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John Decker and Elana Rugh at the Centennial Picnic, June 2021.

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### **DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS:**

For 100 years, the Detroit Historical Society has been sharing Detroit's stories and why they matter through exhibitions, programs and community outreach. As you can see in the amazing photograph on the cover, much of the city as we know it today was under construction in the 1920s. Our organization too has come a long way since Clarence Monroe Burton started collecting the "stuff" of Detroit's history in 1921.

However, as we marked our centennial anniversary this year, we did so with the awareness that we are, ourselves, living through historic times. With our buildings shuttered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we found new and exciting ways to deliver our programming remotely, through virtual tours, social media features and our first-ever podcast. We held our special events virtually, in hybrid formats, outdoors or in smaller groups. When it was safe to welcome people back to our museums, guests came back to both the Detroit Historical Museum and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum in strong numbers.

We are grateful for your generous support over the past year. Our members and donors are truly the lifeblood of this great institution. We are so grateful that even when our doors were temporarily closed, our membership never lagged. We aim to provide each member with special access, information and a best-in-class member experiences, whether we are in-person or virtual, and we hope you feel that membership has value.

As we continue to recover together, we feel a renewed sense of urgency to do everything possible to preserve Detroit's important stories and ensure that they are accessible to all for the next 100 years. As you review our annual highlights in the following pages, we thank you for your support and invite your continuing partnership in fulfilling our mission.

Sincerely,

ELANA RUGH

Elana

PRESIDENT & CEO

**DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY** 

JOHN P. DECKER

CHAIRPERSON

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*On front:* Downtown Detroit c. 1921, showing the First National Building under construction. The view is looking eastward along W. Fort Street toward Woodward Avenue, with parked automobiles and pedestrians visible in the foreground. Commonwealth Federal Savings Bank can be seen on the right side of the image. Detroit Historical Society collection.

# 2020-21 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### **EDUCATION, PROGRAMS & OUTREACH:**

- Like other cultural institutions locally, nationally and internationally, our team had to reimagine how to serve our constituents remotely. This meant developing a cross-departmental Digital Strategies Team, led by our Senior Director of Education and Programs, that helped to guide development of virtual tours, programs and exhibits.
- We created two new short video series, *Detroit History Heroes* and *Pint-sized Prohibition*. Kayla
   Chenault and Dean Nasreddine were recognized with the Michigan Museum Association Colleague Champion Award for their work on *Detroit's History Heroes*, and *Pint-sized Prohibition* appeared in national media outlet *Atlas Obscura*.
- To accommodate the topsy-turvy world of remote learning, we developed new online tours, which became popular with both school groups and senior citizens. We also updated our existing virtual lesson plans to be easier for teachers and parents to access.
- We transitioned our Third Thursday and Speakers Bureau programs to online platforms and moved them into alignment with our *Community Gallery* exhibitions.
- The Youth Advisory Council and Detroit Design 2067 programs were successfully conducted virtually, introducing local youth to the museum profession and connecting them to the community.
- Over 100 children participated in the annual Michigan History Day, which took place virtually.
- We offered 45 Behind the Scenes in-person and virtual tours over the course of the fiscal year with almost 500 tickets sold.
  - Detroit's History Heroes introduced viewers on social media to notable Detroiters.

- We created four new Behind the Scenes tours, including the Indigenous Belle Isle Walking Tour and 'Bees Knees' in theme with our Centennial. We also launched virtual Behind the Scenes tours, including the Negro Motorist Green Book tour and a virtual Historic Houses of Worship experience.
- Lunchtime Techno attracted more than 400 visitors to the Detroit Historical Museum's *Legends Plaza* over its abbreviated three-week series in Fall 2020, in conjunction with the 2000/2020: Celebrating 20 Years of Electronic Music Festivals in Detroit exhibition.
- We worked with the Black Historic Sites Committee to dedicate and install a *Detroit Plain Dealer* historical marker in Capitol Park at the Westin Book Cadillac in October 2020.
- We launched a new collaboration with Design Core
  Detroit: History X Design. The partnership received
  a competitive grant that allowed us to develop a
  walking tour/exhibition called *Invoking the Spirit*:
  Detroit's Black Bottom.
- As we continue to diversify our online and in-person learning opportunities, we renewed our partnership with the Arab American National Museum for GamePlan, an initiative funded by IMLS through the national STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) organization Game for Change.
- Our internal Diversity Equity Accessibility and Inclusion committee convened to develop a comprehensive DEAI statement and plans for further embedding DEAI into the Society as a whole.



