

APPROVED

BOARD OF STATE HISTORY MEETING

April 17, 2025

12:00 pm

Hybrid

Utah Historical Society

3760 S. Highland Drive, Mirror Lake Board Room, Salt Lake City, UT 84106

Virtually, via Zoom

ATTENDEES:

BOARD

Spencer Hall, Chair	Emily Larsen, Vice Chair	Mike Brenchley
Emma Moss	Robert Burch	Kim Wilson
Axel Ramirez	Ignacio Garcia	Tara Beresh

UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jennifer Ortiz	Kevin Fayles	Alycia Rowley
Tim Glenn	Doug Misner	Mark Melville
Holly George	Victoria Hills	Brandi Burns
Greg Walz	Ashley Clouse	Will Challis
Veronica Solano	Nicole Sandberg	Sabrina Sanders
Chandler Vacarro	Aja Macheel	Wendy Rex Atzet
Jessica Proctor	Eliza Carr	Kimberly Kronwall

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Kat Potter

WELCOME

Spencer Hall welcomed everybody to the April 17, 2025 Board of State History meeting.

- Emma Moss was introduced as a new board member. She is a teacher specialist in Canyon School District with a background as a history educator and has worked on projects with the Historical Society previously, including lesson plans for the Thrive 125 project. She also monitors courses for educators working through endorsement processes for the Utah State Board.

- Brief introductions of new and current staff members of the Utah Historical Society (UHS) were made around the room and online.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 13, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

Kim Wilson made a motion to approve the January 13, 2025 meeting minutes as written. Emma Moss seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larson: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Mike Brenchley: Yes. Robert Burch: not online. Emma Moss: Yes. Ignacio Garcia: Yes. Axel Ramirez: Yes. Kim Wilson: Yes. The motion passed.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Kat Potter provided an update on the legislative session.

The department had limited budget requests this year.

- **Budget Items:**
 - \$500,000 (one-time) for programming for America 250, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the country in July 2026.
 - \$500,000 (one-time) for You Serve Utah's fellowship program.
 - \$500,000 (one-time) for arts museums' operating support grants.
- **Black License Plate Bill:** This bill, which previously allocated the entire \$25 fee from each black license plate to the Utah Historical Society, has been changed.
 - Until July 1st of this year, the Historical Society will continue to receive the full \$25 per plate.
 - Starting July 1st, \$2 per plate will go to the Utah Historical Society, and \$23 per plate will go to the transportation fund, specifically to cover special infrastructure projects for the next Olympics in Utah.
 - The legislature also provided a one-time appropriation of \$3.5 million to the Historical Society for the next fiscal year, which covers approximately one year of anticipated revenue. This is effectively an extension of the full funding until July 2026 in a lump sum.
 - Legislators indicated a willingness to consider additional funding for major museum renovations or updates in the future.

Spencer Hall thanked everyone involved in the legislative efforts, acknowledging the difficulty of the process and the positive outcome despite the changes.

The board was encouraged to share the good work of the Historical Society within their communities to amplify its mission.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Geographic Names Committee

Kevin Fayles reported on the Utah Committee on Geographic Names.

The committee reviews local proposals for unnamed features, evaluating them and making recommendations to the federal Board of Geographic Names.

At their March 6th meeting, the committee voted in favor of two proposals:

- **Salamander Pond** in Cache County (personally voted against by Kevin Fayles).
- **Arch Nemesis** (an arch) in Daggett County (personally voted against by Kevin Fayles).

Both were forwarded to the federal level for discussion and approval in a few weeks.

Awards and Conference Committee

Emily Larsen provided an update on the Awards and Conference Committee.

Emily Larsen was elected as the chair of the subcommittee.

The committee reviewed the January award ceremony, which was deemed excellent for award winners and attendees. The pace was good, and the National History Day student performance was highly praised.

Takeaways/Action Items:

- Consideration for future events to limit attendee numbers based on location size.
- Awardees are leveraging their awards for other opportunities, funding, and recognition.
- Create a media package for award winners to promote themselves and amplify the event.

The committee will meet in June to discuss the next award ceremony location and initial planning for the next year's joint conference with the Western Museums Association in September 2026.

UHS AWARDS POLICY UPDATE

Jennifer Ortiz presented proposed updates to the Utah Historical Society Awards Policy.

The policy was reviewed internally and the below updates were identified.

