Registration is now open for the Minnesota Alliance of Local History’s 2017 Annual Meeting and Conference!

The conference, which will be held at Chase on the Lake on April 26-27, has more offerings for attendees than ever before with sessions for both experienced and emerging professionals, a half-day pre-conference event and a variety of pricing options.

Three tracks mean something for everyone

As usual, both days will offer two tracks of sessions on a variety of local history topics, such as collections management, marketing, education, funding and more. However, a new third track on Day One (Wednesday, April 26) will focus on fundamentals, with sessions geared to college students, volunteers and emerging professionals. The third track on Day Two (Thursday, April 27) will provide sessions for experienced executive directors. “We’ll have something for everyone, regardless of his or her level of experience in the field,” said MALHM Conference Chair Jill Wohnoutka (Kandiyohi County Historical Society).

The 2017 conference will be held at Chase on the Lake in Walker, April 26-27.

Keynote speaker illustrates value of local history

The keynote speaker for the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museum’s Annual Meeting and Conference has always been drawn to history.

Formerly the executive director of the Cass County Historical Society (West Fargo, ND), Steve Stark now combines his love of history with his drawing skills to create his “Illustrated History” presentations. Dressed in historical costume, Steve tells true tales of the past while fast-drawing them in charcoal on mounted rolls of paper. The political cartoonist and artist is known as "Mr. History" for his talks to more than 5,000 school children each year as well as adults throughout the region.

See him in action on Wednesday, April 26, at the MALHM KEYNOTE to Page 8
By Marci Matson
Coordinator

In a past career when I did corporate training and development, my company was deep into the philosophies of Stephen Covey, author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

One of the seven habits was to “Begin with the End in Mind.” Training sessions inevitably had attendees envision what they’d want people to say about them at their funerals and then set goals so they’d live up to their eulogies.

Last summer, the MALHM Board of Directors spent a day brainstorming short-term goals for the organization. Our “end” that we kept in mind was April 27, 2017: the date of our annual meeting.

The question I posed to our group was: What do we want to tell our membership that we accomplished when we present our annual report? To answer that question, we created a long list of goals, and I’m happy to say that we crossed off quite a few of them.

Some are as simple as setting up online credit card payments to make registration for events and paying for dues much easier for members. Immediately, that service has paid off.

Other goals took more consideration and research, such as deciding whether or not we wanted to lead a state-wide effort to find a new Collection Management System and a web hosting service. We opted to do so and have submitted a grant to pilot a CMS project. (See Page 3 for more details.)

Many of our goals centered around improving our annual conference: we added a third track, found sponsors and advertisers, added a pre-conference event and more. (See story on Page 1.)

We also added other training opportunities, including a one-day fall workshop focused on house museums, an upcoming workshop on tombstone preservation (see Page 4) and a MALHM Mingle networking event discussing traveling exhibits.

The Board wanted to expand the tangible benefits for MALHM members, beyond the discount on the conference and workshops. We now offer a discount on Gaylord Archival products and provide scholarship opportunities (see Page 3) to attend other conferences.

And yes, I’ll admit some of our plans didn’t work out as well as we hoped. We simply didn’t have time to make a #historyhashtag social media campaign catch on. Our second MALHM workshop scheduled for early spring in northern Minnesota probably wasn’t the best timing choice either. That event has been postponed.

But we wanted to be ambitious and creative and continue to make MALHM a leader in the field. Looking ahead to the 2018 annual conference, we want to know: what should be our list of accomplishment in the next year? Email me with your ideas.
If all goes as planned, five history organizations will test a new Collections Management System (CMS) this year and migrate their records to a common web host.

The eventual goal is that, upon the successful completion of the pilot program, the software will be made available state-wide with MAHLM providing a centralized home for the community and managing hosting services for the software.

The pilot is pending approval of a Legacy grant for the project; a decision will be made later this spring.

Under the requirements of Legacy funding, MAHLM is now seeking bids for both the CMS program and web hosting services.

Once the CMS program is selected, the five participating organizations will work with the vendor to fine-tune the open source software to meet the needs of Minnesota’s local history community.

“We also will seek feedback from a wider group of users,” said Ann Grandy, Pope County Historical Society curator, MAHLM Board Member and grant project manager. Several other organizations have pledged to provide input on how they use specific fields and what features are critical in the next CMS program.

