

# 2023 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



MANITOWOC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

EST. 1906



### **Our Mission:**

The Manitowoc County Historical Society collects, interprets, preserves, and promotes the history and heritage of Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, in order to educate the public and heighten its understanding and appreciation of the past as it proceeds into the future.

### **Our Vision:**

Inspire curiosity and foster lifelong learning about Manitowoc County's past by providing engaging, individualized and unique experiences.

*Pictured on the cover: Top left is Jennifer Johnson working on a sewing project with a student in the Dress Shop; Top right is Scott Sheets in the Harness Shop; Bottom left is Phil Groll, at the right, with an out of state guest on the left, looking at research materials; Bottom right is Tia Brandt in the Sorenson House, cooking with a student.*

*Pictured above is a school group using their detective skills to find out what the items in the immigrant trunk tell about the family.*



Guests walk the Museum and Village grounds in Summer, 2023.

# 2023: IN REVIEW

During 2023, we engaged our guests in new and creative experiences while staying true to our core mission to inspire curiosity and foster learning. Our focus is on enriching our Manitowoc County Historical Society's Museum and Village programs, audiences, and community engagement – all to strengthen our future as a museum and the audiences we serve today and tomorrow.

In this annual impact report, you will learn more about how we have been redefining how the world views and uses museums and how our guests engage with us and what they have to say.

You will learn about how we leverage our local history and how we share learning, agriculture, finances, and our community. By telling more diverse stories and enhancing our accommodations for all guests, we become a more accessible and inclusive organization that further realizes our mission to provide engaging and individualized experiences for everyone.

Through community partnerships and developments, we are continually performing long-term maintenance on our treasured historic structures and landscape.

I am encouraged to see the value and impact our Manitowoc County Historical Society continues to have in our local community and regionally in the museum profession. This past year our business of enrichment laid the groundwork for activating our future – and we thank you for being a part of our year.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Meyer".

Amy Meyer  
Executive Director

# ACTIVATING OUR COMMUNITY

The many public programs at our Manitowoc County Historical Society Museum and Village in 2023 brought families and friends together for unforgettable moments once again. More importantly, revenue generated from these great programs and events, along with other philanthropic support, helped further MCHS's mission to create access and year-round opportunity for under served families through the Access Pass Program. This vital on-going program breaks down financial barriers and allows our events to be a welcoming experience for everyone.

## *Corporate members and sponsors included:*

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Vinton Construction  
Wisconsin Humanities  
Wisconsin Public Service Foundation

**“I came to Pinecrest Christmas after seeing the great reviews and having the ability through the Access Admission... This experience is something that my family will cherish forever.”**

## **SPARK! Memory Care Programs**

As a certified dementia-friendly museum, we strive to provide a safe, welcoming, nonjudgmental social environment where individuals with dementia and their caregivers can connect with one another. There were 10 programs held in 2023, engaging with 67 participants.

## **Public Programs**

Along with returning favorites such as Pinecrest Christmas, Civil War Remembered, the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, and the Mid-Lakes Thresheree, our public programs also included the Heritage Maker's Market. This new program welcomed artists from across the Midwest to share their knowledge and pass on their skills to new generations.

## **Weekly Local History Podcast**

MCHS, in partnership with Seehafer Broadcasting and WOMT-Radio have a weekly radio broadcast called "Our History Our Story". You can find all of our weekly five-minute podcasts on our website. The podcast brings stories from our museum to life. Be sure to listen to an all new episode of Our History, Our Story every Friday morning at 11:25 on WOMT 1240 AM radio.



*Artists gathered outside the General Store during the Heritage Maker's Market in June.*



Volunteers gathered outside the Two Creeks Town Hall in September 2023 for the annual volunteer picnic.

## Thank you to our Volunteers with over 100 hours of service in 2023.

George Baldwin  
John Bohlin  
Bob Coenen  
Jim Day  
Mike Duescher  
Eugene Durben  
Phil Groll  
Greg Krcma  
Bill Pauwels  
Emmy Rebitz  
Jim Steuer

**4,670 total volunteer hours in 2023,  
from over 400 volunteers.**

### Preserving the Past columns are award-winning

Our museum's Preserving the Past column, a bi-weekly column in the Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter, began in December 2009 as an off-shoot of the newspaper's longtime Milestones column by Marge Miley.

A few of our articles earned first place in the 2022 Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation Better Newspaper Contest for the *Local Column* division: "'Half-way house' on Lake Michigan between Manitowoc and Two Rivers was finest in the county," "Manitowoc fire in 1962 was so bright people in Ludington, Michigan, saw light coming from the city." and "This photographer and his trusty horse captured Manitowoc County in photos unlike anyone else at turn of the 20th century."