- **Eliminations:**

- Governor's Medal in History Award (never given out).
- Honorary Life Members Award (strategic decision).
- **Clarifications:**
 - Content of recognition for outstanding achievement awards and publication awards.
- **Name Changes:** Many publication awards, historically named after individuals, will be renamed to be more descriptive of their purpose (e.g., "Best Student Paper in Utah's History Award" instead of "Helen Papanikolas Award"). This aims for clarity for award opportunities. Donors associated with named awards have been consulted and are aware of these changes.
- **Leroy Axeland History Award:** Currently proposed for elimination, but the award is not going away. Discussions are ongoing with the donor to re-envision the award to be more manageable for the Utah Historical Quarterly team, who currently review publications outside their scope. A new proposal will be brought back to the board.
- **Procedures for Establishing a New Award:** A new section outlines procedures for establishing new award categories, requiring proposals to come through the Awards and Conference Committee and ultimately be approved by the board. This ensures intentionality in creating new awards.

Robert Burch expressed concern about losing the opportunity to highlight important historical figures by removing their names from awards. It was suggested to include the legacy of the person in the award description to maintain that connection while improving clarity.

Kim Wilson made a motion to adopt the amended policy. Emma Moss seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larson: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Mike Brenchley: Yes. Robert Burch: No. Emma Moss: Yes. Ignacio Garcia: Yes. Axel Ramirez: Yes. Kim Wilson: Yes. The motion passed.

UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPDATES

Museum of Utah

Tim Glenn provided updates on the Museum of Utah.

- **Audio Visual Exhibits:** The museum is in the production phase for AV exhibits. The team went to Boston in February for the first screening of most exhibits.
- **Great Salt Lake Video:** A preview of a video for the "Building Utah" gallery's nature section was shown. It highlights the importance of the Great Salt Lake and resource management, focusing on impacts on communities, the economy, and the ecosystem

if the lake continues to decline. It also showcases efforts in Utah to conserve water and manage the lake.

- **Oral History Theater Video:** A preview from the "Building Utah" gallery's oral history theater was shown, featuring Heidi Redd, a rancher, speaking about her experiences and connection to the land. This theater will feature voices of workers, both historical and modern.
- **Festival Latino Americano Video:** A preview from the "Celebrations" gallery was shown, highlighting the Festival Latino Americano in Provo, emphasizing its role in preserving roots and traditions for Hispanic communities and fostering cultural sharing.
- **Fabrication Stage:** The museum is almost under contract with a new fabricator (likely Virginia and Chicago-based). The schedule is on track for installation of shelving units in the basement.
- **Museum Operations Team:** The team is coming together with recent hires, including Aja Macheel (Museum Store Manager), a new operations specialist (starting soon), and a museum technology manager (starting in a few weeks).
- **Community Engagement:** Tribal consultation continues, and the work is ongoing for text and high-res images in exhibits.
- A fun photo of Tim Glenn and Emily Larson at the Great Salt Lake was shared, related to the "Among the Brine" podcast series.
- The museum is still on track to open in May.

Collections and Exhibitions

Kimberly Kronwall provided updates on the Collections and Exhibitions program.

- The team is now fully staffed with the hiring of Kylin and Will.
- **Move Prep:** Kylin is leading the planning for the move of collections from Midvale storage to the new building.
- **Engagement Room Closure:** The Engagement Room will close on August 29th to prepare for the move to the museum and will reopen when the museum opens.
- **Moving Company:** Bailey's Moving and Storage, experienced in moving delicate collections, will be used to move collections to the museum.
- **Shelving Installation:** Space Saver is installing shelving for photography, manuscripts, large documents, and maps.
- The cool storage room is fire-graded up to fire three, ensuring film preservation.

Education and Engagement

Brandy Burns provided updates on the Education and Engagement program.

