Legislators’ Guide to the Wisconsin Historical Society

Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Stories Since 1846

wiscinshistory.org
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Overview
Our Mission
The Wisconsin Historical Society helps people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories.

Organization
The Society is one of the largest, most active, and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. Founded in 1846, the Society is governed by a 36-member Board of Curators. It is both a state agency and a private membership organization. It receives about 65 percent of its funding from the state of Wisconsin, and the other 35 percent comes from membership fees, admission fees, gifts, trust funds and grants.

Archives
The Archives serves as the state’s official archive and holds all historical state records. It collects manuscripts and artifacts from private individuals and organizations. It also holds extensive visual and sound records, including more than 4 million historical photographs, posters, oral history recordings, and motion picture films. A network of 13 area research centers make the collections readily available statewide. In addition to Wisconsin history, holdings include several collections of national scope:

- Early American exploration & settlement
- Social action movements, such as civil rights
- Mass communications history
- U.S. labor history and business records

Library
The Library is the official state historical library as well as a nationally-recognized U.S. and Canadian history library, being designated as an official documents depository by the governments of Wisconsin, the United States and Canada.

As a University of Wisconsin-Madison library, it provides reference services in person, by phone, by mail and online. It lends in person, statewide and nationwide through interlibrary loan. Holdings include:

- 3.8 million North American volumes
- Second largest American newspaper collection in the U.S.
- Extensive U.S. and Canadian history collection

Wisconsin Historical Museum
The Museum, located on Madison’s Capitol Square, contains four floors of permanent and rotating exhibits, an orientation theater, and a Museum store. Exhibits and programs document Wisconsin’s history from prehistoric times to the present day, focusing on:

- Prehistoric history and Wisconsin’s settlement
- Agricultural history, industry and tourism
- Political and environmental history
Historic Preservation-Public History
The Division of Historic Preservation-Public History helps people preserve places of enduring value and presents a fresh perspective on history through publications, programs and services.

Public History Programs
- Enhance history education in Wisconsin's schools
- Publish history books for schools and the public
- Assist over 375 local historical societies and museums
- Publish the quarterly Wisconsin Magazine of History
- Conduct the National History Day program for more than 10,000 students

Historic Preservation
The Society is the federally designated state historic preservation office. In partnership with communities, organizations and individuals, it works to identify, interpret, and preserve ancient and historic places for the benefit of present and future generations. In that role it:
- Administers the Wisconsin portion of the National Register of Historic Places
- Administers tax-credit programs for historic building rehabilitation that, in 2009, spurred $60 million in new investment and created 1,310 jobs in Wisconsin
- Conducts underwater archaeological research
- Provides assistance to local organizations and government
- Reviews public projects for their effects on historic properties
- Administers historical marker and burial sites programs
- Maintains historic building, archeological and burial site inventories

Historic Sites and Museums
The Society’s network of 10 historic sites promotes tourism and provides for the comprehensive study, appreciation and enjoyment of Midwestern frontier history.

The historic sites and museums, located throughout Wisconsin, include:

Old World Wisconsin, Eagle, WI
Outdoor living history museum of farm life

Pendarvis, Mineral Point, WI
A restored Cornish miners' colony

Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, WI
Magnificently restored Victorian country estate

Madeline Island Museum, La Pointe, WI
A museum of Apostle Islands exploration and settlement

H.H. Bennett Studio, Wisconsin Dells, WI
Historic studio of the man who made Wisconsin Dells famous

Wade House, Greenbush, WI
1860s stagecoach inn, sawmill and carriage museum

Circus World, Baraboo, WI
America's circus museum, built on the original site of the Ringling Bros. Circus winter quarters

Stonefield, Cassville, WI
1900s farming village, Agricultural Museum and Governor Nelson Dewey home

First Capitol, Belmont, WI
The birthplace of Wisconsin’s territorial government

Reed School, Neillsville, WI
A 1940s one-room school

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MISSION

The Wisconsin Historical Society helps people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories.

Guiding Principles

1. To reach out and partner with the broadest possible public
2. To present and promote sound and authentic history
3. To share our riches of staff, collections and services in ways that captivate and respect our many audiences
4. To collect and safeguard evidence of our diverse heritage according to the highest standards of stewardship

VISION

We will work toward a future in which all individuals, families, communities and institutions actively use history to understand their own stories and the world around them, and to pass their heritage on to succeeding generations.

STRATEGIC AREAS

In order to advance our vision and achieve our mission, the Society is focused on the following four strategic areas:

1. Strengthening audience connections
2. Building and preserving accessible world-class collections
3. Increasing support for the Society
4. Ensuring the Society is a great place to work
Wisconsin Historical Society

Business Overview

Organization

1. Formed as a membership organization in 1846 and was chartered by the Legislature in 1853
2. Governed by a 36-member Board of Curators, with 24 elected by the membership
3. Organized into four divisions and Director’s Office (which includes Information Technology)
   a. Library-Archives
   b. Historic Sites and Museums
   c. Historic Preservation-Public History
   d. Administrative Services
4. Wisconsin Historical Foundation — fundraising and membership support
5. Circus World Museum Foundation — operates Circus World
6. Historic Preservation Review Board and the Burial Sites Review Board
7. Friends groups

Staffing Resources

1. Permanent and project positions — 142.45 full-time equivalent positions
2. Limited-term employees — majority at the historic sites
3. Volunteers — about 250,000 hours annually (i.e. the equivalent of another 120 FTE positions)

Financial Resources

Operations Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. State tax revenues</td>
<td>$14,183,300</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Earned revenues</td>
<td>$3,241,000</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Transfer revenue</td>
<td>$2,553,000</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Federal revenue</td>
<td>$1,216,500</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Endowment revenue</td>
<td>$609,900</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Gifts and grants</td>
<td>$387,600</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Other revenue</td>
<td>$68,600</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$22,259,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facilities Funding Sources

a. Building Commission monies
b. Division of State Facilities monies
c. Gift monies
Facilities

