

Evanston History Center
Fiscal Year Activity Report 2023-2024

Tours and Rentals

- 1,297 people came during public hours, 50 for private group tours,
- Our outdoor walking tours were a wonderful way to stay connected with the community. 187 people joined us for tours of Evanston, including our Holiday Lights and several private group walking tours.
- 27 private events were held in the house and on the terrace, including weddings, anniversary parties, company retreats, memorial services, concerts, community fundraisers, and film shoots.

Research and Archives

- There were 154 phone, email and mail requests for information. The majority of the research requests were initiated by email.
- 200 people visited the EHC archives for research projects.
- The Research Room had 3 interns and 3 volunteers working in the archives on various projects during FY23.
- Collections work in the archives included accessioning, processing and storing new and existing collections.
- We added 11 new collections to the archives, ranging from single records to large collections. We also continued adding collections to our online collection database and are also creating digital collections.
- Flat storage of maps has been re-inventoried and a new database was created by an intern.
- Nine flat storage metal filing cabinets were donated to EHC by the City of Evanston; the blueprint collection is currently being moved from rolled to flat storage in these donated cabinets.
- Northwestern University Department of African American Studies spent the last academic year utilizing the resources in the Research Room seeking sources that address educational disparities in Evanston.
- Research for families applying for Reparations funding from the City of Evanston occurred throughout the year.

Collections

- We received 21 new donations to the collections: including 2 collection donations, 11 archival donations, and 8 costume donations for a total of over 60 items.
- We continued to photograph the costume collection, adding 1305+ images to the costume collection database.
- We had a volunteer working through costume collection records to bring entries up-to-date.
- We photographed and created the first Costume Collection Calendar, focusing on velvet garments. 68 calendars were sold.

Dawes House Restoration

- EHC was awarded a \$133,000 challenge grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and a \$183,000 challenge grant from Illinois Department of Tourism/Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. These grants will support work to restore exterior masonry walls, which will be done in phases. This is the final scheduled work in “Evanston’s History - Evanston’s Home” campaign to restore the Dawes House. \$4,402,539 has been raised for the campaign to date. This includes \$132,000 raised this year.
- TAWANI Foundation has been a long-time supporter, both for the campaign and general operating. In recognition of the extremely generous support of \$1 million+ for the campaign, the Great Hall in the Dawes House has been named for Col (US Ret.) Jennifer Pritzker and TAWANI Foundation. A reception was held in honor of Col. Pritzker for her outstanding support.

Administration

- EHC Executive Director Eden Juron Pearlman announced her retirement after 26 years. The search is underway for EHC’s next visionary leader.

EHC Programs, Events, and Exhibits

- From 9/2022 through 4/2023, EHC hosted 7 *Under the Buffalo* events from “Bon Appetit! A Portrayal of Julia Child with Leslie Goddard to “Edith: the Rogue Rockefeller McCormick,” a presentation by Andrea Friederici Ross. In February 2023, EHC returned to in-person presentations.
- EHC hosted two “Pop Up” events: “Curving Seams: The Twisted History of Sewing Machines in America” with Josh

Chernoff and “Anthro House: Melville J. Herskovits and his Students at Northwestern University, 1945-1960” with Kevin A. Yelvington.

- EHC hosted a special pre-Martin Luther King Day: “Evanston’s Living History: The Fight to Escape Racial Discrimination,” an online presentation by filmmaker Craig Dudnick.
- The exhibit “Suits Me” ran from May 2022 to April 2023. It showcased suits of all kinds from the costume collection, ranging from bathing suits to business attire.
- Two small exhibits in the upstairs exhibit case: “Holiday Shopping in Evanston” in December, and “Evanston’s Railroads” from January through June.
- The costume exhibit in the “Milestones of Evanston History” exhibit changed 3 times.
- The “Evanston Originals” exhibit was installed in time for the Annual Housewalk, showcasing items made or designed by Evanston businesses or residents. This included items from all of the collections.
- The 48th Annual Mother’s Day House saw a return to visiting home interiors and was a huge success, more than 600 people toured the interiors of five historically and architecturally significant homes in Southeast Evanston. We were very grateful to our sponsors, Tawani Foundation, Evanston Community Bank and Trust, fcStudio, Scott Simpson Design + build, and American Vintage Home.
- EHC partnered with Binny’s Beverage Depot for wine tastings. These fundraisers included “Holiday Wines, Spirits and More” held December 8, 2022 inside the holiday-decorated Dawes House, and “Tasting on the Terrace” held June 17, 2023 outside on the beautifully restored lakeside terrace. 100+ patrons attended each event.

Outreach

- In October the history center launched a new website and unveiled a new logo. The website is more user friendly, and has been met with much enthusiasm. The membership brochure was also updated.
- EHC continued its partnership with the Kitchen Table Stories project on: “Placemaking: a Project to Collect and Share Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander (ASPA) History.” The first article in the Placemaking series, “Portrait of Wong Aloy: A Chinese Immigrant’s American Journey,” was published in the *Evanston Roundtable* as a three part series.
- EHC continued its partnership with local Evanston bookstore, *Bookends and Beginnings*, to provide books and co-marketing for online events.
- EHC continued its partnership with the *Evanston Roundtable*. Throughout the past year, EHC contributed articles and answered readers’ questions in two ongoing columns titled, “Ask the Historians” and “Evanston Dimensions.” Topics ranged from the Patten family of Evanston to the Margarita Club.
- EHC provided research for the Evanston Vietnam War memorial display (sponsored by Post 7186) at the EPL.
- EHC again participated in the Blue Star Museum program, a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and museums across the U.S.
- EHC’s website was regularly updated with news and events. EHC continues to host a Youtube channel where many online programs are posted.
- EHC’s regular email was sent 38 times to an email list of over 3,000 subscribers.
- Custom-designed graphics and marketing materials created for special programs (special tours, etc) were sent out in press releases and through social media and email throughout the year.
- EHC continued to invest in its social media presence in 2022-23. As of June 2022, EHC’s followers include: Instagram: 1800 (up from 1535 in June 2022); Twitter: 1656 (up from 1578 in June 2022); and Facebook: 3,000 followers (up from 2494 in June 2022).

The Evanston Women’s History Project at the Evanston History Center

- Planning for a new mural in downtown Evanston focusing on Evanston women was ongoing in 2022 and 2023 with partners Art Encounter and Shorefront Legacy Center. A community input session was held in April and the unveiling of the mural is expected in late summer 2023.
- EHC held several programs with a women’s history focus, including March 2023’s UTB about Edith Rockefeller McCormick.
- We partnered with the Frances Willard House Museum to explore the story of women’s education in Evanston.
- Summer 2022 interns worked on history curriculum for ETHS to explore themes related to women’s history.
- The EWHP [website](#) was regularly updated and bios of Evanston women who were pioneers in women’s education were added to the research database. The EWHP facebook page was also updated regularly.