

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION STATEMENT

To lead in the collecting and promoting of Blue Earth County's history
to ensure its preservation for the enrichment and benefit
of present and future generations..

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023

Jennifer Echevarria, BECHS Treasurer

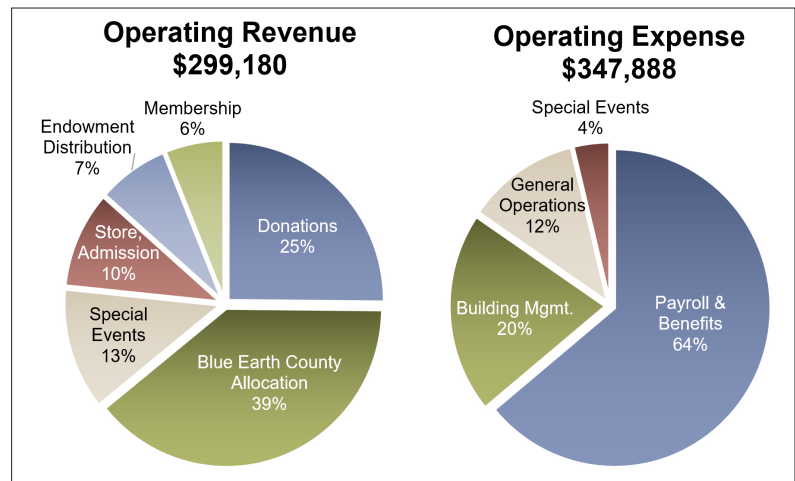
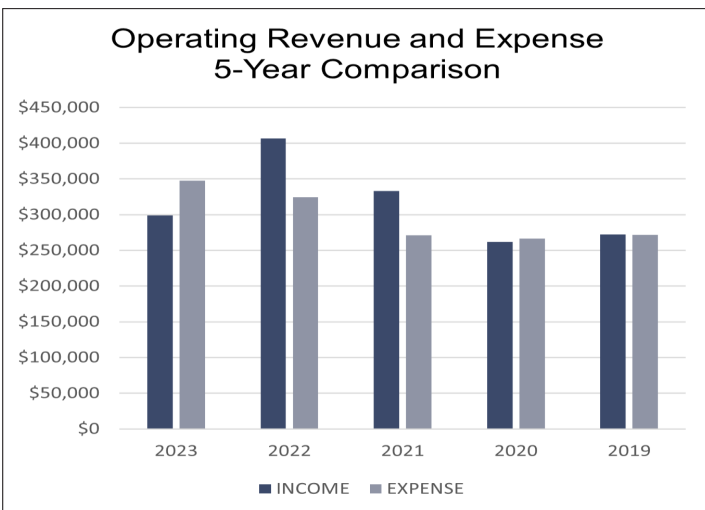
2023 was another financially healthy year for the Blue Earth County Historical Society, and that's due to the many generous people we call History Heroes. Thank YOU to those that contributed to the success of the Historical Society in 2023!

For Fiscal Year 2023, the Board budgeted \$399,385 for Operating Revenue and \$381,053 for Operating Expenses for a net gain of \$18,332. Mid-year, the Board authorized a change to the budgeted Operating Revenue reducing it to \$357,385 due to a program change that was not moving forward.

Unfortunately, even with that purposeful change, we missed our budgeted Operating Revenue by \$58,205 (-16% deficit). Our revenue decrease was due in part to lower than budgeted donations. On the other hand, we spent less than budgeted by \$45,937 (-8% difference). The decrease in overall expenses was mainly due to an open staff position that went unfilled. Totaling in a net loss of -\$48,708 for the year. Due to thoughtful stewardship of funds over the years, BECHS was able to bridge the deficit gap.

Year over year, our Actual Revenue went down by \$106,144 (-26% decrease), while our Actual Expenses rose by \$26,399 (+7% increase). The revenue changes from 2022 to 2023 were due in part to significant contributions in 2022 to purchase the 5th Street property. The property was purchased and razed in 2023 for \$206,845 with project funds. The slight increase in overall expenses was due to an increase in staffing and wage changes to bring our staff to marketable wages.

