

Organizational Profile

Illinois State Historical Society

(7/16/26 update)

Background: The mission of the Illinois State Historical Society (ISHS) is to foster awareness, understanding, research, preservation, and recognition of history in Illinois. The ISHS actively promotes the study of Illinois history through its 118-year-old quarterly journal, its web site, historical markers program, educational activities and programs, outreach, and support of local historical societies and allied organizations. The ISHS does not operate historic sites and does not maintain artifacts and historical collections.

The ISHS has offices at 605 S. 4th Street in Springfield, Illinois. It employs a full-time Executive Director, a full-time office manager, and a part time (30 hours a week) social media manager/outreach coordinator. The ISHS has on contract a bookkeeper who maintains the financial aspects of the Society.

The ISHS is operated by a volunteer board of directors, which includes four officers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary), an eight-member Executive Board, a 15-member board of directors who serve staggered three-year terms, and a 23-member advisory board. The day-to-day operations of the ISHS are administered by the paid Executive Director and staff.

Founded in 1899, the ISHS is a not-for-profit organization which depends solely on membership dues, gifts, bequests, and foundation grants for support. It has an annual budget of approximately \$375,000 a year and an endowment of \$2,400,000.

Tasks:

The ISHS performs numerous tasks designed to promote and recognize Illinois history. These include:

Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society:

The ISHS publishes the quarterly *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, a scholarly journal that generally consists of three to four peer reviewed articles and several book reviews per issue. The *Journal* is published by the University of Illinois Press.

Website:

The ISHS maintains a website which is used for outreach, education, news and announcements and resources for teachers, students and researchers. The website was completely updated and modernized in 2026 to better meet the needs of the ISHS and the public. This is an on-going modernization project that continues to be updated based on input from members, ISHS committees and input from the public..

Markers Program:

In partnership with organizations from across the state, the ISHS has installed and maintains markers throughout Illinois celebrating the rich heritage of people, places and events that occurred in Illinois history. Along with placing and maintaining the physical markers, the ISHS is using new technology and its website to expand the scope and depth of the historical narratives of the markers to enhance their learning potential.

Awards:

The ISHS offers several awards designed to promote the awareness and recognition of Illinois history. These awards include an Illinois history teacher of the year award, a young museum professional annual award, a lifetime achievement award, centennial business awards and sesquicentennial house of worship awards. The ISHS also offers awards for books written about Illinois history, including a scholarly Book of the Year award, and for special projects about Illinois history. It also has an annual award for the best article on Illinois history that appeared in its Journal. Some of these awards come with stipends.

Events:

The ISHS has an annual Best of Illinois History awards ceremony in the Spring and a Statehood Day event in December. It also co-hosts with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum the state's annual Conference on Illinois History in the first week of October. ISHS members and staff often participate in events sponsored by affiliated organizations.

Membership:

There are currently approximately 900 members of the ISHS, with different membership categories. Membership renewals are handled by the University of Illinois Press and monitored by ISHS staff. Membership is on an annual basis and coincides with the calendar year.

Scholarships:

The ISHS operates two scholarships program. The King V. Hostick Scholarship offers doctoral students up to \$5,000 to assist them in writing about an aspect of Illinois history. The Verna Ross Orndorff Scholarship is a high school essay contest and consists of a \$1,000 award for the best essay on Abraham Lincoln or the Civil War.

Education:

The ISHS has on its website videos on Illinois history related programs. It plans to provide lesson plans and lists of resources for teachers and has a committee dedicated to working with educators to provide these resources..

Outreach and Advocacy:

The ISHS works with affiliated organizations to promote Illinois history through lectures, symposia, publicity, and special history related events for members of the ISHS. It strongly

advocates for programs and funding that promote Illinois history. The ISHS does not operate historic sites and does not maintain artifacts and historical collections.