PastPerfect Museum Software has been the standard CMS platform in Minnesota, and some museums will likely stay put. However, as more museums have discussed moving to a cloud-based option not offered by PastPerfect, MALHM decided to take a leadership role in selecting an alternative.

“If each institution chooses its own CMS, we lose the opportunity to create a system collectively,” MALHM stated in its grant request. “By sharing a system, there are significant savings in webhosting, training, and updates. The new software will also allow for future expansion and data sharing capabilities.

“The eventual goal is that not only will individual institutions be able to share their collection (or parts of it) on-line with the public, but that the museums and repositories in Minnesota will be able to share their collection information with each other through a non-public, shared database.”

If you would like to have feedback on the process, please contact grant project manager Ann Grandy at popecounty-museum@gmail.com.

Pilot Project Official Partners:
- Pope County Historical Society
- MN Indian Affairs Council
- Stevens County Historical Society
- Renville County Historical Society
- Isanti County Historical Society

Supporting Organizations:
- Stearns History Museum
- Morrison County Historical Society
- Minnesota Digital Library
- Murray County Historical Society

New MALHM fellowships to help peers help peers

The Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums’ mission is “peers helping peers.”

MALHM members demonstrate that mission by teaching classes for their peers and sharing their expertise one-on-one to improve professionalism in the field.

MALHM will now offer a new fellowship program to help peers help peers. At least two $250 scholarships will be awarded to MALHM members this year to attend training or workshops and share that knowledge with their colleagues in Minnesota. Participants will be required to present a session on the annual MALHM conference.

Scholarships will be reviewed by the Board quarterly to determine if the topic meets membership needs. Applicants should write a letter of request to the Board via email. Indicate the conference or workshop name, date and how you would use the information.

Deadlines are: March 1, June 1, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1.
Learn tombstone preservation skills at May 19 workshop

Many of Minnesota’s historic cemeteries have deteriorating, moss-covered tombstones. Learn how to clean, preserve and reset these markers with a full-day hands on workshop from Jarrod Roll, owner of Save Your Stones and Executive Director of Monroe County Historical Society (Sparta, WI).

The workshop will be held 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, May 19 Meet at Goodhue County Historical Society, 1166 Oak St Red Wing, MN 55066. The afternoon session continues at nearby Oakwood Cemetery for demonstration and hands on activities.

Cost is $40 MALHM members, $45 for non-members; price includes class, lunch and cleaning kit.

Reserve your spot now! Space is limited. Register online with a credit card, and pay for MALHM membership at the same time. Dues are $5 for all-volunteer organizations and $25 for organizations with paid staff.

You may also register by check a check payable to MALHM and sent to: Jill Wohnoutka, MALHM Treasurer, Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 610 NE Hwy 71 Willmar, MN 56201

LSA action teams moving ahead

The goals in the Legacy Strategic Agenda (LSA) build on success realized during the first five years of Legacy funding. The LSA’s strategic priorities include:
- History Education
- Legacy Grants
- Unfamiliar Stories
- Partnerships

In 2017, priority action teams will assess strengths and challenges across the first three priorities. All teams will integrate partnership strategies. After the assessment phase, teams will act to transform history in communities across Minnesota.

Education
Local historical societies are ideal resources for outstate school districts working to meet state social studies standards. The education priority action team will survey local educators & administrators. They’ll assess barriers and opportunities in connecting school districts with local historical societies.

Unfamiliar Stories
There’s a gap between those whose histories and narratives are not in the mainstream - those with unfamiliar stories - and the resources available in history communities. The unfamiliar stories action team will identify places and people where these stories exist and share this knowledge with the wider history community. The priority action team will also explore the wants and needs of communities.

Legacy Grants
How can the MNHS legacy grant programs have continued

LSA to Page 8
By Todd Mahon
Field Services Specialist
Minnesota Historical Society

Contemporary museums and history enterprises are tasked with serving a broad public. Because of this, we need to remove as many barriers possible that prevent the broad public from accessing our programs and exhibits.

A literal way history enterprises with buildings do this is to remove or mitigate physical barriers that may prevent people with physical disabilities from entering buildings and fully engaging with the programs offered. This is an example that most people can see and understand.

