

Washington State Historical Society

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021

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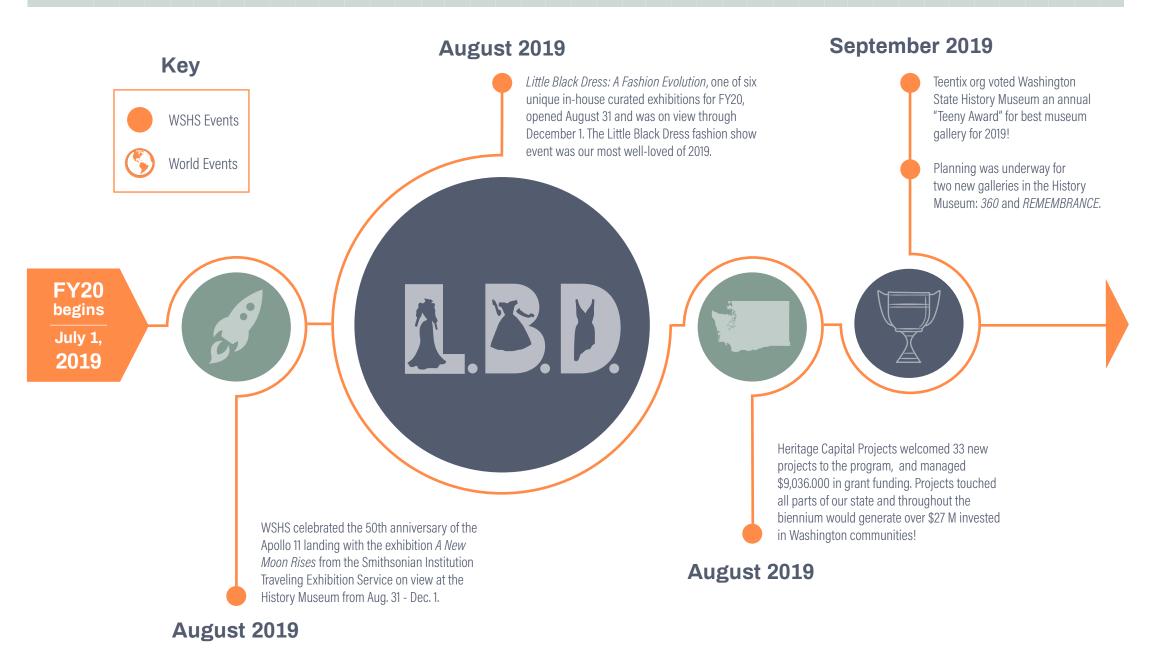
Dear Reader,

We're glad you're here to take a look at the past two fiscal years at the Washington State Historical Society. Our overview begins in our 128th year of service on July 1, 2019, and travels through June 30, 2021.

Our work as stewards of the past takes place in real time, against the backdrop of current events. The last few years have been filled with pivots—some unexpected and unwanted, others purposeful and imperative. Here, we present a timeline to skim the full story, with highlights of our work in context with the unprecedented events of 2019-2021 as they happened.



As we presented the 14th annual IN THE SPIRIT exhibition and festival at the start of FY20 (July 2019), the Society was also working with advisors and consultants to develop two new galleries in the Great Hall of Washington History. The ongoing renovation of the space connects our communities through history with a focus on relevance, diversity and inclusion.



October 2019

The first ever all female spacewalk happened on Friday, October 18, 2019. NASA astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir replaced a faulty battery charger on the International Space Station's truss structure, restoring power for station operations and ongoing research.

Volunteer Orientation was hosted at the History Museum welcoming new volunteers to the crew. Volunteer opportunities benefit the museum and community members alike, providing a meaningful way to contribute to WSHS's mission.

December 2019

WSU launched the Cosmic Crisp apple in Dec. 2019. The delicious fruit was the result of decades of work; the attention-grabbing news reached over 2 billion people.

The quarterly *History After Hours* evening program for ages 21+ was "Washington In Spaaace," hosted at the History Museum on Oct. 10 in partnership with MOHAI and featuring the Bechtel Corporation engineers who worked on the Apollo space missions! Approximately 150 people attended in-person.

