

APPROVED
BOARD OF STATE HISTORY MEETING

October 16, 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

Molly Cannon

Tara Beresh

Michael Brenchley

Margaret Olson

Axel Ramirez

Kim Wilson

Robert Goldberg

UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jennifer Ortiz

Kevin Fayles

Alycia Rowley

Doug Misner

Greg Walz

Ashley Clouse

Veronica Solano

Nicole Sandberg

Aja Macheel

Wendy Rex Atzet

Jessica Proctor

Eliza Carr

Brenda Hickman

Brandi Burns

Haille Van Patten

Alan Ly

Megan Weiss

Jami Van Huss

Monique Davila

Rachel Haberman

Christian Poutre

Carly Bagley

Jordan Kiyak

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Donna Law

Nicole Handy

PUBLIC

None

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Spencer Hall welcomed everybody to the October 16, 2025 Board of State History meeting.

Robert (Bob) Goldberg was officially welcomed as a new member of the Board of State History. He is a retired Professor of History from the University of Utah and former Director of the Tanner Humanities Center.

New Staff Announcements:

- Rachel Haberman & Christian Gutra (Assistant Guest Experiences Managers)
- Fatima Amjad (Volunteer Services Manager)
- Megan Weiss (Public Historian, Women's History Initiative)
- Paula Toscano (Archival Technician)

Upcoming Hires: Local History Services Coordinator, Historic Archaeology Collection Specialist, and 10–12 part-time staff for guest experiences.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 7, 2025 BOARD OF STATE HISTORY MEETING MINUTES

Kim Wilson made a motion to approve the August 7, 2025 meeting minutes. Molly Cannon seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larsen: Yes. Molly Cannon: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Michael Brenchley: Yes. Margaret Olson: Abstain. Axel Ramirez: Yes. Kim Wilson: Yes. Robert Goldberg: Yes. The motion passed.

CCE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Donna Law provided the following updates:

- Legislative Outreach: Donna praised Jennifer Ortiz for her performance on Capitol Hill, noting that her briefings reached 80% of the legislature across both House and Senate caucuses.
- Department Location Move: The department and divisions currently housed at the Highland Drive office are moving to the Tax Commission Building near North Temple, by the State Library. CCE is working closely with the Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) to coordinate the timing to ensure this move does not conflict with or impede the Historical Society's own move of collections and team members to the Capitol.
- Budget: 2026 is expected to be a "lean budget year." A primary focus is helping legislators see the return on their significant investment in the Museum of Utah. Communications are being prioritized to keep them apprised of construction and program milestones. Budget requests include:
 - Transition the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to "fed-free" to avoid federal funding delays to ensure project timelines, permitting, and deadlines are not inhibited.
 - Additional staffing for the Pete Suazo Utah Athletic Commission. Current funding only supports 1.5 people; the extra half-person is needed for program sustainability.

- Funding for the "Volunteer for Good" high school initiative. Expansion from the current pilot phase to more schools statewide as part of the America 250 service initiative.
- Website Launch: CCE launched an updated website (community.utah.gov) to better showcase programs like America 250 and museum updates.
- Service Milestone: Celebrated Alycia Rowley's 25 years of service to the State of Utah.

AMERICA 250 INITIATIVE

Nicole Handy provided an update to the Board. The "Utah's Year of Celebration and Service" focuses on three pillars: Educate, Engage, and Unite.

- Education: Nicole praised the stellar K-12 curriculum and resources that were created by Wendy Rex-Atzet with the National History Day Program at the Utah Historical Society. A partnership with UVU's Center for Constitutional Studies will provide advanced training to 500 civics teachers.
- Engagement: "Miles McUtah" challenge (walking/rolling 250 miles) and traveling exhibits across various counties.
- Signature Event: "The Big Survey/Meal" on July 5, 2026—a statewide (and now multi-state) potluck to encourage neighborly unity.
- Traveling Exhibit: Managed by Arts and Museums, the 250-themed exhibit is already circulating through a "long list" of libraries and local museums to build regional momentum before 2026.
- Capitol Exhibit: A major exhibition launching at the Utah State Capitol in January 2026, curated by Jamie Van Huss, which will feature artifacts from the Revolutionary period and the Dominguez-Escalante expedition.
- The Museum of Utah: The project culminates in the grand opening of the first state history museum in June 2026, framed as Utah's lasting "gift" to its residents for the semiquincentennial.

