



Wisconsin 101: NHD Topic Suggestions

2020 Breaking Barriers in History

Searching for local Wisconsin National History Day topics? Check out the objects that define Wisconsin's history at [Wisconsin 101](#), a digital museum created by people all across the state! Each of these seemingly ordinary objects tells us something different about Wisconsin's past. As you browse, consider different ways that these objects, and the people who made them or used them, broke barriers.

Need help getting started? Get inspired with the list below! Each topic includes a brief historical overview, questions to get you started, and research suggestions for next steps. If you do choose a Wisconsin topic for Breaking Barriers 2020, keep in mind the Wisconsin Idea. The Wisconsin Idea is about breaking barriers for all Wisconsinites to make lives better. All University of Wisconsin schools use this philosophy to guide their research in the hopes of improving health, agriculture, environmental and all overall quality of life for all people within the state of Wisconsin. Learn more about the [Wisconsin Idea here](#).

Breaking Barriers for Immigrants

As immigrants moved to the United States and to Wisconsin the ingredients many women used in creating their ethnic dishes were not available and recipes had to change. Cooking classes at the Settlement House Milwaukee taught women new world recipes and fostered community. Women also learned how to speak English if they did not know already and they had help in becoming an American citizen. The Settlement Cookbook represents the diverse population of women that took cooking classes at the Settlement House in Milwaukee and engaged the larger community in dialogue around cooking. What barriers does this cookbook break for immigrant women? Who broke barriers and how did they break them? Explore those who took cooking lessons at the Settlement House, those who had recipes in the cookbook and the woman who made the cookbook, Lizzie Black Kander. Why was the cookbook popular? Additionally think about the purpose of the Settlement House Movement and for those who ran them? What barriers did they break with these meeting places? What were the lasting effects of the broken barriers? Think about the meeting places we have today for building community.

- To understand the Settlement Movement for immigrants in the United States check out:
 - "Settlement Houses: Improving the social welfare of American Immigrants" by Michael Friedman, 2006.
 - "American Settlement Houses and Progressive Social Reform: An Encyclopedia of the American Settlement Movement" by Domenica M. Barbuto, 1999.

- For more information about the settlement cookbook and the women associated with it.
 - Wisconsin 101 Settlement Cookbook - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/settlement-cook-book/>
 - Papers of Lizzie Black Kander – The editor of the Settlement Cookbook <http://cdm15932.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15932coll5>

Breaking Barriers in Education and Literacy

In the 1950s, areas of Wisconsin lacked the resources to build libraries. Bookmobiles became an innovative idea to bring reading materials to the more remote parts of the country. For example, some adults in Door County had an 8th grade education and the schools were one room structures. What does the Door County Bookmobile reveal about the barriers of geography, class, and education? How did bookmobiles attempt to solve the low literacy levels of lower economic areas? What barriers did bookmobiles break? And what role do libraries play in literacy, the education system, and everyday life? How does the bookmobile reflect the Wisconsin Idea in breaking barriers?

- For information about the Door County Book Mobile check out Wisconsin101:
 - Creating the Door County Bookmobile - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2017/11/01/creating-the-door-county-bookmobile/>
 - Door County Bookmobile - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/door-county-bookmobile/>
- To understand how the bookmobile fit into the Wisconsin Idea view:
 - *The Wisconsin Idea in Action: Reading, Resistance, and the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library, 1950-1952*. Wisconsin Magazine of History <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/49679/show/49649/rec/6>
- For information on the social impacts on communities read:
 - “Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States” by Thomas Augst and Kenneth Carpenter, 2007.
 - “On the Road with Outreach: Mobile Library Services” by Jeannie Dilger-Hill and Erica MacCreaigh, 2010.
 - “Library on Wheels: Mary Lemist Titcomb and America’s First Bookmobile” by Sharlee Mullins, Glenn, 2018.
 - “Bookmobiles in America: An Illustrated History” by Orty Ortwein, 2015.