1. The Society owns and operates nine historic sites and owns but does not operate Circus World Museum, which is operated by Circus World Museum Foundation under a lease-management agreement with the Society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circus World</td>
<td>Baraboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old World Wisconsin</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade House</td>
<td>Greenbush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline Island Museum</td>
<td>La Pointe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa Louis</td>
<td>Prairie du Chien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonefield</td>
<td>Cassville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.H. Bennett Studio</td>
<td>Wisconsin Dells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Capitol</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendarvis</td>
<td>Mineral Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed School</td>
<td>Neillsville</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The Society owns two major buildings in Madison – the Headquarters Building and Wisconsin Historical Museum — plus 225 additional buildings located at the 10 historic sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Site</th>
<th># of Buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circus World</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old World Wisconsin</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade House</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline Island Museum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa Louis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonefield</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.H. Bennett Studio</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Capitol</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendarvis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wisconsin Historical Society

Final 2010-2011 Budget Bill
Authorized Expenditures and Positions by Source of Funds

State Tax Monies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and Support</td>
<td>$10,127,100</td>
<td>$10,094,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel and Utilities</td>
<td>1,190,100</td>
<td>1,222,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Service</td>
<td>2,131,900</td>
<td>2,782,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Historical Society</td>
<td>84,500</td>
<td>84,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$13,533,600</strong> (106.15)</td>
<td><strong>$14,183,300</strong> (106.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Funding Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned Revenue</td>
<td>$3,241,000</td>
<td>$3,241,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Revenue</td>
<td>1,216,500</td>
<td>1,216,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift and Grants</td>
<td>400,400</td>
<td>387,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment Revenue</td>
<td>609,900</td>
<td>609,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Revenue</td>
<td>2,587,900</td>
<td>2,553,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>95,600</td>
<td>68,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$8,151,300</strong> (36.39)</td>
<td><strong>$8,076,600</strong> (36.39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$21,684,900</strong> (142.54)</td>
<td><strong>$22,259,900</strong> (142.45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wisconsin Historical Society

State Funding Sources

1. **State Tax Revenues (designated as GPR)**
   Within this funding source, the state authorizes expenditures of monies for three main Society purposes — general program operations, utilities and debt service. General program operations include monies for personnel (e.g. salaries and fringe benefits for permanent and non-permanent employees) and supplies and services (e.g. travel, telephone, security, etc.) About 85 percent of state tax revenues received by the Society for general program operations are for personnel costs. GPR is separately authorized for (a) utility costs for Society-owned-and-operated buildings (including in the biennium, Circus World Museum) (b) debt service costs for Society building projects financed with bonds backed by state tax revenues and (c) in the second year of the biennium costs to prepare Society collections scheduled for relocation to the Storage Facility.

2. **Earned Income Revenues (designated as SEG)**
   Within this funding source, the state authorizes expenditures of endowment and earned income monies. The Society’s endowment income can be unrestricted or restricted as to its use. A Board of Curators policy controls the maximum expendable amounts in each category annually. The Society’s sources of earned revenues include monies from admissions, sales and services and Department of Natural Resources monies to cover a portion of the Society’s operational costs at the Northern Great Lakes Center in Ashland.

   The Society is authorized to expend an estimated SEG total that, in the case of earned revenues, can be exceeded only if more revenues come to the Society than originally estimated.

3. **Federal Revenues (designated as PRF)**
   Within this funding source, the state authorizes expenditures of monies received from federal agencies for ongoing program operations (e.g. the Historic Preservation program) and special projects (e.g. the grant to preserve the H.H. Bennett glass plate negatives). The Society is authorized to expend an estimated PRF total that can be exceeded only if more federal grant monies come to the Society than originally estimated.

4. **Gift Revenues (designated as PRO)**
   Within this funding source, the state authorizes expenditures of monies received by the Society directly and indirectly (e.g. collected by the Wisconsin Historical Foundation and Friends groups and, subsequently, given to the Society). The Society is authorized to expend an estimated PRO total that can be exceeded only if more gift monies come to the Society than originally estimated.

5. **Transfer Revenues (designated as PRS)**
   Within this funding source, the state authorizes expenditures of monies received from other state agencies. In the state’s accounting system, the PRS designation applies to expenditures in the “receiving” organization to differentiate them from expenditures in the “providing” organization. The Society receives PRS monies from (a) the Department of Administration to cover a portion of the Society’s operational costs at the Northern Great Lakes Center in Ashland through the Library-Archives Division and of our Burial Sites program through the Historic Preservation-Public History Division, (b) the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for archeological services for highway projects through the Museum Division and (c) preparation to move collections into the Storage Facility.

   The Society is authorized to expend an estimated PRS total that can be exceeded only if more transfer monies come to the Society than originally estimated.
Services
Wisconsin Historical Society

Services for Elected Officials

Contact: Kate Easton, Government Affairs Coordinator, at 608-264-6442

- **Limited reproductions of historic images**
  Historic images of Wisconsin people, places and events, plus regional and national history from the Society’s vast collections. Visit our website to view a sampling of our images at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi)

- **History research assistance**
  Help researching for public presentations on Wisconsin or U.S. topics

- **Local history information**
  Statistics and guidance for Wisconsin local historical organizations

- **School tour information**
  Insights on educational programming for the Wisconsin Historical Museum and 10 Wisconsin historic sites

- **Historic preservation advice**
  Clarification of historic preservation processes, including help with restoration techniques and tax credits for homeowners and commercial developers

- **Family history research assistance**
  Access to genealogical resources in Madison and statewide through interlibrary loan and 13 Wisconsin area research centers

- **Online resources**
  Access to digitized American history records and books, made possible in part through our partnership with Google Books
Wisconsin Historical Society

Online Resources

The Wisconsin Historical Society serves more than 15,000 people every day through its website. You and your constituents will find dozens of tools for investigating the state’s heritage; thousands of pictures, articles, books, documents and artifacts; and friendly, prompt replies to your questions.