All in all, it was a successful year for our Society and a wonderful way to take steps toward our BOLD vision. Once again, this was largely due to the hard work and dedication of our BECHS staff as well as the support from our members and donors!



Blue Earth County Historical Society Statement of Financial Position As of December 31, 2023 (UNAUDITED)			
	Dec 31, 23	Dec 31, 22	
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
1000 · Cash/Savings			
1010 · Cash	240.00	240.00	
1040 · Operating-Checking-WFB	42,540.93	213,172.13	
1042 · Savings-WFB	41,942.36	84,847.91	
1046 · Brokerage Account-RBC	308,892.94	340,175.38	
1090 · Endowment Invest-RBC	440,847.75	394,434.04	
1200 · CDs - Dedicated Funds	38,059.96	38,059.96	
Total Checking/Savings	872,523.94	1,070,929.42	
Other Current Assets			
Total 1390 · BECHS Inventory	663,035.09	663,976.63	
1600 · Undeposited Funds	829.61	544.64	
Total Other Current Assets	663,864.70	664,521.27	
Total Current Assets	1,531,446.61	1,735,487.91	
Total Fixed Assets	298,776.09	298,776.09	
TOTAL ASSETS	1,830,222.70	2,034,264.00	
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Total Accounts Payable	9,464.48	8,276.26	
Total Other Current Liabilities	19,204.77	18,259.99	
Total Current Liabilities	28,669.25	26,536.25	
Total Liabilities	28,669.25	26,536.25	
Equity			
3100 · Retained Earnings	1,739,034.52	1,774,772.52	
3110 · Temporarily Restricted	268,693.23	268,693.23	
Total Equity	1,801,553.45	2,007,727.75	
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	1,830,222.70	2,034,264.00	

Full financials are available upon request.
BECHS' IRS Form 900 is available at Guidestar.org.

IMPACT REPORT 2023

BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT, BECHS:

MAKES HISTORY ACCESSIBLE. BECHS added 80 new online archival finding aids in 2023. These finding aids highlight our archival collections ranging from family and individual papers to organizational and governmental records searchable on our website and MNCollections.org, a Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM) collaborative website. A few notable collections include: Mankato State University Historic Survey of Mankato, 1976-1978, Medo Township Records, and Minnie Schoyen Hubbard Papers.



NEW ACQUISITIONS: 1,058 objects, books and photos were donated to BECHS by **129** individuals/groups for long-term preservation.

SPARKS CONVERSATIONS THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCES

BECHS hosted three unique and impactful public historical tours in 2023.

- **Lincoln Community Center:** In partnership with Mankato Area Public School Community Education and inspired by the Celebrating Lincoln exhibit, BECHS hosted self-guided tours of Lincoln each month, January—May. Tours shared the history and sparked conversations and memories.
- **Good Counsel Hill:** In partnership with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, BECHS lead 270 attendees through guided historic tours of Good Counsel Hill to showcase this important community landmark.
- **Glenwood Cemetery:** Our virtual self-guided tour of Glenwood Cemetery highlighted the lives of 19 influential individuals; including Maud Hart Lovelace, George Brett, and Thomas Hughes.



PRESERVES AND PRESENTS HISTORY. The History Center hosted two popular exhibitions in 2023, reaching over 3,000 visitors this year.

- **Celebrating 100 Years of Lincoln School:** This exhibit highlighted Mankato's Lincoln School from its

time as an elementary and junior high school to its present life as a community center. BECHS was happy to share and promote this history in partnership with MAP's Community Education.

- **Music and Memories: A Look Back at the Mankato Music Scene:** This exhibit highlighted Mankato's deep musical history of the 1950s-90s. With the help of Greg Duffy's private memorabilia collection, we were able to share the history of Mankato's musical talents, venues, and events. BECHS also hosted spin-off



programs including the Front Street Pub Crawl, Pete Steiner's "Music City" program, and Bryce Stenzel's "Mankato Community Band 50 Years" program.

INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION. In 2023, BECHS inspired the next generation through hands-on learning and experiential tours.

- **Internships:** In 2023, BECHS hosted eight interns from Minnesota State University, Mankato who worked on diverse projects including museum cataloging, research and writing, and nonprofit leadership.
- **Partnerships:** BECHS hosted MSU, M "Art Museum and Exhibition Studies" students as they explored the fundamental principles of the museum exhibition process, and gained hands-on museum development experience. Their Museum projects included designing an exhibit, creating social media content, and reinterpreting a space for diverse audiences.
- **Tours:** BECHS hosted seven tours for seven schools, bringing 146 students ranging from pre-K through college to the History Center and Hubbard House for experiential tours.



ENGAGES AND CONNECTS TO OUR COMMUNITY. In 2023, BECHS partnered and/or collaborated with 40+ groups, organizations, and businesses to enhance this place we call home. In 2023, over 50,000 individuals connected with BECHS at the History Center, Hubbard House, in the community and online.

HISTORY HERO SHOUTOUT 2023

VOLUNTEERS are truly the lifeblood of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. In 2023, over 90 individuals donated 3,500+ hours of volunteer time to support BECHS. There is not any aspect of work done at the History Center or Hubbard House that doesn't involve volunteers.



MEET TIM PULIS

Volunteer, Member and Donor

Tim has been an active member of BECHS for almost two decades. He began writing for *The Blue Earth County Historian* in 2014 after he learned more about Seppman Mill and the creation of a model of the mill that now resides at the History Center.

"Volunteering at the historical society is all about connections. Connections with the past and present community. It also is about connecting with the wonderful staff who are there to answer all my questions. I feel like I am at home."

MEMBERS and DONORS supported 31% of the Annual Operating Revenue in 2023.

BECHS is proud to be supported by 534 Members. 283 individuals, households, businesses and organizations donated over \$89,000 for general operating and special projects. Today, we serve Blue Earth County thanks to our History Heroes and their generous support.

MEET HELEN BALCOME

Member and Donor

Helen has been a BECHS member and donor for over two decades and attends many of BECHS programs, especially those related to the Welsh and Lake Crystal. Helen serves on the Minnesota Welsh Association Board where she promotes Welsh history and traditions.

"I believe my interest in history began in childhood. On family vacations we often went to historic sites (my Dad's influence). After time away, we returned to Minnesota in the late 1990's. It was natural to visit the Historical Museum. Over the years I enjoyed the many programs, displays, and tours. The preservation and sharing of history is critical. I am grateful that I am able to support the Blue Earth County Historical Society now and in to the future."



Because of History Heroes like YOU, BECHS collects,
preserves and presents the history of Blue Earth County!
THANK YOU!

We couldn't have done it without YOU!

THANK YOU 2023 DONORS & SPONSORS

Support Given

\$89,029

Thank You!

\$2,500-\$5,000

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Thanks to the additional
112 donors who
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BOLD VISION, BOLD STEP, BOLD HISTORY HEROES

Nik Proehl, BECHS Board of Trustees Chair

Historical appreciation asks us to look back and examine, then apply the lessons learned to the future. I do so today, reflecting on our journey over the past twelve months and looking ahead to the exciting changes and challenges ahead. This period has been marked by significant milestones, unique and interesting events, and the strengthening of our work through the reinvigoration of our working groups. Each of these developments represents a step forward in our mission to preserve and share the rich history of Blue Earth County.

One of the more poignant moments of the past year was the demolition of the "Parking Lot House," a decision that, while difficult, was made in the best interest of BECHS's long-term vision and our commitment to providing an accessible and welcoming space for our visitors. The house had stood as a silent witness to the evolving landscape of our neighborhood throughout the years.

