



BETSY-TACY SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

BTS FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

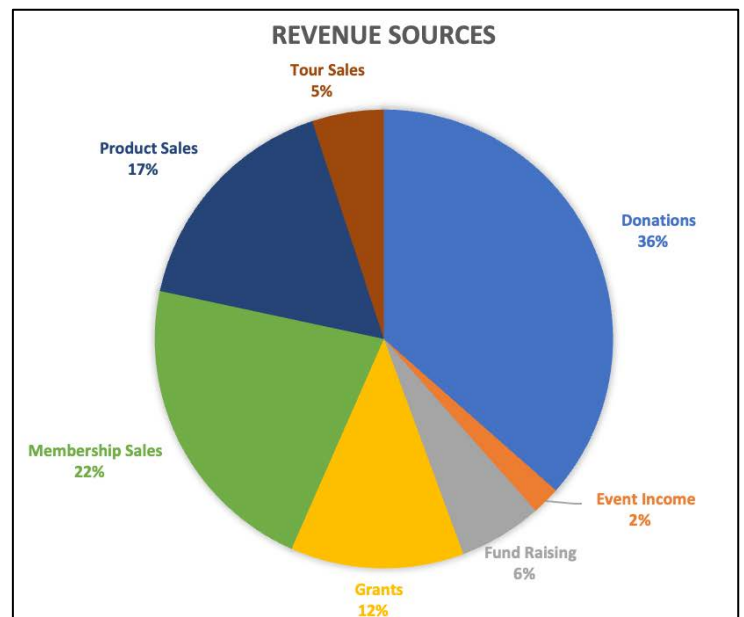
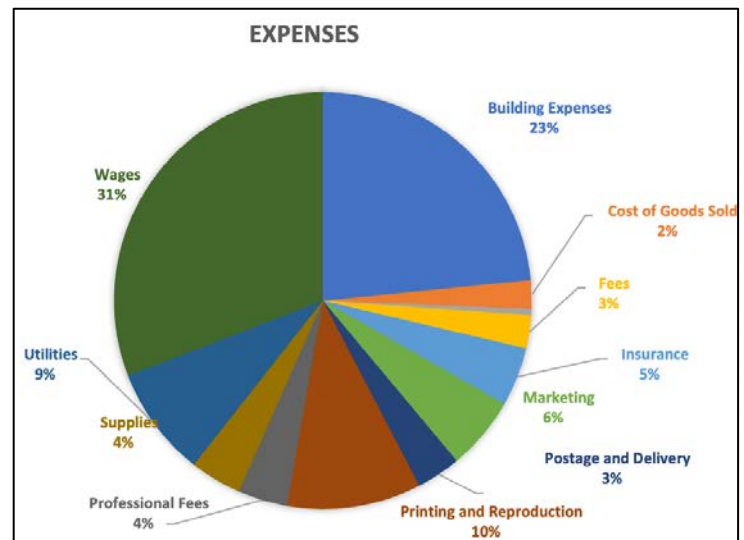
In 2022, we experienced a great deal of growth and transition, but our expenses ultimately exceeded our revenues by quite a bit. We wrote about this in detail in last year's annual report (under [Resources](#) on our website), and we noted our planned strategies for dealing with this shortfall:

- Launching our first annual donation drive, reaching out to both current and past members, our many followers on social media, and our Shop customers who aren't BTS members
- Raising the cost of Senior, Adult, and YA membership by \$5, which we hadn't done since 2016
- Seeking grants and sponsors to help with or cover the cost of newsletters and other BTS activities
- Doing more fundraisers, and charging attendees for any event that requires staff time and resources

We are happy to announce that **our efforts were very successful**: We were able to recoup the cost of all our 2022 improvements, and we had a balanced budget throughout 2023.

The spring donation drive was a huge success!

