

Columns

THE NEWSLETTER *of the* WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



MAY - AUGUST 2021

LETTER *from the* DIRECTOR

Springtime in Wisconsin is always something to look forward to. The days of shoveling snow blanketed driveways are behind us, and bright, warm summer days lie ahead. This spring also marks the beginning of a return to some version of normal life as more and more people receive vaccinations for protection against the COVID-19 virus. This is a time that feels optimistic and hopeful, and it is the perfect opportunity to reflect on all there is to be grateful for. Across the Society, we are especially thankful for the support of our members who have continued to engage with us throughout the challenges of the pandemic. Thank you for supporting our mission to collect, preserve, and share history today and for future generations to experience. In the last issue of *Columns*, I appealed to members to participate in the upcoming vote to approve changes to the Society's Constitution. I am pleased that the revised Constitution was approved with an overwhelming majority of members voting in favor of the changes. The updated Constitution and Bylaws now more accurately reflect the organization we are today and position the Society for success as we write our next chapter. See the back cover of this issue for more information about voting results. With warmer days on the horizon, we are preparing to once again open our doors to visitors at Black Point Estate & Gardens, Circus World, Madeline Island Museum, Old World Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin

Historical Museum. While our other sites will be paused for public programming this year, rest assured that the Society will continue to invest in their regular maintenance and upkeep. Many of the staff from our paused sites have been temporarily reassigned to other state agencies at the forefront of Wisconsin's pandemic response, and we are proud of how they have contributed their knowledge and skills to fighting against the virus which you can read more about on pages 6-7 in this issue.

Lastly, the Society is excited to share stories about two major donors who have helped us reach an important milestone in our campaign to build a new history museum. Recent gifts from renowned philanthropist W. Jerome Frautschi (see page 3) and the late Ruth DeYoung Kohler II (see pages 10-11) helped catapult funds raised for the museum over the \$30 million threshold required to unlock \$70 million in state funding. These gifts—and support from countless others across the state—mean we are closer than ever to breaking ground on a new and relevant history museum where people will explore and discover themselves, their families, and their communities reflected in the stories of Wisconsin and our nation's history. Thank you for sticking with us as we journey towards exciting days ahead.

Christian Overland

Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO

Columns

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Correction: The January 2021 issue of Columns misidentified Ada Deer in the photo on page 5. She is the rightmost individual standing behind Roger Morton.



on the FRONT COVER

Plan your visit to a Wisconsin Historical Society site or museum this season. Visit wisconsinhistory.org/sites for the most up-to-date information.

photo by Bill Johnsen

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CAMPAIGN *for a* NEW WISCONSIN HISTORY MUSEUM

W. Jerome Frautschi Gives \$10 Million Donation

The campaign for a new historical museum recently received a major boost from philanthropist W. Jerome Frautschi, who donated \$10 million to the project. This generous gift is in addition to \$3.5 million previously donated by Mr. Frautschi, a well-known benefactor of numerous Madison projects.

"It has always been important to me for downtown Madison to have the cultural vitality that reflects the values of the city's residents. It has been a pleasure to support projects such as Overture Center, and now the new Wisconsin history museum," said Frautschi. The Society has been working towards building a new state history museum for more than 20 years. The new 100,000-square-foot museum will more than double exhibition space and include modern technology while providing greater access to the Society's world-renowned collection. With Mr. Frautschi's support, the campaign has surpassed \$30 million in private donations required to match \$70 million in state funding.

It will reach and connect people across all 72 Wisconsin counties through distance learning technology and exciting modern exhibitions. It is expected to attract about 150,000 visitors and double student visits to more than 50,000 annually. The new museum will replace the outdated and undersized current Wisconsin Historical Museum, located since 1984 in a converted hardware store at the top of State Street on the Capitol Square. The project has received financial support from donors in all regions of the state.

The campaign is co-chaired by two former Wisconsin governors, Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson and Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle. The Wisconsin Historical Foundation, the Society's non-profit fundraising arm, will continue to raise endowment and operating funds as the project moves forward.



to learn more visit
wisconsinhistory.org/NewMuseum

MARIA LUISA MORALES
DEBRA AMESQUA
LAVINIA K
M

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NEW BREWING EXPERIENCE TAKING SHAPE *at* OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

Since its doors first opened in 1976, Old World Wisconsin has brought history to life for visitors from far and wide. Plans to open a new experience on the site centered around Wisconsin's rich brewing history have been years in the making, made possible by private donations, funding from the state, and with the generous support of the Society's members.

