



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing
Stories Since 1846

2021-2023 BIENNIAL REPORT



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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

October 15, 2023

Dear Governor Evers, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, and citizens of Wisconsin:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Historical Society, I am pleased to submit our report on the performance and operation of the Society during the 2021-2023 biennium, as required under s. 15.04(1)(d) of the Wisconsin Statutes. Since its creation in 1846, the Society has been our state's memory and premier storyteller. Because we are among the nation's oldest, largest, and most active state historical societies, with world-class collections, the Society is a trusted source of authentic historical information for people across our state and beyond. We make major contributions to Wisconsin's economic, educational, and cultural health through innovative initiatives and programs.

The 2021-23 biennium presented unique challenges as we navigated the back end of the COVID-19 pandemic but I am proud to report that, thanks to your steadfast support, we have emerged well positioned for future growth. Over 380,000 guests returned to our 12 historic sites and museums during the biennium, and your support throughout the budget process has kept the largest project in our 177-year history — the Wisconsin History Center — on schedule for completion in 2026. We have raised over \$40 million in private funds to support the significant State commitment, confirmed a site for the center on Capitol Square, and saw excitement grow as we entered the design phase in 2023 and revealed the first architectural renderings. We are on the doorstep of building America's next great history attraction and we look forward to continuing our strong partnership with you to ensure that this flagship facility is spectacular and a model for the nation.

The dedicated public servants of the Wisconsin Historical Society remain committed to the mission you have entrusted to us: to collect, preserve, and share the history and heritage that bind us together. It continues to be our privilege and honor to serve you.

Sincerely,

Christian Øverland

The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO

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ON THE COVER: Among the many important capital projects completed during the biennium was a new roof for the Society’s historic headquarters building (opened in 1900) on the UW-Madison campus. *(Photo courtesy Daniel Toennies)*

2021-23 Review of Performance and Operation by Division

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS; the Society), founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active, and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. WHS serves hundreds of thousands of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs, and services. More information is available at [wisconsinhistory.org](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org).

Mission: Connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories.

WHS is organized into five divisions and offices: Administrative Services; Library, Archives, & Museum Collections; Museums & Historic Sites; Programs & Outreach; and the State Historic Preservation Office. WHS is also supported by the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. A breakdown of WHS divisions follows.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) administers the State Register of Historic Places and Wisconsin's portion of the National Register of Historic Places, certifies building projects for federal and state tax credits, reviews federal, state, and local unit of government projects for their effect on historic properties, and administers statutes that protect American Indian and Euro-American burial sites and cemeteries.

More information is available at [wisconsinhistory.org/preserve](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/preserve).

Program Purpose: Because historic places are critical to quality of life, we will expedite the preservation of places of enduring value.

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the division accomplished the following:

- Approved \$528 million in income-producing rehabilitation projects, generating nearly 9,000 jobs with \$86.7 million in federal tax credits to taxpayers.
- Nominated 58 individual properties and 12 historic districts to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Approved \$265,000 in federal grants to 10 Certified Local Government communities for preservation projects.
- Received a \$50,000 grant from the National Park Service’s Underrepresented Communities program to research historic places in Wisconsin significant to Latinx history.
- Received a \$200,000 grant from the National Park Service’s Maritime Heritage program to catalog and preserve a collection of 10,000 artifacts recovered by private individuals from Wisconsin shipwrecks currently housed at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum.
- Discovered and recovered [two ancient dugout canoes](#) (1,200 and 3,000 years old) from Lake Mendota in Madison, generating global press coverage and strengthening our partnership with Wisconsin’s sovereign Tribal Nations.
- Expanded our archaeological outreach efforts to K-12 audiences through the creation of new interactive curricula, reaching over 1,000 students.
- In partnership with the Menominee Indian Tribe and the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, facilitated the nomination of [Anaem Omot](#), the place identified as the ancestral homeland of the Menominee people in Marinette County, Wisconsin, and Menominee County, Michigan. This six-mile stretch of the Menominee River is the place of origin and creation of the Menominee Tribe and remains sacred to tribal members for their continued practice of religious, cultural, and sacred traditions.
- Completed years-long Programmatic Agreement negotiation with Wisconsin DOT, Federal Highway Administration, and Wisconsin Tribes.
- Continued long range planning with NOAA on agency cooperation at the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

