



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

2017-2019
**BIENNIAL
REPORT**



October 15, 2019,

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 2017-2019 biennium, as required under s. 5.04(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 historical information. We are proud to serve a critical role as the preservers and transmitters of cultural heritage from generation to generation.

The Society provides a powerful connection to the past and encourages everyone to learn from those who have gone before us. We make major contributions to Wisconsin's economic, educational, and cultural health through innovative initiatives and programs. Our staff, collections, and services are shared in ways that captivate and respect our diverse audiences.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Christian W. Overland'.

Christian Øverland

The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director

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2017-2019 Review of Performance and Operation by Division

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), 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.

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

WHS is organized into five divisions and offices: Administrative Services; Library, Archives, and Artifact Collections; Museums and Historic Sites; Programs and 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 the WHS divisions is listed below.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The Society is the federally-designated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In partnership with communities, organizations, and individuals, SHPO works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations. More information is available at: 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 2018-2019, the office accomplished the following:

- Approved \$414,817,769 of income-producing rehabilitation projects through the State Historic Preservation Office. These projects generated over 7,543 jobs and will return \$83,306,417 in income tax credits to taxpayers.
- Listed 71 individual properties and 15 historic districts (having a total of 418 contributing buildings) to the national and state registry of historic places.
- Digitized 29,870 images for wisconsinhistory.org (283,333 total as of June 23, 2019).

- Began a project to digitize 16,791 archeological surveys, 194 covenant and easement documents, and 167 architectural survey reports. Added 1,638 digital reports to the Archaeological Reports Inventory. Processed 32 boxes containing 3,050 reports to be sent for scanning to a vendor.
- Documented off-reservation wild ricing camps in Vilas County in partnership with the Lac du Flambeau Band, state and federal agencies, and landowners. These ricing camps are physical reminders of the Ojibwe community's observance of treaty rights in the ceded territories.
- Developed a new mapping application, forms, and web content to comply with changes to the state's burial laws. Worked with Wisconsin Tribes and the Burial Sites Preservation Board on their expanded roles under these new laws.
- Launched a statewide survey to collect data from local historic preservation commissions and issued a report based on the data collected.
- Hosted field school on the Advance shipwreck in Door County, training avocational archeologists and divers in recording shipwrecks and submerged cultural sites.
- Studied Ho-Chunk land ownership in Jackson County. Using WHS archives map collections, it was identified that in the first half of the twentieth century, Ho-Chunk families claimed large blocks of adjacent parcels to maintain strong community ties. Developed an inventory and created GIS shapefiles of the parcels, which have been shared with the Ho-Chunk Nation.

DIVISION OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & ARTIFACT COLLECTIONS

The Division of Library, Archives, and Artifact Collections acquires, preserves, and provides access to documentary and artifactual evidence about the history of Wisconsin, the United States, and Canada. With over four million items, our genealogy and history collections are among the largest and most comprehensive in the world documenting North American history. More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3556

Program Purpose: Acquire, catalog, and preserve collections that sustain our national reputation and provide equalitarian access to research services for seekers of historical information.

During fiscal years 2018-2019, the division accomplished the following:

- Ensured the preservation of its collection by moving 97% of 3D collections and 1/3 of Library and Archives collections to the newly-opened State Archives Preservation Facility (SAPF) building. Offered inaugural tours of the SAPF facility.
- Completed NEH grant, digitizing over 100,000 Wisconsin newspaper pages.

