In the early 1950s, Lawrenceans were struggling with the wrenching departure of jobs as most of the textile manufacturers left the city to seek lower production costs in the South. The Federal Government declared Lawrence a disaster area because of the unemployment. At the same time, availability of Federal Urban Redevelopment funds encouraged City government and the Congressional delegation explore ways of expanding the tax base while improving the appearance of struggling sections of Lawrence. The two-decade project radically changed the built character of the community.

The original designated area included Common, Valley and Concord Streets bounded by Lawrence and Broadway, requiring the relocation of 274 families, loss of 500 jobs, and relocation or liquidation of numerous businesses. Next was a rectangle bounded by Lawrence St., Haverhill St, Broadway and the Spicket River: the “Plains Project”. Except for the high school, church and City properties and the prestigious homes on Haverhill Street, for example, much of the rest was demolished. A third phase, the Broadway-Essex project, tied in all three efforts and expanded redevelopment to an enormous area bounded by the west side of Broadway, the south side of Essex Street, the east side of Jackson Street and the Spicket River. The Garden Oak St. westerly from White to Hampshire before UR

LHC’s Holdings In Urban Renewal

LHC, as repository of City Records, holds a large collection of Urban Renewal records, including property photographs and accompanying narrative descriptions. We are pleased that we have processed the majority of them and expect to complete the project within the next few months. The collection is of value to family researchers, among others, who are often able to find images of family homes that were demolished during the Urban Redevelopment era and other information of value to their work.

We would like to encourage anyone who has photographs of these areas before Urban Renewal or during the demolition to donate or loan them to LHC for reproduction to fully document the process.
Urban Renewal, cont.

and Union Streets area were also added. Although more of the older structures were spared in the Essex-Broadway phase, significant properties such as the old Post Office, the Police Station, the Central Fire Station and the Broadway movie theaters were destroyed by direct or indirect influence of Urban Redevelopment.

The greatest losses, however, were the neighborhoods that had reflected the diverse ethnic groups that populated Lawrence: children and grandchildren of immigrants who came to work in the textile mills. The local stores were gone: Bogosian’s Meat Market, Charley’s Barber Shop, Contarino’s Pharmacy, among many others. Social and cultural networks were destroyed as families were relocated. They lost contact with their doctors, who practiced from their homes in the neighborhood, homes that were also taken.

While emphasizing that properties were in generally deteriorating condition, the text of the Acquisition Appraisal for the Plains project also stated “The neighborhood has no prestige in terms of social standing” and later “There is at the present time an infiltration into the neighborhood of residents of a lower economic status with less desirable social and cultural backgrounds” (Whipple and Magane Appraisers, prepared for the Lawrence Redevelopment Authority, 1963, p. 22).

In cities throughout the country, similar stories of the dubious motivations and unintended consequences associated with Urban Renewal are the stuff of local legend. In many cases the hopes of more lively economic development and a broader tax base were not realized. On the other hand, the lessons learned have led planners and officials to examine more carefully the value of preserving vintage structures and promoting neighborhood revitalization from within.

Genealogy

The Genealogy Group continues to meet on the fourth Thursday (7PM) of most months. The meetings permit families to hear from experts who can provide insightful ways of tracking down those elusive pieces of family histories.

After an August break, the group will meet again on Sept. 22, when Marcia Melnyk, of the Italian American Genealogical Society, will be the featured speaker. Melnyk has been an important and frequent resource for Lawrence families trying to trace their genealogies.

Participation in the Genealogical Group is open to current LHC members for an additional $5 for individuals and $10 for families.

Upcoming

Planned events include a book signing by Martha Sanger, great niece of Helen Frick, who is publishing a biography of the daughter of the Pittsburgh industrialist Henry Clay Frick.

Helen Frick’s connection to Lawrence was through her establishment of the True Blue Society, an association of young female factory workers from Lowell and Lawrence who were given a vacation at her home, Iron Rail Farm, in Pride’s Crossing in the summer. Frick began this philanthropic venture in 1908 when she was twenty and it continued until 1970.

We wish to express our appreciation to the family of Rosario DiGiovanni for naming the Lawrence History Center as the recipient of memorial gifts.
Recent Acquisitions

During recent months, the Lawrence History Center has received a large number of acquisitions. Some of these are older materials that might have been lost forever had not the donors thought to preserve them here. Others are more contemporary, demonstrating how the Lawrence traditions are continuing today.

A large number of photographs and family papers of Mayor A.B. Bruce (1886-1887) are now part of our holdings. The story of Mayor Bruce offers insights into the personal challenges faced by even the most prominent families in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Among the records are scrapbooks and other materials of John Buckley, the longest serving mayor by far in the city of Lawrence. Buckley represented the City through the turmoil caused by the textile mills leaving. He was praised for his efforts to bring to Lawrence diverse economic opportunities. More controversial was his spearheading of Urban Renewal. For many reasons these materials are of value to those seeking a better understanding of Lawrence's past.

Preservation Corner

If you should be unlucky enough to have your photographs flooded (although you shouldn’t keep them in the cellar anyway), do the following to salvage them. You must act quickly because permanent damage can occur in a very short time. Take each photograph (remove it from albums, frames or enclosures) and place it on a paper towel face up. Because the air must move to avoid the growth of mold, place a fan nearby. If you can’t dry them right away, freeze them.

Negatives should be hung to dry. Slides require rinsing with a mixture of water and Photo-flo or a slide cleaner and then hung. (Northeast Document Conservation Center, 1999)

Exhibits

This summer’s major exhibit, For the Public Good, will remain on display through August 31 at Lawrence Heritage State Park.

Our Ellis Island Exhibit, Lawrence, Massachusetts: A First American Home, was on display at Haverhill Public Library for one month this summer. It will also be mounted in a place to be announced in the Fall.

Upcoming exhibits will feature Urban Renewal and Engineering Art.
Lawrence History Center, as Immigrant City Archives, was created in 1978 by Eartha Dengler to preserve the history of Lawrence. Along with preserving the growing collection, we mount exhibits, develop educational programs and assist researchers. LHC’s site—the Essex Company complex in the North Canal Historic District—is on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Bread and Roses**

A major book on Lawrence’s 1912 Bread and Roses Strike is coming out in August. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants and the American Dream* tells the story of how living and working conditions led workers to initiate a leading battle in the effort to improve the lot of laborers in America.

The author, Bruce Watson, has had a distinguished career in journalism. His articles have appeared in *Smithsonian*, the *Los Angeles times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, *Yankee Magazine*, and *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2003*.

LHC is delighted to announce that we will be hosting a presentation by Bruce Watson and a book signing.

The event will be held at the Mill City Gourmet, an exciting new restaurant in the Everett Mill Building. The site is particularly significant because the restaurant was originally a tunnel through the Everett Mill through which one of the militias marched to their temporary barracks in the building.

**Date:** Thursday Sept. 8  
**Time:** 5:30 PM  
**Cost:** $25- Also, books will be available for purchase and signing

Space is limited. Call (978) 686-9230 for reservations

Refreshments, Parking