Break Barriers in Dairy

The Babcock Butterfat Tester is an invention created by Wisconsin man Stephen Babcock to improve the quality of dairy products and create a standard. As part of the Wisconsin Idea, Babcock shared his invention to the public and did not sell it for profit. In examining the tester, explore how its invention broke barriers in the dairy industry. What barriers did this invention break in the food sciences, economics, and agriculture? Why is this invention important? Study how the Wisconsin Idea influenced the sharing of this invention and the process of patents and ownership. What do we eat now that is impacted by the Butterfat Tester?

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- To understand the purpose of the Butterfat Tester and the inventory view Wiscosnin101:
 - Babcock Butterfat Tester - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/babcock-butterfat-tester/>
 - How does a Babcock Tester Work? - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2013/12/01/how-does-a-babcock-tester-work/>
 - The Men Behind the Butterfat Test - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2013/12/01/the-men-behind-the-butterfat-test/>
- To learn more about the Wisconsin Idea view:
 - Wisconsin101 – The Babcock Tester and the Wisconsin Idea - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2013/12/01/the-babcock-tester-and-the-wisconsin-idea/>
 - “*The University and the Social Gospel: The Intellectual Origins of the Wisconsin Idea*” by J. David Hoeveler, Jr., Wisconsin Magazine of History
<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/27778/show/27717/rec/1>
 - “*The Origin and Early Development of the Wisconsin Idea*” by Vernon Cartensen, Wisconsin Magazine of History
<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/20599/show/20549/rec/1>

Breaking Barriers in Astronomy

The world’s largest refracting lens is found in Williams Bay, Wisconsin contained in a telescope. The telescoped is owned by the University of Chicago and the Yerkes Observation which houses the telescope is considered the birthplace of astrophysics. Astronomers conduct research on the solar system to understand the planets and stars. What barriers did the Yerkes telescope break in understanding our solar system? In constructing the observatory and telescope what barriers did scientists and construction workers break? How did these broken barriers aid future scientists, astronomers, and construction?

- To learn more about the history and construction of the Yerkes telescope view:
 - Wisconsin101 website:
 - Yerkes Telescope Construction and Use - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/09/yerkes-telescope-construction/>
 - Yerkes Telescope - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/yerkes-telescope/>
 - Williams Bay, WI - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/09/williams-bay/>
 - Wisconsin Historical Society:
 - *Stargazers: Building the Washburn and Yerkes Observatories, 1870-1900*, by Rachel S. Cordasco, Wisconsin Magazine of History,
<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/51657/show/51601/rec/1>
- To learn more about Astronomy history view:
 - Wisconsin101 – Astronomy in the 1900s - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/09/astronomy-in-the-1900s/>

- Wisconsin Historical Society - *The Minus First Meeting of the American Astronomical Society: Williams Bay, Wisconsin, 1897*, by Donald E. Osterbrock, Wisconsin Magazine of History, <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/33364/show/33309/rec/2>

Breaking Barriers in the Workplace

Conditions in the workplace evolved over time with Employers Mutual Insurance educating employees with posters, newsletters, and magazines to reduce work related injuries. Based in Wausau, WI this company focused on the worker and their health. Renamed in 1979 the company became Wausau Insurance to reflect their hometown history. In examining this company explore what barriers they broke as they tried to protect workers. What were the conditions like in the workplace before this company found success? How did they change worker rights? Were there any objects that they created or used that helped improve worker conditions in factories? If you have or desire to have a job now, how would your job be different if you worked before EMI and after?

- To learn more about Employers Mutual Insurance visit Wisconsin101:
 - Promoting Workplace Safety - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/24/workplace-safety/>
 - The 1922 Workman's Compensation Act and the Birth of an Industry - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/24/workmans-compensation/>
 - Preventing Hearing Loss - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/05/24/hearing-loss/>

Breaking Barriers in Music

In 1916, the Wisconsin Chair Company in New London, Wisconsin made and sold chairs as well as phonograph cabinets. Phonographs were like record players or devices that can play music. Phonograph cabinets provided decorative places to store this instrument in homes. This new industry in making sound playback furniture moved the company to begin pressing and selling records, ultimately forming Paramount Records. To find their own voice in the music business and after War World I they explored the new field of "race music" where they produced music by African American artists for African American customers. Paramount became one of the leading record labels in this field. As you explore more of Paramount's history, what barriers did they break in becoming a leading record label? Who were the people who helped break the barriers? What was the technology that helped break barriers in sound recording? Who were these artists and how did they break barriers? As you explore Paramount Records think about the culture of the time and what impact the actions of those living then has on artists and record labels today? Also consider the customer and how that has changed and why that has changed.

