SPEAKING OF CLEVELAND
Forgotten Tales from Cleveland’s Past

WRHS
Cleveland History Center
SPEAKING OF CLEVELAND

Take a front row seat online or in-person as the Cleveland History Center presents significant stories that capture the Cleveland spirit. Speaking of Cleveland features the intriguing, curious and oft-forgotten tales from Cleveland’s past. Pulled directly from the nationally-recognized collections of the Western Reserve Historical Society, these stories showcase the innovation, the grit and the pride that characterize Cleveland’s past, present and future.

Our historians and museum professionals are eager to share Cleveland’s stories with you. To book a Speaking of Cleveland engagement for your group or facility, please email education@wrhs.org. Programs can be delivered in-person or over a digital platform online.

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS
$250 per program + mileage (if applicable)

JOHN GRABOWSKI, PhD | Senior VP of Research & Publications

Cleveland: A to Z
Author and historian John Grabowski presents his newest book on Cleveland – a city guide focused on the people, places, and events that define our city.

Immigration and Migration to Cleveland: An Historical Overview in National and Global Context
Today, Northeast Ohio is home to over 120 ethnic groups. How did our city and region, once an outpost of New England, become a global community? This program will explore the history and traditions of Cleveland’s immigrant communities.

Who Names the Neighborhood?
Cleveland’s neighborhoods have, and have had, an intriguing series of names – from Kamm’s Corners to Dutch Hill and Little Italy and now to Hingetown. Some names have been around for over a century, others are new. Who gets to choose the name – the people who live in the area, or city officialdom? This program will explore the history of Cleveland’s neighborhoods by looking at the broader story of their identities over time and the manner in which name changes have been influenced both by shifting demography, politicians, developers, and urban planners.

REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS, PhD | Distinguished Scholar of African American History and Culture

Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities
African American faith communities have long served as influential centers of social and religious activities. In this presentation, historian and author Regennia N. Williams, PhD will discuss the evolving role of religion in Black America, based on her ongoing research for the Praying Grounds Oral History Project and her books and other publications, including “Cleveland, Ohio and Race, Religion, and Reconciliation: Academic Initiatives, Leadership Development, and Social Change.”

Jazz in Cleveland
Historian and music lover Regennia N. Williams, PhD, will present a lecture-discussion on the contributions of Cleveland natives Ernie Freeman, Evelyn Freeman Roberts, and Albert Ayler, as well as those of musical artists such as Noble Sissle and others who spent part of their careers in Cleveland. Williams, who co-authored Washington, DC, Jazz (Arcadia, 2019), will also discuss the importance of Cleveland in the larger history of jazz in America.

Going There & Knowing There: The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Cleveland, OH
This presentation will focus on Dr. King’s many visits to Cleveland, Ohio in the 1960s, the purpose of those visits, the individuals and organizations that worked with him, and Cleveland’s place in the larger history of the Civil Rights Movement in America. The lecture-discussion will include a consideration of the churches and other local landmarks associated with Dr. King’s work.
Black Agency and Black Activism
Based on Dr. Regennia N. Williams' research for her own publications and primary and secondary materials for a course that she designed for the Western Reserve Historical Society in 2021, this presentation will provide participants with opportunities to consider the long view of Black Agency and Black Activism, from the Modern Civil Rights Movement to the #BlackLivesMatter Movement, c. 1960-2022.

Partnerships, Portraits, and the Power of Photojournalism: Black History According to Allen E. and Francis T. Cole
Explore the newest exhibition at the Cleveland History Center with its curator, Dr. Regennia N. Williams (also co-author of Through the Lens of Allen E. Cole: A Photographic History of African Americans in Cleveland, Ohio). This exhibition considers key themes in the history of Black Cleveland within the larger context of American history and the art of photography, while also commemorating the centenary of the establishment of the Cole's home-based studio in 1922. The specific focus of this talk can vary, based on the needs and interest of the host organization or institution.

The Impact of the Great Migration on Cleveland
One statistical portrait of Black Cleveland during the first wave of the Great Migration suggests that the population increased from 8,448 to more than 34,000 from 1910 to 1925. At the time, Blacks were concentrated on the city’s east side, with many living in the Greater Cedar-Central Area. Find out more about the factors that influenced the migration and its impact on the social, cultural, political, and economic history of Cleveland in the 20th century.

CONTENT EXPERTS
$150 per program + mileage (if applicable)

ERIC RIVET | Curator of Collections & Exhibits
Ohio’s Presidential Past
Ohio is sometimes called the Mother of Presidents, and it is claimed that the state has produced more U.S. Presidents than any other state. Join Chief Curator Eric Rivet to learn about the truth behind this claim and to hear stories about the men from Ohio that have held the nation’s highest elected office.

Before They Were Famous: Celebrity Veterans of World War II
More than sixteen million Americans served during World War II. Most of them would return home to a normal life, but some would go on to become beloved celebrities after the war. Join Chief Curator Eric Rivet for an audience participation presentation on how some of Hollywood’s best known celebrities served their country.

