



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

2015-2017 Biennial Report

October 16, 2017



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Dear Governor Walker, 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 2015-2017 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, 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.

In 1853 we became the first historical society in the nation to receive state funding, and since then we have been directly accountable to the citizens of Wisconsin.

We provide a powerful connection to the past and encourage 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,

Ellsworth H. Brown, Ph.D.
The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director

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Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society (Society), founded in 1846, connects people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. More information is available at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/>. A review of the performance and operation of the Society's divisions follows:

State Historic Preservation Office

The Society is the federally-designated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In partnership with communities, organizations and individuals, the SHPO works to identify, interpret and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations. More information is available at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3557>

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

During fiscal years 2015 through 2017, SHPO:

- Approved 89 income-producing rehabilitation projects with investments totaling \$661 million. These projects generated over 12,000 annual jobs, and will return \$130.4 million in federal income tax credits and \$132 million in state income tax credits to Wisconsin taxpayers.
- Approved 640 historic home rehabilitation projects with investments totaling \$16 million. These projects returned \$4 million in state income tax credits to Wisconsin homeowners.
- Processed 83 National Register of Historic Places nominations across 33 counties; 1,120 buildings were made potentially eligible for state and federal income tax credits.
- Recorded 7,342 new historic buildings and 451 new archaeological sites in the Society's historic property database; updated 2,985 existing archaeological records and catalogued nine human burial sites.
- Registered approximately 500 human burial sites with county Registers of Deeds, making their presence known to subsequent buyers and making owners eligible for property tax reductions.
- Approved 2,877 federal, state, and local government projects after conducting reviews for potential effects on historic properties.

- With the help of endowment funds, awarded nearly \$200,000 in historic preservation grants to 12 communities.
- Offered training seminars, webinars and workshops to private sector preservationists, local units of government, archaeologists, and historic preservation tax credit applicants.
- Worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), represented the interests of the people of Wisconsin in negotiating the establishment of a National Marine Sanctuary in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan waters.
- Continued to grow the content and the participation in the annual statewide Local History and Historic Preservation conference.

Division of Library, Archives and Museum Collections

The Division of Library, Archives and Museum 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 <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3556>

Mission: 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 2015-2017, the division accomplished the following:

State Government Information

- Created the new State Government Information Section to better coordinate the acquisition and management of state and local government information, including archival records and publications.
- Acquired 3,579 cubic feet of public records from state agencies and local governments, contained in 422 accessions. Added 126.5 gigabytes of state government records in electronic formats. Acquired 12 terabytes of historically important local government records to our electronic records repository.
- Assisted 30 state agencies with 157 requests for record services.
- Responded to 180 requests for record services from 140 local government units.

- Received a \$166,000 State Government Electronic Records grant funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the granting arm of the National Archives and Records Administration, to increase the number of government records available.
- Added 2,135.1 gigabytes (or 48,067,622 documents) of website information for the Society's website collections, including online newsletters; reports from Wisconsin municipalities, counties, and state agencies; national manuscript collections, organic and sustainable agriculture, and The Water Council.
- Collaborated with partners in the Governor's Office, the Department of Workforce Development, and others in the Society to create templates and repeatable processes and best practices for managing and maintaining electronic records within agencies.
- Acquired the comprehensive plans for the majority of Wisconsin cities, the largest acquisition of electronic government publications to date totaling 6,355 files.

Preservation

- With a \$262,816 award from the National Endowment for the Humanities, digitized 100,000 pages of historic Wisconsin newspapers and made them available on the Chronicling America website.
- Partnered with the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, the Wisconsin Public Library Association and the Department of Public Instruction to scan and publish 61,250 historic newspaper pages in the Archive of Wisconsin Newspapers.
- Reformatted 250,000 pages of brittle newspapers and documents onto archival microfilm and converted 500,000 microfilm pages to digital images, generating \$57,370 in royalties and \$178,703 in sales.
- Conserved over 1,000 books, maps, atlases, scrapbooks, photographs, archival document collections through treatment in our labs.
- Launched the *Wisconsin Sound Archives (WSA)*, now featuring audio recordings from diverse populations and locations across Wisconsin, including oral histories documenting African American communities in Milwaukee, Madison, Beloit and Janesville.
- Documented the effect of plant closings on Milwaukee's African-American neighborhoods over the past four decades through an oral history project that generated 14 interviews with long-time residents. The program was conducted in close collaboration with the Wisconsin Black Historical Society and Museum.

The interviews are available on the Society website at <http://wihist.org/2wUyGHU>.

