to do their own version of a journal too! Get creative. Use this to help beat back boredom and preserve history!

Quarantine journal guidelines:

1. Decide how you will create your journal. Writing it down? A document in MS Word or Gdocs? Video diaries? Photos only? We’ll take all formats!
2. In your first entry, tell us just a little bit about yourself. You don’t have to give your full name, but *a* name is good, your age, and anything else you want people to know.
3. Include whatever you’d like from there. Talk about how you’re spending your days – are you working from home? Are you on the frontlines as a healthcare worker or deemed an essential employee? Tell us about how your life has changed and what your daily routine is like. If you’re taking care of your children, we want to know how you’re helping them. If you’re keeping your journal as a digital file, copy/paste good memes that are making you laugh. (Yes, future historians are going to be studying memes. Help them do it!) Photos of your current craft project. Your list of what you’ve already watched on Netflix. Videos of your quarantine walks. Whatever gets you through this moment.

NOTE: If you’re worried about material being accessed immediately after you donate it, don’t

be! We can put a “do not read until after...” condition on your journal.

4. Keep going until we’re out the other side!

5. Donate! Use our [contact form](#) and mark it as “donations” so we can work with you and figure out the details. To get an idea of what donating to an archive is like, [this guide from the Society of American Archivists](#) will help you out.

Further reading

The Vermont Folk Life Center’s [Listening in Place](#) project is similar to what we’re trying to do.

[The Great Plague 1665-1666: How did London respond to it?](#) from the National Archives in the UK is an educator’s guide to using diaries and personal documents from the Great Plague to help understand what it was like to live during that time. Your journal will help do the same.

[The Great Diary Project](#) gives an excellent overview of why diaries and journals are so important for historians!