

Historical Convening Session Descriptions and Speaker Bios

Keynote Speaker:

Jerome Thompson served the State Historical Society from 1982-2015. From 2005 to his retirement in 2015, he served as State Curator and traveled the state providing technical assistance to local organizations. In retirement he served on the State Historical Board for eight years. He volunteers at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, serves on the board of the Iowa Jewish Historical Society, and is a contributor to Iowa History Journal. In 2014 he was given an Award of Merit by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) for his service to history.

Jerome will be taking a page from James Deetz' book In Small Things Forgotten and focus on "Treasures in Small Places." According to the AASLH 2022 Census of Historical Organizations, there are about 21,000 historical organizations in the United States. By contrast there are about 16,000 public libraries. About 63 percent of historical organizations—or about 9,000—have annual operating budgets of less than \$50,000.

Jerome will highlight some small organizations in Iowa that he has personally worked with and some very interesting "treasures" from their collections. Actually, every organization has treasures that are special to their local communities and are evidence of their community history.

Breakout Sessions:

[It's all TOO MUCH! Practical De-Accessioning for the Chronically Overwhelmed,](#)
[presented by Jodi Evans](#)

Do you ever look around your organization and just...sigh? This session will focus on practical matters in dealing with too much stuff. Emphasis will be given to the basic processes of deaccessioning, tips and resources for disposal, and perhaps a little emotional support.

Jodi Evans has a B.A. from Luther College, a Master's from the University of Iowa, and holds a certificate from the AASLH History Leadership Institute. Since 1987 she has wrangled collections, information, and the occasional curator as Registrar with the State Historical Society of Iowa

[Keep Calm and Get the Disaster Plan,](#) [presented by Kay Coats](#)

Disasters and emergencies are impossible to predict, and challenging to respond to, but having a plan can help you be prepared and respond more efficiently. This presentation will focus on the basics of disaster planning and the resources available to help guide the process.

Kay Coats is the Collections Coordinator for the State Historical Museum and is tasked with the physical care of the object collection. Most days are spent photographing objects and updating database

records, but she also finds herself strategically placing buckets under leaks, moving objects to safety, and updating the disaster plan.

[Growing Historians: Encouraging Intergenerational Learning at Museums, presented by Matthew Jayne](#)

How can museums become centers of learning for all ages? Learn about the State Historical Museum of Iowa's journey to build and create educational opportunities and programs with limited resources and staff. Hear recommendations based on real-life situations on how to evolve existing programs and how to discover (and engage with) brand new audiences.

Matthew Jayne is the Learning and Engagement Manager for the State Historical Museum of Iowa. In his current position, he creates, develops and manages educational programs for all ages of learners and also oversees the museum's internship and volunteer programs. In 2023, he was honored as an Innovative Educator by Iowa State University Alumni Association's STATEment Maker award. He previously held roles focusing on education and public engagement at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa, and University Museums at Iowa State University.

[Donations 101: Should We Take It? How to Decide What Belongs in Your Institution, presented by Allison Johnson and Hang Nguyen](#)

Do you get calls, emails, and unsolicited packages sent to your organization? How do you decide what to keep and what to return? We will teach you the basics of writing a collecting policy, dealing with donors diplomatically, assessing potential donations for threats like mold or bugs, and preservation realities. This informal session will be interactive so please bring your questions, concerns, and scenarios for discussion.

Hang Nguyen is the Reference Librarian at the State Historical Society in Iowa City. She has a background in Musicology and has been working for the society for eight years. She has a passion for helping people find what they are looking for.

Allison Johnson is the Special Collections Archivist at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City. She loves Iowa History and learning stories of Iowans. She has a background in history and has been with the Society for about 10 years.

[President Grant Slept Here Once: Re-examining your Historic House Museum, presented by Hannah Frederick](#)

We'll discuss the different aspects of operating your historic house museum, touching on maintenance, housekeeping, community engagement, and thinking outside the box when it comes to interpretation.

Hannah Frederick has been with the State Historical Society of Iowa as the Montauk Historic Site Coordinator for the past seven years. She holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in museum studies. She lives in beautiful Northeast Iowa with her husband Justin and their three dogs and two cats.

Spend Someone Else's Money! How Grants Can Work for You, presented by Michael Plummer and Kristen Vander Molen

Outside funding can be a great way to support your mission. This session will explore opportunities offered by the State Historical Society of Iowa and offer tips on other avenues to explore.

Kristen Vander Molen is the Grants Manager for the State Historical Society of Iowa. She administers grants for the Provisional Humanities Council, the Historical Resource Development Program, the Country School Grant Program, and the Field Services Program, a technical assistance program for applicants and grantees. Kristen has worked in grants management at the State Historical Society of Iowa for nearly 20 years. She completed her undergraduate studies at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

Michael Plummer is the Historic Sites Manager at the State Historical Society of Iowa, where he also coordinates the Iowa Local History Network and the State's roadside historical marker program. He holds a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from the University of Vermont and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Loyola University Maryland.

Roundtable:

Jessi Galligan is the Executive Director at Pella Historical Museums & Tulip Time. Before taking on this role in 2023, she was the Assistant Director for 4 years, and previous to that, an intern for several summers. Jessi's work at Pella Historical has ranged from social media content creation to volunteer management to exhibit building and many things in between. She enjoys volunteering in the community, spending time with her husband and pets, and watching British mystery shows.

Gale Brubaker is the Executive Director of the West Des Moines Historical Society, headquartered in the historic Jordan House Museum. Gale is a graduate of Drake University and has spent her professional life at both for-profit and non-profit organizations, and feels strongly that the non-profit life can be the most frustrating, yet deeply rewarding job there is!

Hannah Frederick has been with the State Historical Society of Iowa as the Montauk Historic Site Coordinator for the past seven years. She holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in museum studies. She lives in beautiful Northeast Iowa with her husband Justin and their three dogs and two cats.

Valerie Van Kooten is the Administrator of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI). She has a passion for sharing our state's history and takes it personally when someone says "History is boring!" Even her hobbies relate to history—she's the chairperson of the Marion County Pioneer Cemetery Commission, which identifies, repairs, renovates, researches, and provides signage for pioneer cemeteries, defined by Iowa Code as cemeteries that have had 12 or fewer burials in the past 50 years.