

# OUR THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Wisconsin Historical  
FOUNDATION

2021 FISCAL YEAR  
ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2020 — JUNE 30, 2021

### A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

#### Dear Friends,

It is unlikely that any of us will ever forget the past year. The dramatic way in which the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our everyday lives surely will have a lasting impact for years to come.

Those of us at the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, however, will also remember our 2021 fiscal year for another reason: your incredible generosity and willingness to help the Wisconsin Historical Society when it needed you most.

As the Society faced enormous financial pressure due to a temporary state budget reduction and the closure of its 12 historic sites for most of the fiscal year, you stepped up in ways big and small to make sure the world-renowned organization remained strong. Whether it was by contributing to a major project, becoming a member, renewing your membership, giving a gift membership, donating a few extra dollars during our online Giving Days or annual appeal, or simply showing your support by engaging with the Society through its new virtual program offerings or sharing our social media posts, **you made a difference!**

To highlight some of the things you made possible over the past fiscal year, which ended June 30, the Foundation presents this annual report. Along with our lists of members and supporting partners, we have included stories about a few of the many exciting things that donor gifts made possible, a profile of two beloved Society volunteers,



Jan Palzkill and Lois O'Brien, and updates on two major capital fundraising campaigns: one for a new state history museum and another for a reimagined entry experience at Old World Wisconsin. We hope you are as excited as we are about both projects and the major leaps they have made this past year thanks to the generosity of so many thoughtful donors.

New in this year's report is an eight-page insert from the Society that features a message from Director Christian

Overland and stories of great work from the past fiscal year, including a few of the inspiring ways that Society staff responded to the daunting challenges posed by the pandemic.

Indeed, we are living through historic times. Fortunately, both the Society, which marked its 175th anniversary in 2021, and the Foundation, in its 67th year, benefit from the perspective of our long organizational histories, made possible because of people like you. We are grateful for all of the ways you have supported us during this unprecedented year and we're honored by the confidence you continue to have in us and our work. We look forward to a healthy and successful year ahead working together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Lussier".

**Julie Lussier**

Executive Director, Wisconsin Historical Foundation

# FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS

2021 FISCAL YEAR

## \$16.2 MILLION

TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY **(THE MOST EVER!)**



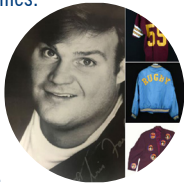
Wisconsin Historical Society  
October 8, 2020

On this day in 1871, the Peshtigo Fire, the deadliest fire in U.S. history, burned a path through Wisconsin. In just two hours, the fire destroyed a swath of forest 10 miles wide and 40 miles long and obliterated the towns of Peshtigo and Brussels, killing about 1,500 people. In all, the fire burned more than 280,000 acres in Oconto, Marinette, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.

**Society social media channels enjoyed another year of significant growth.**

Facebook was up 25% to 38,557 followers, while Instagram grew 85% to 8,539. The Facebook post on the Oct. 8 anniversary of the Peshtigo fire (above) reached 151,452 people and was shared over 1,400 times.

The top Instagram post (right), with more than 700 likes, was about late comedian (and Madison native) Chris Farley's Feb. 15 birthday.



144,480 FOLLOWERS ON SOCIETY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS (A 21% INCREASE)

51,124 DOLLARS RAISED DEC. 1 ON GIVING TUESDAY (INCLUDING A MATCHING GIFT OF \$25,562)

15,695 DOLLARS RAISED ON THE SOCIETY'S 2ND ANNUAL GIVING DAY (MAY 28)

9,880 SOCIETY MEMBERS

2,289 NEW MEMBERS

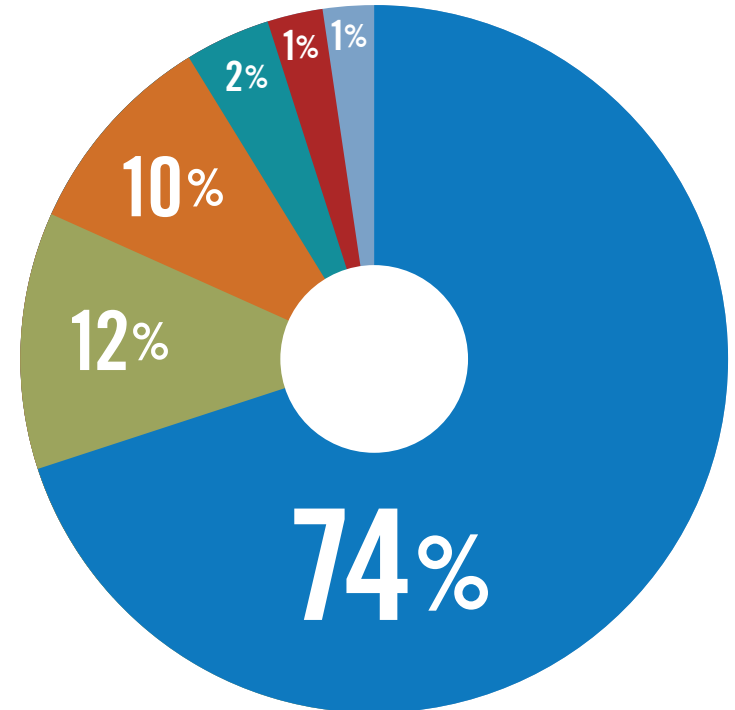
1,086 PEOPLE WHO GAVE A GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

316 NEW GENERAL FUND DONORS

13 NEW MURPHY LEGACY CIRCLE MEMBERS

# WISCONSIN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION FUNDRAISING

JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021



## TOTAL FUNDS RAISED

- Capital Projects
- Collections
- General Support
- Outreach
- Museums & Historic Sites
- Historic Preservation

**TOTAL**

**\$16,185,510**

A YEAR TO REMEMBER, THANKS TO YOU!

## DONORS MAKE HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORTS POSSIBLE

### \$210K+ in generous support paves way for future restoration at Pendarvis, Circus World

**H**istoric Structure Reports (HSRs) are the backbone of historic preservation work, providing exhaustive physical information about a property's history and existing condition. They're vital for decision-makers as they plan future restoration projects and are usually required to access funding opportunities that will help complete rehabilitation projects.

Thanks to significant private funding during the past fiscal year, research and evaluation work was conducted at Pendarvis in Mineral Point and Circus World in Baraboo to inform HSRs for both of the Society's historic sites.