Bob Fay, historian and former executive director of the Manitowoc County Historical Society, was runner-up in the Local Column division for: "Manitowoc County brewery was largest operation found in Wisconsin during Prohibition," "Jens Jensen, internationally renowned landscape architect, designed the original landscape plan for Manitowoc Lincoln High School" and "This Egyptian mausoleum at Pioneers Rest Cemetery in Two Rivers was built in 1914 and remains a focus of curiosity today."

# STRENGTHENING CURIOSITY



*Living History Coordinator, Hannah Harvey, shows a young guest how to pitch bundles into the threshing machine during the Mid-Lakes Thresheree in September.*

Our Education team offered limitless, immersive experiences in 2023, meeting guests where they are to sink into the process of learning, erasing the pressure of an expected outcome or final product. More than ever, guests were given the freedom to step into their own stories.

**Says one homeschool parent: “To be able to connect with local history at this level is a dream. We are so glad we found a place where the kids can be comfortable and safe – and we know they are learning every time.”**

Learning at MCHS is unique and personal. As we invite guests to “Step into the Story,” we also strive to step into theirs. History is at the core of what we do, because we must understand where we’ve been in order to understand where we are and look forward to where we might go. But history does not live in standards or even in research; history lives in our stories, and stories are enhanced through art, science, imagination, and nature. MCHS acknowledges the power of intertwining these concepts and ideas, inviting guests into the stories we know, the stories they bring to us, and the stories we have yet to acknowledge or discover.

## **Field Trips**

The grade school Manitowoc County Historical Society field trip is a well known experience for students in Northeast Wisconsin. Students join us to learn about a



*Gordy Hauman, left, instructs a summer camp student at the carpentry shop.*



Mark Stecker shows students the process of the Babcock Test in the Cheese Factory.

variety of topics, with every lesson built around Wisconsin state standards. Lessons make use of our 60 acres of land, swamps, and ponds, as well as our expert interpretation staff who bring lessons to life in new ways.

### Summer Camp

Our Manitowoc County Historical Society provides a unique backdrop for CAMP PINECREST, where young people can explore nature and history, while also building meaningful friendships, practicing social skills and finding opportunities for personal growth. In 2023, there were 3 summer camp experiences held, leading to engagement with 76 students.

### Adult Programming

We know that learning about our history is not just for youth. In 2023, there were 4 Hungry for History lecture and dinner programs (with 92 guests!)—along with a walking tour of historic Manitowoc Rapids.

**“He could not have done the same things anywhere else that he did during the Life as a Pioneer camp. It truly was an adventure!”**

**– Summer camp parent**



**1,865 students attended a tour in 2023 (64% increase from 2022)**

**76 summer day camp students (8% increase from 2022)**

**311 homeschool program attendees  
(46% increase from 2022)**



**67 new memberships in 2023 (compared to 21 in 2022—  
a 46% increase) for a total of 437 active memberships**



**Over 100 individuals took part in  
Access programs in 2023**



# SHARING OUR ARCHIVES



*Volunteer archivists Jim and Diane are hard at work archiving our American Legion Post 88 collection and local history newspaper files.*

Did you know, our archives include 10,000 3-D artifacts, 16,000 document records, and 25,000 photographs that document Manitowoc County history?

## **American Legion Collection**

One of our newest acquisitions is a collection of scrapbooks and items from the American Legion.

Found inside the Moore's Irish Pub building by the Allie Family, this collection of American Legion post materials tells the group's story from the 1920s to 1970s. Scrapbooks make up the majority of the collection, with newspaper articles, notes, and photographs decorating the historic pages. Part of the collection also tells the story of First Lieut. Daniel B. Bleser, who died in World War II. His family's home at 1119 Lincoln Boulevard in Manitowoc, was donated to the local American Legion Guy Drews Post 88 in March, 1944 by Mrs. Arthur Barrie for use as "clubrooms and lounge" in memory of her son. The Legion used it for a short time, but legal complications developed and the home was deeded back. They

**Says one research guest: "Wow. I never knew my grandparents grew up across the road from each other. This is a neat treasure that I will share with our family and generations to come."**

then met in the Lincoln Park fieldhouse for several years and eventually established a clubhouse on Jay Street in Manitowoc. The Manitowoc post is now named Drews-Bleser Post 88. This collection was recently donated to our museum and is in the process of being added to our permanent collection.

If you missed it, in October our Volunteer Archivist Jim joined Engagement Manager Devinne on WOMT's Our History, Our Story, to talk about the American Legion Collection. You can listen to that episode on WOMT's website here: <https://www.womtradio.com/podcasts>





*Volunteer archivist Phil Groll, at right, shares his findings with a research request guest.*

### Research Requests

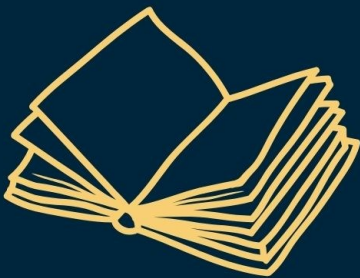
In 2023, how to learn more about our local history was a common question received at the Historical Society. Through phone calls, emails, and social media postings, we directed researchers on how our volunteers answer research requests, what history we have access to, and how far back our records go.

