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**Spring 2016
Volume 19 Number 1**

A GENERATION OF OXEN – Dick Hildebrandt
(excerpted from the “Wisconsin Magazine of History” Autumn 2015)

In the 1840s and 1850s, oxen brought settlers to the opening frontiers of the upper Midwest. Many farmers arrived in wagons with their livestock. A milk cow might be tied behind the wagon, with pigs and chickens in crates bouncing along inside. But, in front pulling it all were the oxen. They led the way into Wisconsin as they had on other frontiers throughout history.

Pioneers uprooted themselves and their families and relocated to undeveloped areas throughout all of recorded history. Ever since their domestication some 9,000 years ago, cattle have provided power for humans and have always been found on any frontier. They provided meat and milk and played an integral part in the development of farming.

Oxen are not a breed of cattle but rather steers – adult, male bovines that have been castrated. They come from bull calves of any breed of cattle and are castrated and taught to follow voice commands and work with humans. Male cattle are selected because they grow to be larger than the females, and cows are more valuable for their milk and their ability to produce calves.

Committees

Education

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Mill House

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Cindy Schmechel

Mill Restoration

Harry Niemann

Museum

Jean Happel

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Project Coordinator

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**Two oxen, Tom and Jerry, hitched together with a yoke.
Rockton, Wisconsin, September 1946**

In nineteenth century Wisconsin, before the rise of the dairy industry, the predominant breed of cattle was Shorthorn, an English breed noted for its meat and milk. Most oxen of that period were at least part Shorthorn. Today, making cattle into oxen and working with them is a hobby rather than a necessity, and trainers choose the breed best suited to the intended use of the animal. Large breeds, such as Holsteins, are selected for pulling competitions and logging, and small breeds, like Devons and Jerseys, are more appropriate for farm work. All cattle raised as oxen must retain their horns which act as brakes to hold back a load when going downhill. The horns also prevent the yoke from sliding over the animals' heads.

These steers, trained for work, were the first domesticated animals stronger than their master, and their strength, once trained and harnessed, became useful to humans as they transformed their environment into something more habitable. Ox power revolutionized transport and agriculture and allowed people to grow more food, transport goods for trade, and travel over long distances. Oxen were especially adapted to the environment of an expanding frontier, and their very presence helped define the frontier experience and westward expansion of the United States.

Oxen were cheaper to buy than horses which made them well suited to the cash-poor economies of the frontier. Although prices might fluctuate, between the 1830s and 1870s, a horse might cost as much as \$150, while a team of oxen cost \$50. However, it was still an investment in a period when a laborer might make \$1.50 in a day and paid \$2 for a pair of shoes and ten cents for a pound of butter. For people who had sold almost everything they had to outfit their journey, the investment was worth it and the savings immense.

Frontier farmers were so busy clearing the land and building shelter that growing enough grain to keep a horse in working condition was difficult. Oxen were less expensive to feed since they required no grain to work, and their ruminant digestive systems allowed them to eat and thrive on rougher fodder than any horse could tolerate. The ox's ability to eat grass along with grain and hay allowed subsistence farmers on the Wisconsin frontier to concentrate on growing crops to feed themselves.

Harnessing an ox was also less expensive than equipping a horse. Ox yokes, made of wood with a few iron fittings, could be easily made with simple tools and were well within the capabilities of the pioneer farmer. Horse harnesses, by comparison, were relatively fragile and harder to make and repair. Although both animals benefit from wearing shoes, oxen are less likely to develop foot problems by going unshod over long distances. Since cattle are hardier than horses, they can also get by with a less refined shelter. When not needed for chores, oxen could be turned out into the woods to forage for themselves and rounded up again when there was work to be done.

The fact that horses were faster meant little in an environment where tracks knee deep in mud passed for roads and the market was as far as the next town, a day's travel away. The slow pace of the ox was better suited to the backbreaking work of carving up a wilderness where speed was less advantageous than the ability to work steadily day in and day out.