#### **EXHIBITIONS & CURATORIAL:**

- In Fall 2020, we opened *Detroit's Brewing Heritage* in the *Streets of Old Detroit's* Depot. This is the first time an exhibition has been placed in this space and it is a very good fit for our brewing exhibition.
- The Society's first podcast, *Untold Detroit: Beer*, inspired by *Detroit's Brewing Heritage*, was hosted by assistant curator Billy Wall-Winkel and is available on all podcast platforms.
- Our tribute to songwriter Allee Willis, created after her death in December 2019, remains in our *Motor City Music* exhibition.
- The global pandemic forced us to postpone a few of our quarterly *Community Gallery* partnerships, allowing us to install 2000/2020: Celebrating 20 Years of Electronic Music Festivals in Detroit in the gallery. Two fun kick-off and closing events welcomed over 200 people to Legends Plaza.
- We started 2021 with the development and installation of our centennial exhibition Boom Town: Detroit in the 1920s. Strong media coverage of the new exhibit helped to attract visitors back to the Detroit Historical Museum after its closure due to the pandemic.
- In February 2020, we installed Last Ice, an indooroutdoor exhibition at the Dossin Great Lakes
  Museum, in partnership with local documentary
  photographer Amy Sacka. Amy collaborated with
  Valaurian Waller, who contributed a gallery of
  photos of Detroit's riverfront, and artist Scott
  Hocking, who created a fishing shanty on the Grand
  Lawn.

- In the Spring, we opened 20 for the Twenties: Maritime Innovation in the 1920s at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum. This exhibit serves as a "sister exhibit" to Boom Town and offered opportunities to crosspromote each museum.
- Our long-term relationship with Wayne State
  University enabled us to work with Wayne State
  students to develop two installations, Selling in
  Detroit: 1920s Advertising and We Fought our Own War:
  Arsenal of Democracy.
- The online Encyclopedia of Detroit was completely reviewed and updated.
- Senior Curator Joel Stone worked with Wayne State University Press to complete our centennial publication, 100 Years of the Detroit Historical Society.
- The COVID and Neighborhoods oral history projects continue to move forward. They were effectively paired with promotion for the COVID-19 memorial garden at the Detroit Historical Museum.



Boom Town: Detroit in the 1920s premiered at the Detroit Historical Museum in January 2021.

#### **MEMBERSHIP:**

- In 2020 we were forced to pause our monthly member tours and receptions due to the global pandemic. We are grateful that we were able to bring them back in 2021.
- We pivoted to continue a wonderful Society tradition virtually – the Annual Membership Meeting and Recognition Reception. Members joined the celebration via Zoom and later received a custom Society gift.
- Our Membership Plus program now adds additional value to your membership with discounts at local restaurants and shops.

#### **OPERATIONS:**

- The Operations team withstood lots of transition this year. It joined the Mission team in Spring 2020, just as the pandemic was causing us to significantly change and upgrade our daily cleaning and safety protocols.
- The department now falls under Exhibitions and includes building maintenance and engineering, which was brought in-house at the same time that a new cleaning company joined the team.
- A new parking kiosk was installed at the Detroit Historical Museum, enabling public use of the parking lot even when the museum is closed.

#### **COLLECTIONS & DIGITIZATION:**

- Two key grants from the Margaret Dunning Foundation and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan allowed us to invest in a new Arc Eye camera system. This groundbreaking technology will enable us to take high-definition 360° photographs of our automobile collection and other artifacts. It will be the first such system used by a cultural institution in the region.
- We have inventoried 34,542 artifacts of the approximately 250,000 items in the collection, adding 4,461 artifacts this year.
- We made artifact loans to seven organizations around the country. Our traveling exhibits *Fighting* on the Home Front and Michigan in the Civil War generated over \$2,000 in rental fees.
- We processed 124 donation offers and accessioned and catalogued over 2,000 artifacts.
- Image and video revenue brought in over \$37,000 from 197 transactions. This included sales to Harbor Height's Documentary Series "This is Detroit," a PBS documentary on jazz in Detroit, Camara Rose Films Hip Hop Uncovered and American Gangster: Trap Queens, the Showtime Series: The Kings, Tommy Hearns segment and many more.
- We created numerous videos for exhibitions and events: a pair of "Welcome Back" videos, a