What can I do online?

- Find answers to constituent questions
- Grab photos to use in presentations and publications
- Copy text for newsletters and press releases
- Get background for meetings, speeches, and publications
- Subscribe to updates like “This Day in Wisconsin History”

What’s in it for my constituents?

- Online shopping for gifts and historic photos
- Resource help for K-12 students’ school assignments
- Lesson plans for teachers
- Trip planning information on historic sites and museums
- Vital records and other genealogy data for family history
- Historical photographs, maps and birds-eye views
- Advice on saving older homes for property owners
- Guidance on historic preservation regulations for developers

Online Tools

- Dictionary of Wisconsin History
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary)
  - 10,000 biographies, definitions, place names and essays linked to original historical documents

- Topics in Wisconsin History
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/topics](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/topics)
  - Encyclopedia articles on more than 100 subjects, people, events and “A Short History of Wisconsin”

Online Collections

- Architecture & History Inventory
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi)
  - Historical and architectural data on 120,000 properties, from barns to railroad bridges

- Local History & Biography Articles
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/wlha](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/wlha)
  - 16,000 newspaper and magazine stories for every Wisconsin county, nearly every town

- Maps
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps)
  - Historical and reference maps related to Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region

- Museum Collections
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/collections/online](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/collections/online)
  - More than 4,000 objects of all kinds, photographed and described

- Turning Points in Wisconsin History
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints)
  - 50 pivotal events in Wisconsin history explained through 1,000 original documents, essays and lesson plans

- Wisconsin Historical Images
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi)
  - Nearly 70,000 historical images online

- Wisconsin Magazine of History
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/wmh/archives](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/wmh/archives)
  - 2,500 articles, 1917 to the present, on all aspects of Wisconsin history

- Wisconsin in the Civil War
  [www.wisconsinhistory.org/civilwar](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/civilwar)
  - More than 16,000 pages of diaries, regimental histories, soldiers letters, articles and maps

For More Information, contact:
[asklibrary@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:asklibrary@wisconsinhistory.org) or call 608-264-6535
Wisconsin Historical Society

Services for Local Historical Societies

The Wisconsin Historical Society offers a variety of services to local historical societies. Our experienced staff can provide advice on subjects ranging from care of museum objects to preservation of historic buildings, often through the Society’s website at www.wisconsinhistory.org. Below are staff contacts (608 area code unless otherwise noted).

**General Assistance and Affiliations**
The Society operates offices in Madison and Eau Claire to assist local historical organizations.

**Contacts**
Rick Bernstein, 264-6583
Southern Wisconsin, Madison
rick.bernstein@wisconsinhistory.org

Janet Seymour, 715-836-2250
Northern Wisconsin, Eau Claire
janet.seymour@wisconsinhistory.org

**Museum Collections**
Curators from the Museum are available for consultation on the care of collections, identification, documentation and collection management.

**Contact**
Paul Bourcier, 264-6573
paul.bourcier@wisconsinhistory.org

**Museum Expertise**
Museum staff provides information on exhibit design and fabrication, legal administration issues, education and interpretation programs and volunteer programs.

**Contacts**
Jennifer Kolb
jennifer.kolb@wisconsinhistory.org

**Exhibit Primer**
This basic guide provides guidance on producing small exhibits and information on exhibit cases, lighting, artifact mounts and labels.

**Contact**
Doug Griffin, 264-6561
douglas.griffin@wisconsinhistory.org

**Youth Program Development**
Beth Lemke from the Museum can provide ideas and share success stories in developing educational elementary school programs in adherence with DPI Standards.

**Contact**
Beth Lemke, 264-6567
beth.lemke@wisconsinhistory.org

**Teaching Kits**
The Museum has developed teaching kits that provide hands-on activities and instruction guides primarily used in classrooms but also applicable to museums and historical societies.

**Contacts**
Denise Wiggins, 261-2461
denise.wiggins@wisconsinhistory.org

Beth Lemke, 264-6567
beth.lemke@wisconsinhistory.org

**Elementary and Middle School Student Programs**
Sarah Aschbrenner from the Historic Preservation-Public History Division can provide ideas and advice on ways to involve children in local history.

**Contact**
Sarah Aschbrenner, 264-6487
sarah.aschbrenner@wisconsinhistory.org

**Middle and High School Student Programs**
Sarah Aschbrenner from the Historic Preservation-Public History Division can assist in involving middle school and high school students in local history through the National History Day program.

**Contact**
Sarah Aschbrenner, 264-6487
sarah.aschbrenner@wisconsinhistory.org
Building Restoration and Techniques
Jim Draeger can field questions regarding how to properly restore or rehabilitate your historic building.

Contact
Jim Draeger, 264-6511
jim.draeger@wisconsinhistory.org

Applying for Tax Credits for Rehabilitation of Historic Homes
Let your members know how they can apply for tax credits when they restore their historic homes.

Contact
Mark Buechel, 264-6491
mark.buechel@wisconsinhistory.org

Burial Sites Preservation
State Archaeologist John Broihahn answers questions about protecting burial sites.

Contact
John Broihahn, 264-6496
john.broihahn@wisconsinhistory.org

Archaeological Sites Protection
State Archaeologist John Broihahn answers questions on identifying and protecting archaeological sites.

Contact
John Broihahn, 264-6496
john.broihahn@wisconsinhistory.org

Maritime Preservation and Archaeology Programs
Underwater archaeologist Tamara Thomsen can help answer questions regarding historic maritime resources, including lighthouses and shipwrecks.

Contact
Tamara Thomsen, 221-5909
tamara.thomsen@wisconsinhistory.org

Applying for National Register of Historic Places Status
Daina Penkiunas can help answer questions on nominating a building, site or district to the Register.

Contact
Daina Penkiunas, 264-6501
daina.penkiunas@wisconsinhistory.org

Researching Historic Buildings or Districts
Joe DeRose helps answer questions on how to research historic properties.