AWARDS POLICY UPDATE

Jennifer Ortiz presented an Awards Policy update to the Board for their review and approval. The change includes the renaming of the LeRoy S. Axland Best Utah History Article Award to a more descriptive title to better align with historical naming conventions.

Kim Wilson made a motion to approve the update to the Awards Policy. Bob Goldberg seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larsen: Yes. Molly Cannon: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Michael Brenchley: Yes. Margaret Olson: Yes. Axel Ramirez: Not present for vote. Kim Wilson: Yes. Robert Goldberg: Yes. The motion passed.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Awards and Conference Committee - Emily Larsen

2025 Award Nominations:

- **Utah Historical Society Fellow:** The Utah Historical Society (UHS) Fellow award is the organization's highest honor, reserved for individuals who have demonstrated a lifetime of extraordinary commitment and distinguished service to the field of Utah history.

This year's recipient is **Dr. Larry Gerlach**, a Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Utah. Dr. Gerlach's nomination was approved based on a career spanning over five decades. He served as a history professor at the University of Utah from 1968 to 2013 and held significant roles such as the Director of the Tanner Humanities Center (1988–1990) and Chair of the Department of History (1983–1988). While a specialist in the American Revolution, he is recognized for bridging political, social, and cultural history to provide a more nuanced view of the 20th-century Utah experience. He has authored numerous authoritative books and articles that have become staples of Utah historiography. Notable works include:

- *Blazing Crosses in Zion: The Ku Klux Klan in Utah*
- *The Men in Blue: Conversations with Umpires* (A seminal work combining sports history and oral history)
- *Prologue to Independence: New Jersey in the Coming of the American Revolution*

Kim Wilson made a motion to approve Dr. Larry Gerlach as a Utah Historical Society Fellow. Emily Larsen seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larsen: Yes. Molly Cannon: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Michael Brenchley: Yes. Margaret Olson: Yes. Axel Ramirez: Not present for vote. Kim Wilson: Yes. Robert Goldberg: Yes. The motion passed.

- **Outstanding Achievement Awards:** Outstanding Achievement Awards recognize exceptional long-term service or specific projects that have made a substantial positive impact on Utah's history, archaeology, and preservation fields.

This year, the committee received 24 nominations from across the state, narrowing them down to a diverse group of individuals and organizations.

Veronica Solano shared the Outstanding Achievement Award nominees and their work:

Aaron D. Clark (Director, Hill Aerospace Museum): Awarded for transforming the visitor experience into one that is "welcoming, well-structured, and fun." His leadership included reorganizing collections, a laser focus on Hill Air Force Base history, and building a robust volunteer and education program that made the museum a "focal point of community pride."

Acacia Yuan: A member of Gen Z who has spent over a decade preserving the oral histories of Utah's World War II heroes (including Gail Halvorsen and Lloyd Hicken) through award-winning documentary films.

Al Mustafa Foundation: Honored for documenting and sharing the history of Utah's Muslim community. Their exhibition, "Utah Muslim Heritage," showcased personal heirlooms and religious artifacts from the homes of local residents, blending past and present to tell a 100-plus-year story.

Brigham City Museum of History and Art: Recognized for the project Uncovering the Journey: Japanese American Pioneers in Box Elder County. This two-year outreach effort resulted in a 2,000-square-foot exhibit and established a new permanent collection of family heirlooms and videos.

Buffalo Soldier Heritage Trail (Sema Hadithi, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), & Site Stewardship): A statewide collaboration that created a heritage trail with interpretive markers and research. This project ensures the legacy of African American regiments is accessible and central to Utah's history.

Dave Brewer: Awarded for his dedicated preservation work on behalf of the Ladies Literary Club.

David Peterson: Recognized for his work to memorialize the March 1935 oil well explosion in Washington County.

Ronald Fox: For his significant contributions as co-chair of the America250 Utah Commission, where he built national partnerships, elevated Utah's visibility, and expanded support for the Semiquincentennial.