Construction is underway to complete a new building to house the brewing experience as well as a beer garden outlined in Phase 1 of a multi-year master plan. This year, the project will reach a key milestone when a historic tavern is transported to its new home on the Old World Wisconsin property. Wittnebel's Tavern originates from Old Ashippun, near Oconomowoc, where it was founded in 1906 and was operated by two generations of the Wittnebel family until 1987.

This long-envisioned "grain to glass" experience will build on what has become one of Old World Wisconsin's most popular features: its historic brewing program created in partnership with the Museum of Beer and Brewing.

"This is a very critical project for Old World Wisconsin, one that positions us well for our future," said Dan Freas, Old World Wisconsin site director. "This Brewing Experience, and the larger plan to reimagine our entire entry area, will transform how we're able to serve guests for decades to come. We're excited to see this dream become a reality, and grateful to all who donate to make it happen."

Phase 2 of the project will include restoration of the tavern to its post-Prohibition appearance and construction of the outdoor beer garden. Work on additional phases from the master plan will follow as funds are secured. Those plans include a new Guest Entry Complex, construction of additional structures, and the renovation or restoration of existing buildings. Guests who visit Old World Wisconsin this season are likely to catch a glimpse of the work-in-progress as the project moves into the next phase.



for updates visit
wihist.org/OWWNewArrivals



photos (L-R) Early construction photo shows location of the new building near Clausing Barn; a progress photo taken in March, 2021 shows walls of the building taking shape; the interior of Wittnebel's Tavern will be restored to look as it would have more than a century ago.

MAY *is* MEMBER MONTH

and we're celebrating with
special offers and extra
benefits just for you!

While the pandemic and resulting budget lapse have challenged us in new ways, our members have stepped up to support the Society's mission to connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Now more than ever, we rely on support from our members to keep us moving forward. Thank you for your unwavering support and for your patience as we navigate this challenging moment in history.



Thank you,
MEMBERS!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE MEMBER PERKS THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF MAY:

- ✓ **40% off** gift memberships
- ✓ **20% discount** on select items from our online shop
- ✓ **Fun activities** like quizzes, word searches, and coloring pages
- ✓ **Special drawings** to win exciting prizes



to learn more visit
wisconsinhistory.org/MemberMonth





PIVOTING *during a* PANDEMIC



More than a year after the pandemic first began upending life across the globe, it is daunting to consider just how much things have changed in the lives of Wisconsinites. The small joys of simpler times—grabbing a bite to eat with old friends, seeing a new band play downtown, friendly conversation with colleagues over coffee—can no longer be taken for granted. Life on the heels of a pandemic means coping with losses great and small no matter who you are.

While we can never go back to the way things were before, life-saving vaccines offer hope for a return to some semblance of normalcy. The light at the end of the tunnel grows brighter with every vaccine administered.

The Society has been challenged in new ways because of the pandemic, but we have never lost sight of our values as we have adjusted to a new reality. In addition to collecting, preserving, and sharing stories of the pandemic, we added an agency-wide goal to support two state agencies in need of assistance to sustain quality of life in Wisconsin and save lives: the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Department of Health Services (DHS). A number of our staff engaged their expertise and embraced a spirit of service by temporarily transitioning into roles at these agencies.

These reassignments, funded by the CARES Act, were an important part of stabilizing the state's

budget and allowed DWD and DHS to scale their workforces to cope with unprecedented demand for the essential services they provide.

Fifty-three staff members pressed pause on their work at the Society to help our communities cope with health and economic crises felt in every corner of the state. Their contributions include establishing new testing centers, developing a system for contact-tracing, managing vaccine distributions and much more. This work challenged staff to apply their skills in new ways and work in concert with others to solve incredibly complex problems.

Many of the reassigned staff also had a unique advantage given their knowledge of pandemics occurring at earlier points in history. This context allowed them to better understand their own experiences and cope with the hurdles they encountered.

Every individual who stepped away from their role at the Society to lend their expertise to DWD and DHS made a sacrifice to support not only their own neighbors and loved ones, but also to serve individuals unknown to them who happen to call Wisconsin home. Their stories show us that pivoting in a pandemic is not only possible, but is also an opportunity to learn, grow, and build stronger communities to the benefit of us all.

by KENDALL POLTZER



ROSE HAVERI

Tourist Information Assistant

"I was reassigned to DWD to assist in the unemployment office verifying claimants' employment histories. My job was to gather information to determine if an individual was eligible to receive benefits. It was a much different experience than any other job I have done before. At times it was challenging just thinking about the sheer number of people waiting for assistance and the work that needed to be done to serve them, but when I was able to collect information that helped someone get their deserved benefits, it felt wonderful! Some of the people I spoke with, whether it was a waitress making \$2.33 an hour, or a doctor making many times that, mentioned they were on the brink of losing their home because of employment that fell through due to the pandemic. When we were successful in getting them benefits, it was a feeling of relief."