October 2019

In 2019, thanks to generous donations from members and the community, WSHS brought nearly 3,000 students to the History Museum through a new Field Trip Scholarship Program.

FY20

TUTIRE

We were honored to open *Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth.* on December 21, 2019, from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The exhibition put the accomplishments of Black men in American history in the spotlight, and our communities responded with interest and appreciation.

At the same time, stories of a flu-like illness spreading in Wuhan, China, began to appear in the news.

December 2019–January 2020

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December 31, Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. A novel coronavirus was eventually identified.

Annual Model Train Festival December 20–January 1 delighted 5,300 visitors, and 153 new memberships were added!

February 2020

WSHS hosts "History Pub: Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting in the Principal's Office," at McMenamins Elks Temple on Feb. 4 with guest speaker Dr. Daudi Abe. Approximately 200 people attended.

WSHS staff began to respond to media requests for information and images related to the 1918 Flu Pandemic, as reporters began to tell the story of what would become known as the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Through a \$50 K grant from the Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services, a sponsor for the SITES exhibition *Men of Change*, WSHS held multiple programs in the museum and the community. Alaska Airlines and the Norcliffe Foundation provided local sponsorship. King 5's New Day was one of many media outlets to cover the exhibition, speaking with WSHS and community partners.

January 21, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the United States, in Snohomish County, Washington.

Forgotten PRISON

Feb 1. WSHS receives Pierce County Heritage Society Special Projects award for "work with multiple constituencies and partners to create the exhibit and associated podcast *Unlocking McNeil's Past: The Prison, The Place, The People*. This well-researched project offered a new perspective for the community, connecting history with a broader criminal justice context." In June, the American Association of State and Local History presented WSHS with an Award of Excellence for the McNeil exhibition, and we also received an Award of Excellence from the Washington Museum Association.

January 2020

As for all Americans (and indeed the world), the pandemic impacts were extremely challenging for our team at WSHS. On March 13, 2020, we made the decision to close the State History Museum and the State Historical Research Center to the public. There were approximately 570 identified COVID-19 cases in the state at the time. Staff transitioned to working from home, many balancing the needs of their children who were suddenly experiencing the shift to remote classrooms.

We wondered how our organization could continue to serve our state. Our pause was brief.

March 2020

WSHS closed its two facilities on March 13, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WSHS collaborated in a drive to collect the personal protective equipment (PPE) used in museums for donation to medical facilities that were in critically short supply as COVID cases increased. WSHS delivered supplies to Tacoma General.

April 2020

WSHS Heritage Outreach launched "Common Concerns," an online discussion forum addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on the heritage sector statewide. During FY20 and FY21, 25 online forums took place with 115 organizations participating in at least one, free of charge. Common Concerns are recorded and available online, providing a rich resource for heritage orgs in Washington.

WSHS launched a COVID collection initiative, capturing digital images and materials related to the pandemic as it unfolded. Approximately 400 items were contributed during FY20 and FY21. The first "Washington Stay Home Society" program on April 30 featured an interview with Margaret Wetherbee, Head of Collections, about the importance of collecting everyday objects.

May 2020

On May 25, the nation witnessed George Floyd's death caused by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis. Protests erupted and institutionalized racism was at the forefront.

April 2020

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FY20 ends June 30, 2020

The WSHS, Washington State Women's Commission, and the Women's History Consortium awarded approximately \$75 K in grants to 25 organizations across the state to create exhibits, programs, panel discussions, events, and performances celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage at community centers, museums, historical societies, libraries, and schools. SOCIETY

May 2 – WSHS Teen Historian Award for National History Day goes to North Central High School's Ivy Pete (Paiute), Alexis Schallock, and Jacob Gannon for their work in creating the documentary film "Freeing The Elwha: Setting the Standard for Breaking the Nation's River Barriers". The team participated in a WSHS virtual program on March 17, 2021 to share about their film and their experience creating this collaborative project during the pandemic while attending school remotely. They're also interviewed in the Dec. 22, 2020 COLUMBIA Conversations podcast.