Collection Development and Management

- Corresponded with more than 300 donors and prospective donors to Wisconsin Historical Society archival collections and responded to numerous additional inquiries via email and telephone contacts.
- Received 275 new collections of personal papers and organizational records, totaling 723 cubic feet and documenting many aspects of Wisconsin history and selected areas of national history.
- New collection highlights include: records, photographs, and artifacts from the Oscar Mayer Company – including a 1969 Weinermobile; UW School of Journalism Professor Jim Baughman’s massive political ephemera collection; and an addition to the Henry and Elizabeth Baird papers, including an 1839 census of the Oneida in Wisconsin. Also acquired nine collections to a growing Organic and Sustainable Agriculture collecting initiative.
- Purchased and cataloged 5,100 books, pamphlets, and annual publications, utilizing state appropriations and endowed funds, with emphasis on Wisconsin history, North American history, and local and family histories. Accessioned 3,300 donated books and pamphlets for the library’s general collection.
- Ingested 18 terabytes of Wisconsin newspapers, consisting of most Wisconsin papers from 2015-2016.
- Subscribed to more than 3,500 periodicals, including genealogy and family history publications, selected academic journals, magazines, and specialized newsletters.
- Acquired access to research databases in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, including Early American Newspapers (Readex/Newsbank), NAACP Papers (Proquest), Associated Press Collections, 1848-2009 (Gale Cengage), Unpublished Hearings of the U.S. Congress (Proquest), and Executive Branch Documents, 1789-1932 (Proquest).
- Added 2,571 cartographic records to the online catalog, completing a six-year privately funded project to catalog for the Society’s entire map collection, totaling 12,000 maps and 3,600 atlases.
- With private support, arranged and described the Vel Phillips Papers (1946-2009), an archival collection of more than 36 cubic feet of papers, photographs, film, and audio recordings; digitized 20% of the collection for free online access.

Public Services

- Served 383,594 users in person and through email correspondence from the Society's Madison headquarters and its 13 regional Area Research Centers. The centers are distributed across the state at the four-year campuses of the University of Wisconsin System. Through a unique lending system, citizens throughout Wisconsin have access to the rich resources of the Society.
- Provided direct instruction to over 7,000 individuals through workshops, tours and classes offered at the Madison headquarters and locations around the state, increasing our outreach to K-12 and higher education audiences by over 60%.
- Developed the traveling library exhibition "Wisconsin's John Muir," providing the exhibit and guest speakers at 30 public libraries, local historical societies, and UW-System campuses.
- Commenced a second phase of the Google Books Project to digitize our collections, which will ultimately result in the digitization of over 100,000 additional titles including many state and local government publications.
- With generous private funding, launched the endowed James Madison Lecture Series: Scholarship in Honor of Merrill Jensen. This series is dedicated to presenting the nation's premier historians of early American history, with free public programs offered in both Madison and Milwaukee.
- Shared over 100,000 pages of Wisconsin Historical Society resources via the Digital Public Library of America portal, a state partnership project with DPI, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Library, Marquette University, and Wisconsin Library Services.
- Mentored three high-school interns in historical methods and oral history so they could conduct 17 interviews with African-American residents of Madison. Those interviewed ranged in age from 51 to 84 and the questions focused on how the capital's black neighborhoods had changed over the past three decades. The interviews are available on the Society website at <http://wihist.org/2wUyGHU>.

Division of Museums and 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 <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3562>

Mission: The division uses physical environments and artifacts to create immersive and engaging learning experiences at twelve locations across Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2015-2017, the division:

- Achieved a total attendance at all museums and historic sites of 521,268.
- Generated \$4.9 million in earned revenue.
- Introduced a number of administrative changes including the centralization of accounting, facility, information technology, marketing, and retail support in order to improve efficiencies.

Accomplishments at specific historic sites and museums included:

Black Point Estate and Gardens, Geneva Lake

- Crews completed a \$500,000 restoration of this historic home's iconic wrap-around porch, on time and on budget.
- The site introduced several new outreach programs including a lecture series, walking tours, and a seven-week history program for area students.

Circus World Museum, Baraboo

- A new HVAC system was installed in the museum's library and research center.
- The gift shop was renovated, resulting in a 15% increase in sales revenue.
- Working with parent company Feld Entertainment, the site received the donation of three historic rail cars from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus train.
- Full restoration of the 1882 "Old Woman in the Shoe" circus wagon was made possible by a \$90,000 gift.
- The site presented its annual summer-long daily circus performance program, drawing professional circus talent from across the country.

First Capitol, Belmont

- The exteriors of the historic structures at this site were repainted and repairs were made to the site's heating system in anticipation of a listening event by Governor Walker and his cabinet.

H.H. Bennett Studio, Wisconsin Dells

- Two new interactive kiosks were created.
- The museum gallery added three-dimensional display screens to enable visitors to fully experience H.H. Bennett's stereoscopic photography.
- The new program "Frankie's Story" focused on H.H. Bennett's first wife, Frances Bennett, who ran and operated the studio while Bennett was traveling and making photos in the field.
- Dave Rambow, the new site director, has brought his expertise in 19th-century wet plate photography to life through demonstrations in the original H.H. Bennett location.

