



LOCAL HISTORY 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.

How long has the WHS affiliation program existed?

The affiliation program of the Wisconsin Historical Society dates back to 1898. Society director, Reuben Gold Thwaites proposed several initiatives to celebrate the 50th 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+ 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 390+ affiliates.

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

Each affiliated organization must comply with several specific provisions of the policies relating to affiliation established by the Board of Curators of the Wisconsin Historical Society. The main provisions are:

- An affiliated society must be incorporated as a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation.
- An affiliated society must be a membership organization that anyone interested in the purposes of the society may join for the payment of reasonable dues.
- An affiliated society must file an annual report with the Wisconsin Historical Society.
- An affiliated society must hold an annual meeting and conduct an election to select the members of its board of directors.
- An affiliated society must maintain minutes of its meetings.
- An affiliated society must maintain financial records.
- An affiliated society must maintain records of collections it acquires.
- An affiliated society must make provision in its bylaws and articles of incorporation for orderly disposition of its assets should the affiliate dissolve as a corporation.

What are the benefits of being an affiliate?

- Each member of the board of directors of an affiliated society receives *Columns*, the newsletter for Society members.
- Each member of the board of directors of an affiliated society receives announcements of meetings and activities such as workshops, regional meetings, and the annual Local History/Historic Preservation Conference.
- To the degree that staff time and funds permit, the Wisconsin Historical Society agrees to extend its professional and technical services to affiliates.
- Each member of an affiliated historical society becomes an individual, affiliate member of the Wisconsin Historical Society.
- An individual, affiliated member of the Wisconsin Historical Society receives a twenty percent discount on admission in the month of June to the Wisconsin Historical Society's historic sites.
- Eligibility to apply for a mini-grant of up to \$700 from a fund jointly administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Wisconsin Council for Local History.
- Affiliates avoid filing an annual report with the Department of Financial Institutions and avoid the annual filing fee.

Does an affiliate pay dues to be an affiliate to the WHS?

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

Does the WHS have any authority over disputes in our society? Can the WHS 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?

To be an affiliate the organization must include articles on dissolution in its bylaws as written in the WHS's sample 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 WHS will provide guidance if requested. If an affiliated organization dissolves, it is most likely that similar nearby organizations 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.

What does it cost to get services from the Wisconsin Historical Society's Field Services representatives?

There is no cost to get services from a Field Services Representative.

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. The council consists of all historical organizations affiliated with the WHS. Any local history group can become a member of the council by becoming an affiliate of the WHS. 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 Administrative Committee, the council also advises the state Society on its local history programming and serves as a voice of local historians.

The local historical societies that currently comprise the Wisconsin Council for Local History represent a variety of geographic locales, such as counties, cities, villages, and townships. 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 over 390+ 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

How does one become a member of the WCLH?

Membership in the Council is automatic, once you've been accepted as an affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Who sends me mailings regarding annual donations to the WCLH?

The Council distributes 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.