

Cultural Archive of

**M**  **MODERN P**  **PAGANISM**



**2023 Fiscal Year Annual Report**

## **Mission Statement**

The Cultural Archive of Modern Paganism exists to preserve, interpret, and promote the history and culture of the contemporary Pagan community as it exists in the United States. Through the acquisition of historical evidence and ongoing research, we will document our community and its unique cultural and spiritual nature. Our collections will be held in a digital repository, available in its entirety to researchers, with curated informative and educational materials made available to the public through our website. In these ways we seek to promote the discipline of Pagan studies and add to our community's sense of identity by providing access to the foundations of its past.

## **Board of Directors**

Timothy Knight  
President

Mike Kirk  
Treasurer

Justin Stein  
Secretary

Lisa LeBow  
Project Manager

## **Executive Summary**

In 2023 the Cultural Archive of Modern Paganism (CAMP) incorporated as a non-profit entity to be able to continue the work started with the Wiccan Church of Minnesota in 2000. Within its first year CAMP formed a Board of Directors, was granted 501c(3) status, and received two Legacy Amendment grants from the Minnesota Historical Society. Through our efforts we have continued to work towards our goals to better preserve the past and serve our community.

## **Community and Organizational History**

Contemporary Paganism emerged in the Twin Cities in the 1960s. In 1970 Carl Weschke opened Gnostica Bookstore which served as the Pagan community's first gathering space and saw the birth of many of the institutions that continue to this day. In 1976, Phil Flom established the Minnesota Church of the Wicca (MCoW) as the first legally recognized Pagan Church in the state. In 1987, a group of individuals broke with MCoW to form the Wiccan Church of Minnesota (WiCoM), which gained legal recognition in 1989. These groups were part of fostering the growth of the Twin Cities Pagan community into one of the largest in the country.

In the early 2000s, WiCoM provided encouragement and support to the New Alexandria Library (NAL). Located in Minneapolis, NAL was a subscription library with a mission to create an archive that preserved Pagan history, culture, and heritage. This was an early attempt at documenting the Pagan community. It was met with great community support but lacked professional resources to continue its work. NAL folded in 2005, and its materials were eventually entrusted to the care of Lou Gastuch.

In the mid-2000s, cultural anthropologist Dr. Murphy Pizza began researching the Twin Cities Pagan community. She published her doctoral thesis in 2009 and a monograph in 2014. In partnership with WiCoM the Cultural Archive of Modern Paganism (CAMP) received its first Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Amendment grant in 2020 titled, "Development of the Minnesota Pagan Oral History Methodology and Template" to continue the documentation of the local community. Through this work, it became evident that our elders were stewards of significant private collections documenting the history of the Twin Cities Pagan community. An increasingly urgent need to find and preserve this information became apparent as community members age and/or downsize their belongings.

In 2022, CAMP and WiCoM received their second MNHS grant to explore establishing the official archive. This project surveyed 10 private collections of archival material related to the Twin Cities Pagan community and 83 boxes of material from NAL. It also created foundational documents to help guide establishing CAMP.

At the successful completion of this grant project, it became evident that CAMP was about to become too large to remain a side project of WiCoM and needed an independent organization to support the continuing work. In March of 2023 the Cultural Archive of Modern Paganism incorporated as a non-profit in the state of Minnesota and received its 501c (3) determination in June of the same year.

## Current Projects

### Creation of Collections Management Policies

The purpose of this project, which began October 2023, is to develop and formalize the policies required to govern archival activity in accordance with professional standards. These policies will enable CAMP to accept new additions to the collection, conduct initial processing of acquisitions, manage all archival holdings, and begin to grant access to their materials.

### Collection of Oral Histories of the Wiccan Church of Minnesota

This project is set to begin early 2024 and will focus on collecting oral histories of at least 15 current or past members of WiCoM to document the story of this significant organization. Using the Methods and template developed in a previous project, this will be the first in a series of oral history projects to record the lineage of the Twin Cities contemporary pagan community.