- To learn more about the history of Paramount Records visit
 - Wisconsin101:

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- The Wisconsin Chair Company - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/07/16/wisconsin-chair-company/>
- Paramount Records - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/08/24/paramount-records/>
- Paramount Records 78 - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/paramount-records-78/>
- Recruiting Talent - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/08/24/recruiting-talent/>
- Wisconsin Historical Society
 - Paramount Records Essay - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1701>
 - New York Recording Laboratories - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS11098>
- To learn more about sound recording and playback view:
 - Wisconsin101 – The Record Production Process - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/08/24/the-record-production-process/>
 - Wisconsin101 – The Graphophone
 - Volta Laboratories Association - <https://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/hear-my-voice/5.html>

Breaking Barriers in Schools

In the 1800s slates were a common school tool that students and teachers used in the classroom and at home to practice handwriting and do school assignments. Technology improved and soon more schools could afford to use new tools. Exploring the tools schools used in educating students, how did new technology break barriers? Think about the use of paper, notebooks, typewriters, computers, and pencils. What did they replace and how did these new tools break barriers? How did it change their learning? How did teachers and students use these new technologies in the classroom? Think about the process of invention, technology, and economics. How did inventors come up with the idea? How did inventors and companies sell the products? To create a connection to today, how similar and different are the tools you use in school to those of the 1800s, like the slate?

- To learn more about early school tools and equipment view:
 - Wisconsin101 – Slate - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/slate/>
 - Wisconsin101 – La Crosse Normal School Fireplace - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/la-crosse-fireplace/>
- To view images of Wisconsin Classrooms over the years visit Wisconsin Historical Society - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records?terms=chalkboards>
- History of School Supplies view:
 - “The Pencil: A History of Design and Circumstance” by Henry Petroski, 1990
 - *First Practicle Typewriter*, Wisconsin Historical Society - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2697>

- “Threshing Rings and Chalkboard Lessons: Tales from the Good Old Day in Central Wisconsin: A Treasury of 20th Century Memories” by Todd Blair, and Karen Garvey

Breaking Barriers in Transportation

Before the move to automobiles, bicycle culture and clubs were popular, such as the Badger Wheelmen Cycle Club in Milwaukee, WI. These social clubs afforded men and women an enjoyable social activity that included exercise and it pushed them to group together to break barriers. Poor road conditions restricted Wisconsin cyclists from their activities in many parts of the state. The *Wisconsin Tour and Handbook* provided cyclists with a map of the state with areas to avoid due to road conditions and areas where road conditions were ideal for cycling. The League of American Wheelmen wanted to secure better roads across the country. Wheelmen wanted state funding to improve the roads, but they failed to get widespread support. What barriers did bicycle clubs break? Think about types of recreation, who got to participate, and the impact on non-bikers. What barriers did the publications such the *Wisconsin Tour and Handbook* break in terms of travel, hotels, and roads? Consider how the technology of the bicycle broke barriers for the invention of automobiles, motorcycles, and electric bicycles.

- To learn more about bicycles and the bicycle movement visit Wisconsin101:
 - Wisconsin Road Conditions - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/11/01/wisconsin-road-conditions/>
 - Sterling Safety Bicycle - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/sterling-safety-bicycle/>
 - Badger Wheelmen Pin - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/badger-wheelmen-pin/>
 - The Crab Tree Special - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/crab-tree-special/>
 - The 1890s Bicycle Craze in Wisconsin - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/2018/11/30/bicycle-craze-in-wisconsin/>
- To start your exploration in the technology improvements with transportation view:
 - Wisconsin101 – Nash Car - <https://wi101.wisc.edu/nash-car/>
 - Wisconsin Historical Society – Nash Ambassador Automobile - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2730>
 - Wisconsin Historical Society – How Two Boys From Milwaukee Created the World’s Largest Motorcycle Company - <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS4366>