Assigned to: DWD WHS employee since: 1998



EILEEN SNYDER

Wisconsin State Government Librarian

"I became a librarian because it's a job that allows me to explore many interests, and I love that I am constantly researching new subjects. I was able to apply my research and analysis skills in my new role supporting DWD. I had to learn a whole new job quickly but it felt good to know I was capable of doing so. Working my reassignment allowed me to feel like I was contributing to the pandemic response in Wisconsin. The mentors who trained me were so patient and helpful, and I was impressed by the professionalism I witnessed at DWD across the whole agency. Although it was stressful at times, working for DWD helped me understand my community in a whole new way. Overall, I was really impressed with how my colleagues who participated in reassignments were willing to step up and support Wisconsin when help was needed most."

Assigned to: DWD WHS employee since: 2014



SCOT MCCOLLOUGH

Finance and Data Analyst

"Many of my skills used at WHS were directly applicable to the work I was reassigned to do at DHS. I was brought on to do data analysis and tracking and I was also involved in maintaining and expanding statewide testing. DHS is a much larger agency than WHS and it was challenging to learn new workflows and unfamiliar software and systems at first. Once I acclimated, it felt rewarding to help people who needed tests get them and to solve problems with a real sense of urgency. My reassignment also gave me an opportunity to get to know some of my colleagues better. The pandemic has made life challenging and has exposed many of the underlying weaknesses in our society, but having historical context allows people to better understand and deal with what is happening."

Assigned to: DHS WHS employee since: 2017



JOE KAPLER

Lead Curator & Curator of Cultural History

"My reassignment was with DHS where I served on the COVID response team (CRT). It challenged me to use a lot of the same organization and data collection skills I use at WHS, but also required me to learn a lot about public health in a short period of time. It was a huge responsibility to be involved in the pandemic response and to stay on the pulse of new data and information that is constantly evolving. I'm glad I had the opportunity to support DHS staff who are under tremendous pressure and scrutiny. DHS staff are putting in a lot of hours and pouring themselves into the work with the understanding of how high the stakes are. At the end of the day, I feel good that I have been able to help create trust in public health and help the CRT team feel confident about dealing with whatever comes next."

Assigned to: DHS WHS employee since: 2001



LEAH PENZKOVER

Architecture and History Inventory Coordinator

"I was reassigned from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to the Customer Outreach Team at DHS. It was a fast-paced transition to learn a whole new job and it's one that is constantly changing to best meet the needs of Wisconsinites. Many of the skills I've honed in my role at SHPO prepared me for my duties at DHS. While I was challenged in new ways and had to learn all sorts of new processes, it was rewarding to be involved in the pandemic response. My role involved helping the people of Wisconsin get critical supplies for testing, which is instrumental in slowing the spread of the virus and ultimately helping to keep people safe. My team at the Society has been so supportive. I am looking forward to the day when it is safe to get out and fully experience Madison's vibrant culture and restaurant scene again."

Assigned to: DHS WHS employee since: 2018



EMIL HOELTER

Manuscript Processing Archivist

"My job at WHS involves processing new manuscript collections, and I got into my field because I have always been interested in building logical systems of organization. My first reassignment was with DWD where my role involved processing forms, doing data entry, and verifying information for unemployment insurance claims. Later I was reassigned to the COVID response team at DHS. It involved doing research and analysis to make sure important information was on our radar. Both reassignments helped me gain a better understanding of how other state agencies operate and allowed me to apply my skills in new ways. In the future, I hope I'll look back on this time and be able to appreciate the positive aspects like not having to commute daily and being able to spend more time with my family."

Assigned to: DWD WHS employee since: 2008

STATE REGISTER *of* HISTORIC PLACES IN WISCONSIN



OAK HILL CEMETERY

Lake Geneva, Walworth County
Date of Construction: 1880

The picturesque Oak Hill Cemetery, established in 1880 on 40 rolling acres in Lake Geneva, embodies the Rural Cemetery Movement, fashionable in the United States between the early 1830s and about 1900. In contrast to earlier urban churchyards, these cemeteries were situated on the outskirts of town and emphasized naturalistic landscaping and a park-like setting. Located at the highest point in the city, this cemetery's meandering drives and walkways, mature trees and plantings, and impressive mausoleums provide a backdrop to the scenic vista of Lake Geneva. Oak Hill Cemetery is also notable as the burial place of many prominent Chicagoans who built vast summer estates around Lake Geneva during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, contributing to the city's cultural heritage.

