20TH ANNUAL

LOCAL HISTORY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

DOING HISTORY
Looking Forward from 250

Celebrating 20 Years of Conference Connections

HYATT REGENCY MILWAUKEE
OCTOBER 14–16, 2026

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

What to Expect

Welcome to the Wisconsin Historical Society's 20th annual Local History & Historic Preservation Conference! This year, we are excited to travel to Milwaukee for the first time in conference history for a program full of dynamic speakers, interactive workshops, engaging breakout sessions, and exciting excursion and networking opportunities.

Registration includes access to all conference sessions and half-day workshops, as well as networking opportunities. Registration also includes breakfast, snacks, and lunch provided at the conference center. Workshops with limited space require advanced registration. Additional fees and registration are required for off-site tour excursions and the full-day National Trust workshop.

Join colleagues from around the state and beyond as we exchange ideas and share our experiences with supporting local history and historic preservation efforts in Wisconsin, the Midwest, and the nation. Under the theme of "Doing History: Looking Forward from 250," we will explore how history practitioners can use the opportunities of the US 250th to find inspiration and practical tools for engaging communities, preserving diverse stories, strengthening civic connections, and shaping the future of local history and historic preservation.

Check our website at **wisconsinhistory.org/conference** for updates about local events and tours, announcements, and more!

Resource Center

Stop By a Booth

Visit tabletop exhibits and informational booths from historical and preservation groups and select service providers from around Wisconsin in this popular networking opportunity!

The Resource Center is open during registration and conference breaks. Gather for refreshments and networking discussions with representatives from a variety of organizations. To request a table, visit **wihist.org/LHHP20resource-center**.

The 2026 Local History & Historic Preservation Conference is presented in partnership with AIA Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions, the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board, and the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation.

AIA Approved Continuing Education

Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions

WISCONSIN TRUST for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

AIA Wisconsin is a Registered Provider for the AIA Continuing Education System (CES). AIA members will earn AIA/CES learning unit hours by participating in the designated sessions. Participants must attend the entire session to receive AIA/CES credit.

Emma Rudd

Executive Director
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

Emma Rudd is the Executive Director of Milwaukee Preservation Alliance. Rudd earned her bachelor's degree in history and business from University of St. Thomas, MN, and her Master of Architecture with certificate in Historic Preservation from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Over the years, she has worked for the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (now Rethos), Historic Ard Godfrey House, the City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Office, and various architectural firms throughout Milwaukee. Her passion for history and preservation advocacy stems from lifelong exposure to historic sites across the country, including her first tour of the Pabst Mansion at age 8.

Rudd will present Thursday's keynote, "What Makes an Advocate?" Explore the power of advocacy, from being a champion for historic places to rallying community support around a cause that matters. Through real-world examples and personal insights on projects such as the Milwaukee Soldiers Home, Central City Plaza, and Mitchell Park Domes, discover how grassroots preservation advocacy can spark ideas into action—and create lasting change in your community.

John Dichtl

President & CEO
American Association of State & Local History

John R. Dichtl is President & CEO of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), a national nonprofit membership association providing leadership and resources to help the history community thrive and make the past more meaningful for all people. Prior to joining AASLH in 2015, he was the executive director of the National Council on Public History for nine years and worked for the Organization of American Historians for 14 years as deputy director and in several other roles. Dichtl received his MA and PhD in early American history from Indiana University. He is the author of *Frontiers of Faith: Bringing Catholicism to the West in the Early Republic*.

Dichtl will present Friday's keynote, "A Semiquincentennial for What Purpose." National leaders and organizations, state commissions, local governments, and others spent years preparing for the nation's Semiquincentennial. In the end, was it a celebration, a commemoration, or a reckoning? Although federal support was sparse, national, state, and local organizations made this a powerful grassroots event. They provided programming that encouraged patriotism and pride in the story of American resilience, offered multiple perspectives on our shared history as a nation of diverse people, and fostered critical awareness of what it means to learn from our mistakes. Where do we take the commemoration from here?

Christian Øverland

The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO
Wisconsin Historical Society

Christian W. Øverland is the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Øverland spearheads the Society's mission to connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Under his leadership, the Society has energized public support for a world-class history center that is set to open in late 2027. Before joining the Wisconsin Historical Society in 2018, Øverland was the Executive Vice President and Chief Historian at The Henry Ford, an internationally recognized history destination in Dearborn, Michigan.

Øverland earned his undergraduate degree in American Studies and Art History at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis and his master's degree in American History and Museum Studies at the State University of New York College at Oneonta and New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, N.Y. He has received many awards for his work and contributions throughout his career, including a National Honor Award for a New Century of Service by the U.S. Forest Service, two Outstanding Achievement awards from the Themed Entertainment Association, as well as a Dibner Award for Excellence in Museum Exhibitions. Øverland is a member of the Governor's Council on Tourism in Wisconsin.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

5:00 - 6:00 P.M.	**SPECIAL EVENING EVENT: Welcome Social Hour at America's Black Holocaust Museum, 401 W. North Ave.**
4:00 - 6:00 P.M.	Conference Packet Pick-Up, Atrium