DIVISION OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Spanning from early American Indian settlement in Wisconsin to the current day, the Society’s Library, Archives & Museum Collections (LAMC) make up one of the preeminent history collections in the country, with a library of over 4 million items, 3 million photographs, 750,000 three-dimensional artifacts, 105,000 cubic feet of textual collections, 25,000 maps and atlases, one of the nation’s largest collections of newspapers and periodicals, an extensive sound and moving-image collection, and much more. Also, in partnership with the Department of Administration and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, the Society operates the State Archive Preservation Facility, providing state-of-the-art security for Wisconsin’s most important historical and cultural resources. **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3556.**

Program Purpose: The Division of Library, Archives & Museum Collections serves the Wisconsin Historical Society’s mission of connecting people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Through an active collecting program, the Society seeks to

continually develop, refine, and enhance the scope and depth of its holdings by acquiring significant historical materials. The Society supports the free exchange of ideas by promoting the widest possible access to the collections in its care.

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the division accomplished the following:

- Hired [Jill Sterrett](#) as the new Administrator of Library, Archives, and Museum Collections.
- Hired [Jackie Pozza Reisner](#) as the new Curator of American Indian collections.
- Hired Daniel Hartwig as Director of Digital Services and launched an effort to digitize and share collections with the public thanks to grant funding from National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historic Publications and Records Commission. This transformation included modernization of digital equipment and the organizational infrastructure.
- In preparation for the new [Wisconsin History Center](#), safely [relocated 2,500 artifacts](#) — ranging from political buttons to full-size vehicles — from the Wisconsin Historical Museum on Capitol Square to the State Archive Preservation Facility.
- Built a custom conservation water vat for the [two historic dugout canoes](#) recovered from Lake Mendota in anticipation of conservation treatment and display at the new history center.
- Developed expanded partnerships to document underrepresented cultures. Continued working with the Latinx History Collective and began working with the Lao American Archives Project.
- Made significant additions to the collection, many of which will be on display at the new History Center. Acquired 1,223 artifacts, including a Tommy Bartlett ski boat, and 255 archives acquisitions. Among them were posters, photographs and other records of the famous water ski show in Wisconsin Dells.
- Serviced hundreds of offices through the Capitol Loan Program from WHS collections. This included moving artwork to new offices in the Capitol, exchanging artwork, and working with first-year legislators to select and install artwork in their offices.
- Served over 328,722 patrons over the biennium in the library and archives at headquarters.
- Conducted 38 genealogy programs with an attendance of 2,239 people.
- Taught or hosted 175 UW classes, National History Day visits, and community groups for over 3,200 students and community members.
- Hosted over 90 tours or events at the State Archive Preservation Facility.
- Hosted a large outreach exhibition at Madison’s Overture Center for the musical “Hamilton” that included documents from the Society’s collections related to Alexander Hamilton and the founding of our nation. Over 1,700 visitors enjoyed the items over six nights.
- Used American Rescue Plan Act funds to modernize the archives technical services workspaces.
- Tended to care of the collection during the WHS roof replacement at Society Headquarters.
- Participated in a work group with the Department of Administration to produce guidance on Administrative Rule 12 and provide statewide training.

DIVISION OF MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

The Society owns and operates the Wisconsin Historical Museum and 11 additional historic sites, museums, and attractions that share stories of Wisconsin's physical and cultural heritage, and promote tourism, community engagement, and economic development. The Division of Museums and Historic Sites (DMHS) interprets and develops experiences that promote the region's history for the public. The division fulfills its educational role through preserved historic interiors, exhibitions, facilitated tours, and a variety of public programs conducted at the Wisconsin Historical Museum in Madison, and at historic sites and other venues throughout the state. **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/sites.**

The division also includes the Museum Archaeology Program (MAP), which actively engages in the identification and preservation of Wisconsin's cultural resources and has been an active field research branch of the Wisconsin Historical Society since 1958. (See Page 9 for program purpose and highlights.) **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS4047.**

MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

Program Purpose: The division uses physical environments and artifacts to create immersive and engaging learning experiences at 12 locations across Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the division accomplished the following:

- Administered a strong recovery from paused visitor experiences during the pandemic, with nearly 383,000 guests visiting our locations in the biennium. Fiscal year 2024 is poised for a full recovery to pre-pandemic 2019 operations. The steady recovery was due in part thanks to the \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding made possible in 2021 by Gov. Tony Evers, the Wisconsin State Legislature, the Department of Administration, and communities across the state.
- Advanced key master planning projects to enhance visitor experience and poise key sites for future growth including Circus World, Wade House, and Old World Wisconsin.
- The division began hiring for the future operations for the new Wisconsin History Center including Deputy Administrator Maggie Marconi, Director of PK-12 Education Abby Pfisterer, and Lead Experience Designer Juan Ochoa. Position alignment will help the Society achieve attendance and earned revenue goals to operationalize the future Center.
- Work began to modernize and re-envision the guest experience at historic sites, especially offering new programmatic experiences. Most notably the [Brewhouse](#) opened in June 2022 at Old World Wisconsin, providing daily historic brewing demonstrations and tastings of beer recipes from 19th century Wisconsin.

