



History

NEBRASKA[®] 2020-2021

ANNUAL REPORT





Chimney Rock, Bayard, Nebraska

Earliest known photo of Chimney Rock taken by well-known photographer Charles Roscoe Savage.

Carte-de-visite photo housed in History Nebraska collections. RG3319

Front Cover:

View of a man on a horse with Chimney Rock in the background. Glass plate photo, 5" x 4". RG3319

Opposite: Hay Harvesting in the shadow of Chimney Rock. © Paul Ellis, 2020.



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WHO WE ARE

We are a state agency dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of Nebraska. Founded in 1878 as the Nebraska State Historical Society, today's History Nebraska is a statewide team of professional employees, student workers, and volunteers.

We exist because Nebraskans believe that our history matters. History shapes our present and future. It strengthens our connection to place. It teaches us the skills of informed citizenship. It shows how Nebraskans play a vital role in the larger story of the United States.

QUICK VIEW:

Founded: 1878

Mission Statement:
"Collect, preserve, and open to all, the histories we share."

Governance:
15 person Board of Trustees

Annual Operating Budget:
\$8.5 million (2021)

Number of Employees: 69

Subscribers: 2,000+

WHAT WE DO

Places you can visit: The Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln and historic sites from Chimney Rock and Fort Robinson in the west, to the George W. Norris House in McCook, Neligh Mill in Neligh, the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft, and the Thomas P. Kennard House and Nebraska Statehood Memorial in Lincoln—plus more than 500 historical markers across the state. In addition, we:

Educate. We have programs for all ages, and our publications range from scholarly articles to classroom materials to popular blog posts at history.nebraska.gov.

Preserve the state archives and collections of rare manuscripts, photographs, and objects. We assist researchers from professional historians to genealogists and students. We do this through tax credits, education, and recognition via the National Register of Historic Places. Since 2015, the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit alone has contributed over \$226.2 million in economic activity statewide.

Assist property owners, communities, and local governments as they preserve their historic buildings. We do this through tax credits, education, and recognition via the National Register of Historic Places.

Conserve fragile and damaged objects, paper, and paintings for museums and individuals at our Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha.

Discover and interpret our state's rich archeological heritage, chronicling more than 12,000 years of human life and culture in Nebraska.

OUR AUDACIOUS GOAL: ***TO BE THE MOST ENGAGING & RELEVANT STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN THE NATION. HOW DO WE GET THERE?***

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN:

- 1. GROW OUR AUDIENCES**
- 2. INCREASE ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS**
- 3. GROW FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**
- 4. EXPAND OUTREACH AND
ENGAGEMENT**
- 5. INCREASE TEAMWORK AND
ACCOUNTABILITY**



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

GROW OUR AUDIENCES

GROW OUR
AUDIENCES

Chimney Rock Grand Reopening

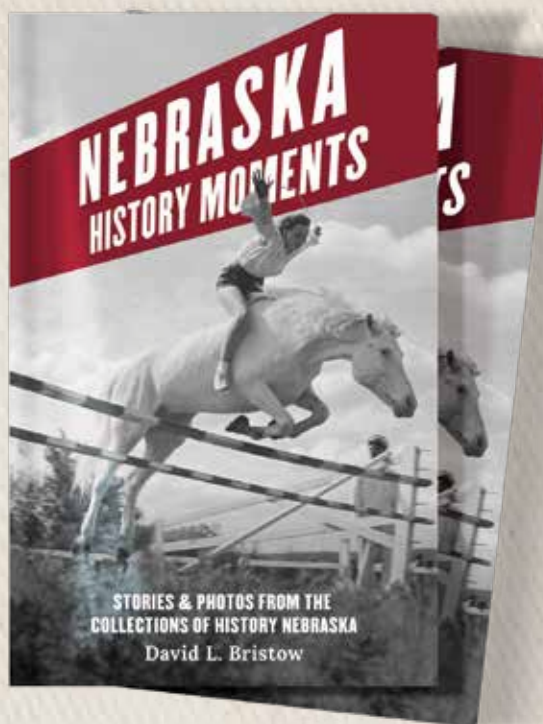
COVID-19 delayed our plans for a 2020 re-opening of our newly expanded Chimney Rock Museum with new exhibits. Months after a “soft” re-opening, an official ribbon cutting was held July 17, 2021. Hundreds attended as History Nebraska received the Rising Star Award from the NEBRASKAland Foundation. The award recognizes outstanding new tourism attractions or significant expansions to existing attractions, and economic and social development efforts.



