

With Local History in Mind, Rural Voices Collection Created for Journal of a Plague Year Archive

My name is Clinton Roberts. Many of you probably know me, but you may not know that I am also a graduate student at Arizona State University. This summer I am working as a curatorial intern for the *Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID-19*. The archive's purpose is to accumulate and preserve historical submissions of life during COVID-19. These submissions are crowdsourced and rely on people to provide observations and firsthand accounts of life during the pandemic. That's why I am seeking submissions from readers like you. The archive began in March of this year and since then has grown to include partner institutions from around the world. I personally created the Rural Voices collection within the JOTPY to represent those living in communities like ours in Blanchard, OK. The Rural Voices collection is an ongoing effort to provide critical perspectives to the often-overlooked experiences of rural people. The website allows people the ability to upload their personal stories, documents, photos, and videos for submission to the archive.

Rural Voices submissions can come from any local community in the world, but Blanchard is my community and was the main influence in creating this collection. I have lived here my whole life and I've seen a lot of changes. This year's COVID-19 is one of those changes and I felt this collection offered the best chance for me to record its impact. My photo of Blanchard's downtown, labeled "Water Tower," represents the way I see our community. These changes



have occurred with the backdrop of an enduring legacy, the lasting effects of a multi-generational memory. And that is why I chose this image to represent my collection page, that enduring legacy of local history.

Each local community has a story to tell and I want our story included. My hope is that future local historical societies and schools can use this as a creative way to learn about our community's ability to adapt during these challenges. The more participants we receive, the better represented each community will be. These stories matter because of the unique ways that rural communities, like Blanchard, have adapted to recent challenges. Some possible submissions could be a church's first virtual service or the local school's drive-thru graduation. You can contribute your thoughts on these events or any of the other ways that your community has persevered. There are so many untold stories. What issues matter to you? Submit your story to covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/rural. Please use the hashtag **#ruralvoices** in your submission description to ensure in my collection efforts.

Regards,
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