POTAWATOMI STATE PARK OBSERVATION TOWER

Town of Nasewaupsee, Door County
Date of Construction: 1931

The Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower was built in 1931 to draw visitors to the park, a clever tactic by local boosters to support Door County's tourism industry. The tower was built by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission with funds from Sawyer Commercial Club of Sturgeon Bay, and the architect was William F. Stevens. The wood structure, which stands 75 feet tall, has wide viewing platforms and a switchback staircase making it comfortable for visitors to climb. As the first purpose-built recreational observation tower in a Wisconsin State Park, its design set a standard that later recreational observation towers throughout Wisconsin have followed.



EAST ARCADIA ROLLER MILL

Arcadia, Trempealeau County
Date of Construction: 1900

Water-powered flour and feed mills played a vital role in the lives of Wisconsin's early settlers, and they remained important sites to rural farmers who relied on the mills for their flour and livestock feed in later years. The East Arcadia Roller Mill, built in 1900, operated continuously into the late 1970s, demonstrating the importance of these mills in rural, agricultural areas. Composed of the mill, shed, office, and dam, the East Arcadia Mill is a very good example of a turn-of-the-century, water-powered gristmill, a type of industrial building that is fading from the Wisconsin landscape.

PHILIP AND MARY GRAY HOUSE

Madison, Dane County
Date of Construction: 1940

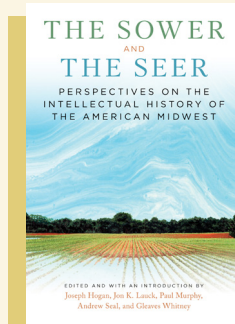
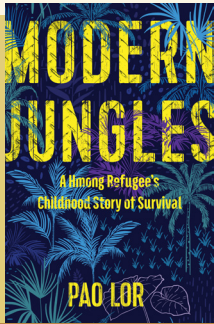
The Gray House was among the largest Modern Movement style houses built on the west side of Madison when it was constructed in 1940. Located in the Highlands neighborhood, it was built for Margaret and Philip H. Gray, Jr. who was a professor at the University of Wisconsin. Designed by architect William V. Kaeser, today considered to be one of the best of Madison's mid-century architects, the house has panoramic views in three directions from its expansive windows. It is constructed of brick and features sweeping staircases, one on the exterior and another on the interior, with well-appointed rooms for a family including a large playroom for children. The house is one of Kaeser's early works and is also considered to be one of his finest.



OTHER LISTINGS INCLUDE: Holy Trinity School, La Cross, La Crosse County; 1st and 2nd Streets Historic District, New Glarus, Green County; 2nd Street Commercial Historic District, New Glarus, Green County; Milwaukee Journal Complex, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County; and West Hill Residential Historic District, Chippewa Falls, Chippewa County.

what's on OUR BOOKSHELF

NEW
AUDIOBOOKS
RELEASED



HMONG REFUGEE SHARES CHILDHOOD STORY OF SURVIVAL

An orphaned Hmong refugee shares his harrowing and inspiring story of escape, survival, and settlement in Wisconsin in the new memoir ***Modern Jungles*** by Dr. Pao Lor. As a child, Lor was among thousands of Hmong who fled for their lives through the jungles of Laos in the aftermath of the Secret War, a Vietnam War-era conflict in the 1970s. In his memoir, Lor tells the Hmong diaspora story through his own eyes, detailing his journey to America and eventually Wisconsin, where he learned to navigate an unfamiliar culture. Readers can dive deeper into the material using the included thought-provoking discussion questions. Dr. Lor launched his memoir with a special virtual book talk at UW-Green Bay, where he holds the Patricia Wood Baer Professorship and chairs the Professional Program in Education. The author also participated in a panel discussion on Hmong history hosted by the Society that readers can access online.

BIOGRAPHY EXAMINES UNSUNG WORK OF 'THE BIRDMAN OF KOSHKONONG'

The stories of John Muir, Increase Lapham, and Aldo Leopold have long been shared among those interested in natural history. In her new biography, Martha Bergland tells the story of a lesser-known but deeply influential Wisconsin naturalist, Thure Kumlien. ***The Birdman of Koshkonong*** details Kumlien's observations of wildlife from his Lake Koshkonong area homestead and his studies on the impact of early agriculture on the environment. His early, keen study of the nature around him, behind-the-scenes work in specimen collection and exhibits, and detailed drawings and journals are influential in museum collections in the U.S. and Europe.