The Pendarvis report, which is nearly complete, was funded by a \$42,750 gift from the Jeffris Family Foundation through its Jeffris Heartland Fund. Since its founding in 1979, it has provided matching grants for advanced planning studies for historic preservation projects in eight Midwestern states. That total was equaled by the Memorial Pendarvis Endowment Trust, created in 1984 to support the site.

The Circus World HSR, in progress, was made possible thanks to \$125,000 in combined support from the Circus World Museum, Inc., the Les & Judy Smout Foundation, and individual gifts from Fred Pfening, and Tom and Renee Boldt.

"This important work simply could not be completed without this generous private funding," said Nicholas Hoffman, Administrator of Museums and Historic Sites. "The Society has wanted to complete this work for a long time and we're grateful to all who have made it possible.

"This investment in the future will ensure the long-term preservation of these beloved historic structures and provide



the foundation for improved experiences that are authentic and captivate visitors for decades to come."

Hoffman noted the importance of the Ringlingville buildings at Circus World, which comprised the Ringling Bros. Circus' winter quarters and are one of two Society locations designated as National Landmarks (Villa Louis is the other).

"This is the first major study of this type of these buildings since the location opened as a visitor attraction in 1959," added Hoffman. "It is critical pre-work before we can begin reinvisioning a new, dynamic visitor experience within those spaces."

**The condition of the 1897 Animal House** at Circus World in Baraboo was evaluated, along with the rest of the site, for a Historic Structure Report that will inform future restoration planning. Similar work was completed at Pendarvis Historic Site in Mineral Point.

## Kohler's legacy lives on with \$1M estate gifts to Wade House, museum campaign

Ruth DeYoung Kohler II displayed a lifelong passion for the arts and historic preservation, and backed it up by building a legacy of generous support for those passions.

The longtime director (from 1972-2016) of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan was a vocal supporter of the Wisconsin Historical Society from an early age. Following in her mother's footsteps, she was also an especially generous benefactor for Wade House, the Society's historic site near her home in Kohler.

Sadly, Ruth passed away at home on Nov. 14, 2020, at age 79. Cementing her lifetime of support for the preservation of history, Kohler's final gifts to the Society included \$1 million for the Wade House Endowment and an additional \$1 million for the Society's Campaign for a New Wisconsin History Museum.

"Ruth was a legend and visionary in so many ways and we miss her terribly," said Julie Lussier, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation. "We're humbled and grateful for her generous estate gifts, which will make history available to people of all ages for generations to come."

Kohler had long been a significant donor to Wade House and the Society, having given more than \$1.5 million over the years. She also served on the Society's Board of

Curators for a decade, from 1990-2000.

Ruth's \$1 million estate gift to the Wade House Endowment will be instrumental in the continued preservation of the property that was so dear to her and her mother, who was responsible for a three-year effort in the early 1950s to restore the 100-year-old stagecoach hotel to its former grandeur.

Unfortunately, the elder Kohler passed away in early 1953 at age 46, just months before its completion, leaving 11-year-old Ruth to hand over the key to the Society in a public ceremony in which the Kohler Foundation gifted Wade House to the state.

"As with her mother before her, Ruth's legacy will live on forever, especially at Wade House, which benefitted greatly from the family's longtime advocacy and support," added Lussier. "Wade House as we know it simply wouldn't exist without them. Visitors to the site will always know the importance of the Kohler family when it comes to preserving and sharing our history."

Ruth's final gift to the museum campaign, meanwhile, helped propel the project to its next phase and brings Wisconsinites one step closer to a state-of-the-art museum.

To honor her significant contribution, a theatre planned for the new museum will bear Ruth's name and serve as a reminder of her role in writing the next chapter of our state's history.



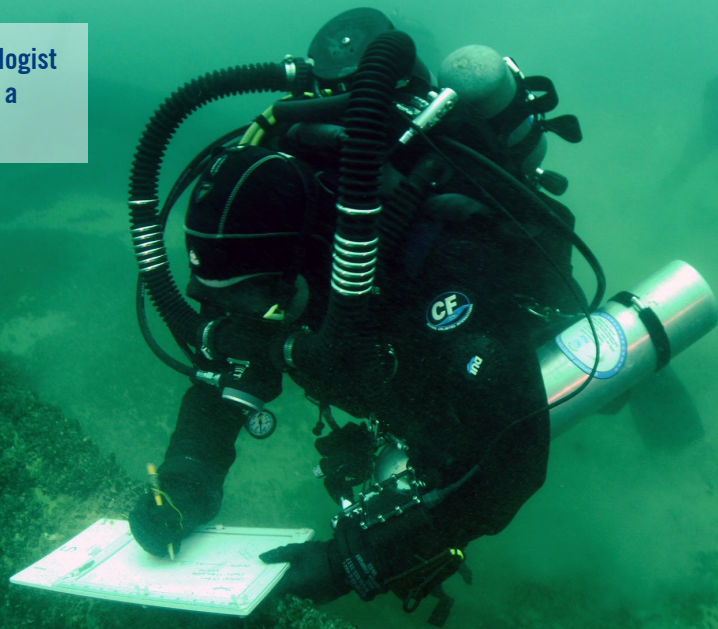
Following the deaths of Sylvanus and Betsey Wade in the 1870s, the stagecoach hotel remained in the Wade family until 1941. For nine years Wade House was owned by a family from Illinois, but in 1950 it was sold to the Kohler Foundation. For the next 70 years, Ruth DeYoung Kohler enjoyed overseeing a thorough painstaking restoration of the century-old hotel, together with the 1955 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 just a few months before Wade House historic site was dedicated and turned over to the Wisconsin Historical Society on June 6, 1953. 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 historic site by the Kohler family, the Kohler Foundation, and the Wisconsin Historical Society for Preservation.



Ruth DeYoung Kohler II made her final visit to her beloved Wade House Historic Site in July 2020. She is seated near a portrait of her mother, who directed the restoration of Wade House, which was completed in 1953.

A Society maritime archaeologist takes notes while surveying a Lake Michigan shipwreck.



## \$32K Fund For Lake Michigan gift allows archaeologists to locate one shipwreck, create 3-D model of another

As one of Wisconsin's greatest assets, Lake Michigan is a treasure trove of Wisconsin and North American history. In addition to its diverse aquatic habitats, Lake Michigan is the resting place of hundreds of shipwrecks and other underwater archaeological sites.