Chimney Rock welcomed more than 11,000 visitors in fiscal year 2020-2021. In all, nearly 22,000 people visited History Nebraska sites despite a year of closures and diminished travel.

Nebraska History Moments Book

A new book published by History Nebraska shares our stories and collections with a popular audience. Each page uses a photo or artifact to tell a true story about the past, drawing from the extensive collections of History Nebraska. The book can be read straight through, but it is written to be browsed. Readers can learn more about each of the 120 stories at history.nebraska.gov/books, and sign up for a free, weekly Nebraska History Moment email.



INCREASE
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Museum guests visting new exhibits.
Chimney Rock Museum, Bayard, Nebraska



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

GROW OUR AUDIENCES

GROW OUR
AUDIENCES

Other Print Media, TV, Radio

We continue to produce our quarterly *Nebraska History* magazine for members, plus a monthly email newsletter, monthly “A Brief History” column for *NEBRASKA-land* magazine, and daily *Nebraska History Moments* during each legislative session.

In the past year, TV and radio reporters have interviewed various History Nebraska employees. We share news about History Nebraska projects and provide historical background for current events.

INCREASE
ACCESS TO
COLLECTIONS

Website and Social Media

Social media allows us to engage the public and share news and historical content. We ended the fiscal year with more than 23,000 Facebook followers, an increase of more than 27 percent over last year. The number of people who see our content grew by nearly 18 percent. Our Twitter following grew by 38 percent.

Our website at history.nebraska.gov is the internet’s largest source of Nebraska history. This year our number of website users grew by more than 15 percent, and “organic” traffic (people coming from search engines but not from paid ads) grew by 22 percent.

GROW
FINANCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY



38%
INCREASE



11%
INCREASE



27%
INCREASE

EXPAND
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OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

INCREASE ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

New Collecting Plan

Approved by our Board of Trustees, this plan reflects an intent to move from a passive collections strategy to an active approach. It defines collecting focus areas through 2025, plus deaccession priorities. It calls for “tiering” items in terms of significance, for targeted and sustainable collecting, and emphasizes accessible collections. The full plan is online at:

history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/CollectingPlan.pdf

Ongoing Digitization

We continue digitizing photos, documents, and objects from our collections to make them available online. This year we set an ambitious goal: to digitize one million pages of material.

How many did we do? More than 9 million pages! This includes probate records, newspapers, county and community histories, and key manuscript collections.

Managing our growing digital collection requires careful management and good software. We began transitioning to Preservica, a digital preservation system that will ensure the prolonged existence of—and access to—our digital resources.

History Nebraska was awarded a \$10,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant to rehouse film into archival quality vented film cans. The new cans will assure longevity of one of the premiere moving image collections in the Great Plains.

Top left: Film storage before National Endowment for the Humanities grant.
Bottom left: Storage of historic film after grant awarded.



Digital Coordinator Sarah Sdao prepares to scan historic documents, allowing for greater online access for the public.

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"Officers Quarters at Ft. Robinson"
circa 1887

The back of the photo reads:

"Compliments of Davis 'Med. Dept.' U.S. Army

The little girl shown in this view is the daughter of a colored servant girl at this post. The little girl is white as any white person, not withstanding the fact she has a negro mother."