Anyone looking at the livestock in Wisconsin in the 1840s would have recognized the region for what it was: a vibrant and expanding frontier where oxen outnumbered horses by virtue of their suitability, necessity, and adaptability to their environment. This is confirmed by the Federal Census of 1850. Oxen comprised fifty-nine percent of all draft animals in the state; 42,801 working oxen as compared to 30,335 horses, asses and mules. Draft animals concentrated in agricultural areas, and in 1850, that was the southeast section of the state. Dane, Dodge, Rock, Washington and Waukesha counties each counted more than 3,000 oxen with the surrounding counties not far behind.

Some of the first settlers who came into Wisconsin came not to farm but to mine lead. The farmers that followed found few decent roads but many tracks through the forest. Early settlers recounted travel as slow and difficult and nearly or quite impossible in certain seasons. The lack of good roads meant more to early Wisconsin farmers than just difficult travel. It also meant difficulty reaching markets. Without markets for their animals, crops and

produce, there was no profitable farming. Instead, small poorer farms raised a little bit of everything, and the goods produced were for local or personal consumption. A settler rushed to build a shelter and clear a patch of land for a first crop, most likely corn to feed his family and beasts. Oxen excelled at the slow deliberate work of hauling logs and pulling stones that was the mainstay of converting forest into field. Trees were cut down, and a small percentage of them were turned into logs or lumber for building and fencing. The excess was burned.

Often these hardwood forests were the only land that early European immigrants could afford. In contrast, the prairies were more conducive to growing wheat and required less work. Because the prairies had the prospect of quicker returns, they were settled first and often sold at a higher price per acre than the forests.

Even as oxen converted the Wisconsin woods and prairies, agriculture became mechanized. From the decade before Wisconsin became a state until the end of the Civil War, inventive minds and entrepreneurial spirits produced machines for the newly created fields. The machines were also particularly suited and designed to operate at the pace a horse walked. Speed had never been an ox's strong suit.

Farming methods would eventually leave the use of oxen behind. In 1842, Jerome Increase Case came to the Wisconsin Territory with six groundhog threshers. He sold five and used the sixth to demonstrate the mechanical threshing technology. By 1844, he was building improved threshers at a small factory in the city of Racine. Cyrus McCormick patented his first reaper, pulled by horses, in 1834 and began to manufacture them in Chicago in 1848. These two machines, along with a host of others, transformed Wisconsin agriculture from frontier subsistence to cash farming and replaced oxen with horses.

It wasn't only technological advances that pushed oxen off the agricultural scene. Attitudes among farmers fostered change just as much as new machinery. As the frontier retreated westward out of Wisconsin, oxen were seen as a thing of the past. Your ancestor may have farmed with oxen, but modern farmers used horses. This technological bias for anything new and improved has always been a part of farming, and oxen were on the short end when it came to modern advances.

The common use of oxen in Wisconsin lasted a little over fifty years as the state was transformed from raw frontier to settled agricultural industry. The only constant was change, as wheat replaced forest and prairie only to be supplanted by the dairy cow. Oxen are remembered today through historical documents and museum displays. Little physical evidence remains of their primary role in the creation of Wisconsin agriculture. Their legacy remains evident in the smooth broad fields of Wisconsin farms and the tractors that continue the work the oxen started.

Memorial Day – Wisconsin May 30, 1895 - Remarks by Senator John C. Spooner
(Memorial Day aids for its proper observation by the schools of Wisconsin)

Teaching the young among you to look with eyes of love and pride upon the flag wherever they see it floating – to remember that there is music in its rustling, there is magic in its web. “Every star is a tongue; every star is articulate.” It is an inspiration to those who love it. It is a sunburst to those who are proud of it. Heaven has blessed it, and the sacrifice of man has sanctified it. Keep it forever floating in the midst of our people, high up where the morning breeze may caress it, and where the rays of the morning sun may transfigure it. Spread it where the school children may look upon it. Let it float over the halls of justice, for liberty is the twin sister of justice; and this is the flag of liberty. It is forever the flag of united people, the ensign of the Union preserved, redeemed and regenerated.

