



September 9, 2004

 Myron Bacon
 4600 Rome Corners Road
 Brooklyn, WI 53521

Dear Mr. Bacon:

Thank you for informing me of the interest in establishing a local historical society for the Town of Rutland. The Wisconsin Historical Society offers an affiliation program to work with local historical organizations. Affiliation is designed to provide advice and assistance to local historical societies throughout the state. The affiliation program provides a variety of services including assistance with organizational steps such as incorporation and application for tax-exempt status. This letter briefly describes the affiliation program and includes a variety of materials that explain the services that the Society provides through the Office of Local History. Enclosed are copies of the application for affiliation, a copy of sample bylaws, brochures for the Wisconsin Council for Local History, and a variety of materials which this office produces - *Exchange*, a roster of affiliated historical societies, and past convention and workshop brochures.

Affiliation is a formal relationship as provided for in the Wisconsin Statutes s.44.03. However, an affiliate is separately incorporated and legally independent from the Wisconsin Historical Society. Because affiliation is a formal relationship, a new group must apply to affiliate and the Wisconsin Historical Society Board of Curators must vote to accept all affiliates.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Wisconsin Historical Society to the local organization include providing educational programs and organizational information and assistance. Educational services are provided through annual workshops, instructional columns in *Exchange*, on-site visits, instructional videotapes, and occasional special projects such as model museum exhibits. The responsibilities of the State Society also include the task of providing for the orderly distribution of property should an affiliated society dissolve its incorporation. The reason is to ensure that items that have been collected for historical purposes will continue to be used for historical purposes, protecting the educational intent of the donors, contributors and the community. Dissolutions have been extremely rare. In the only cases where dissolution was decided, the local historical society made the decision to dissolve, and the dissolution process successfully located other competent and responsible local agencies or organizations to become caretakers for the collections and holdings.

The responsibilities of the local organizations include holding yearly elections and regular

membership meetings; submitting annual report to the State Historical Society and maintaining state and federal non-profit, tax-exempt status. The State Society provides help to new affiliates with applications for incorporation and tax-exempt status.

An affiliated historical society is also responsible for periodically hosting a regional convention of local historical societies. Your society would be asked to serve as a host for your region approximately once every twenty-five years. As a statement of the responsibilities of affiliation, a new society is required to include an article on affiliation and one on dissolution in its bylaws. The enclosed sample bylaws include both the article on affiliation and the dissolution article.

Benefits

By becoming an affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society, the local organization also becomes a member of the State Society. This membership entitles the organization to one vote at all general meetings of the Wisconsin Historical Society and in the election of the Society's Board of Curators. This membership also entitles the organization to receive regular mailings of publications and periodicals of the Society such as the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, *Columns* and meeting notices. These mailings are typically sent to the president of the local organization to be shared with others in the group. All officers and board members of the local society are entitled to receive quarterly issues of the *Exchange* newsletter and brochures announcing workshops, conventions and special programs for local historians.

Affiliates of the Wisconsin Historical Society also become members of the Wisconsin Council for Local History, an organization of more three hundred societies promoting local history in the state. The Wisconsin Council for Local History holds yearly regional meetings in the summer and fall and sponsors a statewide convention each October or November. This year's statewide convention will be held in Madison on October 29th and 30th.

Thank you for your interest in affiliation. I look forward to meeting with your group on September 16th at 3:00 p.m. at the Oregon Historical Society building. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the Office of Local History at (608) 264-6583.

Sincerely,



Tom McKay
Coordinator
Office of Local History
(608) 264-6583