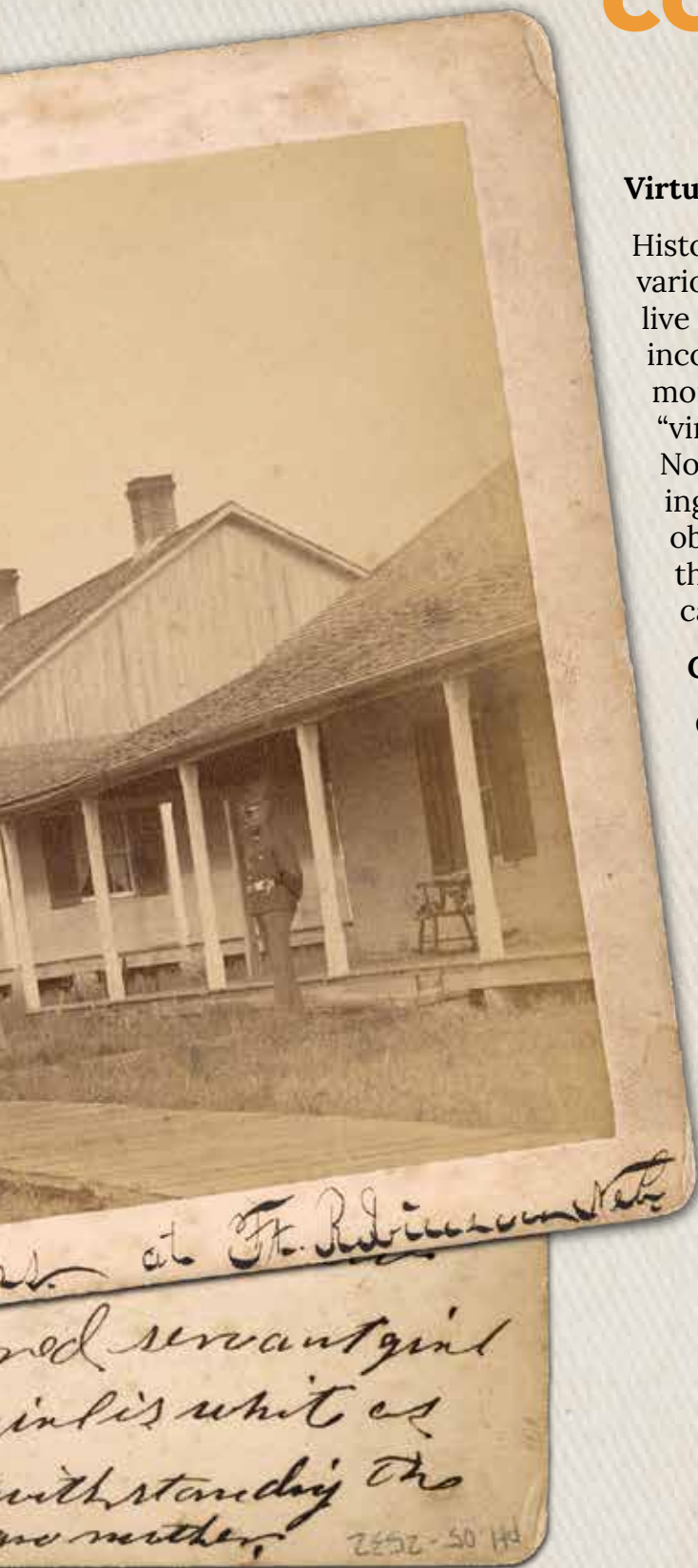
McFarland

*Officers Quarters
daughter of a colored
at this post. The little girl
any white person, not
fact that she has a negro*

CFXY-25

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

INCREASE ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS



Virtual Field Trips

History Nebraska manages historic sites in various parts of the state. But what if you live so far away that an in-person visit is inconvenient? During the spring of 2021, more than 2,000 students participated in “virtual field trips” to the Senator George Norris State Historic Site in McCook, touring rooms in the Norris house, viewing objects and photos while learning about the US Senate and Norris’s influential career.

Collections Aquisitions

One of History Nebraska’s noteworthy acquisitions this past year is this rare circa-1887 view of Fort Robinson. Photos of African American Buffalo Soldiers are relatively rare, and those depicting their children are rarer still.

The girl with the dog is mixed-race African American, daughter of a servant at the fort. The Winter 2021 issue of *Nebraska History Magazine* will share more about this photo.

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Exclusive to History Nebraska gift shops,
our new merchandise includes "History of
Nebraska Plates" poster.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

GROW FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Earning Revenue During COVID

History Nebraska receives about half of its funding from state appropriations, and relies on earned income, grants, foundation support and direct gifts for the remainder. This past year cash revenues totaled \$1,884,392, representing 145 percent of our earned revenue goal, despite seeing only 27 percent of our normal attendance.

Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha

History Nebraska's Ford Center relies heavily on earned income. As with most years, our 2020-21 fiscal year was focused on helping our clients preserve their institutional and family treasures. In spite of the pandemic, we were able to meet our financial goal and complete a number of History Nebraska projects.



Parchment is strong and durable but high susceptible to the environment. Conservators treat a damaged historic medical diploma at the Ford Center in Omaha.

Membership

Membership supports History Nebraska financially. This year we sold **49 percent more** memberships than we did in fiscal year 2019-2020. Our current membership total is 2,002.