Let us on this Memorial Day, softened and exalted by the tender proud memories which it brings to us, and newly resolve that each shall do his full duty as a citizen, that the law shall have our obedience, that every right of man shall have



our respect, that justice shall have our homage, and that liberty in none of its phases shall suffer diminution or invasion while in our keeping

The Hensler Site Petroglyphs – A Gallery of Native American Art since the Ice Age

Dr. Jack Hensler, Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh and Adjunct Scholar in Anthropology in east central Wisconsin, first looked at the Hensler Site 40 years ago. The Site is one of very few cases of rock art excavation in North America.

The Hensler Site, near Waterloo, Wisconsin, is on the Wisconsin Register of Historic Places. It features a panel of 35 petroglyphs on a trough of Andalusite schist between two lobes of quartzite on the western edge of a Waterloo quartzite outcrop. The iconology (study of images) of the panel ranges from Early Archaic (8000 BC) to Mississippian (800AD – 1650 AD).

You might ask – What are petroglyphs? Petroglyphs are images created by removing part of a rock surface by incising, picking, carving or abrading as a form of rock art. Outside North America, scholars often used terms such as “carving,” “engraving” or other descriptions of the technique to refer to such images. Petroglyphs are found worldwide and are often associated with prehistoric peoples. The word comes from the Greek word “petro,” - the theme of the word “petra” meaning “stone,” and glyphen meaning “to carve.”

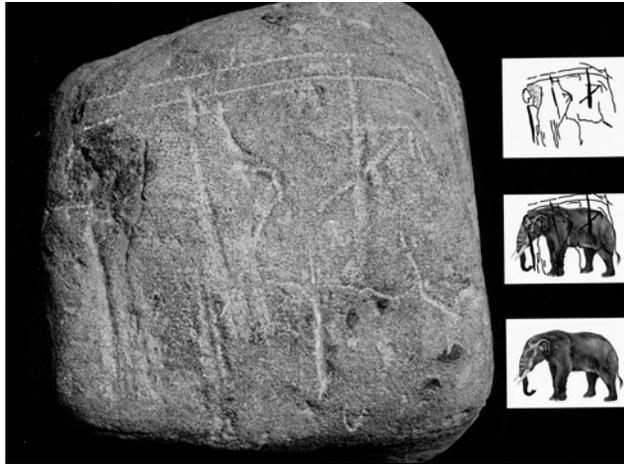
You might ask – Did people create petroglyphs anywhere? Anthropologists say prehistoric people chose places with unique characteristics, Physical qualities of sites are called Phenomenal Attributes which include: geographic prominence, magnetic anomalies, acoustical properties such as resonance (soil making a drumming sound when walked on), strong local winds, unusual rock formation shapes or special colors in the rocks.

You might ask – Why did people make petroglyphs? Petroglyphs were made in prehistoric times which in North America might be as long as 15,000 years ago or more. (in other parts of the world, 40,000 or more years ago.) The cultures that created them are gone. So all we have are educated guesses about why they were made. Possible purposes include religious or ceremonial uses, sharing spatial information such as maps and diagrams of structures, wayfinding markers, or as a means of transmitting cultural education. Although Modern Era peoples don't really know why the petroglyphs were made, many people of indigenous descent view petroglyph sites as sacred.

You might ask – How can you tell when a petroglyph was made? It is very difficult to exactly tell how old a petroglyph is because it is art cut into stone. So there is nothing to measure. Their age, therefore, is inferred from other items associated with the petroglyph. The age of the soil layers on top of the petroglyph is measured, usually by radiocarbon dating or optically stimulated luminescence. Some symbols are known to be of a certain period. This infers newly discovered similar petroglyphs might be from the same time. Artifacts found with it may be from known eras that can be dated.