- Updated and published Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers: 1833-2004.
- Launched initiative to digitize Wisconsin land ownership maps, digitizing maps from all 72 counties.
- Developed new service-oriented webpages for state agencies and local governments.
- Digitized 12,000 items as part of the Google Books Project.
- Launched Wisconsin Sound Archives of select digitized audio collections, with content emphasizing geographical and ethnic diversity, and triaging the most unstable and at-risk analog recordings.
- Completed processing of Wisconsin Veterans Home Records from 1900-2005.
- Awarded NEH grant to digitize and curate records of the National Association of Educational Broadcasting, in partnership with UW-Madison and the University of Maryland.
- Preserved and cataloged 300 reels of television news film from Milwaukee's WTMJ.
- Digitized 1.5 million state occupational licensing records in an agreement with Ancestry.com.
- Implemented Aeon—a new online system retrieval system for archival collections, allowing patrons to register online, make requests, and keep track of their requests, while also allowing WHS to better track the use and oversee the security of its collections.
- Completed digitization of all pre-1924 plat maps, documenting every Wisconsin county.
- Secured a pledge from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association to donate digital versions of over 400 Wisconsin newspapers.
- Began a two-year project to restore 60 rare 17th to early 19th-century accounts of North American exploration.
- Secured funding to describe, conserve, and selectively digitize the papers of architect William V. Kaeser.
- Launched the WHS Electronic Records Portal. The portal's launch is part of a three-year NHPRC Electronic Records Grant and provides online access to born-digital public records.
- Completed the three-year NHPRC Wisconsin Electronic Records Grant, providing digital access to electronic records from 16 state agencies.
- Expanded library access to a major African-American newspaper database. Spanning 1827-1910, the resource includes The Freedman's Record and The Negro Business League Herald.
- Published 100 oral history interviews from the Wisconsin Jewish Archives collection in the Wisconsin Sound Archive, a collaboration with the UW-Madison's Center for Jewish Studies.

- Offered sold-out workshops about German and Irish American genealogy, in cooperation with Friends of Max Kade Institute and the Ulster Historical Foundation, respectively. Also offered workshops on research strategies and methodology, and adoption and unknown parentage research.
- Provided leadership in launching the new Recollection Wisconsin portal, A component of the Digital Public Library of America. The portal provides access to digital content from over 100 Wisconsin libraries and local historical societies.
- Awarded funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a third cycle of the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP). NDNP is a partnership between NEH, the Library of Congress, and state partners, enabling partners to choose and digitize newspapers representing their historical, cultural, and geographic diversity.
- Completed and launched the Eduard Frankl photo collection, a rare and extensive collection of early images from the First World War, documenting the war on the eastern front, Belgium, Syria, Jerusalem, and the Sinai.

DIVISION OF MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

The Division of Museums and Historic Sites collects and preserves the material culture of Wisconsin and interprets the state’s history and prehistory for the public. The division fulfills its educational role through exhibitions, 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.

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

During fiscal years 2018-2019, the division accomplished the following:

- Welcomed 507,474 guests to its 12 historic sites and museums located around the state. This includes visitors from 288 different cities in Wisconsin and 109,477 K-12 students.
- Opened new exhibition, “The Woman’s Hour Has Struck Wisconsin: The First State to Ratify the 19th Amendment,” in the Capitol Rotunda.
- Curators entered over 3,000 object records from research along the Sugar River in Dane County documenting several millennia of settlement in the Sugar River Valley.

Black Point Estate & Gardens (Lake Geneva, Wis.):

- Opened new Woodland Garden designed by Ted Wolff Architecture.
- Collaborated with Chicago Brewseum and Field Museum on “Brewing Up Chicago” exhibit exploring German migration and brewing in Chicago.

Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.):

- Relaunched “Trumpets of Paper” exhibit.
- Raised over \$175,000 for the site at its annual Circus of Chefs Gala in 2019.

Old World Wisconsin (Eagle, Wis.):

- Piloted new “Wisconsin Journey” experience, giving guests a firsthand look at the lives of Wisconsin’s early immigrants.
- Opened Garden Shop store and Discovery Station/Creamery.
- Launched carriage ride experience.
- Saw a 15% increase in school group attendance in 2019.
- Hosted a group of dignitaries from Poland, including Przemysław Czarnek, The Governor of Lubelskie Voivodeship in Lublin, Poland.
- Launched new tram tour, “Beasts and Barns.”

Pendarvis (Mineral Point, Wis.):

- Launched new interpretive plan focusing on the historic preservation efforts of Bob Neal and Edgar Hellum.
- Received several grants for the Merry Christmas Mine Hill Trails and Prairie restoration.