- **Utah Historical Quarterly Redesign:** After 10 years, the *Quarterly* is getting a new look to match the Utah Historical Society and Museum of Utah brand, aiming for a dignified and approachable appearance. Key changes include a header block for titles for improved readability and a shift from endnotes to footnotes. Full-color printing for photographs will also be budgeted.
- **Women's History Month:** Seven successful events were held, with almost double the submissions for bingo cards, reaching across the state.
- **Peoples of Utah Revisited:** Peer review is progressing for scholarly pieces. The goal is to launch the website next year and dedicate four *Quarterly* issues to these pieces. Longer scholarly pieces will go in UHQ, while shorter, image-heavy pieces and story maps will go online. Content has been expanded through partnerships with the Division of Multicultural Affairs and Utah Humanities.
- **Upcoming Event:** Sia Satini, a UHS History Ambassador, will present a panel on her oral history project at the Osepa Memorial Weekend on May 23rd at 6 PM.
- **National History Day Contest:** The state-level contest is next week, April 24th-25th, with 463 students competing. Judges are still needed; interested individuals can email Wendy Rex-Atzet.
- **Staffing Updates:** An offer has been made for the museum school programs coordinator position. Eliza Carr has joined the team as a full-time public programming manager.

Membership and Development

Jessica Proctor provided updates on the Membership and Development program.

- **Recent Grants:** Grants were received from the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, Mariners Eccles Foundation, and Desert Management Corporation (Latter-day Saint Foundation) for National History Day.
- **Larry H. and Gail Miller Family Foundation Gift:** A generous gift of \$1 million was received.
- **Data Migration:** Work continues on migrating data to Bloomerang, with a new Salesforce administrator at the Department of Cultural and Community Engagement assisting. This will enable better management of the membership system, reporting, forms, and communication. Print versions of the *Quarterly* are still being sent to members.
- **Member Month:** Planning is underway for Member Month in August, focusing on fewer, deeper-dive events and "field trips" to interesting places for members.
- **Museum Integration:** The team is actively working on how members will be integrated into the museum experience and grand opening celebration plans.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Haley VanPatten provided an update on marketing and communications.

- **Victoria Hills** was acknowledged for her contributions to social media, blog content, and staff support.
- **Boncom Partnership:** A contract was recently signed with Boncom, a local advertising agency, to help with a communications plan and the grand opening campaign for the new Museum of Utah. They are currently in the research and discovery phase, conducting stakeholder interviews and audience research. Creative delivery is expected later this summer.
- **Current Campaigns:**
 - **Drive Utah History Campaign:** This awareness campaign encourages the purchase of the historic black and white license plate. This year, the focus is on purchasing plates before the July 1st change in allocation, where the Historical Society will receive \$2 instead of the full \$25 per plate. The campaign will run through the end of June.
 - **Summer Pin Campaign:** This new initiative will launch in July, allowing the public to collect 10 unique pins representing iconic Utah symbols (e.g., Bonneville cutthroat trout, brine shrimp, fry sauce, Utah raptor). Each of the 29 counties will ideally have at least one location offering a specific pin, encouraging history tourism and brand awareness for the Historical Society and the museum.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Jennifer Ortiz provided a Director's Update.

- **Evaluation Techniques:** The Historical Society is focusing on evaluation techniques to understand its collective impact, aligning with its strategic plan. Kari Ross Nelson, an evaluation consultant, is working with teams to identify outputs and deliverables, refine logic models, create evaluation tools, and train staff. The goal is to produce informative reports for the legislature, members, and donors by the end of the next fiscal year.
- **Federal Funding Cuts:**
 - Executive orders on NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) and IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) have led to grant evaluations and eliminations.
 - While the Historical Society does not currently have NEH or IMLS grants, sister agencies are impacted. A Utah Collections Preservation Program grant, in partnership with the Historical Society, was eliminated from the department's NEH funding, but their staff will continue to fund it internally.

- Utah Humanities, a humanities council receiving a statewide council grant, has been notified their grant has been pulled. This will deeply impact partnered work.
- The Historical Society receives pass-through funding from NEH for its National History Day program, which could be impacted.
- The Historical Society is in communication with advocacy partners like the Utah Museums Association and Utah Cultural Alliance.
- **Fiscal Year 26 Prep:** Budget planning for Fiscal Year 26 (the museum's opening year) is underway, focusing on consolidating efforts around this major event.
- **Events Management Company:** The Historical Society is finalizing a contract with an events management company for the grand opening celebration and preview events of the Museum of Utah in May of next year.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

- **Ignacio Garcia's Departure:** Ignacio Garcia will be moving on from the Board. Spencer Hall and Jennifer Ortiz expressed immense gratitude for his service, mentorship, and contributions. Ignacio Garcia shared his appreciation for the opportunity to serve and expressed continued support for the Historical Society. He received a plaque acknowledging his service.
- **Next Board Meeting:** The next Board meeting will be held on August 7th.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.