Drive to Teach (Gail Miller & The Larry H. Miller Company): Awarded for nearly 20 years of sponsoring the Driven to Teach program. Originally conceived with historian David McCullough, the program takes Utah history teachers on week-long immersive experiences at historic sites across the nation.

Fanny Guadalupe Blauer: Recognized for nearly a decade of service to Artes de México en Utah, sharing Utah's deep historical roots as part of Spain and Mexico.

Joanna Sorensen: Honored for her advocacy of social studies in elementary classrooms. She pioneered two week-long summer professional learning opportunities to help teachers bring history back into everyday instruction.

Justina Parsons-Bernstein, Monica Stamm, and Utah Department of Natural Resources: Division of State Parks: For their work on the "A Tale of Two Camps" exhibit, which meticulously documents the histories of the Dalton Wells CCC Camp and the Moab Citizen Isolation Center through comprehensive research, engaging storytelling, and immersive interpretive displays.

Michelle Fuller: Recognized for over 20 years of stewardship of the "Outlaw Trail Journal" and for organizing the 100th-anniversary event for the Doughboy Community

Ryan Paul: Recognized for his dedication to teaching history in all forms—from his work with Southern Utah University (SUU) and Main Street Minutes to his service within the Utah State Park system.

Sheila Nadimi: Awarded for her Eagle Village project, which documented the 25-year transformation and eventual demolition of the Intermountain Indian School through striking photography of murals and student expressions.

The Plains Production Company: Awarded for high-quality filmmaking that makes Utah history accessible. Key projects include "The Streak," "Spirit of the Art City," and "American Seams."

Molly Cannon made a motion to approve the sixteen 2025 Outstanding Achievement Award nominations. Margaret Olson seconded the motion. Alycia Rowley called for a vote: Spencer Hall: Yes. Emily Larsen: Yes. Molly Cannon: Yes. Tara Beresh: Yes. Michael Brenchley: Yes. Margaret Olson: Yes. Axel Ramirez: Yes. Kim Wilson: Yes. Robert Goldberg: Yes. The motion passed.

Utah Historical Society Publication Awards:

The Utah Historical Society (UHS) publication awards recognize excellence in scholarly research, student writing, and historical literature that advances the understanding of Utah's past.

Veronica Solano shared the 2025 Publication Awards for history work published in 2024.

Best Scholarly Article Award - Winner: Emily Marie Crumpton-Deason for "*Mammy Chloe: Removing Fiction from Nonfictional Family Stories*," published in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 92, No. 3).

Charles Redd Center for Western Study Award - Winner: Matthew C. Godfrey for "*A West Side (Sugar) Story: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Amalgamated Sugar Company, and the West Cache Sugar Company*," published in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 92, No. 4).

Editor's Choice Award: Winner: Michael L. Shamo for "*The Majestic Virgin Forgot Her Promise: An Environmental History of Irrigating Southern Utah*" (published in *Utah Historical Quarterly* Vol. 92, No. 1).

Best General Utah History Article Award - Winners: Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye and Joseph Soderborg for "*We Had a Symbiotic Relationship: The Structure and Texture of Chinese-White Relationships in Depression-era Utah*," published in the *Journal of Mormon History* (2024).

Best Student Paper on Utah Women's History: Emma Webb for "*Women in the Oquirrh Mountains*."

Helen Papanikolas Student Paper Award: Millie Tullis (Utah State University) for "*The Peepstone Woman in Logan*" and **Isabel Horton** (Weber State University) for her research on women's roles in ward cookbooks.

Best Book in Utah History Award- Winner: W. Paul Reeve, Christopher B. Rich, and Lajean Purcell Carruth for *This Abominable Slavery: Race, Religion, and the Battle Over Human Bondage in Antebellum Utah* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

Finalist: Benjamin E. Park for *American Zion: A New History of Mormonism* (Liveright, 2024).

Professional Development Awards:

The William P. MacKinnon Award - Recipients:

Megan Garcia and **Michelle Gollehon** from the UHS digitization teams.