May 18 – WSHS "Mount St. Helens 40th Anniversary Story Hour" program in partnership with Washington State Parks had 485 in attendance during the online presentation!

A VERY SPECIAL EVENT

One of our members' favorite events of 2019 was the Little Black Dress Fashion Show on October 18. Leaders from the community volunteered to model black dresses from the early 1900s through present day, and local TV Tacoma CityLine host Amanda Westbrooke emceed the event.

Guests enjoyed passed appetizers and beverages, explored the exhibition, and had a great time posing on the red carpet with a professional photographer. Many of the guests attended wearing black dresses of their own, from vintage to contemporary. The atmosphere was lively and the auditorium was filled to maximum capacity.

The exhibition *Little Black Dress: A Fashion Evolution* was on view from August 31 through December 5, 2019. It featured 37 garments from the 1860s through the 2010s, drawn from the Historical Society's collections, paired with artworks by Washington women from the same time period.

The exhibition traced the story of how social norms have been reflected in fashion's forms. Visitors learned how practical, social, and cultural changes in our history were expressed in clothing. As women's roles changed, so did style, fabric, and function in fashion. The results could either reinforce norms or support countercultural movements.







MUSEUMS TO THE RESCUE: #WAmuseumsgivePPE

You'll recall that early in the pandemic, personal protective equipment (or PPE) was very hard to come by. Hospitals, clinics, first responders, nursing homes, and other healthcare providers were desperate for supplies, and manufacturing was not able to keep up with demand.

Museums and archives use masks and latex gloves in their collections and archives departments. Washington State Historical Society created a campaign for cultural organizations to gather whatever PPE they had on hand and donate it, using the **www.GetUsPPE.org** website to find medical facilities in need. We promoted the campaign via social media, enews, Heritage Outreach communications, and our website.

Many museums jumped in to donate masks and gloves to healthcare workers on the frontlines; WSHS was joined by The Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, Puget Sound Navy Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle Art Museum, Everett Museum of History and others. Even though the impact was small in the scope of the crisis unfolding across the nation and the world, it was an action that we could take to show healthcare workers that they were not alone.

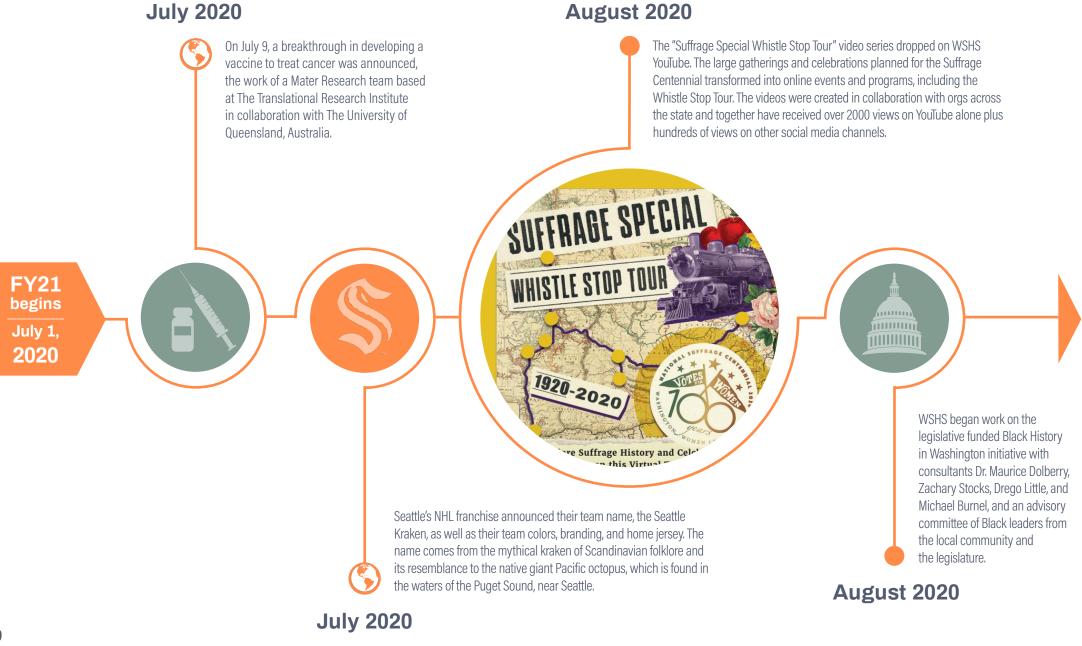
Our gratitude to all of the front line professionals and caregivers who have worked to save lives from the onset of COVID-19 is too great to put into words; their sacrifices and successes will be written into history, studied and appreciated for generations.