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Sandhills research. State Archeology Office staff completed the final report on a multi-year research project in the Nebraska Sandhills sponsored by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. The research project resulted in on the ground examination of nearly 10,000 acres and discovery of 223 archeological sites. We also wrapped up fieldwork and completed the draft report on a statewide project intended to help better predict where deeply buried archeological sites are most likely to be preserved. The project was a collaboration with geologists from the University of Kansas and funded by the Nebraska Department of Transportation.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

EXPAND OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships in Archeology

Construction projects.

The State Archeology Office conducted more than \$700,000 worth of contract work for the Nebraska Department of Transportation, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and a variety of environmental consulting firms and local governments. These efforts involved in-field examination of about 175 proposed construction projects.

The purpose was to discover and avoid impacts to significant archeological sites, bridges, historic neighborhoods, and buildings. This work is required under federal and state regulations.

We also worked with our Department of Transportation partners to produce a short video on this type of work. Search “Archeology in Nebraska Knowledge Nook” on YouTube.

Repatriating human remains.

State Archeology Office staff worked with more than thirty Great Plains tribes to craft a joint repatriation claim for nearly 650 Indigenous individuals and associated funerary objects. These are remains that could not be identified with a particular tribe. The remains were reburied in 2021. We also worked with fifteen law enforcement and local government officials to recover human remains inadvertently found during construction, farming, or from erosion.



Opposite: Taking deep soil cores along the White River in northwest Nebraska to collect information for the statewide buried archeological sites prediction project. Top: Archeology crew evaluating the buried ruins of a Pawnee village near Monroe. The site could be impacted during replacement of a bridge. Bottom: Staff worked with the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma to place ancestral remains in specially constructed boxes in advance of reburial.

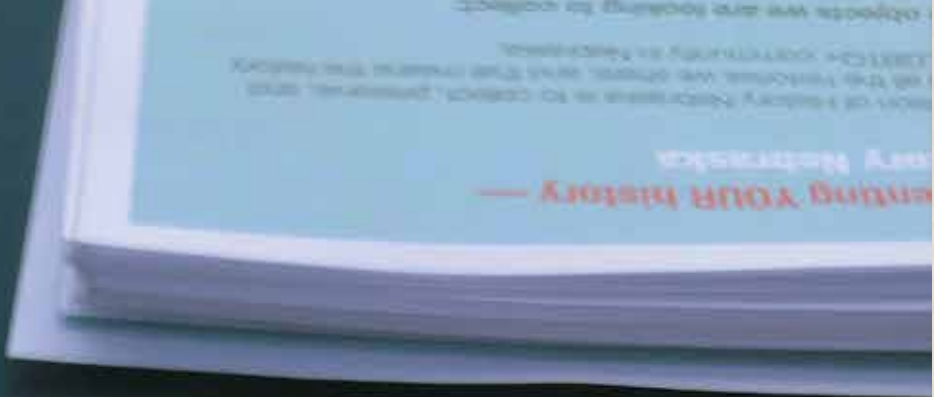
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PROUDLY OPEN TO ALL.

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History Nebraska was a participant in Lincoln's Annual Star City Pride Festival and Parade, June 19, 2021. Stickers above display the LGBT pride flag and transgender pride flag.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

EXPAND OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Lincoln's Star City Pride Festival

In June 2021 History Nebraska participated in Lincoln's Pride Month event by hosting speakers who discussed LGBTQIA+ history and the status of Two Spirit in traditional Native American culture.

Evicted Exhibition

The Nebraska History Museum hosted the traveling exhibition *Evicted*, which focuses on housing, poverty, and eviction. Our supplement exhibit, Nebraska's Housing Stories, showed the history of housing disparity and discrimination. The exhibition was supported of Nebraska's Housing Developers Association and South of Downtown Community Development Organization in partnership with Woods Charitable Fund.

Although tours of these exhibits were limited due to COVID, we worked with other institutions to arrange tours for groups from the Lincoln Electric System, Great Western Bank, United Way of Lincoln, Lancaster County, and Catholic Social Services, among others.

Historic Preservation Partnerships

History Nebraska's State Historic Preservation Office commissioned a public interest survey to learn more about how Nebraskans feel about the preservation of historic properties. We hired museum audience research firm Wilkening Consulting to manage surveys of a broad sample of Nebraskans and of stakeholders connected to preservation work.