- Team Wisconsin enjoyed great success again in the [National History Day program](#), in which middle and high school students research and prepare a project on a historical figure or event. In FY22, 4,500 students participated, with 811 competing in regional competitions across Wisconsin and 400 at the state contest. Among the 52 students who advanced to the national competition were two who took first place: Emma Manion and Krin Blegen from Kettle Moraine Middle School. The last time Wisconsin had a national champion student was 2016. In FY23, about 3,500 students participated as the program returned to in-person activities. A total of 756 competed in regionals, with 340 advancing to state and 58 qualifying for Nationals, where seven placed in the Top 10 or won special awards. Teacher Terry Kaldhusdal of Kettle Moraine Middle School was named the Patricia Behring National Teacher of the Year.

Black Point Estate and Gardens (Lake Geneva)

- The historic site on the shore of Geneva Lake marked its 10th year as a Society historic site in 2023 and enjoyed a booming recovery from the paused visitor experience, attracting 20,118 visitors in the biennium, breaking season attendance records each year as nearly every program sold out. In FY23, 11,305 people visited the site.
- Private donations helped fund the construction of a pedestal for the 1864 Seipp Brewery stone lintel, an internship program now in its seventh year, and the completion of the second phase of the Brewery Lintel Garden.
- A slate of new events included a program on Victorian Spiritualism and a tour of Pioneer Cemetery, while programs such as “An Evening with Agatha Christie,” “Paranormal Parlor Games,” “Remarkable Women of Lake Geneva,” and multiple “Beer Barons” tours also sold out. Also, the site hosted a summer camp for kids for the first time since 2014, in partnership with the Big Foot Recreation District.

Circus World (Baraboo)

- Completed a concept planning project with PGAV Destinations for future guest experiences and began master planning for improvements that will turn Circus World into a year-round attraction. The concepts focus on a restored and immersive Ringlingville experience, year-round performance facility, and reimaged Circus Wagon exhibition.
- Collaborated with Isthmus Architecture to complete a Historic Structures Report (HSR) on the National Landmark buildings that comprise Ringlingville. That work culminated in the Society receiving two \$499,999 [Save America’s Treasures federal grants](#) from the National Park Service. The work will restore the business office that is the most historically significant building in Ringlingville but has never been open to the public, as well as the Camel Barn that currently provides exhibition space.
- Welcomed 53,989 guests in FY23, pushing the biennium total to 98,998. Fans filled the stands for the first half of the final performance season featuring elephants, marking the end of a 64-year run and tradition dating to 1888.

First Capitol (Belmont)

- Guest experiences resumed at the historic site in Belmont, which features the two buildings where legislators met to pass the state’s first 40 laws. Over 1,000 guests visited in the biennium, including more than 600 in FY23.
- Work began on a project to develop new outdoor interpretive signs to highlight the history of the Capitol and founding of the state of Wisconsin. The state historical markers on the grounds were refurbished and reinstalled, restoring an important aspect of the experience.
- Students enjoyed an updated PK-12 field trip program featuring an emphasis on civics education and hands-on history.
- Work began on a facility plan to restore the historic Council House and Court House.

H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum (Wisconsin Dells)

- The site welcomed the return of visitors with the launch of a new studio experience that provides an authentic and personalized tintype photography session, featuring a new mechanical system allowing participants to pick a replica backdrop. Nearly 25,000 guests visited in the biennium, including 15,691 in FY23.
- Thanks to private funding, began installing three large photographic murals in the courtyard that will highlight Bennett’s photography and connection to making Wisconsin Dells a major tourism destination.
- Nearly \$300,000 in state funds allowed for improvements including a new roof and an updated HVAC system and LED lighting that enhance the guest experience and provide better collections preservation conditions.