Inclusive organizations understand that not all barriers are physical. Proper handling of culturally sensitive objects is an important way that history enterprises remove barriers for the public to interact with their institution and ensure that all people feel welcome.

Culturally sensitive objects tend to fall into one of three categories:
- those governed by law;
- those not legally restricted but which need special care and may not be able to be exhibited; and
- those that best practices show should not be exhibited without deliberate interpretation.

**Objects governed by law**


In 2015, MNHS Local History Services (LHS) staff visited each of Minnesota’s 87 county historical societies and conducted a survey that asked if these organizations held culturally sensitive objects. If they did, staff then asked for selected examples. (The full report is available by contacting Todd Mahon at todd.mahon@mnhs.org.)

More than two thirds of the 87 county historical societies either reported having culturally sensitive items, or such items were observed on exhibition during the visit.

The two most common culturally sensitive objects reported in the survey are associated with American Indians and African Americans, like these examples photographed.

**What are “culturally sensitive objects”?**

They are artifacts that originate from a culture that has concerns about how they will be displayed, used and cared for in a museum setting. They may hold sacred or higher meaning and warrant special handling.
Special handling required

MNHS Local History Services staff is fond of describing objects that are not governed by law as an issue “not of having, but of handling.”

Many items that do not fall under governing laws can be sensitively handled in a manner that satisfies the majority of affected groups.

Often this can be handled with interpretation that accompanies the object. A Nazi war trophy, bearing the potent swastika, exhibited without any interpretation, can be threatening or traumatic to many people. The same object exhibited with text that explains the objects origins and the path it took to the exhibit can mitigate that threat.

Interpretation needed

In some cases, the objects do need special handling. For example, followers of the Muslim religion prefer that a Koran on exhibit be displayed closed instead of open. This is a modest accommodation that shouldn’t take away from the intent of the exhibition and makes for an environment that is welcoming for all people.

Organizations that have questions about objects in their collection that may fall under NAGPRA have a resource with the Minnesota Historical Society’s Local History Services. Leah Bowe (see sidebar below) is the Heritage Collections Consultant with the unit and will help organizations navigate the path to repatriation of objects that fall under NAGPRA’s purview, or establish protocols for appropriate care of objects that require special treatment but don’t fall under the aegis of NAGPRA. She is also a resource on other matters of cultural sensitivity and the identification of objects.

Meet Leah Bowe, Heritage Collections Consultant

Leah Bowe is the Heritage Collections Consultant for the Heritage Preservation Department at Minnesota Historical Society. A graduate of Macalester College, she was trained as an art curator with a specialty in Native America.

A lifelong interest in museum ethics and American law has furthermore resulted in over twenty years of serving as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990) Officer for numerous museums in the United States including the Art Institute of Chicago and, most recently, MNHS.

As the Heritage Collections Consultant, her job is to work with MNHS Heritage Preservation staff and local history organizations to improve the treatment of culturally sensitive objects in public collections around the state of Minnesota.
Day One will offer a track with courses like *Exhibit Graphic Design 101* and an informal, drop-in session with five museum professionals who can provide one-on-one assistance with individual collections challenges.

The Day Two executive directors’ track was developed, with assistance of Minnesota Historical Society Local History Services, based on feedback from the community on social media as well as conversations with colleagues. For example, *Sensitive Subjects: I Was Never Trained for This!* will cover difficult situations that executive directors face.

The offerings were developed with the help of a Program Committee, recruited by MALHM for the first time this year. The final schedule will be posted soon on our [Annual Conference](#) page and emailed to MALHM members.

### New pricing options

MALHM will allow one-day registration this year to encourage participation from volunteers and students as well as paid staff.

Cost for both days is $70 for MALHM members and full-time college students and $85 for non-members. Cost for one day (either April 26 or April 27) is $40 for members/students and $55 for non-members. Registration includes breakfast, lunch, snacks and the April 26 evening mixer sponsored by [Minnesota Digital Library](#).

"MALHM has always worked to make the conference as affordable as possible to encourage participation from all sizes of organizations," said MALHM President Dustin Heckman. "Our goal is to bring our peers together annually to learn from each other and increase professionalism in the field."