Most Nebraskans express a preference for historic homes and communities. This preference isn't so much about economics as it is about the desire to live in places that feel safe, comfortable, and family friendly. For most Nebraskans, these are places of character and identity, from historic homes to vibrant downtowns. We also collaborated with the Omaha World-Herald to publish a series of articles based on our oral history project exploring the development of downtown Omaha between 1950 and the 1990s. The stories linked the past with the present by comparing past successes and failures with Omaha's plans for the future.

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*Detail of shattering silk ribbons
and tin cone tinklers, part of a
restored Lakota tradecloth dress.*

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

INCREASE TEAMWORK & ACCOUNTABILITY

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion

Nebraska is a diverse place, and History Nebraska seeks to reflect the diversity of our state's cultural heritage. Among museum professionals, this is known as Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion, or DEAI. This year we completed our first staff DEAI survey and launched a DEAI Committee.

Museums can play an essential role in creating safe and welcoming spaces for the most marginalized and at-risk communities. This year History Nebraska played a key role in developing *Audiences and Inclusion: A Primer for Cultivating More Inclusive Attitudes among the Public*, published by Wilkening Consulting and the American Alliance of Museums. The document uses new research to examine how museums can use their ability to spark curiosity to cultivate attitudes that are more inclusive.

Below: History Nebraska is committed to preserving and sharing the histories of Nebraska's many cultures. A Lakota tradecloth dress from the Nebraska History Museum is decorated with silk ribbons and metal tinklers cut from tobacco tins—illustrating the intersection of trade and cultural expression. Objects conservator Rebecca Cashman stabilized the deteriorating silk ribbons to preserve this important artifact.



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FINANCIAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2021

Revenues

State Appropriations	60.68%	\$4,541,079.10
309 Funds	3.93%	\$294,077.82
Earned Income & Membership	18.27%	\$1,367,079.18
Federal Grants & Contracts	9.29%	\$695,236.57
NSHS Foundation Support	3.57%	\$267,442.38
Donations, Grants & Special Events	4.26%	\$319,135.77
Total Revenues		\$7,484,050.82*

