

# 2010 Year in Review

## Wisconsin Historical Society

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A Message from Ellsworth Brown, The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Despite weathering another year in a challenging economic climate, the Wisconsin Historical Society achieved much to be proud of and thankful for in 2010.



Ellsworth Brown, The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director of the Society, speaks at the public launch of the Forward! Campaign in Madison on the evening of October 1, 2010

Some of the achievements of the year just past will have a profound and lasting impact on the Society's future.

And, during the course of the year, the Society had an opportunity to host some very special events and to present outstanding programs that embody our mission to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. Here are some highlights:

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### Forward! Campaign Launched

The Society launched Forward! The Campaign for the Wisconsin Historical Society, the first major fundraising campaign in the Society's history, at a [grand public launch event](#) at Madison's Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center on October 1, featuring Tom Brokaw as keynote speaker. While the ambitious \$77 million campaign has been quietly underway since 2006, the public launch marks the beginning of the public drive to raise the additional \$8.3 million needed to reach the campaign goal. Several of the capital projects enumerated below have resulted from the work of the Forward! Campaign. To learn more about the campaign, and how you can become a part of it, visit the [Forward! Campaign website](#).

### Grand Library Reading Room Renovation and Restoration Completed

One of the biggest success stories of the Forward! Campaign was completion of the long-awaited top-to-bottom renovation and restoration of the Society's grand Library Reading Room, now one of Wisconsin's most remarkable and distinctive architectural spaces. In April the Society celebrated completion of the project with a [public open house event](#) that attracted a steady stream of visitors over two days. Seven months of painstaking work returned the room to the elegance of its original architectural style while furnishing the space to meet 21st-century library patrons' needs. The \$2.9 million project restored historic details missing or obscured since a renovation undertaken in 1955, including a magnificent replicated stained-glass skylight in the room's 30-foot-high ceiling.

### Preservation Storage Facility Now in the Works

A new, state-of-the-art collections preservation and storage facility to house most of the Society's prized collections will soon become a reality, fulfilling another of the Forward! Campaign's primary objectives. With funding for the \$25 million facility now secured, staff of the Society's museum, library and archives, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, have been working for more than a year on plans for a world-class facility on the north side of Lake Mendota in Madison. When completed in 2013, the 95,000-square-foot building will provide secure storage for museum artifacts, library books and archival collections. Two firms with well-established international reputations, Engberg Anderson of Milwaukee and SmithGroup of Washington, D.C., are the architects and engineers for the facility.

## **New Wade House Learning & Visitor Center to Transform the Historic Site**

As it nears its sixth decade of operation, and having welcomed more than a million visitors, Wade House will open a new Learning and Visitor Center and Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum on June 6, 2013, that will boldly transform the historic site. The facility's grand opening, made possible by the Forward! Campaign, will take place 60 years to the day after the site's original dedication in 1953 and 50 years after the establishment of the original museum of horse-drawn transportation. Multiyear planning for a new facility took hold when the Mark Jung family and the Kohler Trust for Preservation each offered extraordinary leadership gifts of \$3 million. The State Building Commission followed with \$6.5 million. Uihlein-Wilson Architects of Milwaukee is designing the facility while Museum Design Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts, will design the transportation museum's exhibits.

## **Old World Wisconsin Opens New Multipurpose Facility**

This month most permanent staff at Old World Wisconsin will move into a new facility that will serve a trio of purposes. Administrative staff and some curatorial staff will move into the 3,060 square-foot building, marking the first time in the outdoor museum's history that most of its permanent staff will have one roof over their heads. The building will also serve as a facility for training the costumed interpreters who provide the lifeblood of Old World Wisconsin's visitor experience by telling the stories of the pioneers who built, lived and worked in the museum's 67 historic structures. The building's third purpose will be to serve as Old World Wisconsin's period clothing department. The State Building Commission authorized the state's share of funding for the \$710,000 project in September 2009. A significant share of the project's cost, \$250,000, came from private contributions.