Madeline Island Museum (La Pointe)

- In 2022, 50 student artists from 10 tribal nations enjoyed a rare and exciting opportunity to have 64 of their beadwork creations included as part of the exhibition, “Oshki-Anishinaabeg: Telling Our Stories with Manidoominensag.” The project complemented the main museum exhibition “Meeting Nanabozhoo: Works by Rabbett Before Horses Strickland,” featuring the internationally recognized Red Cliff Ojibwe artist. Together, they shared a story of Ojibwe culture and persistence.
- New to the museum in 2023 were two stunning temporary art installations that helped the site attract 14,786 guests, pushing biennium attendance to 25,317. “Everything Around Me Inspires Me: The works of Rita Vanderverter” featured the local artist and member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Meanwhile, “Convergence” featured the works of seven other Ojibwe women artists.
- Thanks to private support, the museum hosted its first high school intern, Jackson Rose of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He spent the summer conducting oral histories, meeting tribal leaders and learning about museum work.

- The Friends of Madeline Island Museum provided support to subsidize the cost of 15 school visits, allowing the next generation to connect to their history.

Old World Wisconsin (Eagle)

- Guests returned in droves to the 600-acre living history attraction in the Waukesha County village of Eagle thanks to new programs and new amenities like the new Brewhouse that opened in 2022 as part of the first phase of a multi-year phased master plan to transform the welcome area. Daily historic brewing demonstrations proved popular and monthly beer dinners, featuring brewers from across the area, quickly sold out.
- A total of 102,076 people visited in the biennium, including 66,531 in FY23 as the site was ranked No. 1 on a list of the “Top 20 Places to Take Kids in Milwaukee” in online voting by Kids Out and About Milwaukee.
- The popular Legends & Lore event in October was expanded to three weekends in 2022 to allow for 6,000 guests to participate in the event.
- A \$10,000 grant from Wisconsin Humanities is helping Society staff develop a new guest experience and interpretive themes for Pleasant Ridge, an outdoor exhibit that focuses on a historical Black community in southwestern Wisconsin from 1850 through the early 20th century. The Society is working with consultants, experts and community partners to create a sustainable model for inclusive living history practices rooted in community dialog.
- New in June 2023 was Animal Encounters, an experience that allows guests to physically interact with animals while learning about efforts to conserve heritage livestock breeds.
- Capital improvements, including exterior work on historic Wittnebel’s Tavern was completed and interior restoration preparations began, with an eye toward a late 2024 opening.
- Worked advanced on the New Arrivals project to enhance the welcome experience and private events capacity at the historic attraction. Several key elements including a new visitor center will break ground in the coming biennium.

Pendarvis (Mineral Point)

- In FY22, a major accomplishment was the completion of the Historic Structures Report for the site. Funded by the Memorial Pendarvis Endowment Trust and Jeffris Family Foundation, the report outlines the restoration work, engineering and budget needed to restore the site to the period of 1935-1970. In FY23, over \$300,000 in capital improvements were completed as work began on implementation of the report.
- Pendarvis participated in the Mineral Point Museum Night as a key feature in the historic community’s heritage tourism network.
- Over 4,200 guests visited in the biennium, including 3,182 in FY23.
- Launched a new historic walking tour featuring architecture of downtown Mineral Point.

Reed School (Neillsville)

- In-person visitor experiences, including programming for students, resumed in 2022.
- Over the biennium, 677 guests immersed themselves in the surroundings that were familiar to generations of rural children in Wisconsin, where 6,000 one-room schools once dotted the landscape.
- In FY23, over 100 students visited on school tours and 378 guests overall.

Stonefield (Cassville)

- The historic site, part of the original 2,000-acre estate of Wisconsin's first governor Nelson Dewey, attracted over 15,000 guests in the biennium, including 9,922 in FY23.
- In FY23, the site hosted two major events: the perennially popular Safe and Spooky Halloween in October and Grant County Dairy Breakfast in June. Both events strengthened Stonefield's deep partnerships with local organizations. Over 2,500 attended the dairy breakfast, while the Halloween event welcomed over 4,000 guests to the village, breaking the FY22 attendance record of over 3,000.
- Stonefield prepared for the future by using state funding to complete capital projects including electrical upgrades, improvements at the Confectionary and repairs at the General Store and State Agricultural Museum.