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.	Registration and Continental Breakfast, Atrium Resource Center Open, Regency Ballroom & Atrium							
8:00 - 9:00 A.M.	**OPENING PLENARY: Welcome & Wisconsin History Center Update from Christian Øverland, Wisconsin Historical Society, Regency Ballroom**							
	Workshop 1 **Executive CD**	**Session A** **Lakeshore A**	**Session B** **Lakeshore B**	**Session C** **Lakeshore C**	**Session D** **Executive AB**	**Session E** **Milwaukee A**	**Session F** **Milwaukee B**	**Workshop 2** **Crystal**
9:15 - 10:15 A.M.	Historic Real Estate Development in Practice	Garages, Hotels, and More Preservation Projects Shaping Monroe (AIA)	Burials in Your Backyard	The History of African Americans in Wisconsin	Building Inclusive Exhibits Through Oral Histories	Writing Local History for Young Readers	AV Doesn't Have to Be Scary!	Fundraising That Lasts: Five Essentials
10:15 - 10:45 A.M.		**BREAK: Resource Center Open, Snacks Served in Atrium**						
10:45 - 11:45 A.M.		Funding Restoration Projects Using State Historic Tax Credits (AIA)	Never Give Up: Preserving Historic Viroqua	Why Old Places Matter	Scrappy Exhibit Design to Bolster Your Museum	Dementia-Inclusive Programming at History Museums	Presenting the ABHM Griot Model: Improving Your Docent Program	
NOON - 1:00 P.M.	**LUNCH & KEYNOTE: "What Makes an Advocate?" with Emma Rudd, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance, Regency Ballroom**							
	Workshop 1 **Executive CD**	**Session A** **Lakeshore A**	**Session B** **Lakeshore B**	**Session C** **Lakeshore C**	**Session D** **Executive AB**	**Excursion 1**	**Excursion 2**	**Excursion 3**
1:30 - 2:30 P.M.	Historic Real Estate Development in Practice (cont.)	Historic Preservation Plans that Address More than "Just" Preservation	From the Water to Your Shelves	Leading Without Burnout	Wisconsin in the Civil War	Mitchell Park Domes: Architecture and History Tour (AIA)	Milwaukee Public Library Tour	Forest Home Cemetery Tour
2:30 - 3:00 P.M.		**BREAK: Resource Center Open, Snacks Served in Atrium**						
3:00 - 4:00 P.M.		Beyond Landmarks: Leveraging Historic Places for Economic Development	Celebrating and Supporting Wisconsin's Sacred Places	Preparing Your Historical Organization for the Next Chapter	How to Strengthen School Partnerships & Boost Field Trips			
4:15 - 5:15 P.M.	**Campfire Conversations, Regency Ballroom**							
5:30 - 7:00 P.M.	**SPECIAL EVENING EVENT: PBR Happy Hour at the Pabst Mansion, 2000 W. Wisconsin Ave.**							

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.	Registration and Continental Breakfast, Atrium Resource Center Open, Regency Ballroom & Atrium							
8:00 - 9:00 A.M.	**BREAKFAST & KEYNOTE: "A Semiquincentennial for What Purpose?" with John Dichtl, American Association of State and Local History, Regency Ballroom**							
	WHC Updates **Executive CD**	**Session A** **Lakeshore A**	**Session B** **Lakeshore B**	**Session C** **Lakeshore C**	**Session D** **Executive AB**	**Session E** **Milwaukee A**	**Session F** **Milwaukee B**	**Workshop 2** **Crystal**
9:15 - 10:15 A.M.	Session 1	Brutalism: Love It or Hate it (AIA)	Deconstruction as a Tool for Preservation (AIA)	Milwaukeean Max Nohl: A Record-Breaking Diver	Hands-On History for Museum Educators	Ditch, Decide, Deliver: Better Software Choices for Tours	Streamlining Stewardship: Optimizing Your Collections Workflow	Partnerships with Native Nations: Doing Work in a Good Way
10:15 - 10:45 A.M.	**BREAK: Resource Center Open, Snacks Served in Atrium**							
10:45 - 11:45 A.M.	Session 2	Wright on a Shoestring	Rediscovering the Legacy of Alonzo Robinson Jr.	Imbibing the Past: Historical Organizations and Alcohol	Envision and Plan Your Organization's Future	Learning Wisconsin History Through Artifacts		
NOON - 12:30 P.M.	**LUNCH & PRESENTATION: Awards Recognition & Closing Remarks with Christian Øverland and Society Staff**							
1:30 - 2:30 P.M.	**TOUR: Milwaukee City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.**							
1:30 - 3:00 P.M.	**TOUR & WORKSHOP: Navigating Racist Memorabilia in Historical Collections, Wisconsin Black Historical Society, 2620 W. Center St.**							

Wednesday, Oct. 14

5:00 - 6:00 P.M.
Conference Welcome Social Hour

(All attendees welcome)
America's Black Holocaust Museum
401 W. North Ave., Milwaukee

Join us for an evening of camaraderie and connection with fellow enthusiasts of public history and historic preservation, hosted by America's Black Holocaust Museum (ABHM) and sponsored by the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation. Whether you're new to these fields or a seasoned pro, everyone is welcome to relax and bond over shared stories. Enjoy light refreshments at ABHM's new museum space, opened in 2022, as you make new connections with like-minded folks from around the region. It's a great chance for emerging professionals to sharpen their networking skills and learn from seasoned veterans in a social environment. Don't miss out on this opportunity to grow your network and enhance your conference experience! All attendees are welcome and encouraged to join and connect.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.
Early Conference Packet Pick-Up

(All conference attendees)

Pick up your nametag and conference packet, including session and workshop room assignments.