Both projects are made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

# **Future Plans**

## **Research**

### Oral Histories

CAMP will continue to explore the many facets of the Minnesota Pagan community through a series of oral history projects. We intend to pursue the history of Druidry and Heathenry in Minnesota. The Reformed Druids of America were formed in 1963 at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. Minnesota has historically been home to descendants of Germanic and Scandinavian countries, which has led to the development of a modern community with traditions based on the spiritual beliefs of those regions. Collectively the traditions are referred to as Heathenry. Examining these new areas will expand and diversify the understanding of our local community and its connections on a greater scale.

### Surveys

Information on the demographics and nature of the Pagan community is sparse and often outdated. To best document and serve this community we must first begin collecting information about who, what, and where it is. To do this we will create and disseminate a series of targeted surveys through our website, social media, and in person events. This information will serve as a basis for future research and archival projects, as well as an avenue for direct engagement with the community.

## **Archival Collections**

### New Alexandria Library collection

During our work with the Wiccan Church of Minnesota we were able to survey the holdings of the New Alexandria Library (NAL). Closed since 2005 NAL was a subscription library with a mission to create an archive that preserved Pagan history, culture, and heritage. WiCoM has been entrusted with its materials, which have been kept in an outdoor storage unit. Its contents include a selection of books on various Pagan topics, periodicals, and ephemera from the early Twin Cities Pagan community. To begin the work of preserving this cultural heritage CAMP will move the collection to new temperature controlled storage, stabilizing its condition with basic preservation measures, and conducting a detailed inventory. By gaining physical and intellectual control of these materials CAMP will be closer to making their contents accessible to researchers and our community.

### Lady Aura Collection

Lady Aura is a long standing member of the Twin Cities Pagan community, a member of one of its oldest covens, and an early member of the Minnesota Church of the Wicca. She has collected a significant amount of material pertaining to her experience in the Pagan community. Most significantly, a set of cassette tape recordings of lectures given during the 1980's. Due to the fragile nature of this medium, the cleaning and digitizing of these recordings are a high priority for CAMP's collection.

## Financial Goals

CAMP has been successful in its formation and beginning its work due to the generous donations from individuals and the support of Legacy Amendment grants from the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS).

In 2024 we will continue to pursue grant funding for projects from MNHS and operational support through building relationships with charitable foundations.

We will also increase our fundraising efforts to include crowd funding campaigns and corporate sponsorships. This will enable CAMP to build the infrastructure needed to preserve the history of our community. The top priorities are to acquire digital storage media, launch our full website, and build a portable digitization lab for community digitization days.

### 2023 Income

Grants		\$19,430.00
Donations		<u>\$750.00</u>
	Total	\$20,180.00

### 2024 Grant, Donation, and Sponsorship Projections

Grants		\$25,000.00
	MNHS	\$20,000.00
	Foundations	\$5,000.00
Donations		\$2,500.00
Sponsorship		<u>\$5,000.00</u>
	Total	\$32,500.00

# Infrastructure Priorities

## Digital Storage

The primary responsibility of CAMP is to provide a trusted digital repository for the materials given into our care. To do this our holding will be maintained in three different mediums; cloud storage, hard drives, and Blu Ray discs stored at a separate physical location in a different climate disaster zone. Some of these costs are incorporated within our collections management system, while the rest require the purchase of equipment. We estimate that this project will cost \$1700.

## Website Development

Our website will be the primary access point to our collections, as well as curated online exhibits and other projects. Our needs will include design, hosting, and the back end collections management program. We estimate that this project will cost \$1500.

## Portable Digitization Lab

To actively engage with our community, we will host community digitization events where individuals can participate in the preservation process and the archive will gain access to material and donors at the same time in a social context. The benefit of a portable digitization lab is its flexibility allowing us to serve communities in a larger geographic area. Our equipment needs include overhead document scanners, laptop computers, external hard drives, and suitable storage bags for transport. We estimate that this project will cost \$2200.