
ARA Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 4.

Greetings members and subscribers!

We have some important developments to share with you.

News on NARA reopening

Like all of you, we absorbed the latest news of a possible COVID vaccine with much optimism, but without more concrete information we are planning based on the best data currently available. ARA representatives are now meeting weekly with NARA executives to discuss the progress being made toward the reopening of NARA's research facilities. At this time nine NARA facilities, including St Louis have reverted to 'closed' status due to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. This means that once the virus infection numbers begin to subside NARA will be starting over with phase I. Each phase will take a minimum of two weeks to complete. The best-case scenario is a limited reopening in January or February and more closures are certain to occur in the coming days.

Once phase III is completed, a limited return of public patrons will be allowed at some research locations. We expect Archives II will open first. Finding aids at Archives II are being digitized and will be available on the NARA catalog. In theory, you will request records ahead of time, set an appointment and when you arrive your records will be waiting for you. There will be no ordering of records while on-site. Masks will be mandatory, space will be limited, and appointment blocks will likely be for a maximum of four to five hours per day. Researchers will wipe down stations before and after conducting research. Public access PCs and photocopiers are currently slated for removal from the research rooms.

NARA has indicated that they believe that many of the new, safety-related

restrictions to access due to COVID-19 will become permanent. It is the view of the ARA that while temporary changes for safety reasons are to be expected, restrictions to access should not be permanent. In fact, we are hopeful that our efforts to increase funding for NARA will result in expanded access in the coming years.

We will continue to keep our members updated on our discussions with NARA on the reopening.

ARA has joined the National Coalition for History!

We are excited to announce that ARA has joined the [National Coalition for History](#) (NCH). Lee White, the executive director of NCH has 35 years of experience in government relations and will be guiding our advocacy efforts in DC. There are many benefits to aligning ourselves with a 50 member coalition that includes the [American Historical Association](#) and [HISTORY](#) among many others. Go to <http://historycoalition.org> for more information.

Recent addition to the ARA board of officers

We are pleased to welcome Bill Beigel as our newest addition to the ARA board! Mr. Beigel is an American military records researcher, speaker, and author specializing in service histories of American veterans and casualties of World War II. Since 1999, Mr. Beigel has researched thousands of WWII veterans and casualties for individuals, families, private and public organizations worldwide. He is the author of *“Buried on the Battlefield – Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead from World War Two,”* which has been optioned for a documentary film. He is building the world’s first complete online database of the 407,000 American military casualties from World War II, which presently includes more than 100,000 names.

First Town Hall Meeting Held

On October 19th, we held our first Town Hall Meeting with approximately 40 members joining on Zoom.

Don Mounts served as moderator and introduced the board members and explained that this meeting was to allow transparency and give researchers a voice through our association.

At the time of the town hall, our membership stood at 86 members: 44 individuals (including self-employed researchers), 13 research companies, 23 non-profits, and 3 corporations/major sponsors who have pledged \$1000 or more annually. As a group, our members represent tens of thousands of researchers and clients worldwide. If you have not already joined please consider supporting our efforts: [ARA membership](#).

Speaking engagements

In the month of October the ARA presented at two conferences. Our exhibition at the National Organization for Veterans' Advocates fall conference examined how veteran advocates can obtain proof required to secure PTSD benefits for their clients. You can view the educational presentations from the NOVA conference on the [ARA website](#). We also participated in the Footage Fest fall conference where ARA panelists presented on special media collections and veterans records available at the National Archives. Both conferences went exceedingly well and we are proud of the hard work that our members put into them. A warm thanks to the conference hosts for having us!

We need your help

We are seeking corporate donors who can become yearly sustaining members at \$1,000 or more. Corporate sponsors and annual donors receive their logo on our homepage. Additionally, major donors with annual contributions of \$4,000 or more will also have their logo/links added to our newsletters and other promotional materials such as conference flyers and webinar exhibitions. If you know of a

potential donor that may be interested in contributing to our effort please have them reach out via [email](#). While the board members are all unpaid volunteers our organization is growing at such a pace that we now require the services of professionals (webmaster, bookkeeper, accountant, graphic design, etc.)

Please sign and share the [ARA petition](#) to save our history and fund the National Archives. We already have over 1,000 signatures. We need your help to get to 10,000 so that we can make a real impact!

There is no better way for us to appeal to our representatives than through real-life, personal examples of how COVID-19 and archives closures have affected us. Tell us how COVID-19 has impacted you, your family, your business and your clients. We now have a webpage where you can anonymously submit your story: [Personal Story Submission](#).

Become a member

It is not too late to get involved. We know that the advocacy work we are doing is important to you. Join us today and become part of an effort that will make a difference to the next generation of researchers too: [Join now](#).

Thanks again to our members and sponsors for all of your support!