Madeline Island Museum, La Pointe

- The museum installed popular temporary exhibitions on the "Tradition of Powwows in Wisconsin" and "Women of Madeline Island."
- School tour participation increased by 30%.

Old World Wisconsin, Eagle

- This site hosted a series of events in observance of Laura Ingalls Wilder's 150th birthday.
- Public restrooms in the Clausing Barn were renovated.
- A capital campaign was launched to bring new educational programs including STEM learning opportunities, improved visitor amenities, and additional historical elements to the guest entry area severely damaged by a 2010 tornado.

Pendarvis, Mineral Point

- The site hosted over 300 visitors during the 2016 Mineral Point Historic Preservation Weekend.
- Public restrooms were renovated, and the site's perimeter fence was replaced.
- Consolidated administration of First Capitol, Pendarvis, Stonefield, and Villa Louis to an expanded existing position that created a director of Southwest Historic Sites.

- The site is undertaking a comprehensive reinterpretation and redesign of its visitor experience program.

Reed School, Neillsville

- Repairs were made to core exhibits.
- The landmark site hosted a cabinet meeting and a citizen listening session, both convened by Governor Walker.
- Several new interpreters are portraying the roles of early 20th-century teachers for seasonal weekend visitors.
- Painting and repairs were done on the outside of the school building.

Stonefield, Cassville

- The site introduced a wholly revised school tour program in 2017, made possible by support from the Eckstein Foundation.
- New interpretive panels were installed at the 12 machine sheds.
- Staff members have begun to undertake an inventory and condition assessment of permanent collection objects stored on site.

Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien

- 2016 marked the 80th anniversary of historic house tours at the Dousman family mansion.
- Two temporary exhibits displayed historic period costumes.
- Two books by curator Mary Antoine illuminating the history of the site, *Frenchtown Chronicles* and *The War of 1812 in Wisconsin* were published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press.
- The annual Carriage Classic again was the largest pleasure driving competition in the country.
- Retail sales on site have increased by 37%.

Wade House, Greenbush

- The site introduced a new annual Carriage Driving Days event in 2016.

- The Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum observed the 150th anniversary of Frank Lloyd Wright’s birth with an exhibition featuring two of Wright’s carriages.

Wisconsin Historical Museum, Madison

- The museum introduced a number of new programs including “Story Saturdays,” summer camps, walking tours on the Capitol Square, and “SPARK,” a program developed for visitors with dementia.
- The museum hosted a record of 30,487 students and teachers on school tours in 2017.

2015-2017 Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses

Historic Site/Museum	FY 16 Revenues	FY 16 Expenses	FY 17 Revenues	FY 17 Expenses
Black Point Estate	\$247,735	\$218,483	\$271,002	\$228,622
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$88,206	\$127,302	\$113,847	\$158,402
Madeline Island	\$323,712	\$297,578	\$302,062	\$238,733
Old World Wisconsin	\$2,375,328	\$2,292,723	\$2,066,066	\$2,214,383
Pendarvis & First Capitol	\$298,337	\$295,868	\$246,028	\$308,329
Reed School	\$40,018	\$36,628	\$38,877	\$35,265
Stonefield	\$246,190	\$257,658	\$247,614	\$284,978
Villa Louis	\$344,754	\$345,821	\$368,124	\$422,955
Wade House	\$947,327	\$973,361	\$851,310	\$936,497
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$1,664,778	\$1,610,353	\$1,360,295	\$1,338,141

The Office of Programs and 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 <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS14818>

Mission: The office tries to enhance the understanding of history through reading, listening, and learning.

At the start of the biennium, the agency reorganized its most visible, public-facing activities into a new Office of Programs and Outreach. The Office is comprised of education staff, the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, and local history staff. Its principle operational initiative is to align agency programming to create maximum benefit for citizens and taxpayers, especially those who cannot visit the Society’s library,

archives, and museums in person and those who have traditionally been under-served. Nationwide recruitment for the director of the Office of Programs and Outreach was completed in January 2016 with the appointment of Michael Edmonds, formerly deputy director of the Society's Library-Archives-Collections Division, to head the office.

Education Program

The education staff consists of specialists in primary, secondary, and adult education who bring history into communities around the state. Highlights of their work during this biennium include:

- Launched "Hands-On History" in the fall of 2016. This program brings museum objects into primary school classrooms and challenges children to interrogate them critically. More than 1,400 students participated, mostly in high-needs schools in urban areas.
- Introduced critical thinking to 20,000 secondary school students through the National History Day (NHD) program. NHD's local, regional, and state contests resemble science fairs, with the best projects at each level advancing up to the next. More than 5,000 students participated in regional contests around the state, with 1,300 competing in Madison and more than 100 advancing to nationals in Washington, D.C.
- Shared three traveling exhibits in 114 venues around the state, with a combined attendance of 218,333 visitors. The exhibits were about John Muir, 1960s civil rights struggles in Milwaukee, and the importance of water in Wisconsin history. They were hosted in schools, public libraries, local historical societies, and other civic organizations.