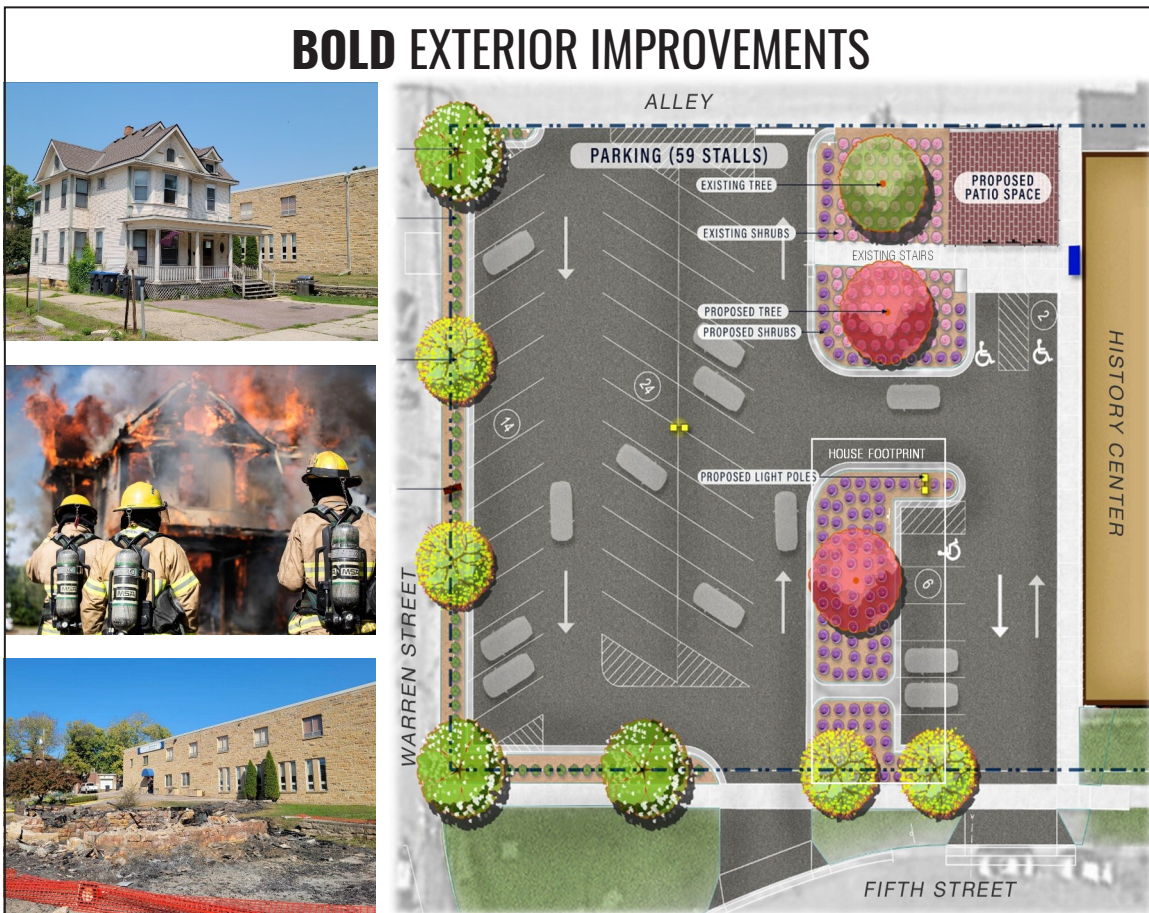
However, its removal marks the beginning of a new chapter for BECHS. We are now poised to commence the reconstruction of the parking lot, a project that promises to enhance the functionality and aesthetic appeal of our facility. This endeavor is not just about adding parking spaces; it is about creating a gateway that welcomes all who come to explore, learn, and connect with our shared history.

The highlight of our social calendar, the annual Speakeasy gala, was held this year at the breathtaking Sky 111, marking the first time this gathering has taken place in this venue. The evening was nothing short of magical, with guests stepping back in time to an era of glamor and intrigue. The success of this event is a testament to the creativity and passion of the staff and

volunteers that defines our Society. It not only served as a significant fundraiser for BECHS but also as a vibrant reminder of the importance of celebrating our collective heritage in dynamic and engaging ways.

