



SPRING 2026

Dear Friends,

As they say in equestrian circles, we are off to the races! The start of 2026 has been head-spinning even by our fast-paced Hagen History Center standards. This year marks our nation's 250th anniversary, so it's going to be one for the record books.

In addition to all of the events that you have become accustomed to, we are planning a special community-wide oral history project, creating a two-day symposium on Oliver Hazard Perry, extending our sunflower festival in Girard to an entire week, producing an America 250-themed gala, and helping to coordinate the Flagship Niagara's return home to Erie on July 2. In addition to our events, we are in the midst of four overlapping large scale construction projects that include:

- A new visitor entrance and orientation experience.
- The creation of the Frank Lloyd Wright Field Office Museum that will complement the existing Wright office.
- A national-level exhibit on Oliver Hazard Perry.
- The repair of all 96 original windows on the Mansion.

But if all of that isn't enough, we will also be launching a new website as well! So, it's safe to say the staff and I will be hard at work for what will undoubtedly be a banner year for our museum and our community.

I would be remiss if I didn't share some very exciting news related to our sunflowers. Our partner, the Wilds Sunshine Factory, located in Kane, has used our seeds to innovate a new product of spiced rum. It's the first time in American history that sunflowers have ever been used to distill rum.

After a taste test with our staff and board, I can say quite confidently that you will absolutely love this delicious new drink. Pending regulatory approval, it should be available for you to drink this summer! Until then, best wishes for a wonderful spring!

Caleb M. Pifer
President



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Save the Dates:

Men at the Museum
June 10, 2026

Watson-Curtze Mansion
356 West 6th St., Erie, Pa.

Women Creating a Legacy
August 4, 2026

Battles Farm, Girard, Pa.,
during sunflower season

Command & Courage:
Oliver Hazard Perry

August 13 and 14
2-day symposium

A Night at the Museum
September 12, 2026

Watson-Curtze Mansion
356 West 6th St., Erie, Pa.

Details inside



HAGEN
HISTORY
CENTER

Hagen History Center presents a 2-day symposium



History happened here. Now experience it.

Join us in Erie, Pennsylvania, August 13–14 at Gannon University for a powerful two-day symposium exploring the life and leadership of Oliver Hazard Perry—the man who helped secure America’s control of the Great Lakes during the War of 1812.

Hear from nationally recognized historians, authors, and a direct descendant, offering new insight into one of the most pivotal figures in American naval history.

Curated by the Hagen History Center, this symposium brings together:



DOUGLAS BRINKLEY, PhD
Renowned American historian, bestselling author, and professor at Rice University



OLENDA JOHNSON, PhD
Professor, Strategic Leadership & Leader Development at U.S. Naval War College



CHRISTOPHER HAVERN, MA
Historian, Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC)



MATTHEW C. PERRY, PhD
Lecturer and direct descendant of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry



CRAIG L. SYMONDS, PhD
Professor, U.S. Naval War College and distinguished naval historian



WALTER RYBKA, BA
Author, former administrator of the Erie Maritime Museum, and former senior captain of the U.S. Brig Niagara



August 13–14

Gannon University | Erie, PA
REGISTER BY JULY 30

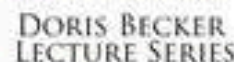
hagenhistory.org/events

Hagen History Center members \$10
Non-members \$20

Presented by:



This program is made possible through the generous support of our sponsors



FEATURED & UPCOMING EXHIBITS



Opening June 27 at 10 a.m.

Discover the NEW *Frank Lloyd Wright Field Office Museum*, a nationally recognized exhibit telling the story of Wright’s life and legacy in a way never done before. This immersive experience complements Wright’s San Francisco field office in our Permanent Exhibit Building and offers a deeper look into one of America’s most influential architects.

Opening this summer

This new exhibit explores the life of Oliver Hazard Perry—naval commander, leader, and Erie icon—revealing the man behind the uniform.

