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# 5 Chapter 5 HISTORY & REMINISCING



## Programs:

1. Aprons
2. Hats Off to Books
3. Mail Across the Miles – and Barns Along the Way
4. My Bonnet: History of Hats from 1860-1960
5. Nostalgia Series
6. One-Room Schools and Necessary Houses
7. Reminiscing: Programs at Local Nursing Homes
8. Roaring 20s: Remembering the Flappers
9. Simple Pleasures
10. They Called It Home

## Other Program Ideas:

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|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. American Indians                | 8. Hometowns         |
| 2. Automobiles Through Time        | 9. Immigrants        |
| 3. Civil War (Especially Fashions) | 10. Ohio Presidents  |
| 4. Courtship                       | 11. Pets             |
| 5. Covered Bridges                 | 12. Porches          |
| 6. Fads                            | 13. Shakers          |
| 7. First Ladies                    | 14. Yesterday's Toys |

## Sources:

Bifolkal Productions: <http://www.bifolkal.org>

National First Ladies' Library: <http://www.firstladies.org/index/htm>

National Museum of the American Indian: <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

Ohio Covered Bridges: <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/se/coveredbridges/>

Ohio Barns: <http://www.ohiobarns.com>

Reminiscing Game: <http://www.seniorstore.com/remgam.html>

Shakers: <http://www.shakerworkshops.com/who-are-the-shakers.htm>

White House: <http://www.whitehouse.gov>



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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### Program Title:

Aprons

### Description/Summary:

Collect aprons of every style, shape, and pattern possible from everyone you know. Have every participant wear one and share their memories of different ones they had inherited, purchased, or hand-made.

Perhaps you have an image of a mother or grandmother fixed in your memory wearing an apron. Many women wore dresses when milking cows or feeding chickens plus an apron. It may have been flowered and faded, with stains that told of years of toil. Today, not many women wear aprons every day, yet it is important to remember what aprons tell us about the past. Although aprons are generally associated with women, the first examples were used primarily by men.

### Materials/Equipment/Resources:

*Remember When*. Ideals Publishing Co.  
*Country Living* (magazine), February 1992.  
Encyclopedias

### Helpful Hints:

Cut out "apron" shaped name tags for each participant. Take Polaroid pictures and give to participant. I have also used this same format with the topic of hats. It is especially good for use in senior residences or nursing homes. It makes a nice Mother's Day program.

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## **HISTORY & REMINISCING**

### **Program Title:**

Hats Off to Books

### **Description/Summary:**

A local collector of historic hats was asked to show his collection and do a short talk about it. Various members of the historical society and the public were then asked to relate a story concerning the hat each of them had brought. Hats were related to books as a display; for example, a graduation mortar board to a scholarship book; a beret to a French art book; an army hat to a book on Vietnam; a cowboy hat to a book on the Old West. "Hats Off To Books" turned out to be fun as well as educational. The idea is adaptable in many ways.

### **Materials/Equipment/Resources:**

Collection of hats; table for display; microphone for speaker; books relating to hats; could use posters or other pictures that would show a connection with the time era of the hats.

### **Helpful Hints:**

Be sure the speaker does not talk too long without action. The speaker could choose persons from the audience to model the hats. If a speaker were not available with a collection of hats, a committee could be appointed to make hats that resembled those of past history and give some of the history related to each. Refreshments are always welcome after a program for seniors. Cookies or other food that look like hats would be suitable.

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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### Program Title:

Mail Across the Miles – and Barns Along the Way

### Description/Summary:

Contact your local and/or Federal Postal Service and ask for the booklet, *History of America's Mail Service*. Emphasize:

- Colonial times – how mail was deposited and picked up from bags located in coffee houses or taverns, or handed directly to the ship's captain if going across the Atlantic
- Pony Express era
- Stagecoaches and wagon trains
- City free delivery and eventually RFD

Check with general stores in your area to see if they still have built-in mail slots for customers. There are literally hundreds of interesting rural mail boxes built to resemble anything from the Main lobster to a church complete with steeple.