- livestream of our Lost Mariners event, participation in an online brewing conference, historical Thanksgiving Parade montage, the 2020 Annual meeting, Karen Hudson Samuels Tribute, the Boom Town Ball and *Boom Town* exhibition, event space rental promos and various media spots.
- There were 75,000 searches in our online database for images, objects and general reference material. Over 145,000 visitors read our collections blog "Look What We Found" and we had almost 1 million views of our YouTube site.
- Collections worked with the Exhibitions team on a storefront exhibition at the City Club Apartments, which will serve as a template for future off-site exhibits in locations around the region for our new "History in This Place" program.
- We garnered fee-based digitization work from several outside groups and individuals, including a Voigt's brewing collection, the Marygrove Conservancy's digital collection and the Woodbridge Neighborhood Development/oral history project.
- We sent Society historians to seven different events to present on topics ranging from sports to cars to Houdini.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES:**

- Staffing at the Society this past year was marked with creativity, adaptability and flexibility. We were able to retain most of our professional staff through two successful PPP loan applications and able to recall all furloughed staff when we reopened our museums in July 2020.
- However, as some staff left the organization for other opportunities or through retirement, we merged and consolidated positions to better conserve our financial resources. At fiscal year end, we did experience a workforce reduction, eliminating two positions.
- In recent months, we have added nine new Visitor Experience Associates to our ranks to help provide a "best in class" experience for our museum patrons. Many of these VEAs have degrees in history or related fields and are looking to start their museum careers at the Society.



Apartments to highlight the history of the site.

#### **MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS:**

- Throughout FY21, we navigated changing state regulations relating to COVID-19, which impacted both our operations and messaging. We successfully reopened the museums to the public in July 2020 with new safety measures, communicated changes around the state's "pause" on gatherings in November and transitioned into the relaxation of statewide restrictions in May.
- We had strong PR coverage of new exhibitions and many of our in-person events. Highlights were the *Boom Town* exhibition, *Detroit's Brewing Heritage* exhibition and *Untold Detroit* podcast, *Detroit 67: Perspectives* becoming a permanent exhibition, the Detroit Historical Museum's COVID-19 memorial rock garden and our COVID oral history project, *Detroit Responds*.
- The *Untold Detroit* podcast well exceeded our goals for its first season, with 3,000 unique downloads and an average listening time of 1 hour and 28 minutes (beating the industry standard of 42 minutes) at three months post-release.
- We worked with local agency FWD Design to create new centennial logos and branding for the Society.
   We rolled out updated assets for staff use, including a new presentation template, electronic letterhead and email signatures. We also updated museum collateral, signage and promotional items with the new identity.
- We upgraded our website to extend its lifespan and add important functionality. The site template is now mobile friendly and features our refreshed centennial branding. The collections blog was migrated onto the main site and the Education Portal was simplified and updated.
- Our History From Home email newsletter reached a full year of weekly messages from CEO Elana Rugh
  - The Society's first podcast, Untold Detroit: Beer, was a great success, with 3,000+ listeners and counting three months after release.

- along with historical tidbits and event promotion. Our open rate of 19% exceeds the industry average of 16%.
- We created all-new visitor guides for both museums, including mobile friendly digital versions. Using a local printer, we are able to print smaller quantities more frequently, updating content when needed and reducing the volume of guides needing to be stored.
- We launched a new Dossin webcam, which streams live on YouTube in beautiful, high-definition video. You can find the link on our website, along with the classic cam.
- In June 2021, we officially kicked off our centennial PR campaign with a live virtual press conference on Facebook, featuring President and CEO Elana Rugh, Board Chairperson John Decker, Senior Curator Joel Stone, Senior Director of Education, Programs and Outreach Malika Pryor and Membership Manager Delisha Upshaw.
- We met or exceeded our digital benchmarks for the year, reflecting our commitment to digital initiatives during the pandemic:
  - We ended FY21 with 961,000 pageviews to our main site (up 2% year-over-year) and 419, 368 users (up 5%).
  - We reached 97,556 social followers across platforms (up 14%) and our social engagements more than doubled from the previous fiscal year to 272,100 (up 164%). We had particularly strong follower growth on Instagram (one of our goals for the year) and a big increase in our Facebook engagement (our largest platform).
  - We reached 82,000+ people through social media ads in 136 targeted campaigns.



