



# Rockford Area Historical Society

Learning, Sharing & Celebrating  
Minnesota History

## OUR MISSION AND VISION

The Rockford Area Historical Society's mission is to "inspire the community's interest in the past". We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities. Through its rich collections, dynamic programming, and effective outreach, the Society preserves the past, informs the present and promotes the Rockford area's legacy and Minnesota history for future generations.

## THE ROCKFORD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY...

- Includes the Ames-Florida-Stork House museum in Rockford MN where visitors experience the beginnings of Rockford's history when George Ames and his brother-in-law Joel Florida, along with master builder and millwright Guilford George, founded the town in 1855, through Meda Stork's dream having her home become a museum in 1986.
- Manages the many journals, photographs and artifacts left by the founding families, including one of the largest textile collections in the state.
- Participates in local events such as annual Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo, Rockford Memorial Day and Rockford River Days, as well as hosts the annual Founder's Day event and Mystery Dinner event.
- Acts as a resource for Rockford Area Schools 1,700 schoolchildren and their teachers as well as other local youth organizations.



## LONG RANGE PLAN--JANUARY 2016 – JANUARY 2021



In five years...

By 2021 the Rockford Area Historical Society will be a vibrant, vital, and visible community organization with exhibits, collections and programs that attract area residents and visitors from near and far. The Ames-Florida-Stork House historic site will go beyond the “traditional” museum mentality to collectively function as a history park that bring the past to life in fun and unexpected ways.

The Historical Society will be a “must join” organization. Area residents will want to get involved through membership and volunteer opportunities. New programs, exhibits, marketing, and a development plan will all work to entice people to become members in a healthy and engaged museum that not only brings local history to life, but that intimately connects to them on a personal level. Historical Society programs will strive to attract and serve residents of all ages. The Board will strategically find energized volunteers to sit on the Board and help run many of the current and new initiatives. New volunteers will bring freshness to the Historical Society’s offerings, and will be used to strategically connect to different populations within the town.

Greater financial security will be achieved through a comprehensive development plan that systematically expands the organization’s membership and donor base. Individuals, organizations and fundraising event will be identified and developed to raise needed funds. Programs will also be developed with an emphasis on building attendance, raising income, and “friendraising.” These initiatives will help place the organization on a better financial footing.

Emphasis will be placed on the Historical Society’s collections. Adequate volunteer staffing will be achieved to support and maintain the long-term preservation, staffing, and planning of historic assets. A disaster plan, collections plan and policy will each be developed to ensure best practices for collections. The collection will be fully integrated into a collection’s software that allows for many of the images to be searched online. Other online and media outlets will be used to present and share the town’s history and the Historical Society’s collection. Through these methods, the public will receive greater access to the organization’s collections and will build a stronger appreciation of the Town’s past and the Historical Society’s value.

Since the Rockford Area Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Our Federal EIN number is 41-1634085.

## OUR VALUES...

### **Stewardship**

Through responsible collections management practices and adequate provision of resources, the Rockford Area Historical Society assures that materials documenting our heritage will be saved for generations to come.



### **Ingenuity**

The Rockford Area Historical Society applies its limited resources in innovative ways to optimize the effectiveness of programs and the efficiency of its operations.

### **Inclusivity**

Through the development of diverse public programs and a willingness to be accessible to all, the Rockford Area Historical Society shares the Rockford heritage with people of all ages, ethnicities and economic background.

### **Engagement**

Through a demonstrated commitment to excellence and the development of respectful partnerships, the Rockford Area Historical Society invites the involvement of members and individuals as active participants in our exhibits and programs, as well as contributors of objects and memories that help weave the stories of the Rockford's past.



## STRATEGIC GOALS & PRIORITIES

In pursuit of the future state we have envisioned and aspire to reach, the Rockford Area Historical Society's Board will focus its energies and resources on four areas of priority during the coming years:

1. **Strengthen Financial Security** – An improved financial position will be achieved by creating and implementing a development plan that thoughtfully incorporates ways to diversify income sources.