As we look to the future, we do so with a sense of optimism and purpose. The challenges we face, from the ongoing needs of preservation to the imperative of making history relevant to new generations, are significant. Yet, with the continued support and engagement of our members and donors, the dedication of our staff and Board, and the partnerships we have forged within our community, we are well-positioned to meet these challenges head-on.

To close, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your continued support of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. Whether through your time, talents, or treasures, your contributions are the lifeblood of our organization. Together, we are not just preserving history; we are inspiring futures. Thank you, History Heroes.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2023

Jessica Potter, BECHS Executive Director

Looking back at 2023, so many happy moments fill my mind. As we moved another year away from the pandemic, we experienced engagement levels like pre-pandemic. The BECHS staff, board, and volunteers engaged, partnered, collaborated, and shared history with thousands of people. From our great tours, podcasts, and exhibits to special programs and events. Here are a few of our most memorable:

Last year, we had special opportunities to partner with Lincoln Community Center and School Sisters of Notre Dame to showcase their history and buildings. As part of the *Celebrating Lincoln* exhibit at the History Center, we collaborated a self-guided



tour of the Lincoln Community Center for the first part of 2023. Participants were able to visit their former classrooms, the gymnasium, and

maybe even find their old locker.

In June, BECHS staff had a special collaboration working with Sisters Mary Kay Gosch and Mary Kay Ash at Good Counsel. They taught us the history of the buildings and showed us the Sisters' impact on our community

for over a century. They also allowed BECHS to host guided history tours of the campus in June. We are so grateful



BECHS could be part of making these historic places accessible to the public.

Speaking of historic places, BECHS was also on the planning team for the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Conference held in Mankato in September. The History Center hosted the opening reception and welcomed over 100 people with food trucks and live music to celebrate the history of Place. We also participated in tours of the Post

Office and a special Mankato history bus tour for attendees.

Of course, the place top of mind in 2023 was the property next to the History Center. Acquiring the house to allow for expansion has been in the works since 2014, so it was a bittersweet moment when the property officially became ours in August. Although the house was slated for demolition, we collaborated with local craftspeople who salvaged



materials out of the house including wood siding, trim, doors, and the staircase. BECHS was able to save two pieces: a built-in bench that sat in the front entry, and

a round window next to the front door which can also be seen on neighboring houses. Sweet reminders of this house and its history.

Partnerships did not stop there. The house was used by the City of Mankato Fire Department for two days of experiential trainings. It was a rare opportunity for firefighters to train on an older house that had many nooks and crannies where rental tenants at one time lived. This training could save lives if a future fire happens in a house like this.

After the house was down, the next donation came in the form of in-kind support from W. Lorentz Construction to clean up the site. And, of course, the



History Heroes who made it possible for us to purchase the property. Next stop, new parking lot!

Sincere deep-felt appreciation to our members and donors who make it possible for the BECHS staff to do the work we love. Everything listed above and throughout this report was made possible through the financial support, time and talents of so many individuals, families, businesses, and organizations.

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Heather Harren
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Collections Manager

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HOW TO SUPPORT IN 2024

BECOME A MEMBER

Each program, event, and initiative detailed in this report was made possible because of History Heroes like you! If you or someone you know are interested in being part of the impact of this work, please visit BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Membership

PHILANTHROPY

There are a variety of ways to use your generosity and advocacy to ensure BECHS continues to inspire, engage, and connect. Learn more at BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Donate

SPONSORSHIP

Align your brand with inspiring programs and events that bring people together and celebrate history. We have unique sponsorship opportunities available at BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Sponsor

VOLUNTEER

Come make an impact by donating your time and talents to support the work we do to collect, preserve and share the history of Blue Earth County. Sign up to volunteer at BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Volunteer.

INSPIRE. ENGAGE. CONNECT.

BlueEarthCountyHistory.com | 507.345.5566 | 424 Warren St. Mankato, MN