Contact
Joe De Rose, 264-6512
joe.deroose@wisconsinhistory.org

Working with Government Agencies to Protect Historic Resources
Chip Brown can provide information about working with agencies to ensure that government projects do not have a negative impact on historic resources.

Contact
Chip Brown, 264-6508
chip.brown@wisconsinhistory.org

Landmarks Commissions
If you represent a local historic preservation landmarks commission and would like to inquire about technical assistance or training.

Contacts
Rick Bernstein, 264-6583
Southern Wisconsin, Madison
rick.bernstein@wisconsinhistory.org

Janet Seymour, 715-836-2250
Northern Wisconsin, Eau Claire
janet.seymour@wisconsinhistory.org

Historic Preservation Assistance to Nonprofits
If you represent a nonprofit organization and want technical assistance or training regarding historic preservation planning projects.

Contact
Jim Draeger, 264-6511
jim.draeger@wisconsinhistory.org

Historic Photographs
Visual Materials Curator Andy Kraushaar answers questions on the care and preservation of iconographic materials and photographs.

Contact
Andy Kraushaar, 264-6481
andy.kraushaar@wisconsinhistory.org
**Paper Conservation**  
Conservation Specialist Katie Mullen offers advice on the care and handling of paper artifacts, including books, manuscripts and visual materials.  

**Contact**  
Kathleen Mullen, 264-6489  
kathleen.mullen@wisconsinhistory.org

**Maps**  
Reference archivist Harry Miller can assist with questions about maps, atlases and cartographic materials.  

**Contact**  
Harry Miller, 264-6459 or -6560  
harry.miller@wisconsinhistory.org

**Questions on Wisconsin or American History Facts**  
Library staff will answer factual questions about Wisconsin or American history.  

**Contact**  
The reference staff, 264-6535  
asklibrary@wisconsinhistory.org

**Wisconsin Archives Mentoring Service**  
Local historical societies can get advice on how to care for their archival collections through the services of volunteer professional archivists by phone, email and, in some cases, on-site visits.  

**Contact**  
www.uwosh.edu/archives/wams

**Genealogy Website Questions**  
Refer genealogists directly to the Society’s website for a wealth of information about researching their family history.  

**Contact**  
www.wisconsinhistory.org/genealogy

**Genealogy Research in Madison**  
If you need to speak with a genealogical specialist, a reference librarian trained in genealogy is available during library hours.  

**Contact**  
Wisconsin Historical Society Library, 264-6535

**Genealogy Research Statewide**  
You may also advise genealogists that they can find research resources at any one of the 13 local Wisconsin Area Research Centers.  

**Contact**  
www.wisconsinhistory.org/archives/arcnet

**Fundraising**  
The Wisconsin Historical Foundation provides assistance to local historical societies by answering questions related to fundraising.  

**Contact**  
Diane Nixa, 261-1378  
diane.nixa@wisconsinhistory.org
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Wisconsin Historical Foundation

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Chief Operating Officer and Co-Director

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Board
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Knife sheath is the first of 116 items stolen by a former curator to return Artifact returned to Historical Society

By George Hessberg
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A Native American artifact stolen in the 1990s by a disgraced Wisconsin Historical Society museum curator has wended its way back to the institution's collection, nurtured a false but persistent hope that other stolen artifacts might follow.

The path to the recovery of the beaded, northern Plains knife sheath began in January, but the return of the sheath from an unnamed museum in New York was not announced until last week in an understated notice in a monthly society publication.

The sheath is the first to be returned of 105 — now 115 — items listed as still missing and stolen by David Wooley, a curator in the Native American ethnographic and archaeological collections who was convicted of stealing more than $100,000 worth of Native American artifacts. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2001, and the thefts took place during his employment as a curator at the museum in the 1990s.

"We have been told that it usually takes a decade for these things to start surfacing," said chief curator Paul Frances.

After Wooley was arrested, the museum recovered 32 missing items, with the knife sheath included in the 3rd and the first since the arrest, said Frances.

In January, a dealer in artifacts from Montana called the museum to report he saw the sheath on the museum's website - which lists the stolen items and includes photographs of 12 of the items — and recognized it as "recalling the knife sheath from the Wisconsin Historical Society museum in the 1990s, was recovered last week after it was found at a museum in New York.

Knife

Wisconsin Historical Society

This pre-1850 sheath, stolen from the Wisconsin Historical Society museum in the 1990s, was recovered last week after it was found at a museum in New York.

Wisconsin Historical Society
Wisconsin Historical Society

In the Media


Sunday, November 14, 2010

The Sheboygan Press

‘Forward!’
MOVEMENT FOR WADE HOUSE

Historic site in Greenbush will get new visitors center, other dramatic changes in vast statewide plan

BY JANET CRISTIEN
Sheboygan Press staff

When visiting the Wade House Historic Site, you drive past the stately, restored inn and pull into the back, where your visit begins with a walk through an ordinary-looking gift shop.

The result is a less-than-stunning introduction to the house where Sylvanus Wade and his family settled Greenbush and welcomed travelers on the plank Road in the mid-1800s.

Officials believe they can do better.

Sweeping changes are in the works for the Wade House — and other historic sites statewide. They include an approximately $14 million project and visitors center at the Wade House and a dramatic re-orienting of the historic site.

The project is part of a $77 million statewide plan to make needed changes, upgrades and improvements to historic sites all over Wisconsin, and the Wade House is one of the first on the list.

“Obviously there’s issues with the economy right now, but what we’ve been dealing with, really over the last 10 years is a decline in attendance at historic sites around the country,” said Alice Geschek, administrator for the Wade House.

Wade House director David Simonse calls the current Weyl Jung carriage rooms “more akin to a used car lot.” The new carriage museum will have interactive components.

Wisconsin Historical Society’s Division of Museums and Historic Sites, “We really felt like the Wisconsin Historical Society’s mission is to connect people to the past.”