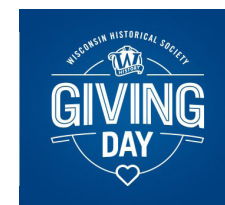
A generous \$32,000 three-year gift from the Fund For Lake Michigan (FFLM) will allow maritime archaeologists in the Wisconsin Historical Society's historic preservation division to locate and map one long-lost ship (the schooner *Our Son*, which sank in 1930) and do the underwater work necessary to create a 3-D model of another well-known shipwreck (the car ferry *Milwaukee*, which sank in 1929).

These projects will greatly enhance the Society's ability to tell the stories of these shipwrecks, as well as increase awareness and public appreciation for Lake Michigan. Initial model imaging on the *Milwaukee* was completed this year, while exploring what is believed to be the resting place of the *Our Son* will be undertaken next year.

"We don't usually have an opportunity to go looking for a shipwreck," said Tamara Thomsen, in her 17th year as a Society maritime archaeologist. "Usually our grants are for surveying known entities so this is very exciting for us because it's exploration. It's super cool. We're very grateful to the Fund For Lake Michigan for making this work possible."

## \$66,819: Thank you for your extra support of the Society during two online giving days

Wisconsin history lovers proved once again this past fiscal year that even in the face of unprecedented personal challenges like those brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, you're willing to step up and help ensure that our state's history continues to be collected, preserved, and



shared by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Hundreds of you answered our call and generously offered extra gifts to help the Society overcome a

massive revenue shortfall.

An amazing \$66,819 was donated to the Society by 350 people during our two online giving days. On Giving Tuesday (Dec. 1), supporters gave \$25,562, which was 100% matched by an anonymous donor, bringing the total to \$51,124. On the Society's second-ever Giving Day (May 28), an additional \$15,695 was raised, including a \$7,500 anonymous matching gift.

In addition, four very thoughtful people named the Society as their non-profit organization of choice for their personal birthday fundraiser on Facebook, raising a combined \$795.

"Our members and friends are the best," said Hannah Hankins, the Foundation's Annual Giving Manager. "Your giving spirit is truly remarkable and inspiring. Thank you for making so much possible for the Society. It couldn't be done without you!"

# POMEROY FOUNDATION'S \$75K GRANT EXPANDS HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Thanks to a generous \$75,190 grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, Wisconsin Historical Society historians and outreach staff will be able to re-envision the Wisconsin State Historical Markers Program over the next three years.

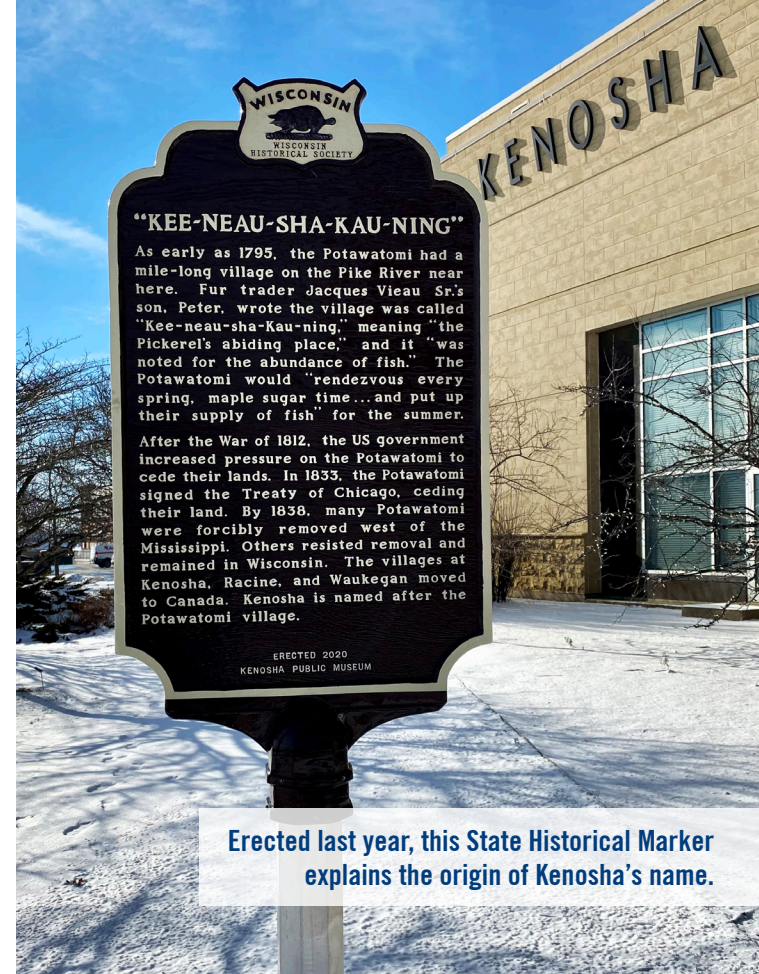
This important financial support will fund the creation and installation of an average of 10-12 of the iconic brown markers each year for a period of three years to address underrepresentation. It will expand the program's reach, with a focus on Black, Native American and other underrepresented histories.

Today, of the nearly 600 official markers across the state, just seven describe events or people associated with Black history and only 10 are dedicated to women's history.

"We are grateful for this support and are excited to engage with new partners to share more stories of local, state, and national significance across all regions of Wisconsin," said Angela Titus, the Society's Assistant Deputy Director and Chief Program Officer. "This grant allows us to lower the economic barrier that sometimes prevents communities from being able to celebrate and highlight their rich local history."

The program was first authorized by a state statute in 1943. The first marker, which commemorated the 1871 Peshtigo fire, was erected in 1951.

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation, based in Syracuse, N.Y., is committed to supporting the celebration and preservation of community history and has funded over 1,500 roadside markers and plaques across the United States since 2006.



Erected last year, this State Historical Marker explains the origin of Kenosha's name.

## \$10K gift from Friends of H.H. Bennett Studio funds valuable intern position

A generous \$10,000 gift from the Friends of H.H. Bennett Studio allowed the Society's historic site and museum in Wisconsin Dells to continue its internship program during the 2021 fiscal year.

"This position is an extremely valuable role and support for us," said Dave Rambow, site director at H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum. "Two of our interns have returned as valuable seasonal employees. It is essential to have the additional help to complete much

of our behind-the-scenes work. We are so grateful for the support of the Friends of H.H. Bennett Studio. Their ongoing financial support makes so many programs possible and enhances the guest experience."