Wisconsin Historical Society Press

The Press publishes trade books, educational materials, and a quarterly magazine (paid for by membership dues) in order to bring the best of Wisconsin history and culture to the widest possible audience. Highlights during this biennium include:

- Published 35 new books for general and young readers, 42 e-books, and two audiobooks on a broad range of topics including Wisconsin agriculture, archaeology, waterways, sports, memoir, Native peoples, and culture and music.
- Streamlined costs to produce a 17% reduction in printing costs for trade titles.
- Held 557 book events (book launches, readings, signings, and other presentations) in 109 cities across the state.
- Won 34 national and regional awards, including the Gourmand National Award for *Good Seeds* by Thomas Weso and two "USA Best Book" awards for

Milwaukee Mayhem by Matthew Prigge, and *Studying Wisconsin* by Paul Hayes and Martha Bergland.

- Published a second edition of the 4th grade Wisconsin history textbook, *Wisconsin: Our State, Our Story*. This updated and revised edition is available in English and Spanish, in both print and digital editions. The complete package includes the student textbook, teacher's edition, and student activity guide. The new edition features improved reading level, revised activities, and new curriculum materials.

Local History Program

- Answered more than 1,000 inquiries from local historians all around the state, ranging from how to care for historical artifacts to how to establish non-profit status.
- Organized two annual conferences for local historians and historic preservation professionals where more than 800 participants attended dozens of training sessions and workshops.
- Collaborated with affiliates in 64 of Wisconsin's 72 counties to improve services to local residents.

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 management 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 Policy, 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 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.

2015-2017 Budget

	2015-2016	2016-2017
State Tax Monies		
Staff and Support	\$ 10,641,500	\$10,643,300
Wisconsin Black Historical Society	\$ 84,500	\$ 84,500
Utilities and Fuel	\$ 976,300	\$ 999,000
Debt Service	\$ 3,255,800	\$ 3,623,300
Subtotal	\$ 14,958,100	\$15,350,100
Other Funding Sources		
Earned Revenue	\$ 3,146,900	\$ 3,146,900
Federal Revenue	\$ 1,313,000	\$ 1,313,200
Gifts and Grants	\$ 561,400	\$ 561,400
Endowments	\$ 589,200	\$ 589,200
Transfer Revenue	\$ 2,303,800	\$ 2,305,200
Other Revenue	\$ 52,400	\$ 52,400
Subtotal	\$ 7,966,700	\$ 7,968,300
Total	\$ 22,924,800	\$ 23,318,400

2017-2019 Programs, Goals, Objectives and Activities

FY 2016, 2017 and 2018 Goals and Performance Measures

FY 2016 Goals and Actuals

Performance Measure	Goal 2016	Actual 2016
Percentage of archival and library collections prepared for transfer to SAPF	93%	93%
Number of researchers served		
On-site visitation	300,000	359,705
Web views of collections	900,000	961,345
Total historic sites attendance	178,000	195,363
Total museum attendance	75,500	72,937
Number of historical books sold or distributed	45,000	47,957
Total distribution of <i>Wisconsin Magazine of History</i>	49,500	45,077
Number of buildings receiving tax credits	260	352
Number of unique visits to the Society's website locations	2,300,000	2,112,375
Attendance of school-age children at the museum		
Education units	56,000	56,500
School-age children	29,000	29,500
Student participation in National History Day	11,000	10,000
Number of student titles sold or distributed	13,000	11,210

Please note that the Society changed its performance measures for FY 2017 to reflect changes made in its strategic plan.

FY 2017 Goals and Actuals as well as FY 2018 Goals

Performance Measure	Goal 2017	Actual 2017	Goal 2018
Number of buildings rehabilitated using the rehabilitation tax credit programs	369	355	350
Rehabilitation tax credit value	\$ 74 million	\$107.8 million	\$100 million
Number of WHSP books sold or distributed	46,000	57,483	50,000
Number of WHSP textbooks sold and distributed	10,500	5,593	7,500
Number of participants in National History Day program	10,000	10,000	10,750
Number of local history affiliate consultations	510	780	700
Percentage of archival and collections prepared for transfer to SAPF	98%	89%	100%
Percentage of all artifact collections transferred to SAPF	N/A	94%	100%
Number of library/archives patrons served	190,000	197,747	190,000
Number of agencies provided with e-records assistance	26	54	50
Attendance at museums and historic sites	270,000	252,822	276,000
K-12 student attendance at museums and historic sites	47,000	78,788	75,000