H.H. Bennett Studio (Wisconsin Dells, Wis.):

- Launched and sold 19th-century tintype photos.
- Added reproductions of Bennett’s cameras, backdrops, and furniture for the tintype experience.
- Renovated museum store.
- Launched Haunted Kilbourn walking tour.
- Opened new exhibit on George Harper Houghton, H.H. Bennett’s uncle and the Dells’ first photographer.

Madeline Island Museum (La Pointe, Wis.):

- Opened new exhibit, “Women of Madeline Island.”

Stonefield (Cassville, Wis.):

- Replaced 175 feet of its original boardwalk.
- Launched daily guided tours of the State Agricultural Museum.

Villa Louis (Prairie du Chien, Wis.):

- Began restoration process for the Astor Warehouse, which will prevent further damage to the National Historic Landmark building and include mechanical, electrical, and HVAC upgrades.
- Completed repair project on Dousman Estate Office which included tuckpointing of all damaged joints of brick on north and west exterior walls, the painting of the north, east, and west brick exterior, window frames repair, and new interior plaster/paint.

Wade House (Greenbush, Wis.):

- Opened new exhibit, “Over Land, Under Cover: Tales of Quilts and Coverlets.”
- Launched new event, “An Evening at Wade’s Tavern.”

Wisconsin Historical Museum (Madison, Wis.):

- Completed new, self-guided, choose-your-own-adventure tour for students.
- Opened new exhibit, “Flavor of Wisconsin.”
- Reopened the popular “Ever Gleaming” exhibit, adding a 1960s replica living room and ticketed photo shoots.
- Increased Summer camp attendance by 50% in 2019.

2017-19 Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses:

Historic Site / Museum	FY18 Earned Revenue	FY18 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY18 State Tax Contribution	FY18 Expenses
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$ 436,868	\$ 36,452	\$ 468,689	\$ 939,533
Villa Louis	\$ 147,414	\$ 14,073	\$ 155,483	\$ 339,219
Wade House	\$ 270,969	\$ 153,060	\$ 282,590	\$ 896,102
Stonefield	\$ 42,509	\$ 26,346	\$ 102,346	\$ 248,772
Madeline Island	\$ 118,765	\$ 14,031	\$ 10,279	\$ 268,548
Pendarvis & First Capitol	\$ 36,053	\$ 17,610	\$ 211,479	\$ 318,792
Old World Wisconsin	\$ 831,709	\$ 136,429	\$ 747,853	\$ 1,934,551
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$ 51,389	\$ 5,989	\$ 107,815	\$ 189,171
Reed School	\$ 0	\$ 31,558	\$ 0	\$ 30,612
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$ 110,555	\$ 99,858	\$ 23,240	\$ 229,382

Historic Site / Museum	FY19 Earned Revenue	FY19 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY19 State Tax Contribution	FY19 Expenses
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$ 396,686	\$ 28,182	\$ 432,792	\$ 903,015
Villa Louis	\$ 112,420	\$ 12,182	\$ 121,986	\$ 293,844
Wade House	\$ 258,390	\$ 79,251	\$ 220,778	\$ 592,566
Stonefield	\$ 38,857	\$ 36,818	\$ 106,627	\$ 171,707
Madeline Island	\$ 115,568	\$ 20,460	\$ 52,643	\$ 319,634
Pendarvis & First Capitol	\$ 38,629	\$ 2,962	\$ 260,890	\$ 306,739
Old World Wisconsin	\$ 840,247	\$ 120,898	\$ 806,463	\$ 1,726,811
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$ 60,748	\$ 11,415	\$ 114,491	\$ 208,201
Reed School	\$ 0	\$ 34,203	\$ 0	\$ 34,209
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$ 109,959	\$ 105,428	\$ 18,320	\$ 202,276

OFFICE OF PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

The Office of Programs and Outreach helps people connect with their past by publishing books and magazines, offering expert professional advice, supporting K-12 students and teachers, and hosting public programs. More information is available at [wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS14818](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS14818).