Thanks to the funding, Rambow was able to hire Alyssa Crossley to work through April. Among her many duties, she made significant progress on the ongoing project of digitizing and organizing thousands of photo records inherited from Bennett's descendants.

She also supported daily guest experiences, including leading walking tours, which was especially helpful with staff members partially reassigned to other state agencies to help with the state's pandemic response.

"It's been really awesome to have an opportunity to explore and get my feet wet in this field," said Crossley, who has returned to the site as a seasonal employee. "It's been nice to be able to build on all the fun stuff I learned growing up (living in the area)."

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS: YOUR ENTHUSIASM AND GENEROUS



## THE CAMPAIGN FOR A NEW WISCONSIN HISTORY MUSEUM

### PROJECT LEAPS FORWARD AS GIFTS TOP \$30M



**"The Wisconsin Historical Society is one of the most respected history organizations in the country and Summit Credit Union is proud to partner with the Society and support this long overdue and important project."**

— KIM SPONEM, President/CEO

**T**he Wisconsin Historical Society's Campaign for a New Wisconsin History Museum moved forward in significant ways during the 2021 fiscal year, bringing the dream closer to reality than ever before.

Most notably, a \$10 million gift from Madison philanthropist W. Jerome Frautschi in February (adding to the \$3.5 million he had already given) put the Wisconsin Historical Foundation over the \$30 million threshold in private donations required by the state to unlock \$70 million in public funding for the project. Later, the Legislature included \$4 million in the state's 2021-23 biennial budget for project planning, including securing a final site. Gov. Tony Evers added his support in signing the budget. In early October, thanks to an advantageous two-property deal with Fred and Mary Mohs, along with additional financial gifts from Frautschi and his wife, Pleasant Rowland, it was confirmed that the museum will be located on the Capitol Square.

Throughout the year, dozens of other supporters across the state, including individuals and businesses who have given to the project, also publicly endorsed the project through letters to their local legislators and newspapers, as well as in testimonials for the Society.

"We are humbled and thankful to all who have helped us reach this important level of fundraising, and for their steadfast public support," said Christian Øverland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Society. "We're also grateful for the bipartisan support from our state legislators and Gov. Evers. The public is overwhelmingly behind this project and we look forward to opening the doors of the new museum by 2026."

To learn more about the project, visit [wihist.org/newmuseum](http://wihist.org/newmuseum).



**"We are pleased to make a donation in support of this project and feel it is important to give back. This is an investment in the future of our state. ... It will be a great day for Wisconsin when the museum doors open to the public."**

— MICHAEL & JOANN YOUNGMAN, Milwaukee



# GIFTS MOVE THESE TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS FORWARD



## NEW ARRIVALS

A CAMPAIGN TO CREATE AN IMMERSIVE WELCOME EXPERIENCE AT OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

## EXCITEMENT BUILDS AS WORK GETS UNDERWAY

**C**urious guests have looked on with excitement and anticipation throughout a year of tangible progress for the first phase of the New Arrivals Campaign for Old World Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Historical Society's 600-acre historic site and living history museum in the Waukesha County village of Eagle.

Thanks to generous early gifts totaling \$2.6 million, work was able to begin on a multi-year, multi-phase master plan that will dramatically transform the welcome area at the site. Most notably, in late 2020, construction began on a new building that will serve as a brewhouse and host The Brewing Experience presented by the Cleary-Kumm Family. Then in May, historic Wittnebel's Tavern (1906) was transported, in four sections, 27 miles to the site and reassembled on a new foundation. It was the first structure moved to Old World Wisconsin in over 25 years. As more funds are raised, the tavern's interior will be restored to its 1930s appearance and tell the story of Wisconsin's tavern culture following the end of Prohibition.

"We're grateful to all of the early donors who have made this exciting work possible," said Julie Lussier, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation. "Old World Wisconsin has long been one of our state's historic treasures, helping people of all ages connect with their heritage. This project will improve the guest experience in significant ways and make Old World an even bigger regional and national attraction. The Foundation looks forward to continuing to spread the word about these immersive experiences and raise the funds still needed to turn the remainder of this great master plan into reality."

To learn more about the project, visit [wihist.org/owwnewarrivals](http://wihist.org/owwnewarrivals). Watch videos of the tavern move at [wihist.org/OWWNewArrivalsVideos](http://wihist.org/OWWNewArrivalsVideos).



**Above:** The roof of Wittnebel's Tavern is lowered into place as it is reassembled on a new foundation at Old World Wisconsin on June 28. **Left:** In late 2020, construction began on a new building that will serve as a brewhouse and host programming for The Brewing Experience presented by the Cleary-Kumm Family. The two projects are part of the first phase of the larger New Arrivals welcome experience master plan.



Jan Palzkill (left) and Lois O'Brien have volunteered together for the past decade at Black Point Estate and Gardens in Lake Geneva. Palzkill says she most enjoys "making the tour a good experience for our guests." O'Brien often does just that by playing the home's 110-year-old piano. "I am proud to say that I volunteer at Black Point," she says.

# WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Hundreds give their time each year to help the Society achieve its mission to serve the public. **We're grateful for your dedication.**

## JAN PALZKILL & LOIS O'BRIEN

Black Point Estate and Gardens

**C**hances are, if you've visited Black Point Estate and Gardens, the Wisconsin Historical Society's historic site in Lake Geneva, over the past decade, you've enjoyed a pleasant encounter with Jan Palzkill or Lois O'Brien.

If you're lucky, you've met both.

The two delightful women have volunteered hundreds of hours over the past decade, helping guests enjoy tours of the Victorian mansion and grounds on the shore of Geneva Lake. It was built in 1888 by Chicago beer baron Conrad Seipp as a summer "cottage" for his family.

"Jan and Lois, and volunteers like them, are critical to the success of Black Point," said Dave Desimone, site director. "We have more than 40 active volunteers and, quite frankly, we couldn't operate the estate without their help."

From 2012, when she started, through 2019, "Jan logged more



**"I feel honored to have the privilege to play for guests,"** said Lois O'Brien, a longtime volunteer at Black Point Estate and Gardens in Lake Geneva.

volunteer hours than anyone else," Desimone added. "Her pleasant demeanor and grace help our guests feel welcome."