## **Society to Reap Nearly \$1 Million in Federal Transportation Grants**

Nearly \$1 million in federal funding will help pay for installation of exhibits at the new Learning and Visitor Center at Wade House and to conduct archaeological surveys of five historic Lake Michigan shipwreck sites. The Society expects both projects to enhance local heritage tourism opportunities. The funding comes from the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Enhancement program. It will come in the form of reimbursements administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation after the two projects' completion.

## **Most Successful Local History & Historic Preservation Conference in History**

In October more than 350 registered participants from 47 Wisconsin counties flocked to the Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva for the 2010 [Local History and Historic Preservation Conference](#) to attend [presentations and workshops](#) on a wide range of topics. That represents a dramatic 19-percent increase in attendance from 2009 and a whopping 65-percent increase from 2008. A further sign of the conference's growing success and popularity is that, of the more than 350 registered participants, 158 were from first-time attendees.

## **Four Wisconsin History Makers Honored at Fifth Annual Gala**

The Society honored the lifetime achievements of four top leaders with ties to the state in May during its [Fifth Annual Wisconsin History Makers Gala](#). The distinguished class of 2010 included: [Robert Spitzer](#), president emeritus of the Milwaukee School of Engineering; [Will Allen](#), chief executive officer of Growing Power, a national nonprofit organization based in the inner city of Milwaukee that supports the development of community food systems; [Frederick P. Stratton Jr.](#), retired chairman and chief executive officer of Briggs & Stratton Corporation; and [Michael Leckrone](#), director of the marching band and director of bands at the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

## Wisconsin Welcomes Home its Vietnam Veterans

Also in May, the Society teamed with Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs to give a long-overdue "welcome home" to the state's Vietnam veterans. [LZ Lambeau™: Welcoming Home Wisconsin's Vietnam Veterans](#), held on the hallowed ground of Green Bay's Lambeau Field, delivered a massive, three-day tribute to those who served and those who never returned. Veterans, their families and the general public flocked to Lambeau Field by the thousands to take part in the moving event. The highlight was a tribute ceremony featuring music, aerial fly-bys, presentations and premiere segments of the "[Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories](#)" documentary produced by Wisconsin Public Television.

## Top Honors for the Wisconsin Historical Society Press

The Wisconsin Historical Society Press had a banner year in 2010, winning 34 awards for its publications. Awards included the prestigious American Association of State and Local History Award of Merit for the "[Wisconsin Magazine of History](#)." Several books also received recognition. "[Encore! The Renaissance of Wisconsin Opera Houses](#)" received the Outstanding Book Award from the Theatre Historical Society of America. "[Out of the Northwoods: The Many Lives of Paul Bunyan](#)" received the American Folklore Society's Wayland D. Hand Prize. The Press also took home the Christopher Latham Sholes Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers (recognizing the Press for outstanding encouragement and support of writers). One book alone, "[People of the Sturgeon: Wisconsin's Love Affair with an Ancient Fish](#)," garnered 10 first-place prizes. Continued growth in book sales in 2010 was due in part to the release of the stunningly illustrated architectural history, "[Wisconsin's Own: Twenty Remarkable Homes](#)," produced in partnership with the Jeffris Family Foundation.

## National History Day State Finalists Compete at National Finals

The Society hosted another successful state event in the yearlong National History Day program, with 47 finalists emerging from the competition and going on to represent the state as Team Wisconsin in the national event in College Park, Maryland, in June. The growing number of Wisconsin students participating in National History Day speaks to the popularity and success of the program. This year's 47 finalists emerged from a field of 9,200 students representing 114 schools statewide that took part in National History Day this year. You can read about their adventures at the June national finalists in their online [journal](#).

## In Conclusion

The successes and milestones enumerated above took the dedication and forward thinking of a hard-working staff, the fundraising prowess of the [Wisconsin Historical Foundation](#) and its [Board of Directors](#) as well as the [Forward! Campaign Cabinet](#), the leadership of the Society's governing [Board of Curators](#) and the steadfast support of our members, volunteers and other donors. We are grateful to them all as we are to the Legislature and to the people of Wisconsin for helping us reach the goals and milestones we did in 2010. Best wishes to all for continued successes in the year that lies ahead.

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