# **FUNDRAISING EVENTS:**

- To accommodate changing COVID-19 protocols, we made several adaptations to the way we hosted events this year. We held our first-ever virtual events, hosted other events with timed entries and held many more events in outdoor spaces. Overall participation and engagement were strong, and we will continue to build on several of the innovations we discovered.
- After canceling the Dossin Gala in May 2020, we pivoted to an outdoor press conference and brunch format in late August. This was a wonderful opportunity to host a safe event and recognize the sponsors of the Outdoor Enhancement Project, Dossin Gala sponsors and Dossin Gala Honorary Host Committee Members.
- Playing off our popular Bourbon and Bowties events, we hosted a handful of online mixology classes where participants learned to create iconic Detroit drinks and the history behind them. It was our first foray into virtual events.
- The Beer Trail was a timed ticket event that attracted a new and younger audience to the *Detroit's Brewing Heritage* exhibition. The event was a resounding success that served as a model for events throughout the year, including its completely virtual option.
- Bourbon and Bowties was a timed ticket event based on the Beer Trail. It was a great success, with 214 attendees throughout the day.
- The Centennial Picnic at the Dossin Great Lakes
   Museum was our first in-person centennial
   celebration in June 2021. We had reduced attendance
   due to storms and flooding but were finally able to
   continue our annual tradition of celebrating summer
   on Belle Isle.







In 2020-21, we found creative ways for guests to gather safely and support the Society.

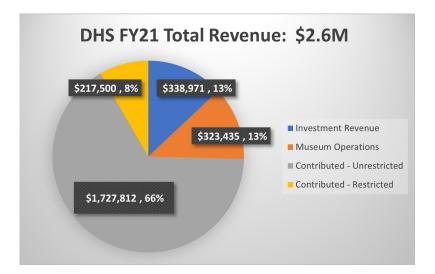
#### **RETAIL:**

- Given closures and low visitor numbers in Summer 2020, we looked to new opportunities outside of the museums to reach customers with historical Detroit merchandise and to bring in much-needed revenue.
- Our continuing partnership with the Detroit Shoppe at Somerset has been a great success. We have worked hard to become their primary source for items such as officially licensed merchandise for Detroit's professional sports franchises and vintage automotive apparel. We tag the merchandise we deliver with custom hang tags that include our website, museum hours and a QR code for membership information, which has become a bonus marketing opportunity.
- During Summer 2020, we brought our online store completely in-house. We now do all of our own shipping, website updates and logistics. The pandemic was a factor in a particularly strong holiday season, helping to keep our sales in line with what we traditionally expect.
- Our third new initiative was a partnership with the All Things Detroit Marketplace at the corner of Michigan & Trumbull, site of the old Tiger Stadium. This new partnership allowed us to sell our merchandise and also attach our custom hang tags. In addition to selling in their store, we also participated in eight pop-up events with them, which generated additional visibility and revenue.

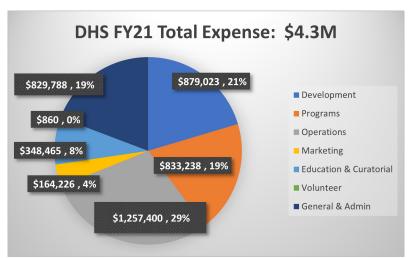
# **DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Combined Revenue and Expense information for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2021.

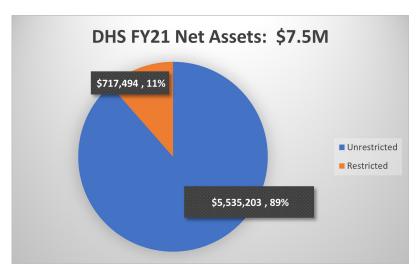
### **REVENUE**



### **EXPENSES**



# **NET ASSETS**



detroithistorical.org

#### AN UPDATE FROM PHILANTHROPY:

The success of any cultural institution is built upon support from the community it serves. We are fortunate that it is the stories of this region that we tell. Though funding priorities unmistakably shifted during the global pandemic, we were able to maintain connection with our many donors, fostering conversations and building relationships for a brighter day. This is the work of philanthropy. We are here to steward relationships that, like history, will help us tell the stories of this time and those past. We are grateful that these relationships have persisted even through the most difficult of times. We used the long, slow months of the pandemic to reorganize, refocus and reprioritize. New fundraising processes have been put in place, new staff is on board and we have identified more direct measures of success. Renewed efforts and improvements continue to build as we look toward success in FY22 and beyond.

build as we look toward success in FY22 and beyond.

Our thanks to all of our supporters, but particularly to those donors listed in these pages, who helped ensure that the Detroit Historical Society emerged in the wake of the pandemic.



1934 Chrysler Airflow on display in the Detroit Historical Museum's *Automotive Showplace*.

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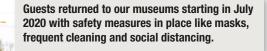
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Our 2020 custom ornament celebrated the Detroit Historical Museum's first location in Barlum (Cadillac) Tower.





collection while it looked back at Detroit in the 1920s.

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