Our goal was to raise \$25K—and we exceeded that, ultimately raising **\$26,939**. Our plan is to hold a donation drive every year with a targeted goal. We like the idea of one specific time to reach out to our potential donors, thus freeing up our limited staff hours for other things. That being said, we did participate in two other key donation opportunities this year:



- **Give to the Max Day:** We've been part of this off and on over the years, with mostly limited success. But we decided to try again this year – and to our amazement, we netted \$1,288! To accompany the unofficial Betsy-Tacy motto of “I thought I was the only one!,” we've added a new motto: “You just never know.”



- **Victorian Christmas ornament promotion:** For a donation of any amount, donors have their name inscribed on a beautiful ornament hanging on the Christmas tree in Tacy's House. We love the idea of enabling everyone – particularly outside-Mankato folks – to be part of this beautiful event. While we don't think of this as a “big” fundraiser, we nonetheless received \$690 – from donations starting at \$5!

In addition, we were awarded several grants in 2023:

- Two grants from the Schmidt Family Foundation totaling \$7,900, which we used to upgrade the technology in our office at Tacy's House and to cover a portion of newsletter postage and printing
- A \$2,500 grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, which covered many costs associated with Victorian Christmas



We also made excellent use of the Prairie Lakes grant we received in 2022. Our creative vice president, Michelle May, dreamed up a **Betsy-Tacy mural on an outdoor wall in Mankato**, secured the funding, and put the whole thing in motion. In August 2023, the Collaborative Artists at Bethany Lutheran College painted Lois Lenski's map of Deep Valley on the garage wall owned by Deep Valley Properties on Main Street, just east of the intersection with Broad Street. It looks simply stunning and will be a beautiful part of our community for years to come.

Our solid financial footing enabled us to make some repairs to our two 100-year-old homes, most notably **giving Tacy's House a much-needed new roof**. While the cost of this work was very close to the amount we raised in the donation drive, we are confident that next year's drive will again restore our coffers to where they need to be.



Work begins on Tacy's roof



Tacy's beautiful new roof!

Our healthy financial status also enabled us to “give back” to our community. **Encouraging and supporting literacy** is a key aspect of the BTS’s mission, and toward that end we contributed to several literacy-focused organizations: Loyola Reads, the Rotary Club of Greater Mankato’s literacy program, and Mankato Youth Place (we donated to their literacy program and gave a set of Betsy-Tacy books to their free afterschool day care).

We also took part in **the life of Deep Valley**: We had tables at the Deep Valley Book Festival and the Blue Earth County Historical Society’s annual fundraiser. We took part in the Lincoln Park Association’s National Night Out, an annual event promoting police–community partnerships. We collaborated with Camp Maverick Rec N’ Read, the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota, and the Blue Earth County Library Summer Learning Program to offer programs for local children, and we co-sponsored a fundraiser with Mankato Area Lifelong Learners.

Finally, we took a step to position the Betsy-Tacy Houses as **a statewide destination** by listing Betsy’s House in the online Minnesota Field Trip & Activity Library.

We could not do any of this good work without the ongoing support of our members and friends.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your continued generosity.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

MEMBERSHIP

- **BTS membership remains steady**; as of this writing, we have 737 members of all ages.
- We’re especially excited about the number of young people (ages 5–19) who are BTS members, as we see them as our pipeline to the future. Today, we have a total of 55 YA and BTT Club members!

EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

- **“Meet the Grandchildren”:** On February 11, Caroline King (Carney’s granddaughter), Ken, Mary Ann, Peggy, and Sally Kirch (Tacy’s grandson and granddaughters), Bonnie Ruth (Winona I’s granddaughter), and Pete Steiner (Cab’s grandson) met via Zoom to share stories and reminiscences about their grandparents, our beloved book characters. It was an evening of laughter and joy, described by one participant as “one of the happiest events I’ve ever attended.” One of the evening’s many highlights was a slideshow of photos and other mementos provided by the grandchildren, set to the song “Same Old Story” performed by Advisory Council member Maud Hixson. This event was a fundraiser for us, ultimately netting close to \$2K – and, because we recorded it and made the video available for purchase (you can find it in our online Shop), it continues to serve this purpose!
- **Monthly book discussions:** We concluded the first discussion series in May, with *Betsy’s Wedding*, and started the whole cycle again in September, with *Betsy-Tacy*. These discussions have been inspiring, insightful, often hilarious – and a perfectly grand way to spend an evening in the company of kindred spirits. A highlight at these discussions has been the presence of nine-year-old Mary Ellen, who has decided opinions on girls’ clubs, three-person friendships, and the importance of having two numbers in your age. We hope you’ll join us in 2024!
- **Writers Lounges:** One Sunday a month, we offer a quiet two-hour block for folks to work together via Zoom – and participants have marveled at how productive they are able to be during this time! After completing the yearly cycle in October, we decided to continue with this small but much-loved event, with a slight variation: We will now alternate between Sunday afternoons (hosted by volunteer Liz Blaufuss) and Wednesday evenings (hosted by Board member Shelley Harris).
- **Recorded book discussion:** We do our best to choose a time for the book discussions that works for the majority of potential attendees (as well as our host), but of course not everyone who wants to is able to attend. To enable those folks to be a “fly on the wall” and observe our lively and wide-ranging discussions, we recorded the July 16 session on *Heaven to Betsy*, which is available for purchase in our online Shop.



Find all upcoming BTS events on our website:

betsy-tacysociety.org/news-events

- **Victorian Christmas:** The Betsy-Tacy Houses opened for two Saturdays in December to welcome dozens of visitors, who munched on homemade cookies, enjoyed the festive period decorations, heard beautiful violin music, and got their picture taken with our own Betsy, Tacy, and Tib!

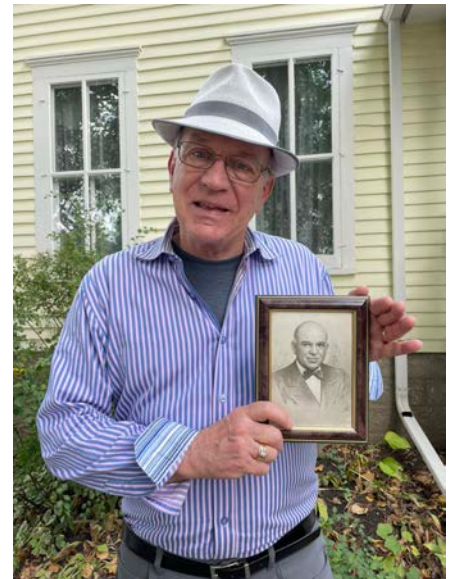


NEWSLETTERS

- We continue to publish multiple issues of our four newsletters: the *Deep Valley Sun* and *The Agony Column* for adult and senior members (two of each per year), *The Social Room* for YA members (three per year), and *Everything Pudding* for BTT Club members (four per year).
- Our editor is thrilled to note that more guest authors are stepping up to contribute than ever before! (If you have an idea for an article for any of our newsletters, please email Jennifer@betsy-tacysociety.org)

HOUSE TOURS

- We offered tours of the Betsy-Tacy Houses from the end of April through the end of October. Visitors came from across the U.S. and Canada. Witnessing a BT fan entering Betsy's House for the first time . . . it never gets old!
- We were approached by Kathy McGillivray, who's been blind since birth, about doing a House tour. This was something new for us, but we were game to give it our best shot – and it ended up being a wonderful experience for everyone. We are especially glad to have had the opportunity to meet Kathy, who is a perfect peach. (Kathy's visit was spotlighted in the Fall 2023 *Deep Valley Sun*.)
- Mankato radio's loss was our gain! This year, newly retired Peter Steiner – better known to BT fans as “Cab's grandson” (Pete's grandfather was Jab Lloyd, Maud's model for Cab) – was on hand several weekends this summer, to our visitors' delight. He also read aloud *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* at our Victorian Christmas event. We're always happy when Pete drops by – and we **love** imagining how thrilled Maud would be. ❤️



Peter Steiner, holding a photo of Grandpa Jab

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Communications Coordinator Jennifer Davis-Kay and two Board members – Shelly Harris and Michelle May – maintain a robust social media schedule. You can find the BTS on Facebook (three to four new posts every week), Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter.