Thursday, Oct. 15

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.
Packet Pick-Up & Registration

Pick up your nametag and conference packet, including session and workshop room assignments.

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.
Continental Breakfast

Opening Plenary Session
8:00 - 9:00 A.M.

Welcome & Wisconsin History Center Update
Christian Øverland, The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO, Wisconsin Historical Society

Join Christian Øverland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society, for the opening session of the 2026 conference. Øverland will share updates on the Wisconsin Historical Society's key initiatives as we prepare to open the new Wisconsin History Center in late 2027. The Wisconsin History Center will offer exciting opportunities to expand education and learning initiatives, along with priorities to expand access to Society collections. As we look forward from the US 250th, learn more about the ways individuals, communities, and organizations can join in partnership with the Society to make history together.

ThursdayWorkshops

Workshops provide opportunities to develop or refresh skills and discover resources through extended, focused presentations with expanded opportunities for Q&A.

Morning Workshop: 9:15 – 11:45 A.M.

Fundraising that Lasts: Five Essentials

Kristin Borst, *Development Director, Wisconsin Historical Foundation*
Hannah Hopwood, *Development Officer, Wisconsin Historical Foundation*
Jen Roberdeau, *Annual Giving Coordinator, Wisconsin Historical Foundation*
Kristin Wensing, *Sponsorship & Corporate Giving Officer, Wisconsin Historical Foundation*

Successful fundraising isn't accidental—it's built. In this interactive workshop, participants will join members of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation fundraising team to explore five core elements every nonprofit needs to create sustainable fundraising success. Through guided discussion and peer collaboration, attendees will assess their organization's current strengths and uncover opportunities for growth. Designed for practical application, this workshop moves beyond short-term tactics to focus on long-term sustainability. Participants will gain a practical, scalable framework for stronger fundraising programs and leave with clear, actionable steps to strengthen their efforts from the inside out.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY!
All-Day Workshop: 9:15 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Historic Real Estate Development in Practice

Rhonda Sincavage, *Director of Content & Partnerships, National Trust for Historic Preservation*
Kathryn Berger, *Interim CEO, Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation*
Emma Rudd, *Executive Director, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance*

Gain a practical, accessible introduction to the fundamentals of historic preservation real estate development. This full-day workshop offers a practitioner-level look at the realities of historic real estate development. Panelists will walk participants through the development process, highlight the roles and decision-making frameworks of key stakeholders, and demystify the legal, financial, and regulatory tools that make preservation projects feasible, from tax credits to creative partnerships. The workshop includes a site visit to the award-winning Journal Commons project. Ideal for professionals seeking a deeper understanding of how historic projects come together in ways that are financially viable and community centered.

The cost for this workshop is $25. Pre-registration is required.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Thursday Morning Sessions: 9:15 - 10:15 A.M.

Garages, Hotels, and More: Preservation Projects Shaping Monroe

Ashley Sarver, *Principal, Studio GWA*
Aaron Holverson, *Principal, Studio GWA*

From a deteriorating detached garage transformed into a small office to a boutique hotel sitting on the historic square, preservation is actively shaping the future of Monroe, just an hour southwest of Madison. Join us as we explore two projects of vastly different scales, unpacking the realities of preservation work, including how Historic Tax Credits can help close the financial gap.

Burials in Your Backyard

Taylor Lambrigger, *Burial Sites Coordinator, Wisconsin Historical Society*

Is there an older cemetery in your area that needs some love and upkeep, but you don't know where to start? Do you have a loved one who's buried in a family plot in your backyard, but you don't know who to tell about it? Or maybe there's a mound group in your neighborhood that you care deeply about and want to help protect. Wisconsin's burial sites preservation program and law can provide guidance on all of these questions and everything in between. Come learn the ways you can be an advocate for burial sites in your area.

The History of African Americans in Wisconsin

Clayborn Benson, *Executive Director, Wisconsin Black Historical Society & Museum*

This presentation covers African Americans from the beginning of the state's history, from James Beckwith to Joshua Glover, to Jonathan J. Mayers and his quest to travel to Africa in 1860. We will also touch on early entrepreneurs, African American involvement in the state's industrial growth, and the national impact Wisconsin's African Americans had on fair housing and the desegregation of the public school system.

Building Inclusive Exhibits Through Oral Histories

Janean Van Beckum, *Curator, Milwaukee County Historical Society*
Olivia Hoff, *Community Programs Manager & Oral History Program Director, Milwaukee County Historical Society*

In June 2026, the Milwaukee County Historical Society opened a new exhibit exploring immigration and its lasting impact on Milwaukee County. Developed over several years, the project progressed through the current political climate, recognizing the importance of sharing immigrant experiences during a time of national conversation and debate. This session will examine the exhibit's development from concept to installation, focusing on how MCHS integrated its Oral History Program to amplify community voices. Presenters will discuss the collaborative and ethical considerations of collecting and interpreting oral histories, as well as practical strategies for using community storytelling to create engaging, inclusive, and relevant museum exhibitions.

Writing Local History for Young Readers

James Nelsen, *Social Studies Department Chair, Golda Meir School*

In this session, attendees will learn how author James Nelsen wrote his book for young readers ages 12 and up, *Milwaukee Through History: A Young Reader's Guide to the People and Events that Shaped a City*. The author will discuss the writing and editing process for a children's text, including primary and secondary research, photographic research, and visual design.