Through letters, personal artifacts, and hands-on displays, visitors will discover Perry’s character, values, and lasting legacy beyond the battlefield.

Born in Newport, Rhode Island, Perry was the eldest of eight children in a family whose roots trace back to the Mayflower.



We have met the enemy, and they are ours.

EXHIBIT SCHEDULES

Wilderness Lodge



Leaving
May 30

Archives Treasures



Currently
On View

Erie County Bar Association



Leaving
April 30

Founding Families



Currently
On View

Women’s History



Leaving
April 30

COMING IN MAY



The Erie Police Department:
170 Years of Service and
History

WHY WE JOIN WHY WE VOLUNTEER

Glenn and Susan Chichester are long-term members and donors at our history center. In a very touching testimonial, Glenn, who is also a docent, writes about his early memories of the mansion and how his experiences influenced his love of history.

Those memories have come full circle for the Chichesters. This is a condensed version of Glenn's essay. To read the entire post, visit hagenhistory.org/support/curtze-family-leadership-giving-circle.

By Glenn Chichester

As a Curtze Circle member and docent at the Hagen History Center, I've become deeply aware of all that the History Center offers to Erie County, our schools, and the many visitors who come to explore. Even though most will read this after Christmas, my story begins with holiday memories at the Hagen History Center—and I want to share them with you.

I was about six years old when I first saw the "mansion." I was an only child living with my parents near West 6th Street. At Christmas, my mother and I would walk downtown—our usual route was from 10th Street to South Park Row. If you picture Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*, you'll have the perfect visual.

On those Christmas walks, my mother always included the Watson Curtze Mansion.

And then there was "the pot." Mad Anthony Wayne's pot was a curious attraction for a little boy, and it became part of every visit. That quirky artifact sparked my love of history—and taught me how strange historical truths can be. Even now, as a docent, older visitors often rush up to ask, "Where's the pot?" Funny how the oddest things stay with us.

Recently, I watched a little girl slowly descend the grand staircase. When she reached the bottom, she looked up and asked, "Did Cinderella live here?"



Glenn and Susan Chichester

I smiled and said, "Maybe she did." I wanted her to leave with a memory—just as I did so many years ago. Now, as a father and grandfather, I reflect on the memories the Hagen History Center has given me, my children, and my grandchildren.

We have photos of three generations in the same spot at the Mansion. Thank you, old Mansion, for the memories. Through generous donations—large and small—the Hagen History Center has become the shining star of West 6th Street and Erie, Pa. As a Curtze Circle member, you help preserve Erie's history and the Mansion itself. Your support ensures that future generations will create their own memories here.

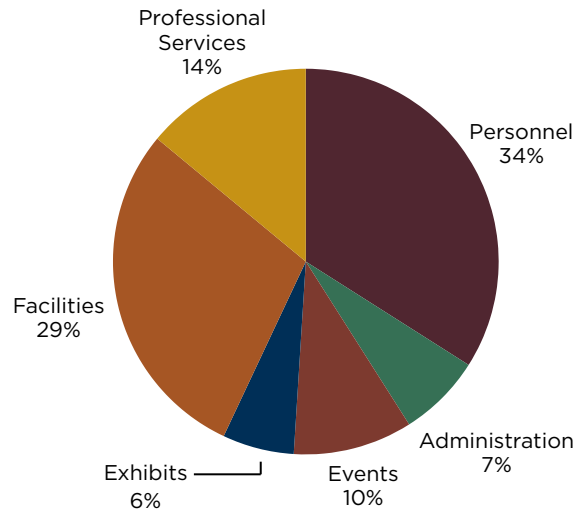
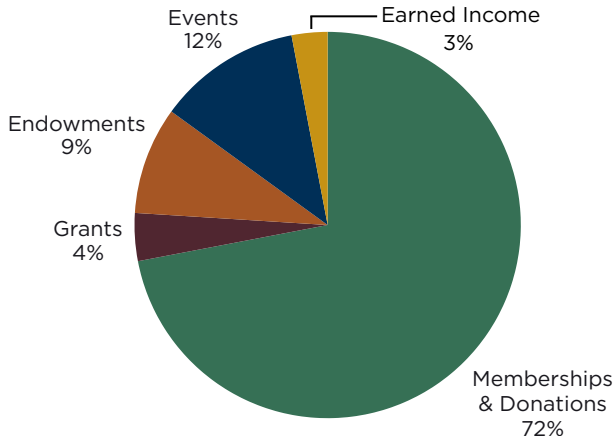
Please consider remembering the History Center in your estate plans.