As one of the oldest Historical Societies in Wisconsin, we are fortunate enough to have a wealth of history collected and have much to share with our local community and beyond. In 2023, research was completed in four main categories: 38% on people and families, 26% on buildings, 23% on events and history, and 11% on places.

### Celebrating 5 Years of our Online Photo Collection

A big step for online accessibility to our collection came 5 years ago with the launch of our online photo collection. In December, 2018 the museum's first online digital photo collection opened with more than 3,000 images from the society's archives.

The initiative was supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The museum worked with a UW-Milwaukee MLIS student to bring an extensive collection of film negatives from Manitowoc photographer Daryl Cornick to be the first online collection available through the museum. Photos are added to the online collection each year!



**46 hours of research completed for guests  
(21% decrease from 2022)**

**98 Items added to the Historical Society's  
permanent collection**



**Over 3,500 images on the online  
photo collection - with 4,700 views**

# ACTIVATING OUR FUTURE



*Hamann Construction shared their employees with us for a week to help construct a new boardwalk from our Law Office to our General Store.*

As any homeowner knows, a to-do list is never complete – but volunteers and contractors checked a few things off of the list in 2023.

## **Print Shop relocation**

When the Village was set up in the 1970s, today's Print

Shop building was the Welcome Center and guests would park just to the south of the building. When the Medical Office was added in the 1990s, it was a rotating exhibit space that guests could enjoy before or after their tour of the village.

Work to relocate the Medical Office and Print Shop began in May, 2023. Seiler Bros. Construction poured cement slabs for both of the buildings. DeVooght House Lifters raised the Print Shop and brought the building to its new location, opposite our General Store and Newton State Bank. Volunteers then laid cement block to raise the building to allow for airflow and better care of the bottom of the structure.

The Medical Office will make its milestone relocation in the same fashion in the next few months.

We have received many great comments about how this will be a benefit for not only village flow, but also programming and access to the structures.

## **Cheese Factory repairs**

In the little over 20 years that our Cheese Factory has been on site, it has quickly grown to be one of the favorites for our school tours, youth programs, and our annual Thresheree program.



*Newly restored Cheese Factory, at the left, with the new road to the Krueger Sawmill and a new location for the Print Shop.*

As it seems with all projects, once we started opening up the rotten areas for repair, we knew there were more exterior boards that needed to be replaced. Final repairs totaled \$15,613 and \$7,368 from painting. Our volunteers were able to keep the painting costs down by doing much of the scraping and prep work.

### It takes a Community

Generous funding from the Ruth St. John and John Dunham West Foundation, Inc. has allowed for our museum to grow and become a great example of living history museums in the Midwest.

Hamann Construction shared their employees with us for a week to help construct a new boardwalk from our Law Office to our General Store. Seasoned workers shared their knowledge alongside our volunteers and high school apprentices.

ACE Building Service has donated much of their time to help investigate the issues with the Dance Pavilion. While we have paid for structural knowledge and tests, we are proud to have an amazing partner in the building's preservation.

Our supporters have inspired local businesses and private individuals to also share their gifts with our museum to ensure that we can continue to literally step into the stories of our past for generations to come.



*We love it when we get to hear stories from our guests about special connections that they have with our historic structures. Lucian, a Franklin Elementary student, joined us for a field trip and shared that his Great-Great-Great Grandmother, Edna Mittnacht, was a teacher at Shadyside School. Thank you for visiting and sharing your family's story Lucian!*



**In 2023, we received over \$222,000 in donations - across all designated areas.**

**The Endowment Fund ended the year with a balance of \$776,339 - with \$19,000 added in donations in 2023.**



**Re-invested over \$65,000 in Vetting Fund projects - to maintain our historic structures**



# MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EST. 1906

924 Pinecrest Road  
Manitowoc, WI 54220



**Our Manitowoc County Historical Society is a reflection of our community's past, present, and future due in part to the dedicated efforts and direction of our Board of Directors:**

Bill Fricke, President  
Angel Johaneck, Vice President  
Matt Neu, Treasurer  
Jennifer Johnson, Secretary  
Megan Bruckschen  
Jack Krause  
Dennis Tienor

**Staff:**

Amy Meyer,  
*Executive Director*  
Devinne Fackelman,  
*Engagement Manager*  
Hannah Harvey,  
*Living History Program Coordinator*

*Pictured at the left are volunteers Emmy Rebitz and Marge Jehle, organizing items in the Museum Store.*