ESSAY COLLECTION SPOTLIGHTS MIDWESTERN THINKERS

A new collection of essays on Midwestern thought, ***The Sower and the Seer: Perspectives on the Intellectual History of the American Midwest***, examines 22 individuals whose stories help establish the region's intellectual history. These essays, selected by the book's editors from papers presented at the Midwestern History Conference, reveal that the Midwest has long been a fertile seedbed for the germination of innovative minds. The volume examines thinkers, writers, leaders, and the movements and ideas that shaped the Midwest including rural school consolidation, women's literary societies, Progressive-era urban planning, Midwestern Evangelical thought, Midwestern radical liberalism, and more. While the essays are varied in subject and style, together they establish the irrefutable significance of the intellectual history of the American Midwest. The launch of the book will be celebrated at the Midwest History Conference in late May.

Some Society Press books are available as audiobooks on CD and as a digital download from popular audiobook retailers and libraries. This includes our newest audiobooks, *Coming Out, Moving Forward: Wisconsin's Recent Gay History* and *We've Been Here All Along: Wisconsin's Early Gay History*. This award-winning, two-volume series by R. Richard Wagner is narrated by Vance Bastian. Other titles available in audiobook format include:

- ***Return to Wake Robin: One Cabin in the Heyday of Northwoods Resorts*** by Marnie O. Mamminga, narrated by Susan Sweeney
- ***Thousand-Miler: Adventures Hiking the Ice Age Trail*** by Melanie Radzicki McManus, narrated by Sarah Zimmerman
- ***People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair with an Ancient Fish*** by Kathleen Schmitt Kline, Ronald M. Bruch, and Frederick P. Binkowski, narrated by Kathleen Schmitt Kline
- ***Creating Dairyland: How Caring for Cows Saved our Soil, Created Our Landscape, and Still Shapes Our Way of Life in Wisconsin*** by Edward Janus, narrated by Kathleen Kline



for more information
wisconsinhistory.org/whspress



LEGACY *of a* WISCONSIN VISIONARY

Ruth DeYoung Kohler II (1941-2020)

Throughout her life, Ruth DeYoung Kohler II stood by the motto, “All the arts for all the people.” She dedicated herself to making art more accessible and understood its power as a driver of positive social change.

“We grew to be really close over the years,” said Terri Yoho, who worked alongside Ruth at the Kohler Foundation and became a close friend. “I got to spend a lot of time with her. She was never self-important or put herself above anyone else—she just wanted to be one of the girls.”

Having Kohler for a last name carries the risk of legacy overshadowing the individual, but Ruth proved herself a visionary in her own right many times over in her lifetime. A graduate of Smith College, she went on to study at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Hamburg before teaching art in Beloit public schools and then founding the printmaking program at the University of Alberta-Calgary in Canada.

Ruth’s passion for the arts led her to serve as Director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center from 1972 to 2016 and to make numerous other contributions to the field. While the arts were Ruth’s chief passion, she made time to support the community in other ways. She was a generous benefactor for the preservation of local history in her home state of Wisconsin and supported the Society from an early age.

“Ruth’s connection to the Society is a legacy that was passed down from her mother. She would often talk about the days when they would travel around the countryside on the hunt for artifacts for Wade House,” said Yoho. “Those memories connected her to Wade House. It was Ruth who stood in for her mother at the dedication ceremony. That married her to the site from that point forward.”

Even when other commitments dominated her time, Ruth made a point of staying on top of what was going on in the organization and maintained a close personal friendship with Ellsworth Brown who was Director of the Society for more than 13 years, preceding current director Christian Øverland.

Ruth’s stewardship of Wade House offered a means of honoring her mother and namesake, but it was not the only way she supported the Society in its mission to connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. She served on the Board of Curators for a decade, from 1990 to 2000, and was recognized as a Lifetime Impact Donor in 2015. This distinction is reserved for those who have contributed gifts meeting or exceeding the \$100,000 threshold in their lifetime.

Ruth DeYoung Kohler II died on November 14, 2020 at her home in Kohler, Wisconsin. Cementing her lifetime of support for the preservation of history, her final gifts to the Society included \$1 million for the Wade House Endowment which will be instrumental in the continued preservation of the property and \$1 million for the campaign for a new Wisconsin History Museum. Ruth’s contribution to the new museum, along with other recent gifts, helped propel the project into its second phase and brings Wisconsinites one step closer to a state-of-the-art history museum that is sure to spark an appreciation for history in all who walk through its doors. A theatre planned for the new museum will bear Ruth’s name to serve as a reminder of her role in writing the next chapter of our state’s history.

by **KENDALL POLTZER**



PRESENTING THE KEY TO WADE HOUSE Ruth DeYoung Kohler II presents the key to Wade House to Dr. William McKern of the Wisconsin State Historical Society. The century-old stagecoach inn and adjoining buildings were restored under the direction of her mother who died just months before the site opened to the public.



RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY Ruth cuts the ribbon at a 2013 ceremony celebrating the completion of the new Wade House Visitor Center and the Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum.

A KOHLER LEGACY



Following the deaths of Sylvanus and Betsey Wade in the 1870s, the stagecoach hotel remained in the Wade family until 1941. For nine years Wade House was owned by a family from Illinois. In 1950 it was sold to the Kohler Foundation. For the next 70 years, Ruth DeYoung Kohler enjoyed overseeing a thorough and painstaking restoration of the century-old hotel, together with the 1855 home of Charles and Julia Robinson, located just west of Wade House. Ruth DeYoung Kohler was married to Herbert V. Kohler, Sr. and was mother of Herbert V. Kohler, Jr., Ruth DeYoung Kohler, and Frederic C. Kohler. Mrs. Kohler passed away in 2020, just months before Wade House historic site was dedicated and named in her honor. A Vice President and member of the Board of Curators of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and a keen student of social history, Mrs. Kohler worked tirelessly to bring the project to completion, guided by her philosophy "that each of us is a trustee of the past, that we have the important task of living up to our inheritance and adding something to it."

The Wisconsin Historical Society is ever and immensely grateful for the ongoing support of and commitment to Wade House. The restoration was made possible by the Kohler family, the Kohler Foundation, and the Wisconsin Historical Society.



RUTH'S FINAL VISIT Ruth at her final visit to Wade House Historic Site in July 2020. She is seated near a portrait depicting her mother who directed the restoration of Wade House.

Explore HISTORY *in a* NEW WAY

An illustration featuring the word 'HISTORY' in large, white, outlined letters. A man in a white shirt, red tie, and yellow suspenders is peeking out from behind the letter 'O'. To the left of 'HISTORY' is a red barn with a grey roof. Below 'HISTORY' is a yellow jersey with 'Z-002000-S' written on it. To the right of 'HISTORY' is a small wooden lighthouse on a red base. The phrase 'in a NEW WAY' is written in a stylized font below 'HISTORY'.

Plan a trip to a Wisconsin Historical Society site or museum this summer! We are excited to welcome visitors to **Black Point Estate & Gardens, Circus World, Madeline Island Museum, Old World Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Historical Museum** for general admission and special experiences.

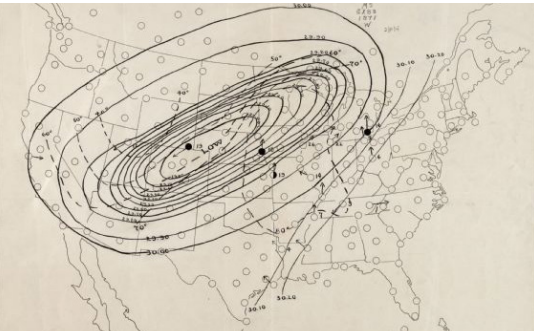
Don't forget—members get free general admission and a 10% discount on special experiences. Check your mailbox for a detailed schedule of our upcoming programs.

First Capitol, H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum, Pendarvis, Reed School, Stonefield, Villa Louis, and Wade House remain temporarily closed for public programming.



Visit wisconsinhistory.org/sites for the most up-to-date information.

REMEMBERING *the* PESHTIGO FIRE



by JANET SEYMOUR

October 8, 2021, will mark the 150th anniversary of the devastating Peshtigo Fire which burned more than 1.25 million acres, impacting the counties of Oconto, Marinette, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc, and Outagamie. It destroyed a swath of forest 10 miles wide and 40 miles long, killing more than 2,000 people. Local historical organizations will join the City of Peshtigo to commemorate the 1871 fire.

PESHTIGO FIRE MUSEUM

The Peshtigo Historical Society operates the Peshtigo Fire Museum and maintains the Peshtigo Fire Cemetery, the site of a mass grave for 350 individuals whose remains could not be identified after the fire. Wisconsin's first official historical marker, "Peshtigo Fire Cemetery," was erected by the citizens of Peshtigo at the site in 1951 to memorialize the victims.

The Peshtigo Historical Society will refurbish the marker in honor of the 150th anniversary of the fire.

Peshtigo Historical Days & Sesquicentennial Anniversary will be held September 24-26, featuring the community's traditional car show, craft fair, fireworks, and family activities. A fireman's breakfast will take place on Sunday, September 26, followed by tours of the museum and cemetery. Special commemorative coins and programs will be available. The Menominee Nation will also participate in the weekend's events. For more information, visit ci.peshtigo.wi.us.

FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN

The Forest History Association of Wisconsin, in partnership with the City of Peshtigo, will hold the organization's Forest History Conference on October 7-9, 2021,

on the 150th anniversary of the Peshtigo Fire.

Pre-conference activities will begin in September with a webinar series exploring the story of an 1871 meteorological event that impacted the Midwest, fire tornadoes that affected Peshtigo and Williamsonville, and the lasting impact on wildfire management practices.

Conference sessions will bring attention to local history, genealogy, and the role of the Menominee tribal community in assisting with fire response and recovery. The Forest History Association of Wisconsin will post conference and registration details on their website in June, 2021. The Peshtigo Historical Society and Forest History Association of Wisconsin are affiliates of the Wisconsin Historical Society. For conference details, visit: Foresthistoryassociationwi.com.

photos (L-R) Weather map depicting the great cyclonic storm that prevailed the day of the Peshtigo and Chicago fires. The ominous weather pattern was of concern to forecasters and residents in the days leading up to the "fire storm"; A depiction of the Peshtigo Fire shows animals fleeing and people trying to escape the flames by boat and on horseback; A group of survivors of the 1871 Peshtigo Fire gathered in front of the Peshtigo Fire historical marker. The marker dedication coincided with the 80th anniversary of the fire.



to more information
wisconsinhistory.org/LocalHistory



Like countless other Wisconsin natives, Susan Zaeske's first exposure to the Wisconsin Historical Society occurred during childhood. It was on a family trip to Wade House, the Society's historic site located just 20 miles west of Sheboygan, where she was born and raised.

"I loved going to Wade House because it brought the past alive for me," recalls Zaeske, who made repeat visits on school field trips. "Learning about the activities and experiences of the women who lived and worked there fascinated me. It sparked my interest in 19th century United States history, which is what I went on to study and publish books and articles about, and which became the foundation of my career."

Over the ensuing decades, the Society would become especially important to Zaeske, 54, who is Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities in the College of Letters & Science at UW-Madison. She has become a financial supporter and enthusiastic advocate who calls the Society a "premiere destination in the United States to conduct historical research."

"When I became a trained historian, I learned about the Society's vast collections and the stellar reputation it enjoys nationally," says Zaeske, who also serves as UW's Interim Director of the Division of the Arts. "I am tremendously proud of the Society for the strength of its collections, its archival and preservation facilities, and its incredible staff."

UW'S ZAESKE *has* LONGTIME LOVE *for* WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by DEAN WITTER

As a proud first-generation college student from what she describes as a working-class family, Zaeske is a Badger through and through. At UW-Madison, she earned bachelor's and master's degrees as well as a Ph.D., before beginning her career as a professor at the university.

Throughout her academic journey, during which she studied rhetoric, history, journalism, and women's studies, Zaeske regularly visited the library and archives inside the Society's Madison headquarters, located on the UW campus' Library Mall. To prepare for exams, "I spent hours every day for months sequestered in a carrel in the depths of the building," Zaeske recalls. "Research for my dissertation and my subsequent book relied heavily on the Society's extraordinary newspaper collection as well as its robust federal government document collections."

Zaeske credits the Society's collections and staff as "invaluable" resources in the acknowledgments for her award-winning 2003 book, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery and Women's Political Identity*, which focuses on U.S. women's efforts to end slavery by exercising the right of petition.

The importance and value of history was impressed upon Zaeske at an early age. She recalls family discussions about an ancestor who fought for the Union in the Civil War and another who was a decorated World War II fighter pilot. In addition to those memorable visits to Wade House, her family also traveled to other Society historic sites such as Old World Wisconsin and Pendarvis. Those experiences "gave me happy memories of family time together and stimulating educational experiences," Zaeske says.

Those moments, coupled with her academic research, convinced Zaeske to become a Society member more

than 20 years ago. She has become more involved in recent years, joining the Heritage Circle (donors who contribute at least \$1,200 annually) and the Murphy Legacy Circle (those who include the Society in their estate plans). Additionally, she supported the fundraising effort for the Society Press to publish Richard Wagner's two-volume book project on Wisconsin's gay and lesbian history, which Zaeske says "is important to me because it is history that has been hidden and needs to be told, and it is my history."