Many types of architecture are represented in fascinating barns along the county and township roads. Take photographs or slides of square-shaped, cupola top, round and polygonal, salt box, masonry with slits, brick, log, crib, tobacco, Dutch styles to name a few. Those with advertisements on the sides or roof, such as "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco," also generate good discussion.

### Materials/Equipment/Resources:

Old stamp collection in plastic sleeves to pass around (providing magnifying sheets for visually impaired.)

Poster tracing the price of stamps over the years.

I also had a Bob Evans mailbox with candy treat inside for each participant.

Schuler, Stanley. *American Barns, In a Class By Themselves*. Exton, PA: Schiffer Pub., 1984.

### Helpful Hints:

You might want to add discussion about the Ohio Bicentennial Barns project.

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## **HISTORY & REMINISCING**

### **Program Title:**

My Bonnet: History of Hats from 1860-1960

### **Description/Summary:**

A local group which collects textiles presented this 30-minute program. Unusual and historic hats were displayed and modeled while a talk was given. A question and answer period followed the program.

### **Materials/Equipment/Resources:**

Microphone for speaker, table for the hat display and chairs for the audience were set up. Coffee, cups and napkins were set out which were provided by the Friends of the Library.

### **Helpful Hints:**

This is one of a series of half hour programs which are regularly publicized by press releases and public service announcements on the radio. They are also always included on the library's monthly calendar.



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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### Program Title:

Nostalgia Series

### Description/Summary:

Six weeks of film/discussion programs were presented, with each week's program devoted to a successive period of about a decade in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: The Innocent Years 1901-1914, The Great War 1914-1918, The Age of Ballyhoo, The Great Depression, World War II (Part 1) and World War II (Part 2). The purpose of the series was to give people the pleasure of remembering while exchanging and sharing with others as well as to encourage them to use the library. The programs were aimed at persons over 50; however, a few younger people attended. This contributed a great deal as they enjoyed listening to the older persons' memories and asking them questions. Memorabilia and books were displayed, fitting in with the theme of each program. The books could be borrowed at the conclusion of the program. The period between the films was used to encourage conversation among the group members.

### Materials/Equipment/Resources:

16 mm projector, screen, record player, table/shelves suitable for book display, a locked glass case for display of memorabilia. The 16 mm films were borrowed from OVAL/SOLO, the local school system and Kent State University. 30 to 40 books were put on display for each program, including history, novels written in and about the period, memoirs, picture books, biographies, etc.

### Helpful Hints:

The general approach was very relaxed. No attempt was made to lecture or explain anything. The presenter served as facilitator for the discussion and some members of the audience really opened up and shared stories of their lives.

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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### Program Title:

One-Room Schools and Necessary Houses

### Description/Summary:

Take photographs/slides of one-room school buildings in your area. Check either the library's local history section or the County Recorder's Office for location of buildings that have been removed. Some one-room schools have been converted into private dwellings, township meeting halls, storage buildings, etc. One building in Seneca County is now a second station for the Green Springs Fire Department and is known as the "one-room fire station." Sauder Village in Archbold is a good place to visit a restored one-room school building.

What a relief when Thomas Crapper invented the flush toilet in England in the 1880s! It caught on among the American rich in the 1890s. His invention was definitely a great gift to civilization! However, the family outhouse was never a source of embarrassment but rather a source of pride. In 1940 the country's 50,000<sup>th</sup> Roosevelt bungalow was dedicated. He gave rural Americans a new deal in their little shacks out back with crews of WPA laborers replacing dilapidated structures with spanking new ones. Stories from teachers and owners of a necessary house could be recorded to add to the oral history of the area. You may want to read "My Great-Aunt Arizona" by Gloria Houston and/or sing "Ode to the Little Brown Shack Out Back" by Billy Edd Wheeler.

