**PHOTOS of all of the artifacts are available here:** [**https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IHKfFr7gkhC1bTe8ZalaL2XjDc8-cDUS**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IHKfFr7gkhC1bTe8ZalaL2XjDc8-cDUS)

**Capturing history as it happens: 6 pandemic artifacts from the past 6 months**

By Jeff Morgan
Iowa Culture Wire

About six months ago the Covid-19 pandemic arrived here in Iowa, and life changed.

Sanitizers. Masks. Social distancing. What are minor inconveniences for some have become part of the nightmares that haunt those who have fallen ill or lost loved ones to the disease.

“For those of us living through this, there’s no question we’ll remember it for the rest of our lives,” State Curator Leo Landis said. “For future generations, however, we are obligated to document and preserve the images, artifacts and stories that will help them understand the tragedies and disruption this pandemic has brought to our way of life.”

That’s why Landis, State Archivist Anthony Jahn and their colleagues at the State Historical Society of Iowa have invited Iowans to submit both physical and digital artifacts related to the pandemic – including photos, emails, blogs and journals – to document the pandemic’s impact on everyday life in Iowa.

Since the call went out in May, the society has received dozens of responses. Here are just a few, just six items from the last six unprecedented months . . .

• Cupron masks, donated by Dan VandenAvond of Fox River Mills in Osage. Fox River Mills, which manufactures socks, retooled to make masks to help fulfill the increased demand. VandenAvond noted that mask sales were initially brisk but slowed down as other producers entered the market.

• A runner's bib from the Sully Freedom Fun Run/Walk, an annual Fourth of July tradition in the small town in Jasper County. When Urbandale canceled a 5K race, some central Iowa runners sought out similar events, including the Des Moines high school cross-country runner who donated the bib.

• Smirnoff Hand Sanitizer from the Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Division. The vodka distiller pledged to donate enough alcohol to make 8 million bottles of sanitizer.

• A face shield printed with the message “Black Lives Matter.” State Sen. Joe Bolkcom, D-Iowa City, wore it during the Iowa Legislature’s abbreviated session at the state capitol.

• A photo of a pandemic-screening tent at the state capitol on March 12, the first day that such screenings were required.

•  A protest sign from a teacher in Des Moines.

Items like these help the State Historical Society of Iowa create a cohesive collection that tells a multidimensional story for future generations. The society of Iowa will continue to accept items to supplement its collection as the pandemic evolves.

“We’re interested in seeing a wide range of items,” Jahn said. “We will be selective in the materials we collect but don’t want to discourage any potential donations that document personal stories or family experiences, such as social distancing, working from home, unemployment issues or adjustments that needed to be made about school.”

**Help make history**
If you have something you’d like to submit for the State Historical Society of Iowa’s collection of pandemic-related materials, please find the details [online](https://www.iowaculture.gov/history/research/collections/donating-materials) at iowaculture.gov. You can also [join the society](https://iowaculture.gov/history/support/membership) to help support its mission of preserving and sharing Iowa history.

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