Identified initiatives and strategies are:

- 1) A comprehensive development plan will be created that incorporates membership, donor cultivation, planned giving, annual appeal schedule, grants, and fundraising events, etc. Special emphasis will be placed on diversifying income sources.
  - a) Membership benefits enhanced, with a goal of 10% of annual budget to be obtained from dues within the next two years.
  - b) A sub-committee will be formed to develop more business and corporate memberships.
  - c) Friends of RAHS (old members, quilt ticket buyers, Founder's Day attendees, etc.) will be contacted and membership options promoted.
  - d) Hanover Athletic Associations Gambling Fund moneys will be reviewed for sustainability and additional income.
- 2) Membership fees will be regularly reviewed and compared to other historical societies in the region. Where possible, rates will be increased accordingly to reflect market price.
- 3) All existing programs will go through a cost/benefit analysis to assess and review their current viability and possibility for future income and sustainability.
- 4) New programs and events will be developed with the intent to raise needed funds. This will be done in tandem with the strategies outlined under Increase Engagement of People.



- 5) Other museums outside of the immediate region will be investigated for successful events.
- 6) Fundraising events should be designed to not only raise money, but to also build visibility and friends.

**2. Increase Engagement of People** – A more active membership and volunteer core will play a greater role in fundraising events, embracing new ideas and concepts, developing inclusive history programming that engages a broad audience, and defining key staff and board roles.

Identified initiatives and strategies are:

- 1) Create a detailed membership plan. This plan will include:
  - a) Setting goals and objectives for membership numbers with a financial goal of 10% of annual budget is obtained from dues within the next two years.
  - b) Redesigning/reviewing the membership appeal process and materials.
  - c) Determining methods to engage members so that they take a more active role in the organization and reduce the burden of the Board.
  - d) Developing incentives for membership participation (i.e., special events, members' open house, monthly programs, etc.)
    - i. During River Days, a RAHS Quilt raffle ticket is free with any membership
    - ii. Individual membership at \$25 with offer of free tours and voting rights at annual meeting.
    - iii. Family Membership at \$50, includes previous membership level benefits plus family members also receive free tours and a set of RAHS postcards
    - iv. Gold level Membership at \$100, includes previous membership level benefits plus RAHS Gold Holiday ornament and 50% off RAHS merchandise.
    - v. Platinum level Membership at \$200+, includes previous membership level benefits plus use of museum for three hours, special luncheon with RAHS director and research assistance.
- 2) Identify new people (working and contributing) and strategic partnerships with the City of Rockford, City of Greenfield, Rockford Area Schools, Wright county Historical Society and other related groups, Hanover Athletic Association, Buffalo American Legion and related groups.
- 3) The Board will actively work towards reshaping the perception of membership, striving to find ways to empower members and get them more involved
- 4) Expand volunteer core through planning and using programs as ways to reach more people.
  - a) Obtain more volunteers to help implement ideas
  - b) Ensure that there is a sufficient population of volunteers to perform organization's jobs: docents, grounds help, and teaching in schools

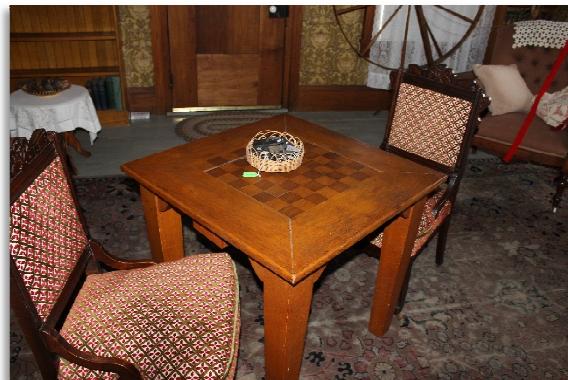


- 5) Pursue board development:
  - a) The Board of Directors will be comprised of members with responsibilities that are essential to the success and operation of the organization.
  - b) New Board Members who represent local demographics will be identified and their interest and involvement cultivated.