To do that, the society has embarked on a major capital campaign, dubbed “Forward!” which is not yet complete. Geschek said the project at the Wade House will turn an unused bluff overlooking state Highway 37 into a 4,000-square-foot learning and visitors center and carriage museum.

The current visitors center and Weyl Jung Carriage Museum leave a lot to be desired as far as drawing people in and helping them understand the importance of the Wade House in the area’s history, said David Simmons, director at the Wade House site.

See Wade House/AZ
Wisconsin Historical Society
In the Media


Wade House
"Forward!" plan means big changes for historic site

Continued from A1

"What we don't have is a place within the space for visitors to get a sense of the experience before they," Simmons said. "In most living history experiences, one is, we hope, transported back into time.

The carriage museum is a particular problem because it does a very poor job of showing what Simmons said is the only collection of horse-drawn transportation of its kind in the country.

"It's a marvellous collection and not very well housed," Simmons said. "A major component in our decision to create a new carriage museum is that collection, as wonderful as it is, is more akin to a used-car lot than it is to a strong interpretive display of the vehicles and their context — how they were used and what they meant in their time period."

The new carriage museum will have some interactive components and will do a thorough job of explaining why horse-drawn vehicles — which were just about to be replaced by combustion engines — were so important.

"The Wade House really needed a facility that helped interpret," Goehring said. "The carriages are more than just beautiful. Why are they important?"

The new visitors center will include classroom and meeting space, a gift shop and a large space that will be available for rental for private events like wedding receptions, Simmons said. The Wade House draws roughly 50,000 visitors per year.

The new visitors center also will make the site a year-round operation as opposed to the spring-fall season the Wade House currently observes, Simmons said.

Sheboygan historian Bill Wangemann said the Wade House is a rare and often overlooked jewel, and the planned work will help expose more people to its important lessons.

"It's probably one of the finest or best functioning historic sites in the state," Wangemann said. "Historically, it's important — there's no question about that. It shows us what Sheboygan County was like. You can't go ahead if you don't where you've been and that's why history is so important. It's a real gem for Sheboygan County."

The Wade House recently received an $800,000 federal grant for transportation enhancements and bicycle and pedestrian projects, which will help the bottom line of the entire project, Goehring said.

"It's very important to the overall vision that we have," Goehring said. "The $800,000 will be used to help fund the fabrication and installation of exhibits in the visitors center and museum."

Goehring said fundraising for the Wade House improvements has already brought in $13.4 million. The minimum amount needed to break ground on the project is $13.8 million, which means they're well on their way.

Of that total, $8.5 million came from the State Building Commission, which has to approve major changes made to state structures. The federal grant will provide $600,000 and the rest is from private donations.

In the state's overall goal of $77 million, there's still $18 million to go.

Groundbreaking for the new visitors center and carriage museum is expected to occur in June 2013 and organizers are determined to hold a grand opening on June 6, 2013, which will be the 6th anniversary of the opening of the historic site.

The long-range plan for the Wade House has three more phases over the next 12 years, and they include renovating the log-united Robinson House, a fresh restoration at the Wade House and some changes to the Hank Road approach to the Wade House, among other things.

Goehring said funding hasn't even been discussed yet for those later projects.

Simmons said that in addition to the main practical reasons for the upgrades at the Wade House, the intangible ones might be the most important.

"We're envisioning much more magical trees to the historic site," he said. "(Visitors) will get on a horse-drawn wagon, travel down through woods, cross bridge, along a tree-lined road, traveling in time to the historic core of the site."
Grant to allow surveying of shipwrecks

The S.S. Milwaukee car ferry sank on Oct. 22, 1929. All on board died.

S.S. Milwaukee, which sank in 1929, is among five to be studied

By MEG JONES
megjournal@journaltimes.com

A 9:09 p.m. on Oct. 22, 1929, as the S.S. Milwaukee car ferry was caught in a storm, the ship's captain wrote a note and locked it into a watertight case: The ship is taking on water fast. We have turned around and headed for Milwaukee. Pumps are working but the sea gate is closed and won't keep water out. (Crew compartment) is flooded. Sights are tremendous. Things look bad.

By the time the note was found, the ship's crew and the rest of his shipmates were already dead. A few members of the crew — some accounts say 56 died on the S.S. Milwaukee, others say it was 77 — managed to escape the 336-foot-long car ferry before it plunged to the bottom of Lake Michigan, along with its cargo of rail cars carrying beefsteaks, automobiles, lumber, barley, canned peas and salt.

Four crew members fled in one of the lifeboats but it wasn’t a rescue, only another vessel of death. Their bodies were found in the lifeboat four days after the ferry foundered.

Now a popular wreck for scuba divers.

Please see SURVEYS, 5B
Wisconsin Historical Society

In the Media

“Grant to allow surveying of shipwrecks, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, November 16, 2010, page 2 of 2

Divers examine what remains of one of the automobiles the S.S. Milwaukee was transporting when it sank in heavy Lake Michigan seas.

FROM PAGE 1

SURVEYS

5 shipwrecks to be studied

The car ferry sits in 90 to 120 feet of water three miles northeast of Awbury Beach. For non-divers, though, it’s hard to picture just what the wreck looks like or its historical significance in a time when railroads often moved rail cars by water to avoid crowded railyards.

Soon, though, the S.S. Milwaukee will be much more accessible, not just to divers but to those who won’t need a tank of compressed air to see the shipwreck.

Starting next summer, archaeologists will survey and document the S.S. Milwaukee and four other Lake Michigan shipwrecks in Wisconsin waters through a federal grant awarded this month by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Chosen because they represent a cross section of historically significant vessels, the shipwrecks are near Milwaukee, Manitowoc, Kenosha and Sturgeon Bay.

“Part of what we were looking for were five shipwrecks that are already powing with people,” said Jim Dranger, deputy state historic preservation officer. “There are all ones that are pretty intact and have good archaeological potential.”