You can choose to include the History Center in your will, in a trust, and/or as the beneficiary of an insurance policy. This type of donation often provides transformational growth for the organization.

If you'd like to discuss any of the above options further, contact Geri Cicchetti, Advancement Director at 814-454-1813 x34 or at gicchetti@hagenhistory.org

FINANCIAL REPORT

for Fiscal Year July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025



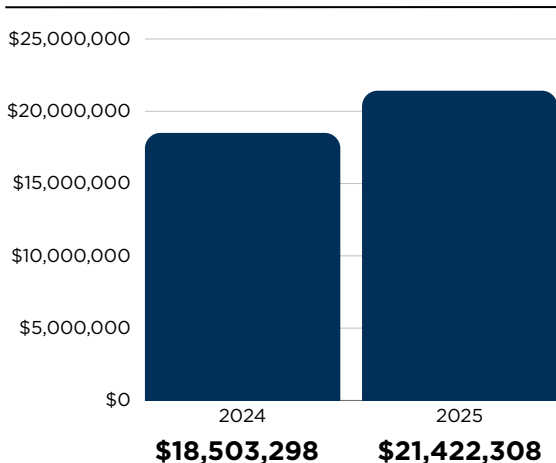
TOTAL INCOME		\$3,515,518
Membership & Donations	\$2,539,971	
Grants	\$127,807	
Endowments	\$317,164	
Events	\$414,527	
Earned Income	\$116,049	

TOTAL EXPENSE		\$1,348,474
Personnel	\$460,995	
Administration	\$94,187	
Programming & Events	\$137,312	
Exhibits & Collections	\$85,200	
Facilities	\$391,593	
Professional Services	\$178,827	

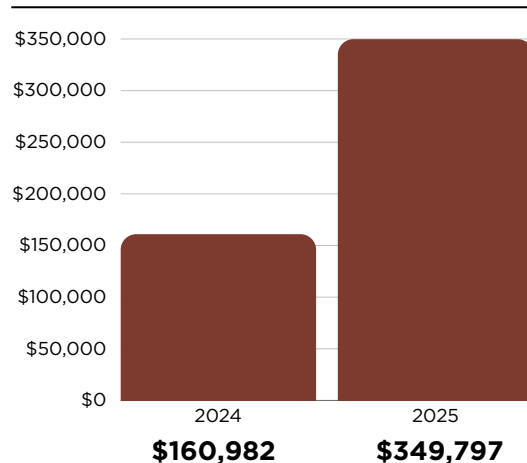
NET OPERATING INCOME: \$2,167,044

for Fiscal Year 2024 to 2025

ASSETS



LIABILITIES



What's New?

1898 Bayfront Reserve on the way

Our Wilds Sunshine Factory partners took our Girard-grown sunflower seeds and turned them into a spiced rum beverage unlike anything America has ever seen.

Our staff, board, and donors were among the first to taste it, and the verdict was unanimous: an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Now we're eagerly awaiting approval and crossing our fingers that, come summer, we'll all be raising a glass together—right in the middle of the sunflower fields.



JOIN OUR GARDEN CLUB

Do you love gardening but have no more room to plant?

Become a member of our new gathering of gardeners at Charlotte Elizabeth Battles' White House gardens, 306 Walnut St., Girard.

- This is more than a group of gardeners ... it's a community rooted in friendship, creativity, and the joy of watching things bloom. Whether you're an experienced gardener, a curious beginner, or someone who simply enjoys the peace of nature, you'll feel right at home here.

