



### Frequently Asked Questions About Affiliation

#### **How does an organization become an affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society?**

Affiliation is a formal relationship, provided for under Wisconsin state law. The members or board of directors of a historical society must vote to apply for affiliation, and the Wisconsin Historical Society's Board of Curators must vote to approve affiliation. Affiliation is initiated with the submission of an Affiliation Application and Questionnaire to Local History Outreach staff.

#### **What does an organization have to do to become and stay an affiliate?**

The Society encourages all non-profit community history and cultural organizations, including publicly funded museums and tribal, to consider formal affiliation. Affiliation enables organizations to receive the following benefits:

- apply for mini-grants to support collections care projects
- have endowment funds managed by the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, if desired
- vote at Society membership meetings
- receive the Society's newsletters and the Wisconsin Magazine of History
- be listed in the Society's directory of historical organizations and other marketing tools
- participate in the Wisconsin Council for Local History

We serve a diverse community of local history organizations throughout the state. Our local and regional partners are invited to:

- schedule free consultations with Society experts
- learn about webinars, workshops and other professional development opportunities
- attend regional meetings of peer organizations
- participate in the annual Local History and Historic Preservation conference
- book events through the Society's Speakers Bureau
- host the Society's traveling exhibits
- contribute to planning the new state historical museum.

The Society's only requirements of affiliates are to possess appropriate by-laws, open their programs to the public, and submit an annual report.

**Does an affiliate pay dues to be an affiliate to the Wisconsin Historical Society?**

No. There is no initial fee to become an affiliate or on-going dues to stay an affiliate.

**Does the Wisconsin Historical Society have any authority over disputes in our society? Can the Wisconsin Historical Society resolve them?**

No, the Wisconsin Historical Society has no authority to settle disputes between an affiliate and a third party.

**What happens if an affiliate dissolves?**

A non-profit organization must include articles on dissolution in its bylaws. The Internal Revenue Service requires these stipulations for any private non-profit that wants to be tax-exempt. These articles set out a procedure to handle the distribution of assets. Should the organization ever dissolve, either voluntarily or involuntarily, the Wisconsin Historical Society will provide guidance if requested. If an affiliated organization dissolves, it is most likely that a similar nearby organization(s) will receive these assets.

**Can affiliation be terminated?**

Yes, an affiliated society may vote to terminate its affiliation. Alternatively, the Board of Curators may vote to terminate affiliation if an affiliated historical society fails to follow the policies established for affiliated historical societies.

**How much does it cost to get services from the Wisconsin Historical Society's Local History Outreach staff?**

There is no cost to get services from Local History Outreach staff.

**How long has the Wisconsin Historical Society affiliation program existed?**

The affiliation program of the Wisconsin Historical Society dates to 1898. Society director Reuben Gold Thwaites proposed several initiatives to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wisconsin statehood. One proposal was for a new state law allowing the Wisconsin Historical Society to have auxiliaries. The state legislature passed the law authorizing the Society to accept auxiliaries and prescribe provisions in the bylaws of county and local historical societies in order to qualify as auxiliaries. The basic language of the law passed in 1898 remains in force and is contained in s.44.03 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The Wisconsin Historical Society's policies and procedures for the affiliation program have evolved throughout the 100 plus years since the acceptance of auxiliary societies was first authorized. The Society now uses the term affiliated historical organization and accepts county, local and

specialized historical organizations as affiliates. The Society currently has approximately 400 affiliates.

### **What is the Wisconsin Council for Local History?**

In 1961 the Board of Curators of the Wisconsin Historical Society authorized the establishment of the Wisconsin Council for Local History (WCLH). The council consists of all historical organizations affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society. Any local history group can become a member of the council by becoming an affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society. The mission of the Wisconsin Council for Local History is to promote communication and cooperation among local history groups. The Council provides opportunities for historical organizations in Wisconsin to discuss mutual problems and promote wider interest in local history.

Through its Board of Directors, the council also advises the state Society on its local history programming and serves as a voice of local historians. For more information about the Board of Directors and its membership, go to “organization of the Wisconsin Council for Local History” on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.

The local historical societies that currently comprise the Wisconsin Council for Local History represent a variety of geographic locales, such as counties, reservations, cities, villages, townships and neighborhoods. The Council also includes organizations with specialized interests such as railroading, labor history, cemeteries and particular ethnic heritages. The council brings together historical organizations from all parts of Wisconsin. A complete listing of the 400 member organizations of the Wisconsin Council for Local History appears in the local history society directory available on the Web at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/localhistory/directory/index.asp](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/localhistory/directory/index.asp).

### **How does one become a member of the WCLH?**

Membership in the Council is automatic, once you have been approved as an affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

### **Who sends me mailings regarding annual donations to the WCLH?**

The Council sends out its own mailings regarding annual donations.

### **Do I have to pay the Council to be an affiliate?**

There is no required fee to remain a member of the Wisconsin Council for Local History.