- A volunteer, Grace Munoz, wrote an article for the YA newsletter connecting the themes of the Betsy-Tacy high school books to specific Taylor Swift songs. We're always looking for ways to entice younger readers to give BT a chance, and Grace's marvelous article, "Betsy and Taylor," is now featured on our website (under [Resources](#)).
- We created three visitor guides to Betsy's Deep Valley (*A Day in Deep Valley*, *A Weekend in Deep Valley*, and *A Week in Deep Valley*), which are posted on the [Resources](#) section of our website.

SHOP

- Our online and in-person Shop continues to do a brisk business. **Sales were up significantly from 2022**, possibly due to some of the fun new items we introduced, including a bistro coffee mug, a Christmas ornament, pinback buttons, ready-to-frame prints (one from each BT book), and all nine of our vinyl stickers available on one sheet. We also brought back our popular "Making Lists" notepad and replenished our supply of *My Betsy-Tacy Miracle*, a book by Kathy Baxter.
- Our top-selling item by far continues to be *Beyond Domestic Science: Recipes from Betsy-Tacy*. This cookbook offers 200+ recipes for almost every dish mentioned in our beloved books, and it's also peppered with quotes from vintage cookery books and Domestic Science texts and includes personal essays from devoted fans of the series. It's a perfectly grand read on its own, even if you're more of a Betsy than a Tib when it comes to kitchen skills!



Advisory Council member Barb Fecteau models our cute new pinback buttons

BOARD, ADVISORY COUNCIL, AND VOLUNTEERS

- We were excited to welcome several new members to our Board and Advisory Council, who are contributing much-needed skills and expertise to our group. We look forward to embarking on some strategic planning in 2024, guided by new AC member Melissa Prycer, who brings years of experience running a museum in Dallas. We're also pleased to have two professional librarians in our group, Board member Shelley Harris and AC member Barb Fecteau, who are digital archiving experts and are eager to make our many BTS treasures more readily accessible to BTS members and Betsy-Tacy fans around the world.
- In the fall, volunteer Samantha Wendt took on the role of Volunteer Coordinator: maintaining the volunteer and tour calendar, training volunteers to lead tours and work in the Shop, and holding monthly meetings. We are thrilled to have Samantha in this important role, and we look forward to working with her in the coming year. A bonus: Samantha's



"Welcome to Tacy's House!"

adorable redheaded daughter Payton is also a volunteer and simply **loves** playing the role of Tacy!

- While the BTS Board is our decision-making body, much of our programming work is done by committees. Newsletter editor Jennifer has assembled advisory groups for each newsletter comprising BTS members who aren't on our Board, and we're now using that model with other BTS committees and working groups. If you'd like to be more involved in the work of the BTS, consider joining a committee! Email us to learn more: info@betsy-tacysociety.org

Could you volunteer a few hours – whether monthly or as your schedule permits – to the Betsy-Tacy Society? We're always looking for folks to give tours and work in the Shop during our regular business hours: Saturdays, 1–3 p.m., May through October. Training is provided for each role, and you may also shadow an experienced volunteer until you feel comfortable soloing. If you're interested or would like to learn more, please email Samantha: volunteer@betsy-tacysociety.org

THE BETSY-TACY SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 94, MANKATO, MN 56002 + (507) 345-9777

INFO@BETSY-TACYSOCIETY.ORG + BETSY-TACYSOCIETY.ORG

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Tacy's House at sunset, January 2023