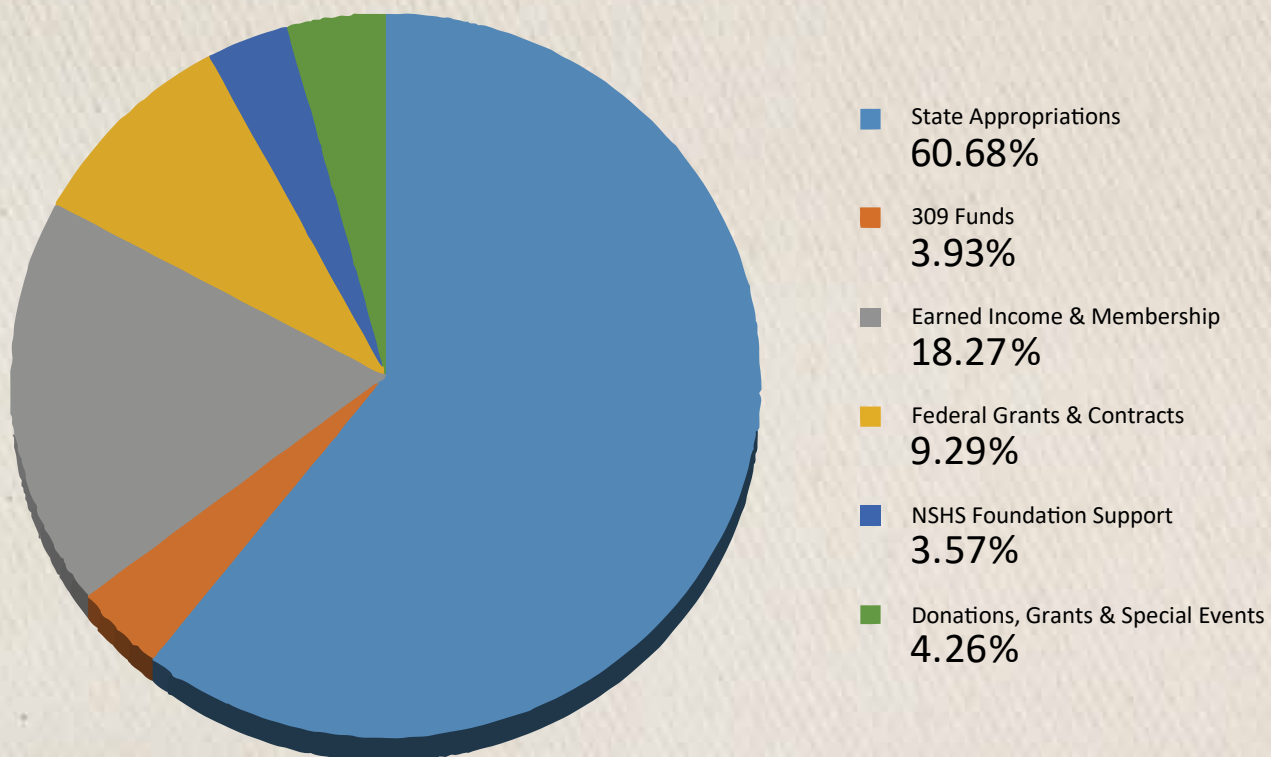
Expenditures

Administrative Services	17.06%	\$1,317,087.45
Museum & Historic Sites	32.15%	\$2,481,612.11
Collections	10.98%	\$847,369.69
Archeology	12.92%	\$997,313.25
Historic Preservation	12.89%	\$995,284.57
Conservation	8.32%	\$642,079.43
Research & Publications	5.67%	\$437,645.50
Total Expenditures		\$7,718,392.00

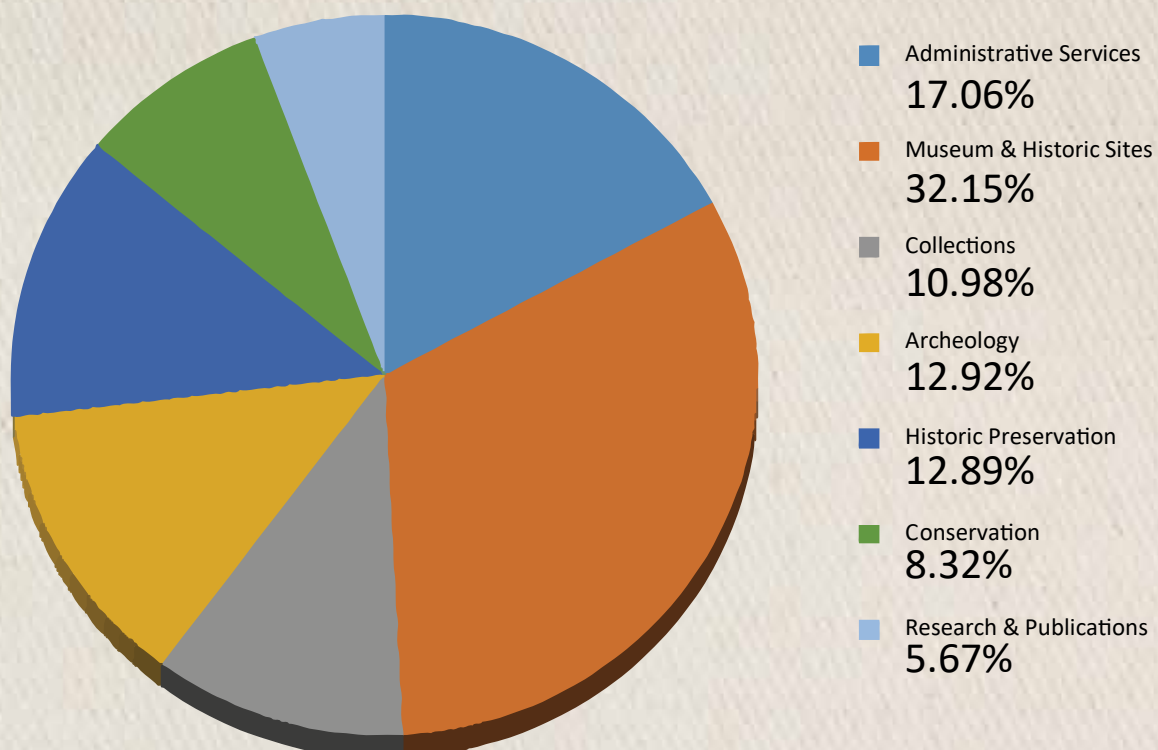
*Does not include indirect and in-kind support from other organizations.

Michelle Furby, Chief Financial Officer

Revenues



Expenditures





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