MALHM is also offering options to purchase the lunch only on either day for $20, so that family and friends may support Minnesota History Award winners on Day Two or see the keynote speaker on Day One.

### Pre-conference event at Itasca State Park

Another new offering is a pre-conference half-day session on interpretation at Itasca State Park, made possible with in-kind sponsorship from [Bemidji Bus Line](#). Attendees will learn how the park manages and trains volunteers and temporary summer staff in interpretation skills so that they’re accurate as well as engaging. Park naturalists will provide a guided tour and demonstrate training techniques. They will also provide links to free and low-cost interpretation resources.

The event will occur on Tuesday, April 25, the day before the conference officially opens. The bus leaves at 1 p.m. from Chase on the Lake and returns around 4 p.m.

Cost is $10 for MALHM members and full-time college students or $15 for non-members. Attendees may provide their own transportation, but the price remains the same.

### New! Credit card registration

For the first time this year, conference attendees may pay on-line with a credit card through [MALHM News— Winter 2017](#)
New conference format splits up keynote and MN History Awards

Keynote speaker Clyde Doepner, curator for the Minnesota Twins, kept MALHM conference attendees enthralled at last year’s MALHM Conference in Willmar.

Afterwards, audience members lined up to chat with him and look at his historic Twins artifacts, but their time was cut short so that the schedule could move onto the Annual Meeting and the Minnesota History Awards.

That won’t happen this year, with schedule changes that put the keynote speaker on Wednesday, April 26, and the Annual Meeting and awards ceremony on Thursday, April 27.

“The only reason we had everything on one day was tradition,” said Conference Chair Jill Wohnoutka. “We used to have a one-day conference so of course everything was on one day.”

The split should also give attendees time to network and chat over the lunch break.

This year, MALHM is offering lunch only rates for guests of Minnesota History Award winners or those who want to see only the keynote speaker. Cost is $20 per person. Register online with a credit card or send check, with memo specifying the lunch date, to: Jill Wohnoutka, MALHM Treasurer, Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 610 NE Hwy 71, Willmar, MN 56201.

KEYNOTE from Page 1
Conference at Chase on the Lake in Walker, MN. Register online with a credit card or by mail with a check. See MALHM website for more details.

An Excelsior, MN native, Steve and his wife, a retired teacher, live in Fargo, ND where he is a cartoonist and columnist for the Forum of Fargo-Moorhead, and writes a feature titled “This Week in Our History.” An award-winning editorial cartoonist, Stark has published more than 3,000 cartoons. He also has illustrated four books, along with numerous illustrations for educational, newspaper and advertising publications.

CONFERENCE from Page 7
MALHM’s new online store. Attendees may also pay with a registration form and check by mail.

With either method, attendees can indicate dietary needs, such as vegetarian or gluten free.

Registration deadline is April 10. Chase on the Lake will offer a discount to MALHM attendees who book by phone by April 4. For more information, see our Annual Conference page on our website.

If you have additional questions, please contact MALHM Coordinator Marci Matson or Conference Chair Jill Wohnoutka.

LSA from Page 4
transparency, operational excellence, and enduring value? The grants action team will assess and act on possibilities related to Legacy grant programs.

The LSA Collaborative will guide the work of the three priority action teams. Meeting quarterly across the state, Collaborative members represent libraries, academia, diverse communities and local history organizations. The LSA Collaborative is a MALHM/MNHS partnership that inspires LSA action and drives momentum.

Look for MAHLM updates on the three LSA Priority Action Teams! We’re always open to having new voices and perspectives on the teams. Email lsa@mnhs.org if you’d like to know more!
Investigating Interpretation at Itasca State Park
Sponsored by Bemidji Bus Line
$10 members, $15 non-members
How does Itasca State Park train hundreds of volunteers and temporary staff to provide accurate and entertaining interpretation? Visit the park’s historic structures and learn “train the trainer” skills from full-time naturalists. Receive free interpretation tools from the federal park system. Bus leaves Chase on the Lake at 1 p.m. and returns around 4 p.m.

Informal Evening Mixer • 8 p.m.
Meet at the fireside at Chase on the Lake’s pub for an informal gathering with your colleagues. Cash bar.