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

During fiscal years 2018-2019, the office accomplished the following:

- Facilitated 32,000 students' participation in National History Day; 114 Wisconsin students qualified for the NHD national finals, with 18 students finishing in the top 10 or winning a special award.
- Received a \$25,000 grant from the Pettit Foundation supporting National History Day.
- Launched virtual classroom visit program for National History Day, reaching 484 students in its first quarter.
- Reached 4,746 students around the state through the traveling hands-on history program.
- Sold 97,969 books through the Wisconsin Historical Society Press.
- Launched Society-wide Speakers Bureau program.
- Attracted a record 417 people to the Local History and Historic Preservation Conference in 2018. Surpassed that number with a record of 421 people in 2019.
- Engaged 5,297 people across the state through its "Share Your Voices" campaign.

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 130 permanent and 320 limited-term employees. The division also assists in the management and maintenance of the Society’s 247 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 Policy 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 Program to allow employees to work occasionally at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for a portion of the regular workweek. 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.

2017-2019 Biennial Budget:

Overview	FY18	FY19
General Program Operations (GPR)	\$ 13,021,600	\$ 14,442,100
Earned Revenue	\$ 4,055,900	\$ 4,055,900
Debt Service	\$ 3,971,500	\$ 4,681,100
Transfer Revenue	\$ 2,306,000	\$ 2,306,900
Federal Revenue	\$ 1,386,500	\$ 1,338,700
Foundation Contributed Income	\$ 809,000	\$ 809,000
Utilities and Fuel	\$ 728,700	\$ 740,600
Endowment Income	\$ 570,200	\$ 570,200
Wisconsin Black Historical Society	\$ 84,500	\$ 84,500
Total	\$ 26,933,900	\$ 29,029,000

2019-2021 Programs, Goals, Objectives, & Activities

PROGRAM 1: HISTORY SERVICES

Goal: Expedite the preservation with places of enduring value.

Objectives/Activities:

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

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.
- Transfer prepared archival, library and artifacts collections to the State Archive Preservation Facility (SAPF).
- 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.
- 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 new 21st-century museum.

Objectives/Activities:

- Prepare and collect stories for new museum.
- Engage citizenship of Wisconsin to develop relevant guest experience.
- Close current museum and transfer artifacts to SAPF.
- Develop facility and realize capital funding requirements.

2019-21 Biennial Metrics:

Performance Measure	Goal 2018	Actual 2018	Goal 2019	Actual 2019	Goal 2020
# of buildings rehabilitated using the rehabilitation tax credit programs	387	307	310	348	310
Historic Rehabilitation tax credit (eligible) project value	\$78M	\$313.4M	\$70M	\$84.6M	\$70M
# of Wisconsin Historical Society Press (WHSP) books sold or distributed	47,000	51,402	46,500	46,567	47,000
# of WHSP student titles and textbooks sold and distributed	12,000	9,385	12,500	6,158	14,500
# of participants in National History Day program	12,000	10,000	17,000	16,000	17,250
# of local history affiliate consultations	560	656	700	454	500
People engaged in new museum development process *	-	-	1,600	5,297	2,000
% of archival, library, and artifact collections prepared for transfer to the State Archive Preservation Facility (SAPF)	100%	98%	100%	100%	-
% of all prepared archival, library, and artifacts collections transferred to SAPF	40%	30%	100%	98%	-
# of collection donations (donor transactions) *	-	-	1,420	242	300
# of patrons served through State Archives & North American History Library	190,000	178,716	190,000	175,408	190,000
# of agencies provided with e-records assistance	28	24	26	32	28
# of local governments served via in-person consultations *	-	-	15	100	20
Attendance at museums & historic sites	278,000	272,165	273,000	293,628	275,000
K-12 student attendance at museums & historic sites	48,000	54,764	54,000	57,161	55,000
Unique visits to website content *	-	-	4,800,000	4,486,007	4,800,000
Total Wisconsin Historical Society members. *	-	-	12,800	11,976	13,000
Value of deferred maintenance at WHS facilities *	-	-	\$11,400,000	\$10,448,900	\$10,900,000

* New metric for FY19