AV Doesn't Have to Be Scary!

Mary Huelsbeck, *Assistant Director, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research*
Amanda Smith, *Film and Video Archivist, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research*
Shiraz Bhathena, *Processing Archivist, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Archives*

This session will provide attendees with information about how to identify and care for audiovisual materials (film, video, and audio). Along with tips on identifying formats, attendees will learn about ways to store, preserve, and provide access on a limited budget. Attendees will be invited to bring examples to the session that they need help identifying or about which they have questions.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board

THE BEST DEAL IN HISTORY!

Become a Wisconsin Historical Society member to gain access to free admission to our historic sites, reciprocal benefits at over 1,200 locations across the country, 10% discount on your next Local History & Historic Preservation Conference registration and more!

TO LEARN MORE VISIT US ONLINE AT
WISCONSINHISTORY.ORG/MEMBERSHIP

Thursday Morning Sessions: 10:45 - 11:45 A.M.

Funding Restoration Projects Using State Historic Tax Credits
Sandra Snow, *Honorary State Regent, Wisconsin Society Daughters of the American Revolution*

This session, presented from the perspective of a non-profit organization which owns a historic property in Wisconsin, will include interactive discussion of how to apply for state historic tax credits through the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office. Attendees will learn how to work through the underwriting process for approval with SHPO, what the award can mean to you and your organization, and how you can use the sale of awarded tax credits to fund your next project.

Never Give Up: Preserving Historic Viroqua
Cyndy Hubbard, *Chair, Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission*

Viroqua has become a tourist destination and a place that people want to live. It wasn't always that way. How does historic preservation fit into this success story? The Historic Preservation Commission has designated many historic properties, but some of our greatest successes have come through working closely with other community organizations for the common goal of taking care of the community we love and never giving up. We will share some recent examples of how this has worked: the renovation of the Fortney Hotel, the 20-years-long saga to save our 1936 WPA bathhouse, and turning a demolition into something positive. Through our story, we hope to pass on some tidbits and lessons learned along the way that we hope other commissions will find helpful.

Why Old Places Matter
Dave Desimone, *Site Director, Black Point Estate*

Dave Desimone of the Wisconsin Historical Society will explore the reasons that old places matter to people. Although people often feel very deeply about the old places of their lives, they don't have the words to express why. Desimone brings these ideas together in evocative language and with examples of local, regional, and national "old places." This session is perfect for anyone that has cared for, lived in, or enjoys visiting old places.

Scrappy Exhibit Design to Bolster Your Museum
Chris Connors, *Heritage Programs Coordinator, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center*

Unmanaged collections? Volunteer shortages? Too many dang spinning wheels? Designing museum exhibits can seem daunting in the face of any one of the common challenges that face small museums. However, with some extra planning, gritty determination, and a bit of creativity, it's possible to create an engaging exhibit while addressing other issues facing your institution. Join Chris Connors in a discussion about using exhibit planning and design as a tool to create the groundwork for further institutional growth.

Dementia-Inclusive Programming at History Museums
Amy Meyer, *Executive Director, Manitowoc County Historical Society*

Discover how museums are revolutionizing accessibility through dementia-inclusive programs. Learn about the SPARK! Alliance and how the Manitowoc County Historical Society brings stories from its archives to the program. You'll gain practical tools to support people living with dementia and take part in real program examples that you can bring back to your site.

Presenting the ABHM Griot Model: Practical Strategies for Improving Your Docent Program
Mia Phifer, *Senior Education, Collections & Outreach Coordinator, America's Black Holocaust Museum*
Adamali De La Cruz, *Past Education & Griot Program Coordinator, America's Black Holocaust Museum*
Adriana Vázquez, *Director of Education and Public Programs, Milwaukee Public Museum*

Since reopening in 2022 after a 14-year closure, the Education Department at America's Black Holocaust Museum has revitalized our Griot (docent) program with great success. Griot is the West African term for "storyteller" and perfectly encapsulates the role of the tour guides at ABHM. This session will talk about the process of rebuilding our volunteer program; how we support our docents' continuous learning through Griot trainings, with partnerships with the Milwaukee Rep, accessibility consultants, and early childhood educators; and how we have fostered a docent program that is truly intergenerational and intentionally diverse. We will also talk about how we have partnered with K-12 teachers, university professors, and other museums to create greater impact with the tours led by our Griots.

Thursday Luncheon and Keynote
Noon - 1:00 P.M.

What Makes an Advocate?
Emma Rudd,
Executive Director, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

Explore the power of advocacy, from being a champion for historic places to rallying community support around a cause that matters. Through real-world examples and personal insights on projects such as the Milwaukee Soldiers Home, Central City Plaza, and Mitchell Park Domes, discover how grassroots preservation advocacy can spark ideas into action—and create lasting change in your community.

Thursday Afternoon Sessions: 1:30 - 2:30 P.M.

Historic Preservation Plans that Address More than "Just" Preservation
AIA Wisconsin
Ashley Sarver, *Principal, Studio GWA*
Aaron Holverson, *Principal, Studio GWA*

Historic Preservation Plans are more than regulatory tools—they can help communities leverage their historic assets to address housing, sustainability, and economic vitality while reinforcing local identity. Drawing on community examples, this session explores what goes into creating a plan, how it complements broader planning efforts, and how preservation can be intentionally woven into everyday community life. Participants will leave with practical insight into using preservation as a catalyst for culture, investment, and long-term resilience.