You might ask – What technology is employed in the excavation of a petroglyph? The technology employed is uniformly solid contiguous pecking which allows an exhibit of mass and is thus realistic. Animals, the atlatl, projectile points, anthropomorphs, and the thunderbird are all solid images, contiguously pecked to convey mass. Even elements like the eye, circles and a beautifully executed spiral are solidly pecked. The Andalusite schist upon which the Hensler petroglyphs were made is sufficiently soft for grooving or incising, but neither is used. It would seem that the rule about the pecking technique prevails through both time and culture.

Dale G. Van Holten is the Team Volunteer Leader at the Hensler Site's archeological digs. He has years of professional photography experience which he uses to document the petroglyphs.



David Weier found this engraved cobbler, believed to depict a Mastodon, in a field next to the Hensler Site.

**Photo by Dale Van Holten
9/23/2015**

The Site is currently threatened by blowing dust from a nearby quarry operation. The dust erodes the petroglyphs and fuels explosive growth of lichen. Due to the Sites great antiquity and historical importance, Dr. Hensler has recommended it be placed on the International Register of Historic Sites.

PRESIDENT

Jim Metzger

I am Jim Metzger the incoming 2016 & 2017 President of the Richfield Historical Society (RHS). I am replacing Frank “Buzz” Carr the outgoing President. Buzz, along with the many dedicated committee and board members and volunteers, led the RHS to two great growth years not only in increased capital but also increased membership as well.

The Society is getting closer to completing its Capital Campaign goal of restoring the Mill foundation started several years ago. You may remember this campaign was set up in three phases the first and second of which have been completed. Phase three will be the most complex and expensive. Currently the Mill Foundation Restoration Committee is re-evaluating the original wall rebuilding concept. Working along with the State Historical Society and a local engineering company, an alternate construction idea has been proposed and is being considered. A budget quote will be solicited soon, and hopefully we can proceed in the near future.

This will be a very exciting year to be part of the RHS. The Antique Appraisal held in February, this year chaired by Diane Pedersen, was very successful. The early results indicate that this year’s event to be the most financially rewarding ever.

While walking through the Parks you could almost hear maple tree sap being collected in buckets which meant that Maple Syrup Family Day is not far behind. Syrup Meister Del continued to hone his craft and always puts on a very informative and entertaining presentation. The rest of the hard working committee members and volunteers had the buildings open for tours including the Grist Mill, Mill House and Lillicrapp Welcome Center. The Art Fair in July promises to be bigger and better than ever. The RHS’s largest event, the Thresheree, will be held in September and will include the Old Iron Swap Meet this year as well. The year rounds out with Christmas at The Mill House in December.

It is easy to get caught up in the energy that the RHS board, committee and volunteer members exhibit all year long. Why not bring a friend and attend one or more of our upcoming events and find out what you may have been missing. I hope to see you in the Park soon.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE**Kathy Weberg**

The Education Committee is starting preparations for the annual Education Activity Days which will be held on May 19 and May 24 this year. Five area schools have been invited and have committed to coming. They are always eager to attend each year - "better than Old World Wisconsin." We are also extending an invitation to two other area schools and are hoping that they will also be able to attend.

The traveling trunk has been out. One of our more gratifying "trunk shows" is with the Menomonee Falls Senior Center's low/no vision group. Artifacts that are particularly tactile are selected, and our volunteers circulate among two or three small groups. Thanks to all the volunteers who make these days possible.

EVENTS COORDINATOR**Daryl Grier**

This year's events are off to a great start! The Antique Appraisal Fair & Chili Lunch gets more successful every year. This year we made over \$1,300.00. Thanks to Diane Pederson for chairing the event and coming up with the idea of a silent auction. Due to Health Department rules, we now make the chili at the Fire Hall the Friday before. Diane organized the cooking and a fun time was had by all.

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have had Maple Syrup Family Day. I'm sure it will be a good family event. Thank you to Sharon Lofy and Kathy Weberg for chairing the event and Del Schmechel and the Thursday crew for spending an incredible amount of time making the syrup. Check our website to see if there is syrup left to buy.