We pivoted to providing at-home history lessons for children while schools figured out how to provide full-time online education. Our public programs were moved online, and suddenly history-lovers nationwide were able to engage with Washington history.

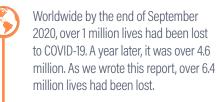
We began a digital archive of the COVID experience in Washington with contributors from across the state, and engaged with the University of Washington School of Public Health/Global Health students to collect pandemic stories from diverse communities.



Other changes in direction were informed by examining the Society's own history. After reflection and thoughtful conversation, we wrote a statement of commitment acknowledging our role in perpetuating systemic racism – through the monuments we placed throughout Washington, the selections we made in collecting, and the focus of historical narratives we shared across time. While we have improved in our efforts to tell a more diverse history over the past few decades, in 2020 we rededicated ourselves to telling both an inclusive story of Washington's history, and directly addressing the mistakes of our past.

October 2020

September 2020



The WSHS Monuments and Markers survey and project launched. This collaborative project is one of the actions outlined in the Society's recently issued Statement of Commitment to examine its past and build a more inclusive future.

WSHS hosted the Pacific Northwest History Conference online from Oct. 20-23, presenting 23 sessions with 78 presenters. Attendance included 423 registrants from across the U.S. and Canada. November 2020

Voters elected Kamala Harris, the first Black and Asian American woman to hold the office of Vice President of the United States. The nation saw record voter turnout for the 2020 presidential election.

Plans were underway for the 25th Annual Model Train Festival. But the virus surged, and we followed public health protocols, closing the museum to the public again on November 15, 2020.

With appropriate protocols in place, the History Museum reopened to the public after a six+ month closure. We were delighted to present the creative exhibition *Votes for Women: 100 Years and Counting*. The Research Center remained closed.

CONFERENCE

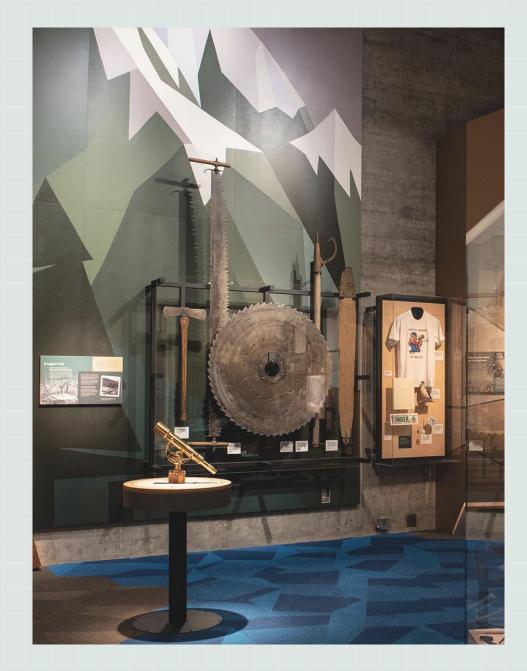
September 2020

In a unique collaboration, WSHS partnered with the University of Washington's School of Public Health/Global Health to co-teach their capstone course. Collections staff worked with students to capture oral histories of the pandemic including underrepresented communities, and those histories were added to the WSHS collections.

FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

While the History Museum and Research Center were closed for parts of 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, the WSHS Facilities team was hard at work implementing renovations. Facilities and maintenance staff leveraged the closures to complete many building improvements, resulting in increased energy efficiencies, improved collections storage conditions, a more appealing environment for visitors and staff, and beautified spaces that support revenue generation through facility rentals. Renovations included:

- Installed new carpet in almost every space of the History Museum.
- Completed renovation of the auditorium, including replacing all of the seats, new carpet, and refurbishing the stage.
- Replaced 95% of compact fluorescent lighting in WSHS offices with greener, more efficient LED lighting.
- Removed walls in the largest gallery on the fifth floor of the History Museum to create an open concept space with two adjacent galleries. This vastly improved flexibility for exhibition installations.
- Replaced all building exhaust fans with more efficient units in the History Museum and the Research Center. This improved our already excellent air quality, an additional assurance for visitors and staff.
- Improved the humidification system at the Research Center for state-of-theart collections preservation.
- Dismantled the Wageworkers Frontier section of the museum's Great Hall to completely empty the space. Included strengthening the floor and preparing surfaces and electrical to build the new *360* gallery.



HERITAGE CAPITAL PROJECTS

Washington State Historical Society's Heritage Outreach Department manages the Heritage Capital Projects (HCP) grant program. HCP grants support facilities that provide public access to history. Since its establishment in 1995, HCP has distributed more than \$86 million in capital grants to support 350 community projects for history facilities and historic landscapes. Washington nonprofits, tribal organizations, local governments, ports, and public development authorities are eligible to apply.

During FY20 and FY21, HCP brought in 33 new projects and managed \$9,036,000 in funding. Through projects funded by HCP grants, over \$27,108,000 was invested in Washington communities.

Some example projects during 2019 and 2020 include:

\$28,000 to the **Cutter Theater** in Metaline Falls to replace the roof on the historic Metaline Falls School Building, which houses the theater among other uses.

\$240,000 to the **Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding** in Port Hadlock for structural improvements, a new roof, and new windows and doors for the Galster House, which operates as a café and is owned by the school.

\$71,000 to the **Highline Historical Society** for exterior and interior improvements to their museum in Burien, as well as the installation of compacting shelving in the archival area.

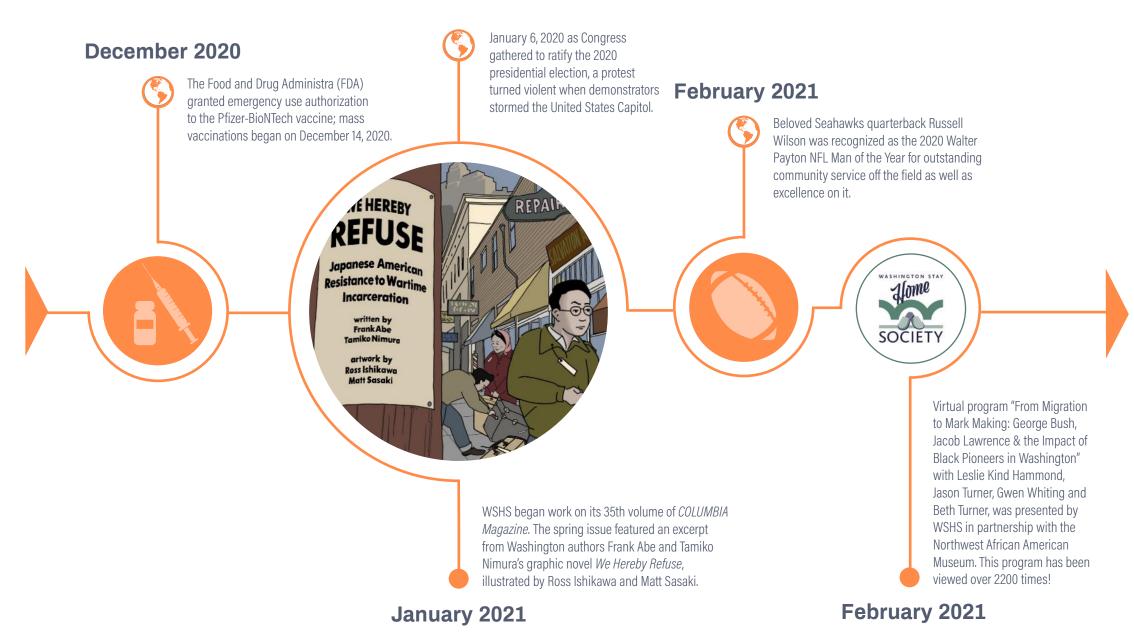
TOP: Metaline Falls School building - Cutter Theatre project MIDDLE: Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding BOTTOM: Highline Historical Society



