

# FOCUS ON LOCAL HISTORY

## Strong collaboration with network of 400 partners will transform the reach of local stories

Wisconsin was the first state in the country to emphasize the power of local history. Since 1898, because of dedicated community leaders across the state, the Wisconsin Historical Society's network of local history partners has grown to over 400 organizations and nearly 60,000 members, and is written into the state's statutes as a vital responsibility of the Society.

In addition to organizing one of the nation's largest local history conferences — with record attendance in recent years — the Society dedicates three full-time staff members to assist local partners, providing hundreds of consultations each year.

This essential network is a shining example of how Wisconsin has led the nation in the preservation and support for history — and the future is even brighter.

With a new Wisconsin history center, local partners will have an opportunity to transform the impact and value of local history in the state. A greatly expanded outreach and education program will allow partners to help traveling programs such as Hands-On History reach schools across the state. Inside the history center, they will play a critical role in developing temporary and core exhibits. With more than 200,000 annual visitors, the center will give local stories invaluable exposure on Wisconsin's Capitol Square.



With a new Wisconsin history center, local history organizations will be able to share their unique stories and artifacts with tens of thousands of visitors either through potential temporary exhibit space or by connecting to the history center in real time via exciting digital distance learning video technology.

## Stories of everyday citizens, every day

All history is local, and the Society will make sure that point is made loud and clear in the new history center. Core exhibits will occupy approximately 32,000 square feet, and visitors will experience Wisconsin's rich history through the stories of everyday citizens.

The collaboration with our partners will allow for stories and exhibits to be continually updated with relevant *local perspectives*, and the Society will look to these organizations to suggest new exhibit ideas with local artifacts that will enhance storytelling.

After a day in the new Wisconsin history center, visitors will see the people and places of our state through entirely new eyes.

**“The ability to tell our story on the big, central (Capitol Square) stage will give us invaluable exposure to Wisconsinites who too often mistake our town with that other one in Indiana.”**

**John Decker**, Evansville,  
Former President of the Wisconsin Council for Local History



## THE CAMPAIGN FOR A NEW WISCONSIN HISTORY CENTER

### Local partners essential to telling Wisconsin's story

The Society is excited to collaborate with its longtime friends at local history organizations in creating the new history center. This cherished relationship, built over a century of trust, will be essential in assuring that *local* voices and *local* history will shape the center's focus of telling stories that reveal "What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin."

By sharing their unique stories or artifacts, either through potential temporary exhibits or integration into core exhibits in a new history center on Wisconsin's Capitol Square, local history organizations will have exciting opportunities to reach thousands of people who may have never visited their area of the state or understand why it's essential to Wisconsin's story.

In addition, easier access to its world-renowned collections will allow the Society to share the state's historic artifacts for temporary display at local organizations' facilities, too.

### Distance learning connects history center to the state

While a visit to the center will be on a must-do list — approximately 30,000 students from schools in more than



200 cities across Wisconsin visited the current (now-closed) museum in recent years — exciting new digital distance learning technology will eliminate financial and geographic obstacles.

People of all ages unable to visit in person before will now be able to engage with the history center wherever they live. Children in internet-accessible classrooms will participate in live video streams of the center's programming and interact with peers from across the state. Likewise, people at societies, libraries and other statewide venues will be able to engage with programs at the center.

This exciting opportunity will expose our residents to new perspectives, bridge socioeconomic, racial and other divides, and encourage a better understanding of our connection to a shared heritage.



**"For my organization, it would be a great opportunity to share information and learn from each other."**

**Clayborn Benson**  
Founder & Director,  
Wisconsin Black  
Historical Society

To learn more about the new history center campaign or to join us, please contact us:

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