Discover the stories behind Wisconsin’s heritage through exhibits featuring Native Nations and Tribes, the immigrant experience, frontier life, agriculture, industry, politics, and much, much more.

Enter a replica of a 1,000-year-old house and examine a fur trade post. Walk into a lead mine and climb into a tractor cab. Share the stories of the ways people made a living and learn about Wisconsin’s political heritage, ethnic diversity, and sense of community.

Explore the stories, ideas, attitudes, work, and recreation that make up our rich history!
The exhibition On Common Ground: 200 Years of Wisconsin History begins on the Museum’s 3rd floor. Explore themes unique to Wisconsin from settlement days to the present. Discover a frontier lead mine, track immigration routes, explore work and play in a lumber camp, and examine life on a Wisconsin farm. Use the questions and discussion points below to supplement the exhibits on display.

WISCONSIN AS A “FRONTIER”

Discover what brought people to Wisconsin after the era of fur trade. What has changed? What has remained the same?

- Where did they choose to live?
- What made the location so appealing?
- Find the genealogy map and try to figure out what countries the flags represent.
- Who might have benefited from this change? Who might not have benefited from this change?

LEAD MINING

Surface deposits of lead, zinc, and copper ore led American Indians to begin mining in southwestern Wisconsin. Lead mining stimulated the first large-scale settlement of Wisconsin by European and European American settlers. How does the past help us make sense of the present?

- Enter the lead mine; pretend you are underground.
- Look at the tools used by a lead miner.
- Do you think the work was easy or hard?
- Do you think you would want to work in such conditions?
- How has the mining industry changed over time?

THE IMMIGRANT STATE

Explore the diverse cultural traditions brought by settlers from many different countries. How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?

- Has immigration stopped or do people still move and migrate and make Wisconsin their home?
- Discover the difficult choices people had to make when deciding which items to bring with them on their journey to a new land.
- Does any one artifact surprise you as to why it was brought?
- Move over to the dock and try to imagine you had to pack up your family because you were moving to another place.
- What would be three things that you would choose to bring with you on your new adventure?

MAKING A LIVING

From farming and logging to industry and tourism, Wisconsin has a diverse and ever-widening economy. What has changed? What has remained the same?

- While exploring this exhibit area, make your way to the Farm Life, Home Life case.
- Why would the museum have a collection such as this on display?
- Do you see an object in this case that you might have in your home?
- Compare the two automobiles on this floor.
- What make and model year are they?
- In what city was each automobile manufactured?
- Do we still see these cars on Wisconsin roads today?

The exhibition On Common Ground: 200 Years of Wisconsin History continues on the Museum’s 4th floor. Examine Wisconsin’s political heritage, different social events, and ethnic diversity. Discover how artifacts reflect history and what artifacts reveal about us. Use the questions and discussion points below to supplement the exhibits on display.