Why Join Us?

- Connect with history. The Charlotte Elizabeth Battles property is one of Girard's most treasured landscapes. You'll be preserving, tending, and celebrating a landmark that has been loved for generations.
- Make new friends, unwind, relax & recharge.

For more information, email Caleb Pifer cpifer@hagenhistory.org



Your turn at history

As part of our America250PA celebration, we're inviting you to participate in oral/video recordings where you can share a memory, hope, and/or dream.

Watch our website for details.

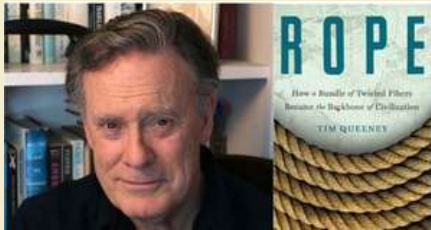


EVENTS SCHEDULE 2026

Some events, like our Sunflower Days, for example, are dependent on Mother Nature. We don't have exact dates for everything, so please visit our website for updates and details on each event.

www.hagenhistory.org/events

2026 DORIS BECKER FREE SPEAKER SERIES AT THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY



APRIL 22 Author **Tim Queeney**

Rope: How a Bundle of Twisted Fibers Became the Backbone of Civilization. Join us for this lecture and book signing.



MAY 6 Architect **Robert Heineman**, FAIA, shares *Live, Work, and Play: Designing the City of the Future—The Woodlands, Texas.*



AUGUST 27 Historian **Dr. Judith Ridner** tells us about *The Dirty History of Soap*. Discover how soap's early beginnings of tallow and oils evolved across centuries and cultures.

All events begin at 7 p.m. Registration is required.

[Register at hagenhistory.org/events](http://hagenhistory.org/events)

JUNE

June 5 Girard Art Walk

June 27 Grand opening of our **NEW** Frank Lloyd Wright Field Office Museum and reopening of our Welcome Center

June 10 Men at the Museum

June 22 to 26 Student Architecture Camp

TBD Command & Courage: Oliver Hazard Perry exhibit opens in Wood-Morrison House

JULY

July 2 Niagara Returns/Parade of Sail
The ship will be open for tours all weekend.
Hosted by the Hagen History Center

July 31 to August 3 Dan Rice Days, Girard

AUGUST

August 4 Women Creating A Legacy in Girard

August 8 to 15 Sunflower Days
Featuring picnics, dinners, art classes, an Erie Philharmonic concert, and flower arranging classes at the White House in Girard

August 11 Annual meeting for Hagen History Center members in the sunflowers

August 13 and 14 Command & Courage: Oliver Hazard Perry Symposium at Gannon University Yehl Ballroom

SEPTEMBER

September 12 A Night at the Museum Gala



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Erie, PA
Permit No. 433

356 W. 6th St.
Erie, PA 16507
www.hagenhistory.org
814-454-1813

WWW.HAGENHISTORY.ORG

814-454-1813



Save
the
Date

A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

In honor of our hometown's impact on American history, we will celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary by honoring Erie people who have made their mark on the national stage during *A Night at the Museum* on September 12, 2026.

Become a part of September's biggest community celebration where 600 to 900 attendees celebrate on the grounds of the incomparable Watson-Curtze Mansion. We anticipate national attention during this event as we share two new exhibits: the *Frank Lloyd Wright Field Office Museum*, enhanced *Frank Lloyd Wright San Francisco office*, and *Command & Courage: Oliver Hazard Perry*.

Our event will also share our honorees' stories for decades to come with oral histories and individual archives that we will include in our repository of Erie's history. *Invitations will be mailed in August.*

Saturday, September 12
6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Honorees include: Admiral Christopher Colvin, General James Dubik, General Michael Dunlavey, Ambassador William Heidt, Admiral Matthew Kohler, Journalist Maria Sansone, Journalist Steve Scully, Yacht designer Doug Zurn