Villa Louis (Prairie du Chien)

- The 25-acre historic site on the banks of the Mississippi River in Prairie du Chien attracted 18,759 guests in the biennium, including nearly 11,000 in FY23. In 2022, it marked 150 years since construction began on the Dousman family mansion and 70 years as a state historic site.
- In 2022, it hosted more than a thousand people for the Society's first major event in the recovery from the two-year pandemic pause with the 40th anniversary of the highly popular Carriage Classic.
- A goal for the site is to expand interpretation to include a more complete historical account, including that of free and enslaved Black men and women who lived and worked in Prairie du Chien. Mary Elise Antoine's 2022 Society Press book "Enslaved, Indentured, and Free; Five Black Women on the Upper Mississippi, 1800-1850" was the first significant step to document and share this history. To launch the book, Villa Louis and the Society Press organized a two-day program including a reunion of descendants of the women, with C-SPAN and Milwaukee Public Television filming events. Other subjects for future programming include Western expansion, Native Nations and military history.
- In 2023, notably, although the Mississippi River crested at the third-highest level on record (22.91 feet) on April 28, the site opened as planned for the season thanks to preparations and fast action by staff.

- Efforts to improve accessibility and enhance historic interpretation continued with the completion of the first phase of a project to restore and repair the limestone walkway around the home and launch of the second phase, which included pathway lighting based on archival images. Other capital improvements included visitor center remodeling.

Wade House (Greenbush)

- In FY22, work began on a master planning project with PGAV Destinations to identify new opportunities to strengthen visitor experiences at the historic site, carriage museum and grounds in Sheboygan County.
- Bridgitt Zielke started as the new director of the historic site in FY23, when 10,839 guests, including over 2,300 students, immersed themselves in the horse-powered world of the 1800s, pushing the biennium attendance total to 16,671.
- A new horse arena, funded by a generous \$750,000 gift from the Kohler Trust for Preservation and dedicated to Herbert Kohler, Jr., was completed in the fall of 2022. Featuring restored competition grounds and new bleachers, the arena will be the new host of the popular annual Carriage Driving Days, which featured 179 attendees and over 40 competitors in 2022 and promises to attract many more with the improved venue.
- The Society continues to invest in capital improvements to strengthen the site for the future, including a \$158,000 replacement of the pedestrian bridge to the blacksmith shop.

Wisconsin Historical Museum (Madison)

- In FY23, the museum completed its 37th and final year before closing on Nov. 27, 2022, to make way for construction of the new Wisconsin History Center.
- The museum attracted 54,726 guests in the biennium, including 28,329 in its farewell year, when 7,895 students visited on school tours.
- In FY22, school tours welcomed nearly 10,000 students back to the museum, resuming the tradition as a field trip highlight to the Capitol Square in Madison.
- Staff launched virtual programs that reached over 1,100 students whose school groups were still unable to visit in person.
- Another major tradition resumed with the return of the Ever Gleaming aluminum Christmas tree exhibition, which included additional interpretive context on the atomic age when the trees were introduced.
- Since its 1986 opening, 2,895,624 people (equivalent to nearly half the population of Wisconsin) visited the museum, including 913,329 students.
- While the new history center is being built through 2026, the Society will continue to provide Madison visitors robust public and school group programming at a History Maker Space located inside US Bank Plaza on Capitol Square. The classroom space opened as a pilot in March and attracted over 4,000 guests during the spring school semester.

FY22 Division of Museums & Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses:

Historic Site / Museum	FY22 Earned Revenue	FY22 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY22 State Tax Contribution	FY22 Federal Grants & Contributions	FY22 Expenses
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$142,665	\$39,347	\$10,715	\$0	\$204,846
Circus World	\$864,758	\$67,621	\$349,376	\$553,373	\$1,669,060
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$26,878	\$674	\$88,332	\$43,462	\$140,664
Madeline Island Museum	\$144,095	\$180,638	\$13,472	\$0	\$306,864
Old World Wisconsin	\$711,520	\$195,161	\$980,523	\$0	\$1,837,708
Pendarvis & First Capitol	\$18,257	\$837	\$122,866	\$51,971	\$217,985
Reed School	\$0	\$25,249	\$4,078	\$0	\$35,997
Stonefield	\$20,777	\$30,742	\$110,498	\$43,506	\$212,895
Villa Louis	\$65,972	\$3,742	\$201,557	\$69,074	\$385,142
Wade House	\$158,224	\$132,635	\$311,021	\$143,279	\$638,831
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$196,185	\$54,668	\$495,554	\$0	\$822,705

FY23 Division of Museums & Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses:

Historic Site / Museum	FY23 Earned Revenue	FY23 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY23 State Tax Contribution	FY23 Expenses
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$146,011	\$105,749	\$13,916	\$265,676
Circus World	\$942,247	\$119,924	\$625,780	\$1,772,452
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$44,251	\$34,848	\$116,889	\$160,807
Madeline Island Museum	\$139,917	\$216,390	\$13,276	\$395,415
Old World Wisconsin	\$989,921	\$208,592	\$1,076,225	\$2,355,838
Pendarvis & First Capitol	\$35,613	\$3,766	\$144,911	\$233,445
Reed School	\$0	\$19,391	\$8,056	\$41,610
Stonefield	\$43,726	\$148,298	\$101,915	\$290,680
Villa Louis	\$123,424	\$9,351	\$160,861	\$387,983
Wade House	\$214,965	\$188,823	\$265,939	\$644,457
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$90,648	\$131,750	\$234,348	\$526,662

MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

The Museum Archaeology Program provides technical services to federal and state agencies to aid in compliance with historic preservation laws and regulations, including:

- Identification of archaeological resources, burial sites, and historic buildings and structures that may be affected by development and construction projects.
- Development of instructional materials and programs for educators to aid in teaching the history of Wisconsin.
- Curation and management of state-owned archaeological object collections and associated documentation.

Program Purpose: To serve as a leader in Wisconsin archaeological research, working side-by-side with other archaeology programs at the Society, academic institutions, agencies, and local historical societies throughout Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the Museum Archaeology Program (MAP) accomplished the following:

- Archaeologists and historians traveled to 37 of Wisconsin's 72 counties (51%) to conduct research. On average, MAP visits 36% of the state's counties each year.
- Discovered 152 archaeological sites and investigated 104 historic buildings.
- Reviewed 418 client projects for the presence of previously reported cultural resources.
- Conducted in-depth research on archaeological sites for 355 roadway projects on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT).
- Consulted with the Ho-Chunk Nation and Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, WisDOT, Federal Highway Administration and State Historic Preservation Office regarding impacts to culturally significant places during the ongoing design process for highway updates in Richland County.
- Published Archaeology around Wisconsin articles in The Wisconsin Archaeologist.
- Acquired 110 new archaeological collections and entered 5,798 historical object records into the collection management system.

OFFICE OF PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

The Office of Programs and Outreach aims to expand the reach of the Society's mission, programs and services to all Wisconsinites through three main functions: Field Services, the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, and Education. The office develops curriculum for K-12 classrooms, conducts school visits, administers tours and programming at Society locations, creates traveling exhibitions, and administers the state National History Day program. It also provides technical assistance to more than 400 affiliated historical societies statewide and assists the general public and researchers on a variety of historic preservation and other history-related inquiries and projects. The Wisconsin Historical Society Press publishes the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, books for general readers, and textbooks and curriculum support materials for teachers and students. **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/cs14818.**

Program Purpose: The office helps to enhance the understanding of history through reading, listening, and learning.

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the office accomplished the following:

- 97,636 students used the Society's fourth-grade Wisconsin history textbook, including an increase of over 10,000 in FY23, when over 8,000 were sold to Milwaukee Public Schools.
- Provided 953 on-site, phone and email consultations to support local history organizations.
- Attracted 793 attendees to our 15th and 16th annual editions of the [Local History and Historic Preservation Conference](#), including a second virtual conference in October 2021 with a record-setting 445 participants from 55 Wisconsin counties and 21 states.
- Produced a new [Ojibwe Winter Storytelling online series](#) that reached audiences from 18 countries, 122 U.S. cities, and 167 Wisconsin communities. The programming reached an audience of 20,000+ through live events and recordings.
- Launched a [new traveling display](#) that explores the stories of Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ history makers through the profiles of eight individuals. The traveling exhibits program reached over 45,000 residents across Wisconsin.
- Produced five educational webinars that reached more than 700 people. Topics included fundraising, digitizing newspapers, government records, and collections care.
- Partnered with the Wisconsin Council for Local History to offer \$21,524 in small grants to 39 affiliated museums and historical societies.
- Approved 18 applications for new State Historical Markers and continued a grant-funded, three-year effort to expand the State Historical Markers program to include stories of underrepresented histories.

- Published 20 new titles through the [Wisconsin Historical Society Press](#) and sold 97,148 books overall, resulting in \$1,772,841 in net sales and 20 awards.
- 24,837 student titles and textbooks were sold and distributed by the Society Press.
- Completed the framework for the History Makers Tour, the next phase of community engagement to bring programs and experiences to all 72 counties, leading up to the 2026 completion of the new Wisconsin History Center.
- The [Society Headquarters Event Rental Program](#) hosted 27 nonprofit organizations in the biennium, covering 45 events including conferences, lectures, receptions and performances, with a combined attendance of approximately 2,250.
- Created advisory councils to advise the development of Wisconsin History Center exhibits, programs, and design elements, including a Native Nations Council, Disability Community Council and PK-12 Educators Council.