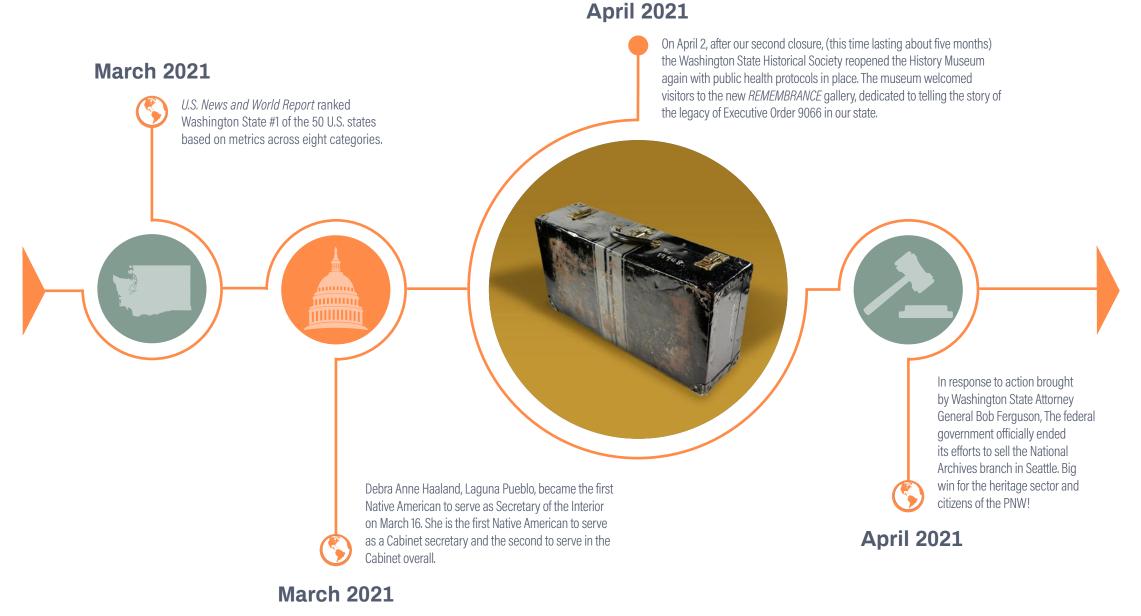




Supporting our communities through the spring and summer included outreach to the heritage sector across the state. Our Heritage Outreach team established Common Concerns, an online forum for historical societies and heritage orgs throughout Washington to connect and problem-solve everything from how to protect artifacts during closure to accessing funding and loan programs and more.



Throughout the closures our team developed and applied new skills to serve our constituents online. The Society's digital programming has continued to evolve with interactive online public programs, virtual gallery tours, digital history boxes, and online exhibitions.

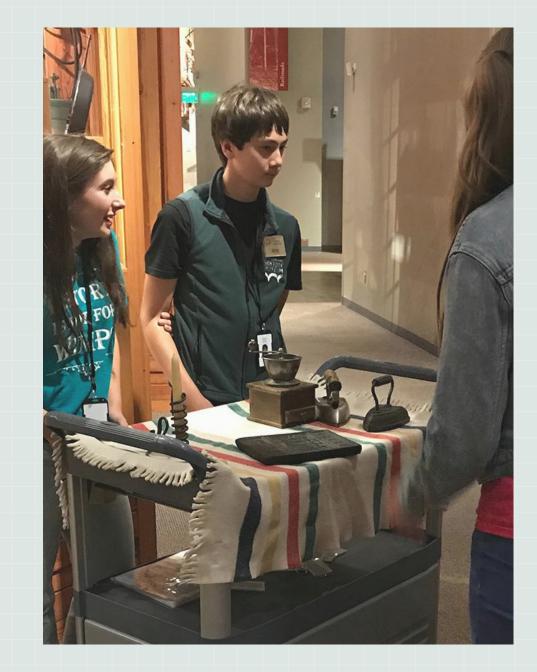


VOLUNTEERS AT THE WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volunteering at WSHS provides on opportunity for community members to make meaningful connections while also fulfilling support needs within almost every department at WSHS. Volunteers work as gallery docents, connect with school groups in the History Lab, assist curatorial staff with exhibitions, support collections functions, distribute collateral, work at museum programs and special events, and more.

