



## Learning Capitol Ideas in Madison

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PastForward Conference  
September 15, 2025

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### 1. **Wisconsin State Capitol** (10:30a-10:55a)

Join Darrin Smith, Building and Grounds Superintendent, and Tom List, Project Manager and Licensed Architect, for a presentation offering a behind-the-scenes look at the restoration and preservation of the Wisconsin State Capitol. The session begins with an overview of the Capitol's historical significance and major restoration efforts from 1988–2001. The presenters will then highlight ongoing and proactive preservation work, including masonry repairs, system upgrades, and accessibility improvements, underscoring the balance between maintaining historic integrity and meeting modern needs. The presentation concludes with a look ahead to future projects and preservation challenges.

This is the fourth capitol building for Wisconsin. Designed by architect George B. Post, this Beaux Arts building is laid out in an x-plan with four equal wings. Constructed in five phases, work began in 1906 and the building was completed in 1917. It continues to house our three branches of government. The building was designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, State Register of Historic Places in 1989, Madison Landmark in 1995, and National Historic Landmark in 2001. The building has been currently undergoing the latest round of rehabilitation.

[Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory](#)

[National Register Nomination](#)

[Madison Landmark Nomination](#)

[Historic Structure Report](#)

### 2. **Madison Municipal Building** (11a-11:25a)

Originally the US Post Office and Federal Courthouse, this building was designed by architect James A Wetmore (Acting Supervising Architect for the US Treasury Department) and constructed in 1927. It became the Madison Municipal Building in 1980. The building underwent extensive rehabilitation that completed in 2018 and currently houses City offices. The property was designed in the National & State Register of Historic Places in 2002, and as a Madison Landmark in 2002.

[Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory](#)

[National Register Nomination](#)

[Madison Landmark Nomination](#)

[WHS 1929 Photo](#)

### 3. **CG Schmit** (11:35a-12:30p)

This construction firm started in Wisconsin and completes a variety of projects nationwide, including historic preservation work.

[CG Schmidt History](#)

### 4. **Gates of Heaven Synagogue** (12:45p-1:10p)

The Romanesque Revival building was designed by architect August Kutzbock, and constructed as a synagogue for Madison's Jewish population. Over the years, different congregations of different



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faiths called this building home. In 1970 a redevelopment threatened preservation of the building, a grassroots fundraising effort saved the building and relocated it from Washington Avenue to James Madison Park and the City of Madison took ownership of the building. As a Madison sandstone building with a variety of interventions over time, it needed serious conservation work. The City recently completed conservation of the sandstone and rehabilitation of the building. InSite Consulting Architects provided a full exterior envelope restoration of the building and was awarded a Madison Trust for Historic Preservation award and a Wisconsin Board of Curators award. The building currently serves as a polling places and is available for rentals. The building was designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, as a Madison Landmark in 1974, and the State Register of Historic Places in 1989.

[Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory](#)

[Madison Landmark Nomination](#)

[WHS 1864 Drawing](#)

[WHS 1885 Drawing](#)

[WHS 1971 Photo of building relocation](#)

[Gates of Heaven Masonry Restoration Information \(City of Madison Engineering\)](#)

### 5. **Ancient Canoes** (1:20p-2p)

Tamara Thomsen, a marine archaeologist who works with the Wisconsin Historical Society, accidentally uncovered an ancient dugout canoe while testing diving equipment. In 2021, the Wisconsin Historical Society in collaboration with tribal partners, recovered the canoe and began conservation work. At that point it was the oldest canoe ever recovered in the state. The same archaeologist discovered another canoe, which the partnership recovered for conservation in 2022. Fieldwork is ongoing and archaeologists have identified at least 11 dugout canoes, dating from 800 to 4500 years old.

Marine Archaeologist Tamara Thomsen will discuss her discoveries, the ongoing conservation work, and show us how the canoes are being preserved for future display in the Wisconsin History Center.

[Wisconsin Public Radio 2024 Article](#)

[Smithsonian Magazine 2024 Article](#)

[Wisconsin Historical Society Press Release 2024](#)

### 6. **Royal Thai Pavilion** (2:15p-2:40p)

A truly international endeavor, revival of the Royal Thai Pavilion brought together the best local and international excellence. The Royal Thai Pavilion, given as a gift to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the City of Madison by the Thai Royal Family, is one of only six pavilions outside of Thailand. The structure is built of traditional materials - wood, clay roof tiles, and lead flashings - and highly ornamented with decorative painting, gold leaf gilding, and mirrored mosaic tiles. After 20 years' continuous exterior exposure in a northern climate, the tropical-based materials were failing. InSite developed modern and traditional techniques and solutions to bring the structure back to its original grandeur. This project was awarded a Madison Trust for Historic Preservation award.



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[WMTV Story on Restoration 2024](#)

[Press Release for 2025 Madison Trust Award](#)

### 7. **Garver Feedmill** (2:50p-3:45p)

This building was originally a sugar beet refining plant. Constructed in 1906, the original architect is unknown. When the Garver Feed and Supply Company bought the property, they hired prominent local firm of Law, Law, and Potter to complete renovations. The Garver Feedmill focused on livestock feed and operated here until 1972. The building remained vacant for and the City acquired the property in 1997. The building remained vacant and in significant disrepair. After an extensive public process, the City entered into a public-private partnership and rehabilitation began in 2017. The City continues to own the property, but the Garver Feed Mill LLC owns the building. Bryant Morodor will discuss the work they undertook to revitalize this building, which has served as an incubator for several small businesses. The building was designated a Madison Landmark in 1994, and in the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 2017.

<https://garverfeedmill.com/>

[Madison Landmark Nomination](#)

Map of Tour Sites