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Division of Administrative Services provides a wide range of day-to-day support and long-range planning for the Wisconsin Historical Society, including its divisions, the Director’s Office, the senior leadership team and over 175 permanent and between 150 and 250 limited-term employees, depending on the season. The division also assists in the management and maintenance of the Society’s 253 buildings located throughout the state.

Flexible Work Schedules and Alternative Work Patterns:

- Pursuant to s. 230.215, Wisconsin Statutes, the Wisconsin Historical Society currently supports and has implemented flexible-time schedules and other alternative work pattern programs. As a result, the Society has many permanent and part-time employees using flexible-time work schedules. The Society has found that implementing alternative work patterns serves the needs of the state by offering consistent and reliable service to the public, increasing efficiency and maximizing employee productivity. The Society’s Alternative Work Patterns Program complies with the requirements of the state Alternative Work Patterns Policy and Procedures Outline.
- To further the achievements gained under the Alternative Work Patterns Program, the Society has published a Telecommuting Policy to allow employees to work occasionally at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for a portion of the regular work week. The Society understands that, in appropriate circumstances, this policy will promote productivity, conservation of resources, and better service to the public while also offering a benefit to suitable employees.

2021-2023 Biennial Budget:

Overview	FY22	FY23
General Program Operations	\$15,960,400	\$15,960,400
Earned Revenue	\$2,466,900	\$3,444,500
Debt Service	\$4,545,300	\$4,783,900
Transfer Revenue	\$2,532,600	\$2,534,100
Federal Revenue	\$1,459,000	\$1,459,200
Foundation & Other Contributed Income	\$1,015,300	\$1,015,400
Utilities and Fuel	\$810,800	\$812,100
Endowment Income	\$639,500	\$639,500
Wisconsin Black Historical Society	\$84,500	\$84,500
Total	\$29,514,300	\$30,733,600

During fiscal years 2022-2023, the division accomplished the following:

- Prioritized our workforce by hiring a new Workforce and Culture Program Officer, who collaborated with employees at all levels to develop, implement, and communicate a data-driven agency-wide employee engagement strategy and corresponding action plan that fosters a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and engaging workplace where staff feel heard, valued, and empowered at all stages of the employee life cycle. This strategic planning focused on factors that drive employee engagement including leadership and internal communications; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); health, wellness, and connectedness; training and development; recognition; and continuous improvement.
- Empowered our agency equity and inclusion committee by developing a framework and structure through a comprehensive charter, and increased membership by 200 percent. This committed team was instrumental in strengthening our Equity and Inclusion Plan in the areas of recruitment, retention, and agency culture.
- Successfully hired a Risk & Safety Director to initiate the development of an agency-wide Risk Management Program.
- Created and incorporated new hire risk and safety training at Human Resources onboarding and orientation of new staff.
- Designed a Risk and Safety web page to make risk and safety information easier to find for staff.
- Developed and implemented an automated recruitment tracking process in Asana.
- Implemented new online and electronic surveys to collect required hiring information from supervisors and applicants.
- Completed planning for the transition of IT Services from UW Division of Information Technology to DOA-DET
- Secured funds via the NEH ARPA Grant (Democratizing History: Digitization for a New Wisconsin History Museum) to begin implementation of a Digital Asset Management System to modernize our digital collections infrastructure.
- Implemented an online ticketing platform to enable advanced purchase of tickets to visit our 12 museums and historic sites as well as improve revenue and attendance reporting.
- Created initial financial and attendance reports in Tableau to better leverage data to drive decisions and improve operations.
- Improved financial services, cash handling, and accounting processes at our museums and historic sites by realigning position responsibilities and embedding Finance Team employees at Old World Wisconsin and H.H. Bennett Studio.

- Created and updated workflows, including utilizing new reporting and electronic tools, for improved efficiency and processing.
- Implemented AccessGov and PromptPay to better serve the public and employees via electronic tools.
- Successfully transitioned the Museum Archaeology project database from a legacy, homegrown system to STAR.
- Rearranged space and moved employees as needed to facilitate temporary space for museum employees and new hires, accounting for flexible-time work schedules and alternative work patterns.
- Implemented a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) system to centralize maintenance information and facilitate the processes of maintenance operations.
- WHS headquarters facilities staff visited sites to improve facilities communication and standardize facilities operations across the state.
- Used the 5S methodology to improve the headquarters mailroom and facilities shop.
- Began conversion to Smart IDs with new hires.
- Conducted a Historic Structures Report and Programming Study Report in consultation with Mead & Hunt and DOA for the headquarters building.
- Completed the following capital projects at headquarters:
 - Air Handling Unit Repairs and Water Damage Remediation
 - Replace Florescent to LED Fixtures, add motion sensors - Basement
 - Remodel of Breakroom and Kitchen
 - Security Improvements – installed five Avigilon cameras
 - Fire Panel Replacement
 - Roof Replacement

2023-2025 Programs, Goals, Objectives, & Activities

PROGRAM 1: HISTORY SERVICES

GOAL: Expedite the preservation of places of enduring value.