### Materials/Equipment/Resources:

*Old Favorites Sing-A-Long*. 675 New York Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22801 (Kit of songbook, slides, and cassette)

Reyburn, Wallace. *Flushed With Pride: the Story of Thomas Crapper*. London: Macdonald & Co., 1969.

Guilliford, Andrew. *America's County Schools*. Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1984.

Wheeler, Billy Edd. *Outhouse Humor*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1988.



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# HISTORY & REMINISCING

## Program Title:

Reminiscing: Programs at Local Nursing Homes

## Description/Summary:

Using Bi-Folkal Kits as a model, the library collected materials to stimulate the senses and used them to get residents in nursing homes involved. For "Before Electricity" we developed two skits. One was about the icebox ("Don't Open the Door") and the other was on "The Saturday Night Bath." These were very simple and easy for people to read. To start discussions, the presenter asked questions like, "How did you amuse yourself before TV?". Other themes for reminiscing were "Going to the Fair," "Fourth of July Picnics," "Local Floods," and "Storms." The response was fantastic! Everyone loves reminiscing.

## Materials/Equipment/Resources:

Washboard, homemade soap, apron, game of jacks, button on a string to make a buzzer, locally produced slides, old newspapers ads, pictures of pets, newspaper clippings about 1913 flood and 1902 storm.

## Helpful Hints:

We learned from experience to stay away from traumatic topics. Half of the group was in tears when we talked about favorite pets.

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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### Program Title:

Roaring 20s: Remembering the Flappers

### Description/Summary:

Before the first part of the BiFolkal slide show, "Remembering 1924", was shown, the audience was asked what they remembered about the 1920s. During the segment about the flappers, I stopped the slides and showed the first 15 minutes of the film *Flapper Story*. The slide show was then completed along with more discussion of that time period.

### Materials/Equipment/Resources:

Slide projector, boom box, and 16mm projector.

"Flapper Story" (film). Cinema Guild 29 min.

"Remembering 1924." Madison, WI: BiFolkal Productions.

### Helpful Hints:

After the program, I had to run the rest of the film through the projector, and everyone wanted to stay to watch it.



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# HISTORY & REMINISCING

## Program Title:

Simple Pleasures

## Description/Summary:

This program is dedicated to all who, regardless of age, can recall some simple and forgotten pleasures. The program, which was presented by three staff members who do adult and children's programming, began with a look at the folktales told to us as children. The presentation included storytelling, sing-a-long, audience participation and book reviewing. Length of the program: 1 to 1 ½ hours, depending upon the amount of audience participation.

## Materials/Equipment/Resources:

"The Great American Depression Book of Fun" by John O'Dell, "Forgotten Pleasures" by Ruth Rudner. Poem "Simple Pleasures" by Laverne P. Larson; "The Teeny Tiny Woman" retold and illustrated by Barbara Sealing; "The Strange Visitor" from English Folk and Fairy Tales, compiled by Joseph Jacobs; "The Twist Mouth Family" published in a Treasure of American Folklore edited by B.A. Botkin; "The Songs We Sang: A Treasury of Popular Music" by Theodore Ralph, "Ideals: Americana," Vol. 38, No. 5, July 1981, "Thanks for Sharing" a biography of Kate Smith.

## Helpful Hints:

Publicity included announcements in the local newspaper, library column, radio, area businesses, senior citizen housing and branch libraries.

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## HISTORY & REMINISCING

### **Program Title:**

They Called It Home

### **Description/Summary:**

I showed slides of Ohio Presidents' homes and/or memorials; mansions in Newport, RI; The House of Seven Gables in Salem, MA; Thomas Edison's winter home in Ft. Myers, FL; the Governor's Palace in Colonial Williamsburg; and the White House. You could adapt it to any homes of famous or historic people.

### **Materials/Equipment/Resources:**

Collect and display postcards, artifacts, and any memorabilia of 'homes' you decide to discuss. Inside slides of the White House were purchased from: The White House Historical Association, 740 Jackson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20506.  
Slide projector/screen

### **Helpful Hints:**

This is especially good for use in senior residences and nursing homes.