"Dave gave me the title 'The Wrangler' because one of my responsibilities was to keep the guests together for the docent," said Palzkill, 86. "I'm proud to be a part of showing off the 1888 cottage and sharing its history. The estate is a beautiful site. I'm of a certain age

and the work is easy."

In addition to her volunteer work, Palzkill has funded an internship program at the site since 2016.

"My husband was a teacher for 39 years," she said. "It just seemed natural to honor him in this way. I'm proud to be a donor and volunteer."

"Visitors often tell us how wonderful it is to see young people showing an interest in Wisconsin's history and Jan makes that possible,"

Desimone said. "Our interns are very important to us and we're grateful to have Jan's financial support."

O'Brien, 90, volunteered over 100 hours annually from 2011, when she started, through 2019.

"Lois is fond of saying 'Many hands make light work' and she has put that into action by helping in many ways," Desimone said. "She is a pleasure to work with and is always helping to make our guests feel welcome."

O'Brien is perhaps best known for entertaining visitors by playing the 110-year-old Chickering piano.

"I feel honored to have the privilege to play for guests," said O'Brien, a business teacher at Big Foot High School in Walworth for 34 years before retiring in 1989.

"History is important to me and I hope the younger generation will learn how people lived in the past by visiting sites like Black Point."

O'Brien encourages others to volunteer for the Society.

"Volunteering is a wonderful way to learn more about historical family life," she said, "and it is a great way to meet people with the same interests."

# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DEDICATED LEADERSHIP TEAMS

*We gratefully recognize the members of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation Board of Directors and the Wisconsin Historical Society Board of Curators who served from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Your extraordinary dedication and thoughtful leadership during an unprecedented and challenging year enabled us to connect with millions who look to the Society as a trusted source of authentic history. Thank you for your service!*

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Board of Curators

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Travis Gross, President, Wisconsin  
Council for Local History  
Theresa H. Richards, Chair,  
Wisconsin Historical Foundation  
Greg Summers, University of Wisconsin  
System Designee

### Honorary Curator

Judge Thomas H. Barland, Eau Claire

# THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The following pages recognize individuals and organizations who cumulatively contributed \$250 or more to the Wisconsin Historical Foundation from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, including pledges and gifts of membership. **It's because of your generosity that the Society has been able to accomplish so much this year. We cherish your confidence and enduring friendship!**



**Your membership and special gifts** allow the Wisconsin Historical Society to connect people of all ages to history in amazing ways. Above, Laurel Miller of the Wisconsin Historical Museum leads a group walking tour of the Capitol Square in Madison. Outdoor walking tours, hosted by the Madison museum as well as other Society sites, were a popular way for guests to connect to history in a safe way during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Unforgettable moments like these are made possible **THANKS TO YOU!**



## PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL OF THE HERITAGE CIRCLE

### \$1,000,000 and more

W. Jerome Frautschi  
Ruth DeYoung Kohler II\*  
Jane A. Bartell and John W. Thompson

### \$500,000 – \$999,999

Mr. Craig C. Culver

### \$100,000 – \$499,999

Anonymous  
Estate of Robert W. Chase  
Mark and Ilene\* Laufman  
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### \$50,000 – \$99,999

Robert C. Dohmen  
Richard Searer and  
Cathi E. Wiebrecht-Searer  
JoAnn and Michael Youngman

### \$25,000 – \$49,999

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### \$10,000 – \$24,999

Anonymous (2)  
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### SAVE THE DATE

■ **2022 President's Council Dinner:**  
June 22 at The Florian in Germantown

*\* Above photo: Diane Dei Rossi and James Hardy at the 2019 President's Council dinner*

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**I am tremendously proud of the Society. When I became a trained historian, I learned about the Society's vast collections and the stellar reputation it enjoys nationally. It does all of this in the service of understanding the past in order to create a better future for all. I want to be part of that important and great work."**

**Susan Zaeske**

UW-Madison Associate Dean for Arts & Humanities; Heritage Circle and Robert B.L. Murphy Legacy Circle member



**I feel kind of like an evangelical person when it comes to the Society. There's so much quality. The leadership of the Society and Foundation and the hard work that everybody puts in is so impressive. You know you're giving to a very well-led, strategic and stewardship-minded organization."**

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**(To donors who support National History Day), thank you! I learned so much from NHD and I'm looking forward to future competitions. My favorite part was getting to see Julia Child's original letters and show notes that a (Society) archival librarian scanned in and sent to me."**

### **Liza Kanne**

Home-schooled sixth grader, who placed sixth at NHD Nationals (pictured with older brother Alan, who also qualified for Nationals)

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**National History Day is unlike any school project that I have ever experienced. As I uncovered more about my topic and found different perspectives, what I thought might have been true continued to change, evolve and lead to new discoveries. It was like unraveling a mystery.”**

**Emma Manion**

Kettle Moraine Middle School,  
fourth-place finisher in individual  
performance at NHD Nationals (as  
war photojournalist Dickey Chapelle)



**Preserving history, our history, is what keeps us moving forward, and von Briesen is proud to partner with a nationally respected organization like the Wisconsin Historical Society. No organization is better equipped to share the stories of our great state."**

**Megan Jerabek**

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**“We would like to inspire others who grew up in Wisconsin to invest in such a worthy project. This museum will provide Wisconsinites, no matter where they are living today, with a world-class facility to honor the state's historic past and use that knowledge and experience to build a better future.”**

**John & Sherry Stilin**

Society members and early donors to the Society's Campaign for a New Wisconsin History Museum. The Milwaukee area natives live in Redmond, Wash.



**Our sincere thanks to Susan and Bob Crane**, owners of Crane Dairy in Brighton, for donating this handsome Holstein calf to Old World Wisconsin in June. Fritz, as he was named in a guest contest, was featured in the site's new *Dairy Stories* experience, which taught guests (including the youngster pictured at right) about the dairy industry. Susan is pictured above with Dan Hess, Old World Wisconsin's agriculture and trades coordinator, after donating Fritz. The Cranes are members of the Society's President's Council and Susan is secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation's Board of Directors.



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“It's important to have an estate plan that honors your values. It feels great to support an organization that is preserving and sharing things I cherished growing up and that make me proud of my Wisconsin roots.”

## John Peters

Robert B.L. Murphy Legacy Circle member; Chippewa Falls native, and Worcester, Mass., resident

## Generations of Wisconsinites benefit from your planned giving

Our sincere thanks to the 13 people who let us know they made a planned gift to the Wisconsin Historical Society during this past year. In doing so, they will make a real and lasting difference for the Society's work — preserving the past, while inspiring future generations of Wisconsinites to learn about their state and better understand its vital role in our nation's history.