The 2025 award winners will be officially honored at a private reception hosted by the Utah Historical Society on January 28th at the Hill Aerospace Museum. Board members are invited to attend and will receive registration information.

Utah Committee on Geographic Names:

Kevin Fayles reported that the committee approved names for "Salamander Pond" (Cache Co.) and "Nemesis Arch" (Daggett Co.). Utah will host the Council on Geographic Naming Authorities conference in 2027.

UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPDATES

Education & Engagement: Brandi Burns shared that the National History Day (NHD) participation has recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Data shows 90% of students feel NHD helps them identify credible information. UHS is launching a new teacher advisory group to better support K-12 teachers. Board members Emma Webb and Axel Ramirez have agreed to lead the development of this initiative. UHS is specifically targeting rural teachers, who face unique challenges in running history programs due to limited staffing.

Marketing and Communication: Haille VanPatten shared that following the "viral" success of the PinQuest's Round 1, Round 2 launched on Oct 3rd with 37 partner sites across 20 counties. The program drove a 4.1% increase in social media followers in a single week. The program has gained significant traction on platforms like Reddit, with users creating framed displays of the entire pin set. New this year was also an added UHS membership benefit that set aside a limited number of pins exclusively for UHS members at all partner sites.

A major public campaign with the agency Boncom will begin in January 2026 to build anticipation for the Museum of Utah's grand opening.

Membership and Development: Jessica Proctor shared that the UHS current membership is at 637. Since July, 56 new members have joined, driven largely by the "PinQuest" initiative.

The exclusive Seagull Circle membership tier for the Museum of Utah has officially launched. Members who join for a one-time \$100 contribution will be recognized as sponsors in the museum's rotating gallery. Gift fulfillment for early joiners (including unique seagull pins) will begin in late 2025.

UHS is finalizing agreements that will allow UHS members to use their membership cards for free admission and discounts at partner museums across the country.

DIRECTOR UPDATE

Jennifer Ortiz reported that a proposal to sunset the governor-appointed Board in favor of a community-appointed Board is moving forward for May 2026. This is intended to modernize the appointment process and make board service more accessible.

As of February 1, 2025, UHS has paused accepting new donations to the collection to focus entirely on the massive task of cataloging and moving artifacts into the new museum's state-of-the-art storage.

Jennifer provided a progress report on the Museum of Utah.

- Fabrication: 75% completed. Staff recently visited Chicago Scenic and Capital Museum Services (in DC) to inspect physical interactives and exhibits. Staff also traveled to Scotland to inspect the museum's casework (the project's largest budget item).
- Grounding Theater: The introductory museum film will feature a 180-degree screen and a narration composed of 100 diverse Utah voices rather than a single professional narrator.
- The "Jewel": Jennifer described the garden-level collection storage as the "jewel" of the project—a purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility for both State History and State Parks collections.
- Building Schedule:
 - January 15, 2026: North Capitol Building ribbon cutting.
 - January 2026: Museum Store and Visitor Services open.
 - February 2026: "Dusty Boots" Tours. Work-in-progress walkthroughs specifically for state legislators
 - March – May 2026: Object Installation. Final atmospheric pieces and artifacts are placed in the galleries.
 - June 19, 2026: UHS Board VIP Preview.
 - June 26, 2026: Press Preview and Ribbon Cutting
 - June 27, 2026: Grand Community Opening.

SPECIAL FAREWELL

The board recognized Tara Beresh, who has concluded her four-year term of service with the Utah Historical Society.

Jennifer Ortiz noted that Tara provided critical guidance and input during the Society's significant period of transition and rebranding. Spencer Hall and Jennifer emphasized the importance of Tara's role in providing representation from Moab. Jennifer thanked Tara for being a frequent host to the UHS team for various events held in Southern Utah over the years.

Because Tara attended her final meeting virtually, Jennifer displayed a plaque to the camera, which will be mailed to her as a token of appreciation for her dedication and service.

Tara expressed her gratitude for being welcomed by the group, noted that her time on the board had been really beneficial to her personally and for her career, it was wonderful to hear the insights over the years and that she was grateful to know everyone on the board.

NEXT MEETING

The next Board meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.