From the Water to Your Shelves
Amy Rosebrough, *State Archaeologist, Wisconsin Historical Society*

Wisconsin's waters are time capsules of our history. From 5000-year-old canoes to lost car carriers on the Great Lakes, physical traces of the past are just below the waves. What happens when people recover artifacts from the water? This session will give an overview of our Maritime past and cover the conservation and legal issues that arrive with waterlogged items.

Leading Without Burnout
Karen Sailer, *Owner, Northstar Nonprofit Consulting, LLC*

Small and mid-sized historical societies rely on dedicated volunteer leaders who balance a passion for history with limited time, resources, and staff. This interactive session explores what effective leadership looks like in organizations where everyone wears multiple hats. Attendees will learn practical, plain-language leadership strategies focused on three essentials: clarity, continuity, and care. They'll leave with concrete tools to reduce confusion, prevent burnout, and strengthen their organizations for the future—without adding bureaucracy. The session will discuss why it feels hard to be a leader, the difference between the title and leadership, what a leader does, common pitfalls, and a 30-day action plan.

Wisconsin in the Civil War
Eugene Tesdahl, *Associate Professor of History, University of Wisconsin – Platteville*
Michael Larson, *Faculty, District of Menominee Area and Northland Technical College*
Ashley Weis, *Undergraduate History Major and McNair Scholar, University of Wisconsin – Platteville*

"'...We will make short work of the rebellion:' Wisconsin in the Civil War" will offer participants surprising looks at Wisconsinites in this conflict. Ashley Weis will present "...looked better as a Soldier [sic] than as a Girl [sic]...." exploring the significant contributions of civil war drummer Rebecca Peterman. Dr. Eugene Tesdahl will give "She lives in Elenboro [sic], is about twenty years old, wears soldiers clothes, and is quiet and reserved," explaining strategies to research people who intended to remain hidden. Michael J. Larson will offer "From the Iron Brigade to the Eagle Brigade: How the 7th and 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiments Defined the War Through Their Lived Experiences."

Thursday Afternoon Sessions: 3:00 - 4:00 P.M.

Beyond Landmarks: Leveraging Historic Places for Economic Development in Marshfield
Vickie Schnitzler, *Commission Chair, City of Marshfield Historic Preservation Commission*

The City of Marshfield Historic Preservation Commission is going a few steps beyond "just" designating and protecting their precious historic buildings and sites. Vickie Schnitzler from the City of Marshfield HPC will share examples of what Marshfield is doing and some of the benefits of adding tourism and economic development into the historic preservation equation.

Celebrating and Supporting Wisconsin's Sacred Places
Kevin Block, *Director of Special Initiatives, Partners for Sacred Places*
Emily Sajdak, *Director of Rural Initiatives, Partners for Sacred Places*
Mark Elsdon, *Co-Founder & Lead Builder, RootedGood*

Today, historic religious property owners across the country face special challenges and opportunities. In this presentation, staff from Partners for Sacred Places and RootedGood will provide overviews of their respective approaches to building stewardship, community engagement, and capacity-building, highlighting recent projects and success stories from their work in Wisconsin.

Preparing Your Historical Organization for the Next Chapter
John Harry, *Executive Director, Portage County Historical Society*
Rikki Harry, *Founder & CEO, Leap Nonprofit Consulting*

Small historical societies often begin as passionate, all-volunteer efforts. But when structure can no longer support the mission, change is necessary. This session explores how to transition to a sustainable, staff-supported organization—and the impact of doing so. Rikki Harry of LEAP Nonprofit Consulting will outline strategies for board roles, development systems, and accountability. John Harry of the Portage County Historical Society will share how this work enabled staff growth, stronger programming, and greater community visibility. Participants will gain practical tools and a clear roadmap for navigating organizational transition and increasing long-term impact.

How to Strengthen School Partnerships & Boost Field Trips
Merrilee Lee, *Director, Hoard Historical Museum*
Dana Bertelsen, *Assistant Director, Hoard Historical Museum*

Interested in engaging more with your local or regional schools but not certain where to start? The Hoard Historical Museum in Fort Atkinson has spent several years working to create and improve their partnerships with local and regional schools. This session will explore the similarities between schools and museums, how to use those to your advantage, and how to identify what opportunities for school/museum partnerships already exist within your own museum while boosting your field trip attendance numbers.

Thursday Afternoon Excursions: 1:30 – 4:00 P.M.

Hop on a bus for an educational excursion to a local historical site. An additional fee of $30 per person and advanced registration are required to participate. Please note that there is **no membership discount** for excursions, as costs cover transport. Capacity is limited! Excursion buses depart the conference center at 1:30 PM.

Mitchell Park Domes

AIA Wisconsin

524 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee
Limit 30 Attendees

Christa Beall Diefenbach, *CEO, Milwaukee Domes Alliance*
Therese Hanson, *Project Architect, Kubala-Washatko Architects*
Shannon Winterhalter, *Director, New History*

This is a special opportunity to learn about and experience the innovative engineering of the Mitchell Park Domes Horticultural Conservancy. The unique conoidal, concrete-lattice domes of the conservancy are a remarkable feat of structural engineering. The domes and the Modernist entrance pavilion and lobby that connects them were named one of America's most endangered historic sites in 2016. In 2026, they were formally nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, and there is a plan to repair and conserve them for the future. Three preservation professionals will talk about the history, design, and future of this architectural marvel.