Those who have notified us that they have included the Society in their estate plan — through a will, trust, or other planned gift — become members of the Robert B.L. Murphy Legacy Circle, our

appreciation group honoring those who help provide for the long-term financial health and success of the Society.

While gifts designated for specific purposes are always welcome, unrestricted gifts allow the Society the greatest opportunity to strengthen the overall organization and the flexibility to address emergent priorities (such as those that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic).

We're grateful for these planned gifts and hope your thoughtfulness will encourage others to make the Society a part of their legacy, too.

## THANKS TO MURPHY DESMOND

The Society and Foundation would like to thank Murphy Desmond S.C. for its continued financial support of our annual spring luncheons for members of the Robert B.L. Murphy Legacy Circle, named after the law firm's late founder (right). Murphy was a founding director of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation in 1954 and served more than 40 years on the Society's Board of Curators. He passed away Sept. 11, 2001, at 95, and generously included the Society in his estate plan.



## MAKE YOUR PLANNED GIFT

The Wisconsin Historical Foundation accepts a variety of planned gifts for the benefit of the Society, including through a will or trust, stocks or other securities, real estate, an IRA or other retirement assets, and life insurance. These gifts may offer you tax benefits and financial flexibility.

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Contact Joe Kollar, Development Officer, at (608) 264-6585 or [joseph.kollar@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:joseph.kollar@wisconsinhistory.org), or visit [wisconsinhistory.org/legacy](http://wisconsinhistory.org/legacy) for more information about how you can include the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, Inc. (tax ID 39-0921093) in your estate plan.

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Donna J. Sereda  
Judith Siers-Poisson and  
Jean-Marc Poisson  
Robert\* and Delores Spitzer  
Richard Staedtler  
Robert Stone  
Dawn and David\* Stucki  
Donald E. Swinton  
Don and Judy Taylor  
Natalie Tinkham  
John and Carol Toussaint  
Michael and Monica Turner  
Kathleen D. Valfer  
George L. Vogt  
Laurie A. Wermter  
Charles E. and Ruth Werth  
Carlyle H. Whipple  
Richard Searer and  
Cathi E. Wiebrecht-Searer  
Beth and David Wilder  
Barbara\* and Ted\* Wiley  
JoAnn and Michael Youngman  
Susan Yugo\*  
Susan M. Zaeske

*\*In memoriam*

Murphy Legacy Circle members are generous supporters who have included the Society in their estate plan. We honor and celebrate their commitment to sustain the Society's work for generations to come.



**ROBERT B.L.  
MURPHY  
LEGACY CIRCLE  
2022 LUNCHEONS**

**May 10, Madison**  
Nakoma Golf Club

**May 12, Milwaukee**  
The Wisconsin Club's  
Country Club

*\* Above photo: Nan Webster, left,  
and Jeanne Engle at the 2019  
MLC luncheon in Milwaukee*



**Wisconsin Historical  
FOUNDATION**

816 State Street  
P.O. Box 260050  
Madison, WI 53726-0050



Guided Journeys programming at Old World Wisconsin allowed guests to safely explore the historic site.



**WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

[wisconsinhistory.org](http://wisconsinhistory.org)



**Wisconsin Historical  
FOUNDATION**

Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Stories Since 1846

Supporting the Wisconsin  
Historical Society Since 1954

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Explore  
**HISTORY**  
in a **NEW WAY**

Plan a trip to a Wisconsin Historical Society site or museum this summer! We are excited to welcome visitors for general admission experiences.



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## 2021 FISCAL YEAR ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2020 — JUNE 30, 2021

**SPECIAL  
INSERT**

**WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
HIGHLIGHTS**

# A message from the Society's Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO

Dear Friends,

The past year was unlike any other in the Wisconsin Historical Society's 175-year history. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed how we all worked and lived, and how the Society operated as a history organization.

Through it all, I am pleased to say that our staff repeatedly adapted and ultimately delivered meaningful and memorable mission-based services to the citizens of our great state. As you will see on page 5, I am proud of our teams' perseverance and thankful for the dozens of Society staff who accepted temporary job reassignments to help other state agencies respond to the overwhelming needs of fellow Wisconsinites during the pandemic. Their selflessness truly reflects the core values of our organization.

Several highlights from the past year are documented on these pages, as well as in the fiscal year report from our partners at the Wisconsin Historical Foundation. After the historic year we all experienced, we deserve a moment to reflect and be grateful, as well as be thoughtful in building our pathway forward. Be sure to explore [wisconsinhistory.org](http://wisconsinhistory.org) and join the conversation on our social media channels as we share interesting, historical content.

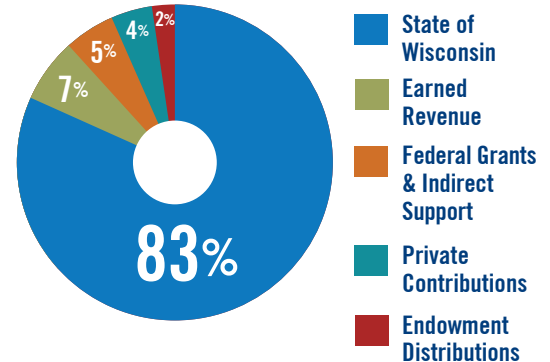
Thank you for your support of our organization. Together, we have met this moment of history and, together, we look forward to better days ahead, especially as we work towards building and opening a new history museum on Wisconsin's Capitol Square. Onward!