A Tale of Two Torpedoes: The Sinking of the German Battleship Bismarck
The German battleship Bismarck was one of the deadliest ships afloat at the beginning of World War II. The story of the nine-day chase and destruction of the Bismarck was full of so many twists and turns that it could have been written by Hollywood. Hear the saga of the Bismarck and learn how the epic story hinged on two torpedoes, one British and one German.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf
The Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944 was one of the largest naval battles in history. Actually five separate battles spread around the Philippine Islands, the American victory at Leyte Gulf effectively removed the Imperial Japanese Navy as a threat in the Pacific Theater. Join Chief Curator Eric Rivet to learn about this key World War II battle.

An Impossible Victory: The Battle of Samar
In October 1944, a small U.S. Navy task force came under attack by one of the most powerful Japanese fleets ever assembled. Unable to flee, the American ships attacked with a vengeance and, despite all odds, won an impossible victory. Learn about the ships, the men, and the nearly unbelievable string of errors on the part of U.S. Navy leadership that allowed the battle to happen.

The Apollo Program
Between 1969 and 1972, twenty-one American astronauts left Earth’s orbit and voyaged to the moon as part of NASA’s Apollo Program. Twelve of those men walked on the lunar surface. Discover the triumphs and tragedies of the Apollo Program and learn about the men and machines that made it possible for us to leave Earth.

PATRICIA EDMONSON | Museum Advisory Council Curator of Costumes & Textiles
Amanda Wicker: Black Fashion Design in Cleveland
Amanda Wicker (1894-1987) moved to Cleveland in 1924 with not much more than her skills as a dressmaker. With a single student enrolled, she began the Clarke School of Dressmaking and Fashion Design in her home on Cedar Avenue in Cleveland’s Fairfax neighborhood. For the following six decades, she established herself as the preeminent fashion teacher and mentor in the predominantly African American Fairfax neighborhood. Join costume curator Patty Edmonson to learn about Amanda Wicker’s incredible legacy, in the fashion world and beyond.

Wow Factor: 150 Years of Collecting Bold Clothes
Clevelanders use fashion to stand out in a crowd. Share in the images and stories from our extensive costume collection to learn more about our city’s trendsetters, who they were, and where they shopped.

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SEAN MARTIN, PhD | Associate Curator of Jewish History

How do local groups operate within larger, national ethnic groups? How do they help us negotiate our identities as citizens? Explore the variety of ethnic communities to which we belong and the local groups in which we live.

JOHN FRATO | Euclid Beach Park Grand Carousel Training & Volunteer Coordinator

Euclid Beach Park’s Grand Carousel
This is the story of the Euclid Beach Park Grand Carousel: its years at the park, its operation in Maine, and its journey back home to Cleveland. John Frato will recall the challenges encountered in the project to restore the 1910 carousel to full operation and tell the stories of carousel memories old and new.

PAMELA DORAZIO-DEAN | Italian History

Italian-American Life in Cleveland
Today, Cleveland is home to a vibrant Italian-American community that has grown over decades of immigration. Explore Italian immigration to the city from the late 19th Century through the present day, with a focus on life in the Italian neighborhoods.

The Art & History of Italian Sculpting in Northeast Ohio
Among the Italians who immigrated to Cleveland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were skilled stone carvers and sculptors. Their skills and talents helped to create exquisite works in stone that continue to beautify Northeast Ohio. This talk will explore the stone carvers and some of the works they created, including monuments and headstones at Lake View Cemetery, the Soldiers & Sailors Monument, and the iconic Guardians of Transportation.

MARY MANNING | PK-12 Education Manager

History of Hough Bakery
Founded in 1903, Hough Bakery was a Cleveland staple for 90 years. Through access to the Hough Bakery archives in the library of the Western Reserve Historical Society, this program will focus on the founding and growth of the company, Hough Bakery products, and its closure in 1992. Find out how, why, and the ways in which their legacy lives on.

Wars, treaties and other world events can change boundaries, politics, and even a country’s name. Knowing the basics can help a researcher navigate the complicated geography of nineteenth and twentieth century Eastern Europe.

The Story of Euclid Beach Park
Food, rides, and attractions. Why is Euclid Beach Park so very memorable? Learn about its beginnings in 1895 and reminisce about its heyday, as well as its final days in 1969. Relive those special memories that Euclid Beach Park holds for Clevelanders.

Euclid Beach Park – Then and Now – An Epilogue
By the turn of the century, there were approximately 30 amusement parks operating in Ohio. A large number operated not only in Cleveland but the surrounding area. The program focusses on Geauga Lake, Chippewa Lake Park, Idora, Luna, Puritas, Myers Lake and touches on some lesser known parks like Lincoln Park, WilloBeach, Gordon Gardens and Forest City.

