On a beautiful evening in May, the Hancock Historical Museum hosted the inaugural "History with a Twist" craft cocktail competition at its downtown Findlay campus. The unique new event took a different approach to engaging the public in museum programming, by combining history with the art of mixology. Seven of the most talented bartenders in the city, representing all local establishments, each created an original craft cocktail inspired by history. The competition guidelines required that the cocktail pay homage to American, state, or local history, whether in technique, title, or ingredients. Guests to the sold-out event had the opportunity to sample each of the cocktails, while enjoying live music and appetizers. A panel of four judges chose the winner, while guests voted on their favorite for the People's Choice title.

"THE LOCALIST"
Lemon Juice
Bitters
Aquafaba
Honey Lavendar Simple Syrup
OYO Honey Vanilla Bean Vodka

Renee Miller, Fins Seafood & Grille, Judges' and People's Choice Winner
The tour day began with a special Breakfast in the Barn, prepared by local restaurant, Main Street Deli, and held at the historic Hancock County barn of Mark and Drena Metzger. The Metzger barn was awarded the Ohio Barn of the Year Award in 2015. The sold-out breakfast gave 200 people the opportunity to learn more about the history of this beautiful barn and farming practices of the past, while enjoying conversation with fellow guests from across Ohio. In recent years, the Historic Barn Tour has won numerous awards and been recognized as one of the most successful preservation programs in the state. The event is made possible by the generous hospitality and support of our county’s agriculture community, and 2019’s tour continued a proud tradition for the Hancock Historical Museum.

The 5th Historic Barn Tour hosted by the Hancock Historical Museum was held in September, with more than 800 people visiting southern Hancock County in a single day to learn more about our area’s agricultural heritage. The self-guided tour featured five historic barns, dating from the 1840s to the early 1900s. In addition to learning more about these impressive structures, guests to the tour also enjoyed a wide array of activities, including antique machinery and blacksmithing demonstrations, local food vendors, timber-framing and hewing demonstrations, and live music with the Dulcimer Gatherin’ and the classic country band, East of Cheyenne. Special additions to the 2019 tour included children’s arts and crafts, science activities, and a silent auction of Hancock County barn paintings, generously donated by Cincinnati artist, Robert Kroeger.
In November, the museum released Ice and Fire, a compilation of first-hand accounts of local service members during the Korean War. The book made its debut during the museum’s annual Veteran’s Day celebration. Many of the local veterans featured in the book attended the reception to sign their personal stories for guests.

The book was the brainchild of local historian, Ron Ammons. Ron began gathering the stories of Korean War veterans nearly ten years ago. In 2016, he reached out to the Hancock Historical Museum and Curator, Joy Bennett, for assistance in completing the project. Joy conducted additional interviews and worked on editing the stories into book format. Volunteer, Linda Bash, provided additional editing support.

The completed book includes stories from local veterans Mark Metzger, Gay Jones, James Rooney, Dick Corbin, and many others. Ice and Fire is available for sale in the Hancock Historical Museum Gift Shop, or online at hancockhistoricalmuseum.org/gift-shop.

Throughout the summer months, history organizations across the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of NASA’s Apollo 11 lunar mission and the first moon landing. The Hancock Historical Museum invited families to visit the campus for an evening of history and science during “Moon Magic!” With partner organizations like the Children’s Museum of Findlay, Mazza Museum, and Findlay City Schools, guests of all ages enjoyed space-themed crafts and activities, including launching their own rockets!
Recognized by both the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service, May is National Historic Preservation Month in America. Activities are planned across the country to raise awareness about the importance of preserving our cultural resources, and to get people actively engaged in the preservation process.

As the only non-profit organization in Hancock County tasked with the preservation and interpretation of our local history, the Hancock Historical Museum celebrated Historic Preservation Month in May with an awareness campaign and opportunities for the community to become involved.

In conjunction with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the museum promoted the “This Place Matters” movement. Preservation is about saving the places that are meaningful to us and to our communities, and the museum asked the community to share which places are important to them and why. Guests were able to pick up posters and signs with the “This Place Matters” logo at the museum’s front desk, and place them in windows throughout the city. Community members took photos with the signs in front of their favorite historic buildings and shared them on social media. From private homes, to small businesses downtown, to large institutions like the University of Findlay, the museum was overwhelmed by the response to this positive movement!

Throughout the month, the museum shared more information about the importance of historic preservation through a weekly collaboration with The Courier and social media. The museum also recognized many of Findlay’s historic homeowners with a door-hanger campaign, expressing our sincere appreciation for their stewardship.
For one month in 2019, the Hancock Historical Museum served as the temporary home for one of the nation’s rarest flags. The only 13-star, Revolutionary War-era American flag on public display in the world was unveiled at a reception at the museum on Flag Day, June 14th. The flag is privately owned by the Mooney family of southern Ohio, and had most recently been on display at the National Underground Freedom Center in Cincinnati. The flag is believed to have been used during the Revolutionary War at Ft. Independence, in Boston. James Mooney approached the museum in May with the idea of having the flag in Flag City, USA on Flag Day. Following the reception on June 14th, the flag was on display at the museum for visitors through July 5th. Hundreds of guests came to view the flag from neighboring counties and states throughout the month. More than 200 visitors came to view the flag on Independence Day alone. The Mooney family flag has been authenticated by several renowned textile experts. Dye testing has further affirmed its authenticity. The Mooney flag is likely 30 to 40 years older than the oldest flag at the Smithsonian. The Hancock Historical Museum was proud to house such an important piece of American history, while providing the opportunity for our community to view this rare and special artifact.
As we look towards our programming in 2020, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Hancock Historical Museum. In 1970, five civic-minded Findlay businessmen; Jim Brucklacher, Harold Corbin, Jack Harrington, Ed Heminger, and R. Joseph “Joe” Opperman, established the Hancock Historical Museum Association. One year later, the Association acquired the historic Hull-Flater House at 422 W. Sandusky Street, and the museum opened its doors.

Each of the founders, and their families, gave generously of their time, talents, and treasures to ensure the future success of the museum, creating a foundation and volunteering to serve in leadership positions on the Board of Trustees. Connections the men had made in their businesses, and the respect with which they were viewed in the community, helped to bolster the museum’s membership and support. Their enthusiasm for the project was infectious, and the early success of the museum became a labor of love for many. Over the last half century, the museum has grown to encompass nine buildings and over 25,000 square feet of exhibit space. Museum programming reaches more than 25,000 people annually, including more than 4,000 Hancock County schoolchildren.

The founding fathers of the Hancock Historical Museum are no longer with us. Joe Opperman, the last surviving member of the group of five, passed away in July 2019. Up until their deaths, each of the men remained committed to the museum, along with the many other civic projects they created and supported during their lifetimes. Throughout 2020, the Hancock Historical Museum will be recognizing the dedication of the Museum Founders, and celebrating this special Golden Anniversary.