The $70,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration Transportation Enhancement program will pay for digital photo mosaics, sketches and measurements, photos, site plans and historic research. Digital photo mosaics illustrate the wreck as it now looks by piecing together hundreds of photos taken by scuba divers. Divers will measure and sketch the wreck, said Dranger.

The archaeological surveys and documentation will be used to nominate the five wrecks to the National Register of Historic Places, which will give them additional legal protection. Bones will be placed at each site so dive boats can safely navigate without harming the shipwreck.

Along with the S.S. Milwaukee, these ships will be surveyed:

- Floretta, an iron ore schooner wrecked off Manitowoc in 1890;
- America, a three-masted freight boat that sank near Kewaunee in 1890;
- Lake Island, an iron steamer loaded with new autos lost off Sturgeon Bay in 1904.

Jerry Geyer has dive on the S.S. Milwaukee for years. He takes many customers to the wreck through his work as owner of Pirate’s Cove Dive Shop in Milwaukee and captain of the Mr. Scuba charter boat.

Among the popular sites are the wheel house, which lies on the lake bottom near the wreck, as well as the twisted storm gate that many believe led to the demise of the Milwaukee. Some have speculated that the rail cars broke free and crashed against the gate, allowing water to flow in.

While the S.S. Milwaukee used to be a challenging dive for those who wanted to penetrate the wreck and swim inside to see the rail cars and cargo, it’s now very difficult because the ship is starting to break apart.

Until a few years ago divers could see two intact 1920s automobiles, but now the vehicles have been reduced to piles of parts.

It was fairly intact until the last 10 years. It’s been breaking apart. The decks and bilges have all collapsed. It’s not what it once was,” said Geyer. “Because of its depth, it’s a shorter dive than some of the other wrecks. Its size makes it pretty hard to see on any one dive, so a lot of people ask to go back and make several dives.”
Wisconsin Historical Society

In the Media

“Historical explorations move ‘Forward!’,” Wisconsin State Journal, November 21, 2010, page 1 of 1

Wisconsin tourism > Preserving heritage

Historical explorations move ‘Forward!’

By GEORGE HESSELBERG
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Projects designed to enhance “heritage tourism” in Wisconsin received a $970,000 boost this month from federal grants aimed at preserving efforts above ground and under water.

Because the money comes from transportation sources and is required to be used for “surface transportation,” among other criteria, the Wisconsin Historical Society is channeling it to horse-drawn carriages and sunken ships.

The five ships involved plied the surface of Lake Michigan but sunk between 1880 and 1932.

The carriages are in an extensive collection housed at Wesley Jung Carriage Museum, part of the Wade House stagecoach inn attraction in Sheboygan County.

The money gets added to the society’s “Forward! Campaign,” an ambitious effort begun with the state slogan’s exclamation point four years ago to raise $77 million from public and private sources for numerous projects. The new total is $56.7 million, said Bob Granfelt, historical society spokesman.

The total includes $43.3 million in public, or government funds, and $23.4 private funds raised.

“For the last $8.3 million we are seeking private donations,” he said, describing a public effort that began in October with an invitation-only gathering of potential donors in Madison.

Please see TOURISM, Page H2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE H1

The two new grants come from the Federal Highway Administration’s Transportation Enhancement program, which reimburses transportation projects that improve the community experience. The largest of the two, $550,000, will pay for installing exhibits in a new Learning and Visitor Center to open in 2015 at the carriage museum, a unique gathering of carriages, sleighs and wagons. Wade House, which ended regular hours in mid-October but offers special events year-round, has had 16,733 visitors this year, Granfelt said.

The remaining $170,000 pays for the society’s underwater education program, an unusual project for unusual tourists. The project involves gathering information – taking archaeological surveys, for example – that will help put the Lake Michigan shipwrecks on the National Register of Historic Places. But the effort is broader than that.

“Very little is known about these ships,” said Draeger, so a survey will add to the trove of information included in the society’s “Maritime Trails” program. The wrecks attract well-suited tourists, he said, and the grant also will pay for mooring buoys to assist shipwreck seekers and to protect the sites from anchor-dragging visitors.

Heritage tourism efforts can combine maritime elements – the shipwrecks with nearby lighthouses, for example – into groups that can be promoted, Draeger said.

“The surveys also help us write the history and track the evolution of vessel designs,” he said.

“We are trying to build public appreciation of these shipwrecks by allowing public access to them, teaching people these wrecks are important. Rather than have divers discover the wrecks on their own and pull a chunk off, this will help teach responsible tourism. Visit the wrecks and leave nothing behind but bubbles.”

Shipwrecks: The Wisconsin Historical Society’s maritime projects are detailed at two websites: www.wisconsin.shipwrecks.org and www.maritimetrails.org. The five Lake Michigan shipwrecks targeted for archaeological surveys are:
• SS Milwaukee, steel rail car ferry lost off Milwaukee in October 1896, with all hands on board.
• Eılma, early self-unloading vessel scuttled off Milwaukee in December 1932.
• Friesla, iron ore schooner lost off Manistoc in September 1885.
• Cheyenne, three-masted carver lost off Kewaunee in September 1890.
• Lakeland, iron steamer loaded with new automobiles lost off Sturgeon Bay in December 1924.

Wade House: Details about the Wade House are available at wadewhonhistory.org.

Winter at state historic sites: For a complete schedule of offseason events, check www.wisconsinhistory.org/sites/index.asp.

Forward! Campaign: The Wisconsin Historical Society’s public-private fundraising and education campaign is detailed at www.forwardscampaign.org.
There are places we can go and others we can’t. This installment in our Secret Places series, which appears occasionally, is designed to take you to hidden, unknown or in plain-view-but-off-limits places in Madison and Wisconsin.