Conference sessions, keynote lunch
In addition to our variety of sessions on collections, education, administration and other aspects of the local history field, we’ve added a third track “Focusing on Fundamentals” geared to college students, volunteers and emerging professionals. To encourage executive directors to send their whole team, we’re offering a one-day rate for the first time this year. (See box at right.)

Evening Mixer
Sponsored by Minnesota Digital Library
Network and socialize with your colleagues at this free evening event. More information TBA.

Conference sessions, annual meeting and Minnesota History Awards luncheon
You asked for sessions geared to executive directors with years of experience in the field, and this year we partnered with the Minnesota Historical Society to provide a third track of advanced sessions. In addition, we’ll continue to offer two other tracks of hands-on and informative sessions in all aspects of local history work.

Conference rates
Two-Day Rate: $70 members, $85 non-members
One-Day Rate: $40 members, $55 non-members
Includes breakfast, lunch and evening mixer.

Hotel rate
Special MALHM rate offered by Chase on the Lake
$109 for Classic Hotel Rooms
$119 for Lake View Hotel Rooms
Call 218-547-7777 by April 4, 2017 to receive discount.
ATTENDEE INFORMATION

Please write clearly for accuracy in name tag and contact form

Choose One

Pre-Conference Special Session

Full Conference

April 26-27

One-day only

April 26

One-day only

April 27

April 25

Itasca State Park Bus and Session

Sub-total

- Full price $85
- Member rate $70
- Full price $55
- Member rate $40
- Full price $55
- Member rate $40
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- Full price $55
- Member rate $40
- Full price $15
- Member rate $10

- All volunteer group $5
- Individual/Student $5
- Organizations with paid staff $25

Please make checks payable to MALHM.

Total $
Gaming the Museum: Making history fun and interactive

Follow the clues. Whodunits, daring escapes and murderers on trial make headlines. They also bring in record crowds for museums, especially when murder and mayhem are served with a side of beer and wine.

Beltrami County Historical Society’s “History Mystery,” based on a real-life crime from the community’s past, is a popular event. Played like the board game “Clue,” visitors attempt to solve the case by interviewing costumed characters. (See Bemidji Pioneer’s story.)

Another interactive game for visitors is Cokato Museum’s Escape Room, in which participants must solve a historical puzzle inside a locked room within the allotted time, or an alarm sounds. Minnesota Public Radio covered the creative approach to history.

In Owatonna, the screaming headline “Was it Attempted Murder in Steele County?” does not pertain to a current crime. Instead it promotes “History Uncorked” at the Steele County Historical Society, where attendees get to sit on a jury and watch real life attorneys debate the case of an alleged murderer from the community’s history. (Unlike real jurors, however, they get to sip on wine and beer in the “court room.”)

How can you combine history with fun and games to bring visitors to your museum? Learn how these three organizations brought history to life with interactive and inventive games at the 2017 MALHM Annual Meeting and Conference.

Presenters Mike Worcester (Executive Director Cokato Museum and Akerlund Studio), Kim Purscell (Executive Director, Steele County Historical Society) and Gary Rozman (Executive Director, Beltrami County Historical Society) will present a session called Gaming the Museum: Making History Fun While Staying True to Your Mission. Discover the secrets of their success!

Get help refining collections at deaccessioning panel

Does the size of your scythes make you sigh? Does the wealth of your wedding dresses make you weep? You’re not alone. Many museums are reassessing how many scythes - or ox yokes, wedding dresses, carpenter planes and other commonly donated artifacts - are needed to tell a community’s history.

Before getting rid of duplicates, however, what do museums need to consider? What are the legal implications? And what should be done with the deaccessioned items? Five collections managers will discuss those topics and more in a session entitled Deaccessioning: Considerations from the Field.

When MALHM staff traveled around the state this fall to regional history group meetings, many groups requested a conference session on this topic. Thanks to these presenters for coming through: Adam Smith, Stearns County History Museum; Leah Bowe, MNHS; Anjanette Schussler, MN State Archives; Ann Grandy, Pope County Historical Society, and Cathy Osterman, Northfield Historical Society.
The purpose of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums shall be to nurture and encourage an appreciation of the local history of the state of Minnesota by providing the structure to foster collaborative local history projects, communicate curatorial and educational information, and encourage professionalism among local and specialized historical organizations in Minnesota.