**Christian  
Overland**

## FY21 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

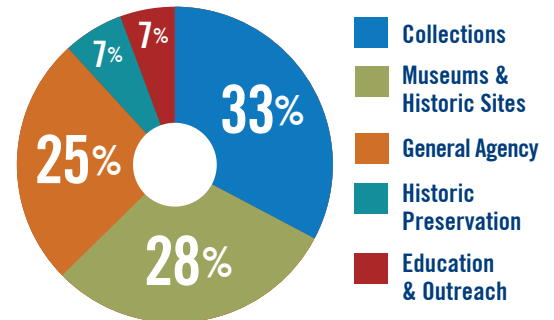
### REVENUE



TOTAL

**\$22,981,258**

### EXPENDITURES



TOTAL

**\$22,055,495**

\* Percentages are atypical due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WHS operations; Revenue percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding



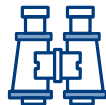
### Library, Archives & Museum Collections

**19,238** PATRONS SERVED BY LIBRARY & ARCHIVES



### Local History

**451** SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL HISTORY AFFILIATES  
**382** ATTENDANCE AT VIRTUAL LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE



### Historic Sites & Museums

**30,585** TOTAL ATTENDANCE AT THE HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS  
**6,698** K-12 ATTENDANCE AT THE HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS

\*Library & Archives rooms were partially closed and many historic sites fully or partially closed due to COVID-19



### Education

**57,719** STUDENTS USED THE SOCIETY'S 4TH-GRADE WISCONSIN HISTORY TEXTBOOK  
**40,918** BOOKS SOLD BY THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS  
**3,562** STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN VIRTUAL NATIONAL HISTORY DAY PROGRAM (NHD)  
**52** STUDENTS QUALIFIED FOR THE NHD NATIONAL FINALS  
**7** STUDENTS FINISHED IN THE TOP 10 OR WON SPECIAL AWARDS AT NHD NATIONALS



### Historic Preservation

**2,209** PROJECTED JOBS CREATED BY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS  
**479** BUILDINGS REHABILITATED USING TAX CREDIT PROGRAMS

# ADJUSTING TO A HISTORIC YEAR

## Society staff responds to unprecedented moment by collecting history as it happens

With the enduring COVID-19 pandemic uprooting our daily lives and public protests for social justice and racial equality resuming with each new incident, history was happening all around us throughout the 2021 fiscal year.

Through it all, the Society's archival and collection teams were working behind the scenes to ensure that these simultaneous historic crises would be well represented in our world-renowned collections.

Among the myriad items collected: nearly 300 (and counting) COVID-19 journals submitted by the public; World War II-style public information posters created by artists for the Society; healthcare workers' personal protective equipment; clear plastic protective barriers; bottles of hand sanitizer made by Wisconsin distilleries; a quilt made out of face masks; and plywood that covered the windows of the Wisconsin Historical Museum on Capitol Square, spray-painted not by commissioned artists

but by activists during nightly protests. Even COVID-19 vaccine boxes were collected.

"As a professional, the year 2020 has completely changed all of my understanding of history and what all of those experiences meant to all of the people I read about in so many books (over the years)," said Society Chief Curator Estella Chung. "I don't think there's any way I'll ever forget 2020."

Chung said it was important to collect the plywood panels created by protesters "because it was a really, really difficult summer and (the panels) absolutely capture the challenging questions we had in that moment in time."

Pandemic-related collecting will continue as long as it lasts — and beyond.

"What we're after as a collecting team," Chung added, "is being able to amass enough resources where someone with the perspective of history, which we don't have right now, will be able to parse the important messages."





## Work continued to create better future guest experiences even as the Society's historic sites were closed to visitors

While on-site visits were paused for most, if not all, of the fiscal year due to the pandemic, important work continued at the Society's 12 historic sites and museums.

"We looked at it as an opportunity to build for the future by improving the conditions at our facilities for a better guest experience, as well as holding ourselves to increasingly higher standards in accessibility and historic preservation," said Nicholas Hoffman, the Society's Administrator of Historic Sites and Museums. "We wanted to create new and better opportunities for guests of all abilities to connect with history through mission-based experiences and programming."

Among the projects completed were two that ensure equitable access for all guests.

**Villa Louis:** Work included the restoration of the historic walkway around the mansion and outbuildings. Adhering to strict historic preservation standards, bricks and stonework were replaced, vastly improving accessibility to this cherished National Historic Landmark building.

**Madeline Island Museum:** Work included new and refurbished ramps at all entries and exits, a paved parking lot, button-activated door entries, and paved pathways connecting the museum to outdoor program areas.



At **Villa Louis** in Prairie du Chien, workers carefully replaced the walkways leading to and surrounding the historic mansion.

## Dozens of employees temporarily changed jobs to help the state respond to crises

The Society is extremely proud of the 53 staff members who accepted temporary job reassignments during the past fiscal year to help other state agencies respond to demand for services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

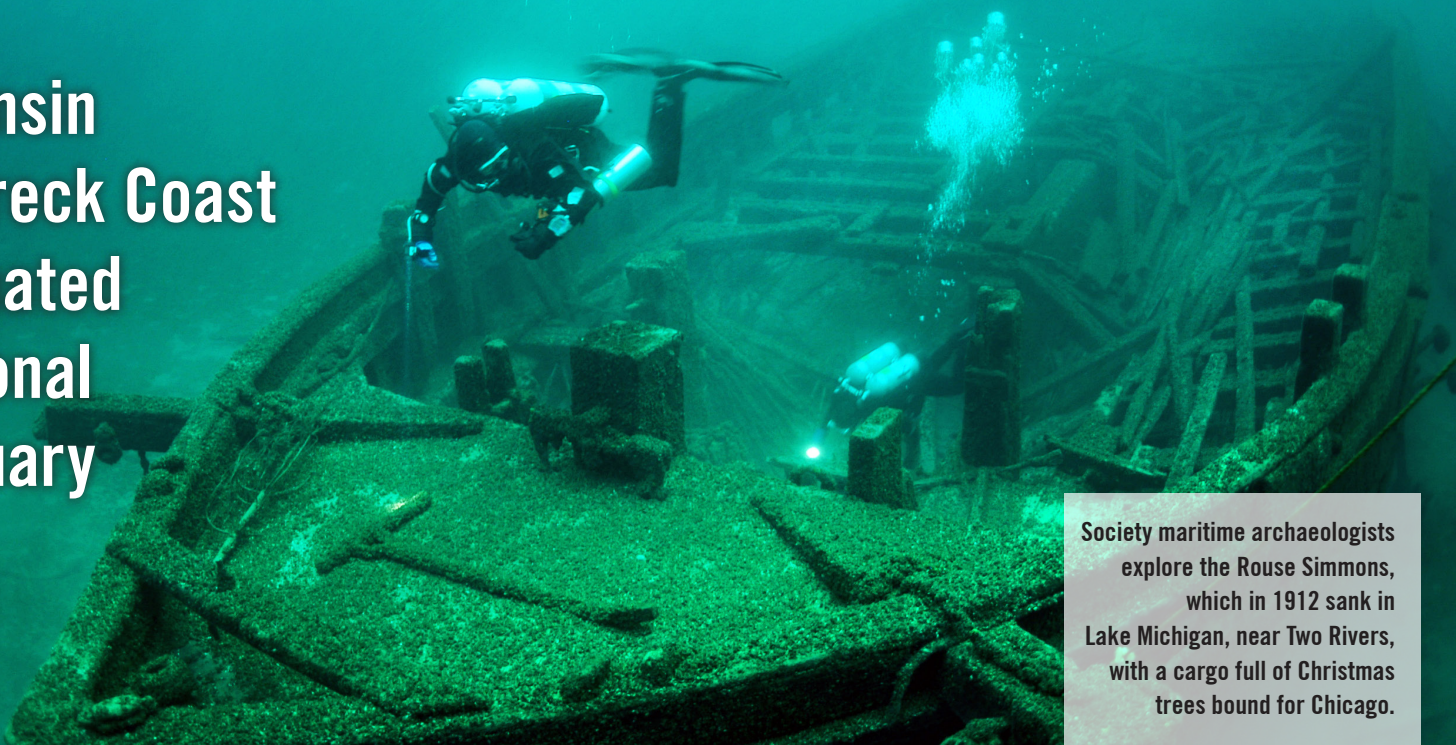
These employees transitioned to positions with the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), both of which faced unprecedented demand. Their contributions included establishing coronavirus testing centers, devising contact-tracing systems, managing vaccine distribution, and helping process record numbers of unemployment insurance claims.