As a group, the Historical Society's volunteer team provided more than 450 hours of service between July 1, 2019 and March 15, 2020.

When the History Museum and Research Center closed in response to the pandemic, our corps of well-informed and engaging volunteers were unable to continue in their roles at WSHS. We extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every volunteer, and we look forward to rebuilding the volunteer program.



COLLECTING WASHINGTON'S STORIES

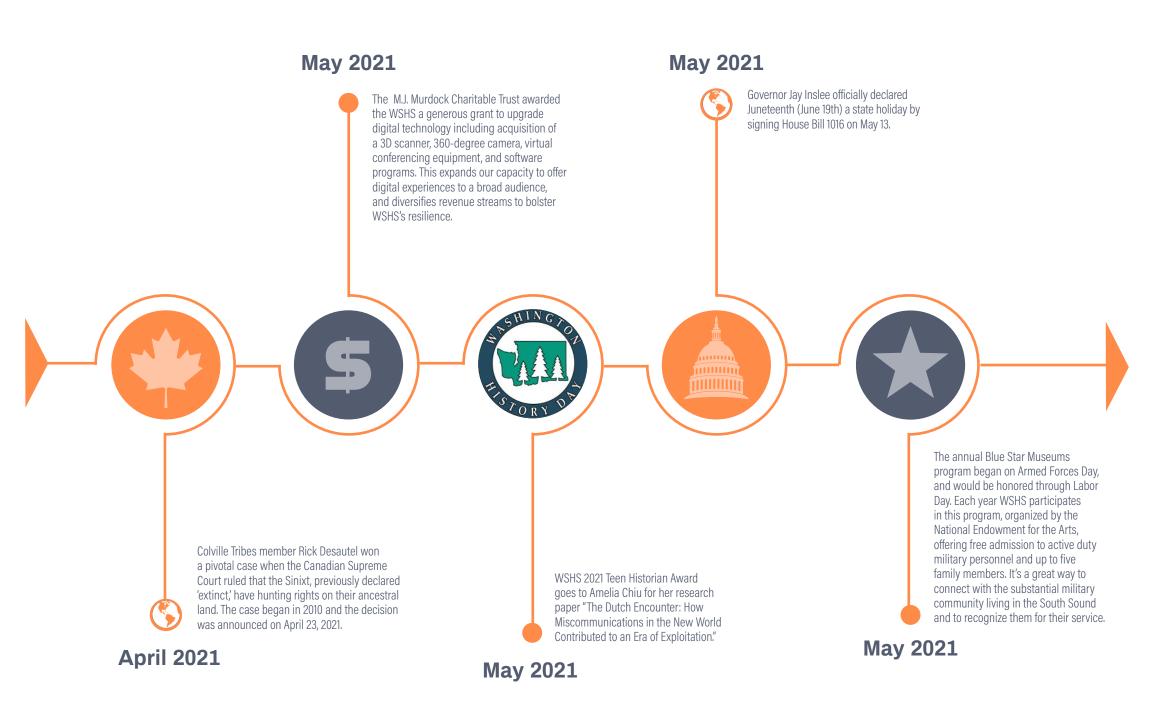
When the Washington State Historical Society closed its doors temporarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew we needed to launch a collections effort around this historic global crisis. We put out a call for COVID related donations, and the first response came almost immediately from former educator and quilter Denise Long of Stanwood, Washington.

In Long's words, "Around April 1, 2020, I saw a Washington State Historical Society Facebook post looking for Covid-19 commemorative items for their collection. I had been thinking about making a memorial quilt . . . I wrote the Historical Society about my idea. COVID-19 had touched me personally when a lady from my church died in early March, 2020." Reaching out through Facebook groups, she connected with interested volunteer quilters and soon the block-making was underway.

