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Dick Ammann, archivist at the Racine Heritage Museum, is retiring after 10 years on the job.

He's history

Racine archivist retiring after a decade

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RACINE — The keeper of so much local historical knowledge is closing the file on this part of his career.

Dick Ammann, archivist at the Racine Heritage Museum for the past 10 years, is retiring. His last scheduled shift is Wednesday.

Before taking the job, he spent the previous decade volunteering at the museum — mostly in the archives.

"I've seen this place really grow and expand in 20 years," the 65-year-old Ammann said.

Chris Paulson, executive director of the museum, credited him for broadening the ways people could search the museum's resources and beginning to integrate The Journal Times' clipping files into its own. Paulson added that Ammann kept strong working relationships with colleagues across Racine County.

"He has a wonderful sense of the family and business connections that characterize Racine's development," Paulson said.

Though he grew up on the East Coast, Ammann's family has deep roots here. One of his ancestors started Western Publishing, and, when he moved here in 1975 to take a teaching job at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Ammann became the fifth generation

Archives to close for a month

Journal Times staff

RACINE — The archives at the Racine Heritage Museum, 701 Main St., will be closed for a month beginning Saturday to allow staff to work on the museum's collections.

The archives will resume its standard hours Feb. 2. They are Tuesdays, 1 to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Exhibit galleries and all other activities will remain open.

Museum hours are: Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Research requests can still be made through the museum's e-mail address,

inquire@racineheritagemuseum.org

He said he was especially intrigued by research he and others did on local Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and on the local role in the Underground Railroad, a network that helped fugitive slaves reach safety. The National Parks Service approved two markers

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commemorating Racine's involvement: one on Monument Square and one at Gaslight Pointe.

"We're far ahead of the curve, nationally, on this kind of research," Ammann said. "It's been great fun."

The museum receives between 700 and 800 requests for information each year, he estimated, many from people researching their family histories. As younger visitors have come, he has tried to capture their attention by showing them old yearbooks with hairstyles from the period or information

about the Racine Belles women's baseball team.

Mary Kay Mandli Nelson will take over the archivist position part-time when the archives reopen in February. The department will maintain the same hours open to the public.

Now living in Rochester with his wife, Sharon Kelly, the train buff said he's interested in digging deeper into a 19th-century railroad that would've run through the county's west end but was never completed. It's a fitting transition for the man who has staffed the observation car to the county's past.