**3. Expand Programs and Optimize Collections** – New, innovative programs set forth in a thoughtful plan will bring the Ames-Florida-Stork House museum to life in fun and engaging ways that attract youth, families and history buffs while the historical society’s collections will be better organized and preserved to maximize their effectiveness and long-range preservation.

Identified initiatives and strategies are:

- 1) Make sure that programs and exhibits space is adequate for the preservation of the collection and museum.
  - a) Oversee the current HVAC grant to completion and determine additional fundraising to cover the budget shortage for the HVAC (\$10,000).
    - i. Special grant requests will be pursued to Buffalo American Legion and the Hanover Athletic Association to help cover the budget shortage for HVAC.
    - ii. Research costs and pursue funding options for museum repairs that are needed in the short-term future (i.e. chimney, window glazing, and foundation support) and long-term needs such as additional parking, addition of a public restroom, garage repairs, addition of a multipurpose shelter.
- 2) Develop more inclusive and creative programming to better serve the Rockford Area community, such as:
  - a) Teen nights
  - b) New school programs that connect specially with school curriculum needs
  - c) Meet with area teachers to identify needs and specific interests
  - d) Theatrical and music related events, i.e. holiday programs, Memorial Day.
  - e) Scout programs
  - f) Develop ways to connect to “history hobbyists”; Founder’s Day event, house tours, etc.
  - g) Invite locals to share their “histories.”
  - h) Find and provide an outlet for unfulfilled niches of interest i.e., pre-school programs during the week for children and parents, clubs, social organizations, homeschooled families etc.



- 3) New programs will be developed that emphasize the Society as a unified organization. These programs will focus on town's heritage and will be in addition to those that are site specific at the Ames-Florida-Stork House museum.
- 4) Program times and days of the week will be experimented with to see what works best with different constituents.
  - a) Surveys to members/possible constituents will be continually developed to find out the program times and topics that would most interest them. The first of these can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1cSIVY8de5708EvRINfYey-L77tf6tv3-HYqCyZSPkm8/viewform>

- 5) Events and programs will be reviewed and further developed. Annual fixtures include:



- a) Mystery Dinner in **February**
- b) Memorial Day Ice Cream and Pie Social in **May**
- c) River Days Quilt Raffle in **August**
- d) Founder's Day Event in **September/October**

- 6) To enhance visibility and to ensure success the Historical Society will look towards piggybacking with existing community events, such as the Rockford-Greenfield Community Expo, Crow River Christmas, etc.
  - a) Local businesses and the City of Rockford will be contacted for inclusion of RAHS ad in their various publications which are distributed throughout town.
- 7) New ways to offset program operating costs will be pursued.
  - a) Sponsorships
  - b) Grants
  - c) Collaborations with other partners (Wright County Historical Society, Minnesota Historical Society, etc.) to share resources (both staffing and financial).
- 8) A collections policy and plan will be developed to ensure that best practices are followed for the museum collection. This will include guidelines.
- 9) The creation of a disaster plan will be completed to ensure the safety and security of the museum sites, the Historical Society's collections, and the public.

- 10) Explore more activities that involve people in town like open house, dress up day, fundraiser, etc.
- 11) The Historical Society's photographs will be digitized and organized into a software system that can be integrated online.

**4. Build Public Awareness** – Increased branding of the organization and clear and consistent public communication will build visibility of membership, programs, financial support and the historical society's resources.

Identified initiatives and strategies are:

- 1) Develop a detailed marketing plan that will promote the uniqueness of the Rockford Area Historical Society, its programs, and its resources in a way that excites and engages a broad audience.
- 2) Develop a greater online presence. Create additional promotion through internet, etc.
  - a) Place collections online so that more people become aware of the Historical Society as a vital historic resource.
  - b) Creation of Virtual Tour of the Ames-Florida-Stork House museum to act as a teaser for people to come and see the site.
- 3) Showcase human interest stories and display in them in the community (library, etc.)
- 4) Increase electronic communication with website, expanded email list, and other organizations.
- 5) Develop a greater presence with the community through new programs, exhibits, partnerships and collaborations.