"We couldn't be more proud of the way our staff embraced their spirit

of service and made significant personal and professional sacrifices to support people across our state during this unprecedented time of need," said Christian Øverland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Society. "Their willingness to apply their skills to solve incredibly complex problems and help save lives and livelihoods will forever be part of the story of this historic time."

"Some of the people I spoke with ... mentioned they were on the brink of losing their home because of employment that fell through due to the pandemic," said Rose Haveri, a tourist information assistant and Society employee since 1998, who was reassigned to DWD. "When I was able to (help) them get their deserved benefits, it felt wonderful!"

# Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast designated a national sanctuary



Society maritime archaeologists explore the Rouse Simmons, which in 1912 sank in Lake Michigan, near Two Rivers, with a cargo full of Christmas trees bound for Chicago.

For more than three decades, Wisconsin Historical Society maritime archaeologists and their colleagues have carefully documented dozens of shipwrecks off the eastern coast of Wisconsin in the waters of Lake Michigan.

That work received national recognition late this summer when the 962-square-mile Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast was officially designated the nation's 15th

national marine sanctuary by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The vast area, located roughly between Port Washington and Two Rivers, includes 36 known shipwrecks, 21 of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. The designation paves the way for further exploration and opportunities for educational and tourism programming.

"It is truly awe-inspiring," said Society Director Christian Øverland. "This

sanctuary will be an important way for us to teach visitors about the maritime history of our state and its national impact. We appreciate Gov. Evers and his administration, as well as state and local stakeholders and community partners, who helped make this designation a reality. It is extremely exciting and the culmination of decades of work by countless individuals."

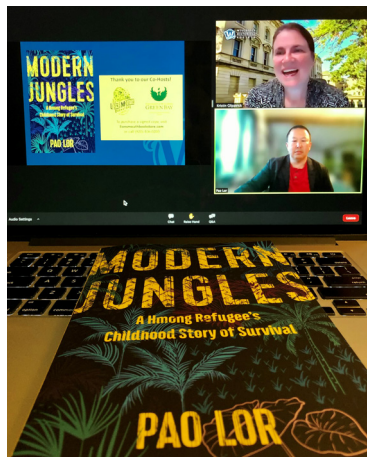
For more information on this significant designation, visit [wihist.org/noaa](http://wihist.org/noaa).

## Society Press enjoys strong year despite pandemic

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic creating unique challenges in the 2021 fiscal year, the Wisconsin Historical Society Press was able to connect with thousands of readers in new ways. In the process, it actually surpassed 2020 totals in both books sold (40,918, up by 3,756) and net sales to support the Society (\$612,006, an increase of \$15,738).

“The Press team believes that the written word has the power to build bridges and improve people’s lives — especially during trying times,” said Kate Thompson, director of the Society Press. “We’re grateful that so many people across the country engaged with us virtually and, through their purchases, helped support Society programs. It was inspiring to see book lovers come together to learn and lift each other up during these historic times.”

As the pandemic took hold, the Press pivoted to a variety of successful online programs. In addition to virtual book launches and talks by authors that attracted more than 2,000 guests, the Press launched a monthly *Book Bites* author series for adults, drawing over 3,200 views on the Press’ Facebook page. It was an expansion of the *Storytime Live* summer series for young readers (5,200 views). Both can be viewed on the Society Press YouTube page (@whspressbooks). “These events kept our books in front of live audiences during the pandemic,” Thompson said, “and enabled us to share history when in-person events weren’t possible.” In fact, they proved so popular, she said, that *Book Bites* will continue through 2022.



**Author Pao Lor** is hosted by Kristin Gilpatrick of the Society Press during his virtual book launch in April.

## NHD, local history conference make virtual connections

For the first time, the Society’s Local History and Historic Preservation Conference pivoted to a fully online format for its 14th annual gathering in October 2020, while the National History Day program for middle and high school students across Wisconsin also conducted its judging virtually. Both exceeded expectations despite the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you to our generous sponsors whose financial support made these events possible, allowing people of all ages to connect with history — and each other — during a truly historic year.

■ **Local History Conference:** 382 people from 19 states and 53 Wisconsin counties registered, including 49 percent first-time attendees. They enjoyed 32 sessions and interactive networking.

■ **National History Day:** 3,526 students participated, with 52 qualifying for Nationals, where seven finished in the Top 10 or won special awards. “My oldest son has said often that NHD was the best preparation he could have had for college work,” said Elizabeth Kanne, whose high school son, Alan, and sixth-grade daughter, Liza, both qualified for Nationals, with Liza placing sixth.



Guests celebrate a wedding at the Wisconsin Historical Society headquarters building in Madison in June. Over the past three years, the building has hosted 36 weddings among 185 private events, with more than 16,000 attendees.

Thank you to all who have hosted events, inspiring others to engage in our shared history while also providing revenue to support the Society. Go to [wisconsinhistory.org/eventrentals](https://wisconsinhistory.org/eventrentals) for information on how to host your event at a Society site.



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