Today we visit the storage rooms and archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

This 1941 Harley-Davidson knucklehead — one of 2,682 made by the Milwaukee company — was confiscated by the state after its power got one too many drunken driving violations. It stands in the middle of an aisle in a crowded storage room at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Hanging on to those things that define us

By Geri Kittner

*glkittner@madison.com
* 608-256-3379

Dog in a basement on the UW-Madison campus tells the story of our state:

The cheesehead was signed last year by President Barack Obama on his visit to Wright Middle School in Madison. He is there, with the 1 millionth aluminum wheel cover cast at the Reynolds Metal Company in Beloit in 1940 and signed by the employees, and a wild 19th-century machine used on the Lac du Flambeau Reservation.

They’re among the 98,000 historical objects and thousands more archaeological artifacts found in the storage of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

WEB EXTRA

Video: See inside the Wisconsin historical society's storage and archive. Go to madison.com/weg
Wisconsin Historical Society

In the Media

“Hanging on to those things that define us,” Wisconsin State Journal, October 7, 2010, page 2 of 2

Historical

Continued from Page A1

Consider this Secret. Place the state’s antique warehouse — clean but musty, crammed but orderly — a slideshow of the objects both notable and obscure that epitomize Wisconsin.

“We do rely on people’s sense of history, of their willingness to share their stories with other people,” Paul Boursier, the Wisconsin Historical Society’s chief curator, said of the society’s collection that has been built almost entirely through donation. “Our stories are important. We want something of ours to be preserved so that future generations can appreciate the things that we did.”

10 rooms filled with history

A tour of the collection — a maze of rooms rarely shown to the public — starts at the basement level with Boursier, swiping his badge to open a secure door and shuttering us down a short flight of stairs to the processing area, where new objects are photographed and catalogued before being stored.

Beyond this small, brightly lit area, adjoining rooms hold now after now of drawers and metal shelves filled with 16 years’ worth of procurements.

Every available slice of space — 10 rooms, 20,000 square feet — is filled. A 1941 Harley-Davidson Knucklehead — one of 2,452 made by the Milwaukee company and confiscated by the state after its owner racked up too many drunken driving violations — is parked in the middle of an aisle next to a 1958 high-rise from Gray’s Brewing Co. in Janesville and the brewery in Monona that used to produce the Beng- hoff and other brands. On the other side of the Harley is a roll-top desk owned and possibly made by Darwin Clark, a Madison mayor in the 19th century.

An iron lung, used to treat polio in the 1950s, from the Wisconsin Veterans Hospital is in a corner.

A 6-foot-tall ribbonboard American Indian cutout displayed in Milwaukee during the Milwaukee Braves’ World Series win in 1957 is tucked behind a dentist chair in a storage room of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

A 6-foot-tall ribbonboard American Indian cutout displayed in Milwaukee during the Milwaukee Braves’ World Series win in 1957 is tucked behind a dentist chair in a storage room of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The facility will have a larger area for processing additions to the collection, including an isolation room to store objects such as outdoor signs that could come to the historical society infested with bugs. Now these objects are tightly wrapped in plastic to prevent the bugs from spreading to other objects and stored alongside everything else.

The building will have a conservation lab, a photography studio and a bigger processing room. Other rooms will be designated for paintings, industrial machinery and culturally sensitive materials such as Native American items. The facility will store collections of books, media and archival materials and be shared with the Wisconsin Historical Museum.

Space constraints “really limit us as far as the kinds of things that we can preserve from Wisconsin’s past and present,” Boursier said.

“Say we were offered the Warnermobile — a classic Wisconsin artifact. We wouldn’t have any place to put it in the current building. But in the new building, we’ll have a place to put that.”

Over the years, the society has had to turn down Wisconsin-made automobiles and other pieces of heavy industry, transportation or agriculture, such as a cranberry harvester, because it had nowhere to store it.

But officials have made special accommodations at locations off campus for old beer vans from the Greaves Point Brewery and the first robotic milking machine made by Bomanic of Madison. Preserving contemporary, too

The storage isn’t just filled with the old. Items such as the Cheesehead signed by Obama and the six-pack of Capital Supper Club, which Boursier bought the first day the beer hit grocery store shelves, or nearly 1,300 milk bottles that were collected over the decades from dairies in the state.

“Any really carrying on a legacy by collecting contemporary material,” he said. “We try to concentrate on those things that help define Wisconsin as a place. That’s really the direction a lot of our future exhibits are going to go.”

FILM VAULT

Not far from the sprawling storage area of the Wisconsin Historical Society is the society’s film vault, which lies under the grass and stays hidden in the society’s front door.

Here, 146,000 rolls of microfilm and 32,000 reels of motion picture film are stored as part of the collection between the society and the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research at UW-Madison.

“This certainly qualifies as a space that people don’t get to see,” said Harry Miller, the society’s reference archivist.

Above the film vault, much of those floors within the historical society’s headquarters are devoted to its archival collections, including letters, minutes, studies, scripts, reports and financial records that social and political organizations, businesses and Wisconsin state and local governments have created.

Documents of note among the archive include a set of letters with signature from everyone who signed the Declaration of Independence, likely worth more than $5 million.

A box of papers, from former Republican Gov. Scott McCallum who sent a box of Little Lulu’s cartoon strips.

One section of the floor holding theater and film materials is partly closed off by a locked cage, behind which are boxes with photographic negatives.

“These are mostly of the kind of photos you see in theater interiors,” Miller said, pulling out glossy photos of Ava Gardner.

Although less rare now, the photos traditionally carried a high market value, he said.

“One line, many years ago, there was a theft of some of these stills and this cage was constructed.”

In addition to the collections in the society’s library, archives and museum storage, 100,000 more objects are located at the Wisconsin Historical Society’s 11 museums and historic sites throughout the state.

TELL US ABOUT A SECRET PLACE

Is there a Secret Place you’d like the Wisconsin State Journal to uncover? We want your ideas for locations not accessible to the general public. There’s the way, hidden or off-roads. Send your ideas to: Assistant City Editor Mark Pitch at nationaljournal@journaltimes.com, or call 608-257-5645.
“Quest for bigger closet,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, October 20, 2010, page 1 of 2

Quest for bigger closet

Historical Society raises funds for new storage space

By MEG JONES
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Madison — The state's attic, hope chest and file drawers are rapidly filling up.