Northern Ohio Amusement Park Memories
The program begins with an overview the most popular rides at Euclid Beach Park with a focus on the last years the Park was open. The emphasis shifts to how the land was used after the closure, the disposition of the rides, operation at Shady Lake, and auction at Old Indiana Family Fun Park. Discover not only what happened to the rides once the Park closed but where the original rides or those very similar are still operating today. Please note: This program can be presented separately, but is more impactful if presented in conjunction with “Euclid Beach Park: Cleveland’s Most Beloved and Successful Amusement Park.

Legends, Myths, Tall Tales and True Stories – How Clevelanders Remember Euclid Beach Park
Generations of Clevelanders remember Euclid Beach Park. How have the stories changed over time? Separate the truth from the fiction: did the Rocket Ships really fly into Lake Erie, where is Laughing Sam, did they serve cotton candy and funnel cakes, was there ever an admission charge? Learn the answers to these and other questions.

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CLEVELAND HISTORY FAVORITES
$130 per program + mileage (if applicable)

A Brief History of the Western Reserve
Most people in Northeast Ohio know the term Western Reserve, but how many people really know what it means? Join the Cleveland History Center for a discussion about the fascinating history of the region and see some of the rarest treasures in the Western Reserve Historical Society's collection: early maps of the Western Reserve.

Battle for the Ballot: Cleveland’s Suffragist Movement
There is no complete record of the brave, often unnamed women who fought for their right to vote and finally triumphed in 1920. Learn about a band of women who dedicated themselves to the public interest and grew into an organization that won the respect and confidence of the nation. This program will tell the story behind the Cleveland women who advocated for suffrage and went on to help establish the League of Women Voters.

Eliot Ness & the Torso Murders
While acting as Cleveland’s Safety Director, Eliot Ness made great improvements in our infrastructure that created a lasting legacy for the city. However, in these same years, Ness would come head-to-head with a series of heinous crimes – the Torso Murders. Explore the famous case that is still considered unsolved to this day, and learn about the Cleveland of Eliot Ness.

The Golden Age of Shopping
Explore the heyday of Cleveland’s most glamorous department stores. From small grocers to giant palaces, companies like Higbee's, the May Company, and Halle Brothers grew with the city and came to define Cleveland fashion and shopping for decades.

Stories from Millionaires’ Row
Declared “the most beautiful street in America,” Euclid Avenue was once home to powerful families who not only shaped Cleveland, but national politics and industry, as well. Hear their stories as you take a walk down Euclid Avenue in the 19th Century and learn about the beautiful art and architecture of their homes.

Car Capitol of the World
At one time, Cleveland was the automobile capitol of the world. Take a ride through the Western Reserve at the turn of the 20th Century and discover a treasure of Cleveland-made vehicles.

The Burning River: A Natural and Social History of the Cuyahoga River
The Cuyahoga River has been at the heart of life in Northeast Ohio for thousands of years, yet the enduring vision of the Cuyahoga is that of the Burning River. Join the Cleveland History Center to look behind the myth to see what history tells us really happens, and why the 1969 fire and Cleveland became the face of the industrial urban crisis.

Carl and Louis Stokes: From Projects to Politics
Two brothers from Cleveland, OH helped reshape American history. Carl and Louis Stokes, along with others, created pathways, policies, and programs that advanced civil rights, promoted urban issues, and helped make the United States a more equitable nation. This program will focus on their life story, one of ordinary people struggling to achieve extraordinary things in a city, nation, and world that held many barriers for people who were poor and black.

Thanks to Garrett Morgan: The Life and Times of Cleveland’s Inventor Extraordinaire
This program is about the life of Garrett Morgan, a black inventor in Cleveland, Ohio, whose inventions produced global effects. His is a Cleveland success story that parallels the hopes and dreams of the Great Migration generation, as well as the hardships and prejudices faced by African Americans in the north in the early 1900s. He was the first African American in Cleveland to own a car. He started social clubs and newspapers to bring the black community together, and was known across the city for his inventions. By examining Morgan’s life, we gain a better understanding of how the African American community developed in Cleveland and how creativity and innovation can overcome stereotypes and oppression.

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SPECIAL HOLIDAY PROGRAMS
$130 per program + mileage (if applicable)

Cleveland’s Holiday Traditions
From early settler traditions to department store palaces, Cleveland has always embraced the holiday season in a big way. Share your memories of Mr. Jingeling and department store windows while learning about some of the lesser-known holiday traditions of Clevelanders both then and now.

Ghosts of Christmas Past
Enjoy a true Victorian holiday season and explore the ghosts and folklore that shaped 19th Century holidays in Cleveland. Whether you view them as creepy superstitions or tales with hidden wisdom, these stories are made to entertain and will leave you looking at holiday traditions in a whole new way.

Valentine’s Day in Cleveland
This program highlights love stories of Cleveland’s past while highlighting the history of St. Valentine’s Day. Explore how the holiday and its advertisements have changed over the years, especially in local press.

CUSTOM PROGRAMS
Starting at $170 per program
Our experts’ research interests cover a wide range of topics and time periods. If you are interested in a specific subject not covered by the programs above, please contact us to see if we can customize a program for your group! (Pricing dependent upon topic and preparation required.)