Objectives/Activities:

- Facilitate Wisconsin's historic preservation programs, including private investment in historic properties utilizing the state and federal historic building rehabilitation tax credit programs.
- Educate Wisconsin residents, property owners and stakeholders on Wisconsin's archaeological, maritime and built environment resources.

GOAL: Enhance the understanding of history through reading, listening and learning.

Objectives/Activities:

- Publish and distribute highly valued and widely read Wisconsin Historical Society Press (WHSP) books sold to general audiences.
- Distribute highly valued WHSP student titles and textbooks to schools and students.
- Provide transformative history educational experiences for middle school and high school students through the National History Day program.
- Provide assistance and support to local history affiliate organizations and support to local heritage and community groups through consultations, programming and educational services.

GOAL: Acquire, catalog, preserve and share collections that sustain our national reputation and provide egalitarian access to research services for seekers of historical information.

Objectives/Activities:

- Acquire and document history through current collecting policies and collection plans.
- Provide valued service and unparalleled access to the society's research collection to patrons and visitors.
- Provide assistance with electronic records to state agencies.

GOAL: Use physical environments and artifacts to create immersive and engaging learning experiences.

Objectives/Activities:

- Deliver quality, engaging, entertaining and educational experiences for visitors of all ages that result in lasting and inspirational memories and connections to Wisconsin history.
- Advance the Old World Wisconsin master plan to improve quality of guest experience.
- Provide enriching educational experiences for school children that meet Wisconsin instructional standards.
- Increase safety and security at Society facilities and reduce deferred maintenance.

GOAL: Replace Wisconsin Historical Museum with a new 21st-century history center.

Objectives/Activities:

- Prepare and collect stories for the new history center.
- Engage citizenship of Wisconsin to develop relevant guest experience.
- Develop facility and realize capital funding requirements.

2021-23 Biennium Metrics & Future Goals:

Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Actual 2021	Goal 2022	Actual 2022	Goal 2023	Actual 2023
# of buildings rehabilitated using the rehabilitation tax credit programs ¹	NA	179	NA	253	NA	254
Total rehabilitation tax credit project investment ²	NA	\$407M	NA	\$193M	NA	\$354M
# of Wisconsin Historical Society Press (WHSP) books sold or distributed	15,235	40,918	25,000	45,373	42,000	51,775
# of WHSP student titles and textbooks sold and distributed	2,500	8,248	3,125	7,162	4,000	17,675
# of student participants in National History Day program	10,000	3,562	15,000	4,500	5,000	3,500
# of local history affiliate consultations	550	451	600	454	450	473
People engaged in new museum development process	1,500	163	1,500	320	1,000	317
# of collection donations (donor transactions)	200	232	215	311	300	132
# of patrons served by State Archives & North American History Library	15,000	19,238	60,000	152,755	150,000	175,982
# of agencies provided with e-records assistance	15	20	25	10	18	20
# of local governments served via in-person consultations	15	79	20	109	100	185
Attendance at museums & historic sites	68,000	30,585	140,000	156,770	250,000	226,601
K-12 student attendance at museums & historic sites	in-person 0 virtual 5,000	in-person 0 virtual 6,698	in-person 20,000 virtual 10,000	21,000	60,000	34,209
Unique visits to website content	5.7M	5.7M	5.7M	5.7M	5.7M	6.2M
Total Wisconsin Historical Society members.	11,000	9,880	11,500	11,253	12,000	11,748
Value of deferred maintenance at WHS facilities	\$6.81M	\$8.1M	\$5.4M	7.7M	\$6.0M	\$6.0M

¹ Formula for counting buildings rehabilitated has been recalibrated and corrected. Actual numbers have been updated to reflect the new formula. Previous goals do not apply.

² The formula for reporting total investment has been recalibrated and corrected. Actual numbers have been updated to show final investment in projects completed during the reporting year. Previous goals do not apply.

The Wisconsin History Center,
to be completed on Capitol Square
in 2026.



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