A Quick Guide to Creating Content for Cleveland Historical

Topic Selection (What is a "Site?" What is a "Tour?")

The concept behind sites (i.e., place-based stories):

A site is a geo-located point on a map interface. It represents either a current or historical place, such as a building, house, park, monument, statue, cemetery, river, factory, restaurant, theater, school, or church. A site is more than just a place, however. It is a place interpreted. In other words, it is a place-based story. In some cases, an event (either a singular historical event, such as the May Day Riot in Public Square in 1919, or an ongoing one, such as Parade the Circle on Wade Oval) is the rationale for a site. In other cases, a person may be a site, but careful attention must be given to choosing the most appropriate location to tell a story about the person. For instance, we tell the story of Mayor Tom L. Johnson at his statue in the northwest quadrant of Public Square instead of on the site where his home once stood on Euclid Avenue because there is a physical place to anchor the story. In other cases, one site may be a proxy for a broader story. With all of Cleveland's old breweries now defunct (and many of their buildings not even standing), it makes sense to have "The Brewing Industry" site at the Great Lakes Brewing Company because it invites visitors to ponder how the company fits into the longer history of brewing and offers a suitable place for touching on the history of a variety of other sites that may not merit individualized treatment. Note that this choice did not preclude a separate decision to have a site for a demolished brewery, the Leisy Brewery. The bottom line is that some sites should never become dumping grounds for encyclopedic information but instead should be *curated*.

Components that comprise a site:

Ideally, each site contains a 300-500 word description, 8-10 images with captions, 1-3 oral history clips, and 1-2 videos.

The **description** serves as the entry point for app users. It is *not* encyclopedic, although some key elements of overview are important. Rather, it is interpretive and selective. Four hundreds words is not a lot, so the description must be tight, precise, and, hopefully, engaging. The "Lake Erie" site description is a good example of not being encyclopedic; it focuses on the environmental story of the lake. As important as the description is as the potential introduction to a site, keep in mind that more often users begin with the rich media (audio, images, video) and may never read the entire description. Thus, the description should be the glue that binds the accompanying items and offers added value. It need not carry the full burden of depicting a site, and in fact it is an excellent idea to save some of the most revealing, startling, memorable points for users to discover in the form of image captions. Likewise, if a story is developed in an oral history clip or a video (explained below), it should not be thoughtlessly replicated in the description, though a passing mention offers connectivity.

The **images** for an app site must be selected with great care. They are *not* the first 6-10 images that you find. Rather, they support the angle of the overall site interpretation, correspond to the

key pieces of the story, and add aesthetic value. Images are such an essential part of a site that your first order of business when selected any site will be to determine if sufficient images are available. You are welcome to use anything in the 500,000-item Cleveland Press Collection photo files and anything in the 25,000+-item Cleveland Memory website. They must be clear scans (300 dpi at full size is sufficient). For images you find in the Press Collection, you will scan with assistance from Special Collections staff; for those you find in Cleveland Memory, you will provide the Identifier # to Joanne Cornelius via email at j.cornelius@csuohio.edu, and she will email you your files. Allow her sufficient time to process your request. If a site's story encompasses a long period of time, images should be spread across as much of the period as possible. Though rarer, color images offer contrast and interest. Captions should be carefully crafted to convey as much interpretation as possible in a small package—ideally about 50 words. They should never merely describe what is plainly evident but instead show how what one sees is a window into something more. If the image corresponds to an interesting story, simply giving a quick account of the story may be sufficient and even powerful. Captions should instruct the viewer in interpreting the image but make him or her thirst for more information.

Oral history **sound clips** are a valuable, though not required, addition (in this course). Oral histories may be those already conducted for the Cleveland Regional Oral History Collection (700 interviews and counting) or those that you conduct voluntarily for extra credit (pending the following of carefully set expectations that include scheduling, conducting, analyzing, logging, and clipping an interview). Brevity is essential in a mobile environment in which the user cannot be expected to spend more than a few minutes exploring an app site (because ideally the app is a key that unlocks new understanding of place, and once the key has been turned the user will of course explore the place itself). As with our discipline in holding descriptions to 500 words and limiting the number of images and lengths of captions, here again we set a limit on audio. In our experience, few people will listen to more than 2 minutes of an oral history while visiting a place. In fact, sometimes 2 minutes is much too long. When analyzing a digital sound file of an oral history, then, it is essential to select enough content to develop a story but also to know when to cut off the story. It is better to leave users yearning for more than to lose their attention. Thus, 1 minute is a good rule of thumb. In-class training in oral history and sound-clipping methods will be provided as part of the course.