For more than 150 years, the Wisconsin Historical Society has been the collector of the state's story — the repository of governors' important and not-so-important papers, maps of the Great Lakes before Europeans knew what Lake Michigan's shoreline looked like, movie scripts, photos, paintings, a 1941 Harley-Davidson "knucklehead" motorcycle, even a Big Boy restaurant sign.

More than 4 million titles of published materials are stored by the Wisconsin Historical Society, along with reams of archival materials such as pictures, posters and advertisements. The society has lots of shelves, all of which would measure 30 miles if laid end to end. But like any closet, a bigger one will soon be needed.

The Wisconsin Historical Society has launched a campaign to raise $8.3 million in private funding by 2013 for several initiatives, including build-
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The new storage facility will be built in Madison on vacant state land near Limona Memorial Health Institute. The storage space that includes 26,000 square feet will be needed to provide space to house the society’s collection.

This is part of the nation’s largest collection of oral history, which is the society’s primary mission. The collection includes over 3,000 oral histories, which are recorded in a variety of formats, including audio, video, and digital media.

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OUT WITH THE OLD...

...in with the really old at Library Reading Room.

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How does one restore a “sense of place” when there is little evidence of what the original looked like? Detective work, attention to quality, brilliant solutions and persistence were brought to the task of restoring the Library Reading Room at the Wisconsin Historical Society’s campus headquarters.

For the $2.9 million renovation and restoration project, the society received a room demure in tone, expansive in structure and inventive in meeting an odd challenge of in-with-the-really-old, out-with-the-old.

These subjective public can test for itself in tours Friday and Saturday, but students and other researchers have already responded positively to the new room. The county leather reading chairs, the soothing color tones, the lovingly restored column curvels and cues and subtly bell flowers, the mahogany tables, the handy outlets for laptop computers and the twinkling green-shaded lamps.

“We had to restore the look and retain the functionality,” said Peter Gottlieb, state archivist.

The restoration dates to 1955 when the room — which is on the second floor, facing the Library Mall — was significantly, and nearly fatally, altered. Only if you had been there before then would you have known about the ornate stained glass skylights panels.

“Nearly fatal” because the ornate stained glass skylights were smashed, the ceiling was dropped and the graceful room turned into more “room” and less “grace.” The “new” ceiling, with ornate plaster rosettes, gild leaf accents and a blushing rose contrast color, is gap-inducing.

“We had one photograph, a black-and-white,” said Jim Dresser, the society’s architectural historian, of the search for samples of what the room looked like in 1900, when the NeoClassical Revival building was dedicated. They also had one postcard, hand-tinted, from Germany, dated 1900. Researchers scoured records for written descriptions of the room, looking for colors, consulted old blueprints and followed clues from the way the tiny mosaic floor tiles were colored.

One green glass lampshade was found in the museum’s collection, and from that the stylish lamps were recreated — even the deepening shade of green was duplicated — returning “task lighting” and a casual intimacy.

Ellsworth Brown, society director, noted the building for 50 years was the UW-Madison library, and that reading room then and since was defined by users’ experiences.

“This is a declaration of a sense of place,” Brown said, inviting the public to rediscover it.
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Better than the original

Findorff gives Library Reading Room overdue finishing touches

It took 110 years, but the Library Reading Room at the Wisconsin Historical Society’s headquarters in Madison is finally getting the finishing touches it was originally designed to have.

During the building’s construction at the turn of the 20th century, money ran out and the interior was never painted, gold leafing was never applied as intended, and other decorative details went by the wayside, said Greg Parkinson, the society’s director of administrative services.

“Finally, 110 years later, the building will really be complete,” he said of the renovation and restoration project.

Major work was done on the building in the 1950s, Parkinson said, but it involved taking out decorative elements, not putting them in. Due to the political unrest at that time on the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s campus — the historical society is in the middle of the campus’ Library Mall — first-floor windows were removed and replaced with stone, he said.

After many years spent gathering support for a full renovation/restoration of the Historical Society, the restoration of the
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Library Reading Room is the first step in that direction, Parkinson said.

The Library Reading Room was a natural place to start, he said, as it is the most visible part of the building.

“The Historical Society has pushed hard for this work in recent years,” he said. “We were successful in gaining the support of the Division of State Facilities and the Building Commission over the past couple of years.”

As with any project that involves a commonly used space, working around the society’s many visitors has been a challenge, said Steve Klaven, project manager for J.H. Finderff & Son Inc., the general contractor on the job. Use of a ramp from the outside directly to the second-story Library Reading Room offers the contractors a way of going in and out with minimal disruption to visitors, he said.

Klaven said he jumped at the opportunity to work on the project because of his previous experience renovating the Boston Public Library.

“With these types of projects, you have sensitivity toward the historical nature of the building,” he said. “There’s a tremendous degree of protection involved — preserving the existing finishes and protecting the floors.”

To achieve a historically accurate look, artists were hired to complete decorative painting, plaster work and gold leafing, Klaven said.

The result will be multifaceted, Parkinson said.

“It will be a dazzling gem,” he said, “but also a state-of-the-art library reading area.”

The restored Library Reading Room will include a variety of new equipment such as improved microfilm machines and computer terminals, Parkinson said, in addition to the decorative touches that were part of the original design.

“It will be a nice mixture of the old and the new,” he said. “We hope it will be attractive in nature and use of the facilities will increase.”

— Celey Clinton

**Project Specs**

- **Project name:** Wisconsin Historical Society Library Reading Room renovation
- **Location:** Madison
- **Owner:** Wisconsin Historical Society
- **General Contractor:** J.H. Finderff & Son Inc., Madison
- **Architect:** Isthmus Architecture Inc., Madison
- **Project cost:** $2.96 million
- **Start date:** June 21, 2009
- **Completion date:** March 1, 2010

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