Milwaukee Central Library

814 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee
Limit 30 Attendees

Join us for a guided tour of the extravagant Milwaukee Central Library. This grand Beaux Arts building with its three-story marble lobby and rotunda was designed by the Milwaukee architecture firm Ferry & Clas and completed in 1895. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Today, the library houses the Wisconsin Architectural Archive.

Forest Home Cemetery

2405 W. Forest Home Ave., Milwaukee
Limit 30 Attendees

Take a bus tour of Milwaukee's "rural cemetery." Forest Home Cemetery was designed by Wisconsin naturalist Increase A. Lapham in the rural cemetery tradition. Its first recorded burial was in 1850. Discover the pioneers, inventors, reformers, brewers, philanthropists, and everyday people whose vision shaped the city we know today. Learn how their ideas, businesses, and generosity helped build Milwaukee's neighborhoods, parks, schools, hospitals and social institutions—many of which still serve the community. The tour concludes with a hop-off stop at Beer Barons Corner, home to the iconic monuments of Blatz, Schlitz, and Pabst.

Thursday Afternoon Networking: 4:15 – 5:15 P.M.

Campfire Conversations

Take some time to sit for a burning conversation on a focused topic. Each "campfire" will have a facilitator who will provide questions to ignite the topic. Campfire Conversations are an opportunity for focused, collaborative, roundtable discussions around current issues to share experiences and explore ideas. A full list of topics and the final schedule will be provided in your registration packet.

Thursday Special Event:

PBR Happy Hour at the Pabst

Pabst Mansion
2000 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee
Limit 150 Attendees

Visit Pabst Mansion for a PBR Happy Hour! Enjoy a self-guided tour of the historic home while toasting Captain Pabst with a PBR. Additional beverages will be available for purchase.

Pabst Mansion was completed in 1892 for the famed beer baron Captain Frederick Pabst and his wife, Maria. This Gilded Age house museum boasts stunning restored interiors, elegant original furnishings, exceptional wood craftsmanship, intricate ironwork, and a brilliant fine and decorative arts collection. Included in conference registration, but attendees must register in advance! Attendees should plan to travel to the Pabst Mansion independently.

Shop with us!

Support Wisconsin history by shopping at the museum store in the Resource Center or online at **shop.wisconsinhistory.org**.

Use code **PRESERVE** for 20% off!

Offer Vaiid
Oct 14 - 18

Friday, Oct. 16

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.
Packet Pick-Up and Registration

Pick up your nametag and conference packet, including session and workshop room assignments

7:00 - 9:00 A.M.
Continental Breakfast

Friday Keynote
8:00 - 9:00 A.M.

A Semiquincentennial for What Purpose?
John Dichtl, President & CEO, American Association of State and Local History

National leaders and organizations, state commissions, local governments, and others spent years preparing for the nation's Semiquincentennial. In the end, was it a celebration, a commemoration, or a reckoning? Although federal support was sparse, national, state, and local organizations made this a powerful grassroots event. They provided programming that encouraged patriotism and pride in the story of American resilience, offered multiple perspectives on our shared history as a nation of diverse people, and fostered critical awareness of what it means to learn from our mistakes. Where do we take the commemoration from here?

Friday Special Session:
9:15 – 10:15 A.M. or 10:45 – 11:45 A.M.

Attend one of two opportunities to learn about the Wisconsin Historical Society's largest initiative, the Wisconsin History Center, opening in late 2027!

Wisconsin History Center Preview
Wes Mosman Block, *Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer, Wisconsin Historical Society*
Nick Hoffman, *Chief Creative Officer & State Historian, Wisconsin Historical Society*
Jill Sterrett, *Chief Collections Officer, Wisconsin Historical Society*

In just over twelve months, we'll open the doors of the new Wisconsin History Center! Join WHS leadership and History Center team members for an exciting preview of the building, now under construction on Madison's Capitol Square. This behind-the-scenes look will include images of hard-hat construction updates, exhibit gallery renderings, and previews of media productions. Following the brief presentation, there will be ample time for discussion and questions.

Friday Workshops:
9:15 - 11:45 A.M.

Workshops provide opportunities to develop or refresh skills and discover resources through extended, focused presentations with expanded opportunities for Q&A.

Streamlining Stewardship: Optimizing Your Collections Workflow
Danielle Benden, *Owner, Driftless Pathways, LLC*

Let's dive deep to consider museum collections workflow. This hands-on workshop provides strategies and best practices for how collections can move through your museum with ease. Attendees will explore each step of collections management—from collections intake and documentation, accessioning to storage, care and management, to potential deaccessioning. Each stage of the collections process will be carefully considered, with dedicated time for participants to practice adapting and refining their existing workflows using actionable tools, guidance, and best practices that participants can apply to their own institutions and collections workflows. All participants will receive a digital resources guide for further exploration.

