

Wisconsin Historical Society: Wisconsin Historical Museum plans for transition of artifacts to make way for new history center

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 6, 2022

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Madison, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society is approaching a pivotal moment on the path to constructing a new history center. Over the next several months, Society staff will be packing up artifacts at the Wisconsin Historical Museum and moving them into safe storage at the State Archive Preservation Facility. Museum exhibitions will be disassembled in phases, with the third and fourth floors closing on Sept. 12 and the second floor closing on Nov. 28. School tours will continue into December and the first-floor retail store is expected to remain open through 2023.

“With the final site for the new history center selected and architectural and experience design underway, the time has come to start the monumental task of carefully moving the museum artifacts into safe storage,” said Christian Overland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society. “Now is the time to celebrate a museum that has touched the lives of many and to look forward to an exciting future for history and culture enthusiasts across Wisconsin and our nation.”

The Society will continue to serve Wisconsin residents and schools statewide during the transition period before the doors open to the new history center. Plans are in development to offer programs and special exhibitions at the Wisconsin State Capitol building and to bring touring installations, programs and virtual offerings statewide.

“In the absence of a physical building, we are creating a ‘museum without walls’

that will connect with people, communities and stories across Wisconsin's 72 counties," said Overland. "We are feeling energized by the challenge of making history accessible and engaging in new and enriching ways."

Demolition of the current museum and construction of the new history center are expected to begin in 2024, after authority to construct is granted by the State Building Commission. The new history center will utilize the site of the current Wisconsin Historical Museum as well as two adjacent properties on Madison's Capitol Square. The new facility will more than double the exhibition space of the current museum and is expected to welcome more than 200,000 guests annually.

Funding for the new building has been successfully secured through \$70 million in State support and \$30 million in private gifts. An additional \$20 million in gift funds is needed for programming, collections, and an endowment necessary to support the history center.

For more information on the new history center project, visit wisconsinhistory.org/historycenter, and tune in to the Wisconsin Historical Society's social media accounts in the coming weeks for a behind-the-scenes look at some of the museum's top treasures as they get packed for safe storage.

About Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. The Wisconsin Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, receives grants and private contributions benefitting the Wisconsin Historical Society and administers the membership program. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.