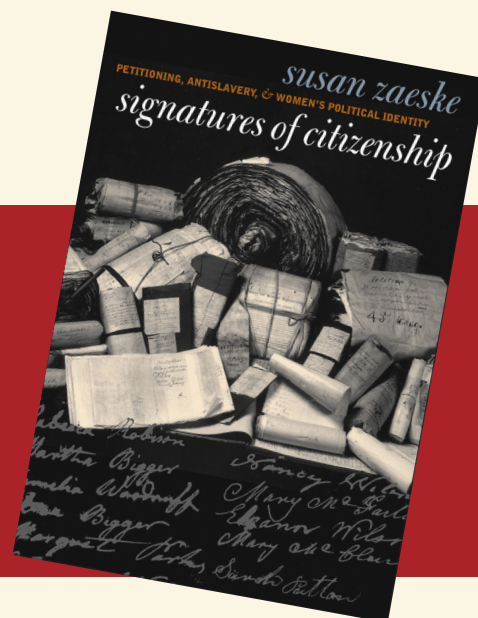
More recently, a tour of the State Archive Preservation Facility, where the Society's oldest and most delicate collections are stored, had a huge impact on her. "I was awed," she says. "When I was shown the expansive section of the building that holds the newspaper collection, I choked up with pride."

Touring the facility helped convince Zaeske to make a generous financial pledge in support of the Society's new state history museum campaign. "Wisconsin needs a place for the public to see the amazing collections and hear the stories behind them," she says. "Engaging the public in interpreting and understanding our shared history is more important now than ever. We need to understand how we got here in order to heal and figure out how to forge a better future."

Zaeske says she's impressed by the wide array of programs, services, and resources the Society provides and she's proud to advocate for it. "The Society does all of this in the service of understanding the past in order to empower people to create a better future for all," she says. "I want to be part of that important and great work."

◀ **Susan Zaeske, Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities at UW-Madison**, is an enthusiastic advocate and financial supporter of the Wisconsin Historical Society. "Engaging the public in interpreting and understanding our shared history is more important now than ever," she says. "We need to understand how we got here in order to heal and figure out how to forge a better future. I want to be part of that important and great work."

▶ **Signatures of Citizenship**: Zaeske credits the Society's collections and staff as "invaluable" resources in the acknowledgments for her award-winning 2003 book, which focuses on women's efforts to end slavery by exercising the right of petition. The Society is "a premiere destination in the United States to conduct historical research," she says.





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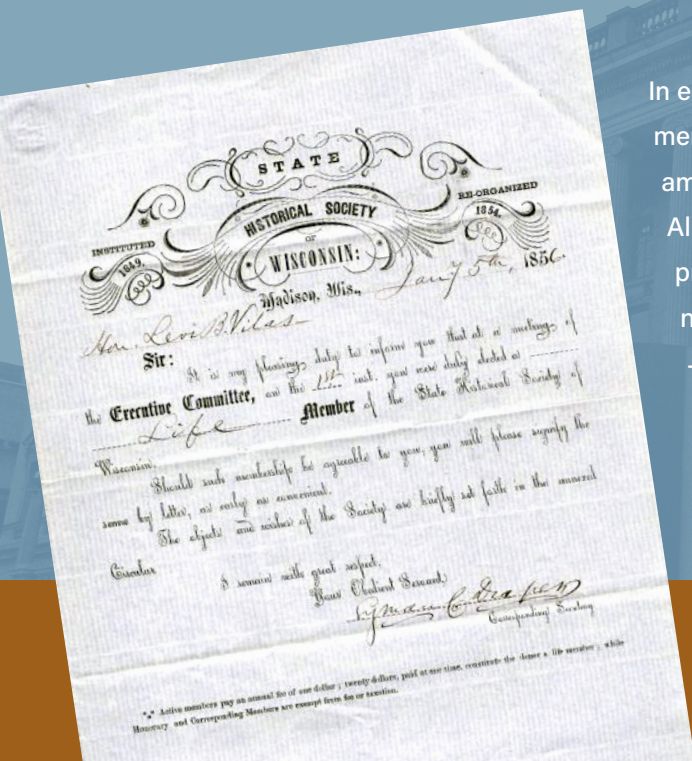
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REVISED CONSTITUTION APPROVED

In early February 2021, a special mailing was sent to the Society's membership asking for your vote on a revised Constitution. The amendment passed with 3,458 members in favor and 75 against. Almost one-third of our membership participated in the voting process and we had 97.9% approval of the voting members. The new Constitution and Bylaws went into effect on March 17, 2021. Thank you to all who voted. We are grateful for your support as we move our mission forward!



WHI IMAGE ID 38623 The Society has experienced many changes since our founding in 1846. This image shows a membership certificate issued to Levi B. Vilas in 1856. It is signed by Lyman C. Draper, then the secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. A note at the bottom indicates a one-time payment of twenty dollars is the cost for a lifetime membership!