Partnerships with Native Nations: Doing Work in a Good Way
Rachel Byington *(Choctaw Nation)*, *Tribal Liaison, Wisconsin Historical Society*
James Flores *(Oneida Nation)*, *Tribal Liaison, Milwaukee Public Museum*

This interactive workshop brings together Native museum professionals from the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Milwaukee Public Museum to share their experiences navigating collaboration with Native Nations. Presenters will discuss balancing organizational goals with the cultural responsibilities and nuances of working alongside Tribal communities, highlighting successes, challenges, and lessons learned from initiatives including the upcoming Wisconsin History Center and Nature and Culture Museum of Wisconsin. Explore approaches to building trust, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships, and creating more meaningful exhibit and program experiences with Native Nations. Attendees are encouraged to bring an exhibit concept, partnership idea, program, or other project involving Native Nations to workshop with presenters and fellow participants. Together, we'll offer supportive feedback, practical strategies, and actionable next steps to help move your ideas forward with intention and impact.

Friday Morning Sessions: 9:15 - 10:15 A.M.

Brutalism: Love It or Hate It?
Justin Miller, *Architectural Historian, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Archives Cultural Resource Management*

Brutalist buildings, with their raw concrete and stark, blocky shapes, evoke strong reactions, both positive and negative. As these buildings from the 1960s and 1970s become "historic," preserving and repurposing them often involves challenges over aesthetics, energy efficiency, and sustainability. This presentation will explore the history of Brutalism and the reasons the style became popular and widespread. We'll look at notable examples around the state and explore several projects that have updated Brutalist buildings to meet current tastes and needs.

Deconstruction as a Tool for Preservation
Jocelyn Slocum, *Museum Director, Pabst Mansion*
Sarah Pantos, *Preservation Manager, Berglund Construction*
David Weirick, *Senior Associate, Klein & Hoffman*

This presentation will focus on the meticulous 2024 deconstruction of the Pabst Pavilion at the Pabst Mansion by using advanced digital documentation technologies, proving that deconstruction can be an act of preservation rather than destruction. Attendees will gain insights into how technology-driven methodologies can be applied to similar projects by showing how controlled deconstruction can serve as a proactive tool for preserving historic structures by allowing for careful documentation, salvage, and future reconstruction.

Milwaukeean Max Nohl: A Record-Breaking Diver
Tamara Thomsen, *Maritime Archaeologist, Wisconsin Historical Society*

Published by WHS Press in 2025, *I Live Underwater* is the posthumous memoir of legendary inventor and deep-sea explorer Milwaukeean Max Gene Nohl. Nohl's groundbreaking contributions include the invention of the first self-contained diving suit that set the World Deep Diving Record in 1937. He founded Milwaukee-based diving equipment company DESCO and developed underwater film and photography techniques for Hollywood. After Nohl's sudden death in 1960 in a car accident, his nearly complete memoir was donated to the Milwaukee Public Library Archives. Hear his thrilling story of underwater exploration and learn about the achievements of this Wisconsin depth-defying pioneer.

Hands-On History for Museum Educators
Mary Jo Knapp, *Educator, Milwaukee County Historical Society*
Christian Jensen, *Educator, Milwaukee County Historical Society*

Milwaukee County Historical Society's Hands-On History program has been a successful museum education model for a decade. Attendees will learn how to share the love of local history to their younger guests. Be prepared to have fun, share your successful education experiences, and go away with a plan that you can adapt to your historical society or museum, too.

Ditch, Decide, Deliver: Better Software Choices for Tours
Julia Griffith, *Program Director, Historic Milwaukee, Inc.*
Katarina Repinski, *Visitor Services & Social Media Coordinator, Historic Milwaukee, Inc.*

Are you struggling to determine what software might be the best fit for your organization? Several factors can go into these major decisions including cost, on-boarding and volunteer buy-in. Historic Milwaukee staff will walk you through their actual decision-making process including how to break up with your old platform, how to prioritize your organization's needs, lessons learned and importantly, how these changes have increased visibility to the wider public. Specific programs address volunteer management, program registration and app-based tours.

Friday Morning Sessions: 10:45 - 11:45 A.M.

Wright on a Shoestring
Rainer Dronzek, *Board Member, Friends of the Meeting House*

The Friends of the Meeting House support education, tours, and preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unitarian Meeting House in Madison. For the National Historic Landmark's 75th anniversary in 2026, our all-volunteer non-profit launched new educational materials and a yearlong event series—all on a shoestring budget. This session pulls back the curtain on how we are organized for maximum impact and the specific systems and applications we use to manage operations, volunteers, and outreach. See examples of products and tools used to steward a world-class architectural icon with limited resources.

Rediscovering the Legacy of Alonzo Robinson Jr., Wisconsin's First Black Architect
Eric Vogel, *Board President, Docomomo US Wisconsin Inc.*
Kim Robinson, *Board Member, Docomomo US Wisconsin Inc.*

Alonzo Robinson was the first Black person to be licensed as an architect in Wisconsin. During his career spanning 1954–1998, Robinson designed public utility buildings, houses, churches, industrial buildings, and commercial buildings all over Milwaukee. His three-building complex, Central City Plaza, was the first Black-developed, -owned, and -operated mixed-use commercial project in the state. Eric Vogel and Kim Robinson (son of Alonzo Robinson), both board members of Docomomo US Wisconsin, will discuss Alonzo Robinson's work helping Milwaukee's historically marginalized African American community create spaces for their own neighborhoods and the significance of Central City Plaza within that context. They will also recount the advocacy strategies that led to the designation of the complex as a City of Milwaukee Landmark, helping the broader community rediscover the story and the significance of Central City Plaza.