The quilt was officially presented to the Historical Society on August 5, 2021, and forms a poignant founding for our COVID-19 collection. We extend heartfelt thanks to Denise Long and the many contributors who created this special work of art, and for the documentation collected along with the quilt, telling stories of personal experiences during the pandemic.

Image: Project creator Denise Long of Stanwood, Washington, with her husband Sam Long, showing the front side of the COVID-19 Commemorative Quilt in front of the Research Center.





I have joked that we have pivoted so much over the past two years that we are now pirouetting. The last two years have kept us on our toes, but also strengthened our organization in innumerable ways. We could not have met these challenges without your support.

oil thilm

Jennifer Kilmer, Director, Washington State Historical Society

May 2021

The Washington State History Museum opens *Crossing Boundaries: Portraits of a Transgender West* in collaboration with historian Peter Boag. It was on view May 29-Dec. 12, 2021. Many visitors provided powerful feedback about their appreciation of and gratitude for this exhibition. (In 2022, WSHS received an AASLH Award of Excellence for this exhibition.)

> The new *360* gallery was nearing completion, scheduled to open in September, 2021. This gallery shares multiple perspectives on the rich resources that have sustained and drawn people to this land.

June 2021

360

During FY20 and FY21, the Collections team installed and deinstalled over 500 historic objects at the Washington State History Museum. They also improved over 15,000 collections database records!

FY21 ends June 30, 2021

77

The Heat Dome: Record breaking heat wave hits the Pacific Northwest from June 21-30, 2021. Hanford, WA, reached 120 degrees farenheit on June 29. That's the highest temperature the state has ever recorded. The Washington State History Museum was open free to the public as an emergency cooling center.

June 30 – As we reached the end of FY 21, approximately 55% of Washingtonians had received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. The Washington State Historical Society had worked through two closures and reopenings, and continued to thoughtfully engage citizens in our state and beyond.

June 2021

PHILANTHROPY

A very special thank you to our members and donors.

We are incredibly grateful to our members, donors and community for your unwavering support and investment in our mission as we navigated and adapted to the changing world around us. You showed generosity in so many ways.

Our members and donors truly were a lifeline in providing support that enabled our staff to generate programs, exhibitions, educational tools, and heritage outreach resources supporting Washington's heritage sector through the challenges of 2020 and 2021. Thank you for sticking with us through closures, and shifting plans, and for meeting us in the virtual realm. Because of you these programs are able to continue and to thrive.

In addition to the grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to improve our digital infrastructure, WSHS would like to recognize and thank the Ruth Anderson Wheeler & Henry O. Wheeler Charitable Trust for supporting our work to develop new Digital History Boxes for use by educators across the state, and ongoing support of the WSHS collections team to continue preserving and sharing the stories of people from our region. We are also grateful for the continued support of Columbia Bank who have been a fantastic partner for many years as the sponsor for Free Third Thursdays, and for their support for online programming during the museum's COVID closures.

From all of us at the Washington State Historical Society, thank you!



FY20/FY21 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Income

Government	\$3,715,000
Contributed Income	\$350,927
Rentals & Parking	\$264,042
Admissions	\$211,924
Endowment Draw	\$35,228
Sales, fees	\$168,120
Membership	\$89,491
Total:	\$4,834,732

Government	\$3,850,380
Contributed Income	\$211,700
Rentals & Parking	\$58,531
Admissions	\$49,117
Endowment Draw	\$33,634
Sales, fees	\$81,113
Membership	\$75,260
Total:	\$4,359,735

Expenses

Exhibitions	\$526,712
Education & Programs	\$1,104,288
Collections	\$431,687
Facilities & Security	\$967,002
Admissions	\$56,390
Administration & IT	\$1,050,085
Development & Membershi	ip \$164,997
Marketing	\$261,730
Total:	\$4,562,891

Exhibitions	\$372,106
Education & Programs	\$811,493
Collections	\$451,024
Facilities & Security	\$984,931
Admissions	\$34,842
Administration & IT	\$1,151,133
Development & Membersh	ip \$173,108
Marketing	\$150,374
Total:	\$4,129,011

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Gifts of \$100 or more between 7.1.2019-6.30.2021

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750

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