

Dakota County Historical Society - Organizational Background

Founded in 1939, the Dakota County Historical Society is committed to collecting, preserving, promoting and presenting the history of Dakota County. It pursues this mission both independently and through partnerships with a broad range of organizations including local history peer organizations, all levels of government, businesses of all sizes, and a diverse range of arts and cultural institutions that contribute to the quality of life in Dakota County. Key partners include Dakota County, the City of Hastings, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Genealogical Society, First Minnesota Volunteer Regiment, Burnsville Performing Arts Center, five member chapters, and more than 20 other organizations.

The Society works very closely with Dakota County, providing services for Dakota County parks, libraries and planning departments. DCHS also provides curatorial services for the Dakota County Public Art Citizen Advisory Committee. The county provides an annual operating grant of approximately 50% of the DCHS budget.

Since 2005 the operating budget of the Society has doubled to nearly \$260,000 and Society staff and board are working hard to continue this growth. Full-time staff is comprised of an executive director and associate director/research librarian. Part-time staff include a LeDuc site manager, collections manager, four senior guides, office manager, tour guide, research assistant, house host, and custodian. The Society operates two staffed sites (detailed below) and provides exhibits and programming at three Dakota County service centers, the Burnsville Performing Arts Center, county libraries, Dakota County Fair, and at other locations throughout the county.

DCHS serves more than 30,000 individuals annually at facilities where it can track attendance. An estimated 60,000 additional people see Society programming at sites where no head count is possible.

Lawshe Memorial Museum – South St. Paul

Located across from South St. Paul's city hall, the museum is home to a 30,000-piece collection, 5,000 square feet of exhibit space, and a fully equipped research library used by thousands of researchers and genealogists every year. Exhibits explore Dakota Indian culture, small-town life in the 1900s, veterans, local industry, politics, and more. Lectures by noted researchers, and community exhibitions of folk and fine arts are regularly held at the museum. Open year-round, admission is always pay what you can.

LeDuc Historic Estate – Hastings

This 15-room Gothic Revival mansion was built during the Civil War for William and Mary LeDuc. Based on designs by renowned landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing, the 4.5 acre estate comprises one of the earliest National Register sites in Minnesota.

Guided tours introduce visitors to the role of the family in achieving Minnesota statehood. William's service in the Civil War, African Americans in Minnesota during reconstruction, architecture, A.J. Downing, and the business ventures of William and his daughters.

Tour Season is May – October. The Estate is available for private events and group tours year-round.