Imbibing the Past: Historical Organizations and Alcohol
John Harry, *Executive Director, Portage County Historical Society*

This session explores how partnerships with breweries and distilleries can help historical organizations reach new audiences and tell meaningful, place-based stories. Using examples from the Portage County Historical Society, this session highlights collaborations like historic beer revivals, branded spirits, and immersive events. We'll discuss how these partnerships can drive attendance, increase revenue, and strengthen community connections, while navigating mission alignment and audience expectations. Participants will leave with practical ideas for responsibly incorporating alcohol into public history programming.

Envision and Plan Your Organization's Future
Laura Damon-Moore, *Library Strategist & Consultant, WiLS*
Melissa McLimans, *Library Strategist & Consultant, WiLS*

The Wisconsin Historical Society and WiLS are delighted to present a Strategic Planning Toolkit and Resource Library, inspired by the Planning to Plan workshop and now available to local history organizations throughout Wisconsin. Laura and Melissa will provide a thorough tour and orientation to the toolkit, answer your questions, and point out the critical resources you'll need to plan, conduct, and implement a strategic planning process that is data-driven, community-inspired, and—dare we say— FUN!

Learning Wisconsin History Through Artifacts
Mia Forslund, *Education Engagement Specialist, PBS Wisconsin Education*
Nick Ostrem, *Education Engagement Specialist, PBS Wisconsin Education*

How do you use objects to engage learners in our state's history? Join us for this session to take a closer look at *The Look Back*, an educational media series from PBS Wisconsin Education for grades 4–9 that explores eras from Wisconsin's history through artifacts. The series is hosted by historians who model an inquiry process: sharing artifacts, asking questions, visiting archives and museums to learn more, telling the story of their findings as they go, and making connections to our lives today. Discover how you can use this series and share ideas to shape future seasons.

Friday Luncheon, Awards Recognition, and Closing Remarks: Noon – 12:30 P.M.

2025 Board of Curators Awards
Wisconsin Historical Society Community Engagement & Historic Preservation Staff
Join us in celebrating the outstanding achievements of the organizations and individuals recognized by the Board of Curators for excellence in sharing Wisconsin's stories and preserving historic places.

Closing Remarks
Christian Øverland, *The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO, Wisconsin Historical Society*
Mr. Øverland will share closing remarks highlighting inspirations from this year's conference and encouragement for the year ahead.

Friday Tours:

Sign up for a post-conference tour to extend your experience! Attendees should plan to travel to Friday tours independently.

Milwaukee City Hall

200 E. Wells St., Milwaukee
1:30 – 2:30 P.M.
Limit 25 Attendees

Jim Owczarski, *City Clerk, City of Milwaukee*

The City of Milwaukee will host 25 conference attendees for a free tour of the Milwaukee City Hall building. This stunning German Renaissance Revival building with its eight-story atrium, "beer stein" turrets, and original bourdon bell was designed by Milwaukee architecture Henry C. Koch and completed in 1895. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. It still serves its original purpose as the seat of municipal government in Milwaukee. City Hall is just three blocks from the conference hotel. Attendees should plan to travel to the building independently.

An American Inheritance: Navigating Racist Memorabilia in Historical Collections Wisconsin Black Historical Society & Museum

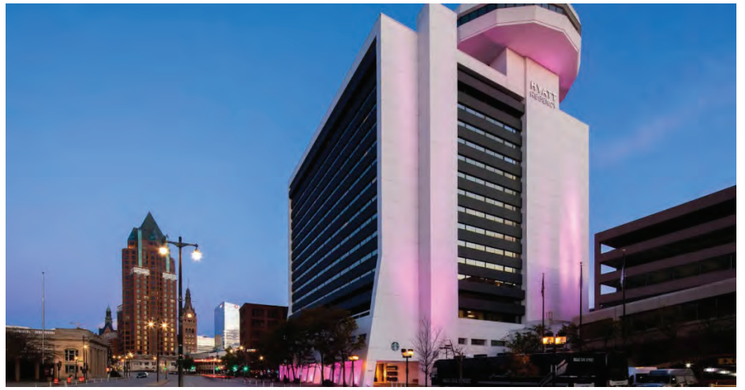
2620 W. Center St., Milwaukee
1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

Clayborn Benson, *Executive Director, Wisconsin Black Historical Society & Museum*
Mia Phifer, *Senior Education, Collections & Outreach Coordinator, America's Black Holocaust Museum*

Join representatives from the Wisconsin Black Historical Society & Museum and America's Black Holocaust Museum for a guided tour and workshop inspired by their joint exhibition, *An American Inheritance: The Story of Racist Memorabilia in Wisconsin and the US*. Together, we will explore practical and ethical considerations for caring for these challenging objects, responding to future donation requests, and engaging communities in meaningful conversations about the history and legacy of racist imagery.

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee

The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency, 333 W. Kilbourn Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53203. All conference sessions and workshops will take place in the hotel's conference center and ballrooms. Onsite parking is available for a fee.



Hotel

A block of hotel rooms has been organized at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee with special rates for conference attendees. To make a reservation, please visit **wihist.org/LHHP20-Hotel**.

For more information, contact **lhhpconference@wisconsinhistory.org**.

Big News! In 2027, the Local History & Historic Preservation Conference will partner with AASLH for their Annual Conference!

Sept. 20-23, 2027
Madison, Wisconsin