

# Local History Report

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April 2023

A few small updates worth knowing this month.

- I. Requests. March set a new record for LH requests, so it's worth explaining how I define an LH request. Something is counted as a "request" if it requires time to fulfill. If someone asks to see a yearbook, or asks a very general question about the building ("what did this place used to be?"), this is *not* a request. A request does include retrieving photos, newspaper articles, or getting a specific answer to a question (e.g. when did the roundhouse close?). The number reported represents the number of requests, whether the question is narrow or broad. If someone needs one article ("John Smith's obituary") or twenty ("everything on John Smith"), this is counted as a single request. The raw numbers do not tell the full story of whether it was a five minute request or a multi-day request. Unfortunately, I do not know a better way to track this statistic to reflect how involved they can be. Incidentally, all requests since January 2019 are kept, under the belief that any question asked will be asked again.
- II. Newspaper digitization. We are in the early stages, with under 10% of our reels digitized. On April 14, we received the first batch of digital records. Spencer and I anticipated the PDF files to be relatively small in terms of storage space. On the contrary, they are exponentially larger than expected – the first batch took 48 hours to download, and we will ultimately need to have a hard drive designated solely for newspaper storage. He has already moved forward on that. No tentative date for public access to the digital files has yet been decided. As a reminder, this project was funded by a patron donation, so the only cost on our end will be the storage space.
- III. PastPerfect. Our single-user PastPerfect is scheduled to be migrated over to the public, online version on May 1. At first, it will be in "trial" mode to ensure the data went through correctly. We can make it "live" at any point after that. Volunteers continue to add photos right up until launch (and beyond), while I've been cleaning up minor typographical errors to streamline the index, and making a standardized how-to on entering names and other data going forward to maximize uniformity. I cannot express how excited I am for this. On day one (possibly before the next board meeting), over 10,000 photos will be searchable anywhere in the world. PastPerfect also has other database features we have yet to utilize, where (for example) biographies and company histories can be accessed. In essence, it could be used as a "one stop shop" for everything Kaukauna history, from the 1700s up through today.
- IV. While LH requests are private, I will say in general that I've assisted three different organizations design murals based on Kaukauna photographs in the last few months. There is no shortage of history on display around the city, and I'm proud our organization's collection will be reflected on many walls.