Short documentary **videos** are possibly the most valued items in an app, but also the most challenging to create. They are comprised of a preset intro screen, a body (sound clip + images), and a scrolling credits screen. They are created according to very strict guidelines using iMovie (an Apple video-editing software). They feature images carefully keyed to sound, using individually crafted "Ken Burns effect" movements such as zooming or panning to add dramatic effect. As their core, they are constructed from a larger collection of images than that used in the images section of the site. One typical app video, "The Brewing Industry: The German Connection," is 2:12 in length, of which 1:48 is an oral history clip, and contains 21 images. Note the variety of images and the fact that a new image appears, on average, every 5 seconds. A comprehensive training session (date/time tbd) will be required for anyone who opts to undertake the production of a video.

For each component, you have myriad examples already on Cleveland Historical. I recommend going to the web version at http://clevelandhistorical.org and clicking "Browse Locations" at the top. This will pull up a list of all 248 app sites in reverse chronological order of development.

Thus, the more recent ones probably represent our more refined work. Analyze what goes into a description, how images relate to the description, and how captions treat images. Since videos tend not to work on the website due to an unresolved technical issue, you may view all of these on an iOS or Android device or take a look at highlighted videos at http://www.youtube.com/csudigitalhumanities.

Researching a Site

Your primary-source research will include collecting at least 25 useful articles *per app site* from the Plain Dealer Historical Index. You will also have access to the Cleveland Press Collection and are strongly urged to mine it for additional insight. The rationale for requiring your use of the P.D. index is twofold: it encourages proficiency in an invaluable research tool and enables the very careful manipulation of search results to deliver information in less of a scatter-shot manner than is true of the Press Collection, which is the product of selective clipping by reporters. In addition to articles, you will be expected to consult 1 scholarly book per site that will help you see how your site pertains to a broader, likely national context. Your interpretive essay (2,000 words on 2 sites for undergraduates; 3,000 words on 4 sites for graduates) is the foundation for your curated sites, especially for the description and the captions. No doubt you will find it advantageous to make use of any other pertinent research materials, but the above is the minimum expected standard.

Using the Course Blog to Aggregate Content

Prior to the final presentations in the course, you will share your content in the form a blog post (one per site) at http://souther311.clevelandhistory.org that you will edit and re-edit in response to feedback from me and from fellow students. Note that you must first log in to post to the blog. When you log in, you are directed to the main Cleveland History Blogs site and will need to navigate back to the course blog. Click "Dashboard" at the top at "Add New Post." Your post title will be the name of the site. You can modify the name as needed later. In the second window, begin with your description. Either type directly into the blog or compose in a plain-text editor (NotePad or TextEdit, depending whether you're a PC or Mac). If doing the latter, you still must convert the file to "plain text" format (.txt) before copy-pasting into the blog window. In NotePad, this is a "Save as" option, while in TextEdit, it is in the Format menu. Another, albeit at times tricky, way is to copy the text into your browser's URL bar, which will strip out all formatting and will be a bit quicker, and then highlight and copy-paste into the blog post window. After the description, click the "Add an Image" icon (a little picture icon to the immediate left of Upload/Insert above your post window). Select the image file and upload. Then add a caption. Repeat the process for each item. You may do the same later for the optional clips and video, choosing the "Add Audio" or "Add Video" icons as appropriate. The reason for creating content in the blog first is twofold: 1) we cannot grant "Admin" rights to an entire class; 2) the blog offers a readymade place for posting comments on content, which the app site does not.

Offering Feedback on Others' Content on the Blog

On November 15 and 17, following in-class presentations of site content on the blog, I'll ask that you leave feedback on each other's sites by posting comments to each person's blog-based site content. The purpose is to reinforce any suggestions you may make in class or offer suggestions

that you might not think of in class or have the opportunity to express.   I will also leave feedback on everyone's material in this manner. Please be very specific if you refer to particular content.

From Blog to App

The plan is that your sites will have undergone sufficient vetting and revision by week 14 that I can transfer your content to the administrative "back end" of Cleveland Historical, meaning that in week 15 you will have the opportunity to present, directly on the app, your finished app sites/tour. As with all content submissions to Cleveland Historical beyond the scope of this course, the Center for Public History + Digital Humanities reserves the right to withhold any content that it judges not to be ready for display in the app, as well as the right to undertake additional revision without notice before displaying.