The annual plant sale is just around the corner. Sharon Lofy is in charge of this event. Gift certificates are available for \$15.00 & \$25.00 for purchase of flowers and vegetables at Faust Greenhouse, 4729 Pleasant Hill Rd. in Richfield. RHS members received an email with an order form, and there is one enclosed. Forms are also available on the RHS website (richfieldhistoricalsociety.org) or by calling Sharon Lofy at 262-297-1546.

The 8th annual Art Fair will be held on July 23, 2016 from 9 am to 4 pm. Admission and parking are free. Pick up a special gift for a birthday, anniversary or better yet for yourself! There will be over 70 talented artists (painting, woodworking, jewelry, pottery, and much more). You will be able to buy nuts, candy, herbal items, natural beauty lotions and cleaning articles and more from vendors at the Fair. Kids will have a fun time at activities provided by Kohl's Color Wheels. Enjoy delicious food, live music, tours of the historic buildings (for a small fee) and wagon rides to the exhibit area.

Flowers will be up soon! Please save & dry them for flower arrangements that we will sell at the Threshere. Any type of plant, flower or branches from flowering bushes can be used, corkscrew branches, status, peonies, roses, etc. To dry, just pick them when they start flowering, tie a string around a bunch and hang them upside down in a dry place, a garage or basement works. If you don't have a place to dry them, contact Daryl Grier dgrier@charter.net 262-628-4221.

The annual Threshere is September 17th and 18th. Details will be in the next newsletter or see our website richfieldhistoricalsociety.org. We can always use more volunteers. Tasks are easy and fun, and it is a good way to support our society.

If you would like to volunteer, contact Daryl Grier, 262-628-4221 dgrier@charter.net or Sharon Lofy 262-297-1546 hsl1725@yahoo.com.

Sap, Syrup and Sunshine — Linda Derrick

A perfect combination for Maple Syrup Family Day!

It was a great day for our first outdoor event of 2016 at the Richfield Historical Park. The sun was shining and many families came out to enjoy an afternoon of fun. They learned how sap is collected and turned into delicious maple syrup. A peek in the Sugar Shack allowed everyone to observe the last batch of the season as it was being cooked down. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup.

Del explains the history behind maple syrup making.



There were rides through the Park on the “people mover” (a tractor-hauled wagon). The kids could try their hand at husking and shelling corn; and everyone could enjoy hot dogs, beverages and other treats. The new Welcome Center, as well as the Mill and the Mill House, were also open; and many families toured all three buildings.

If you missed this great event, don’t miss our next one! Join us for Richfield Art at the Mill on July 23, 2016...It’s another free and fun family event.



Dennis explains the biology of the Maple tree.



Enjoying hotdogs – all part of the event.



Left – Laverne shows a little girl the art of corn husking.

Right – Pete boils down the last batch of sap in the Sugar Shack.



Many projects have been accomplished since the last newsletter. To start with, Phase II of the Mill foundation has been completed with the installation of the safety fence. The fence was donated by Del Schmechel's sister and with some modifications and several coats of paint, it fit perfectly on the retaining wall.

Two trailer loads of pine logs were donated by the Millie Theisen family from their farm on Shadow Lane. Their farm buildings were dismantled and recycled by an Amish contractor, and the trees were felled with the cleanup of the property. Bob Laubenheimer and I cut the limbs and then the logs to ten foot lengths. They were loaded on a trailer and hauled to Daniel Wittenberger's farm to be cut into one inch roof boards for the blacksmith shop. Thanks to the Theisens and Daniel for giving these trees a new purpose in the Park



Phase II Mill Foundation – lower level entry



Pine logs from Shadow Lane Farm

Several Thursdays part of the crew did a cleanup of downed, rotted and undesirable trees in the former mill pond. Along with that activity, four large trees were removed near the Mill House. Three were diseased and partially rotted, two of which threatened the house in the event they were to fall. The Village hired a contractor to remove them because of their location. Some may question the removal of trees. Remember they are alive and will suffer from age and disease. The Society has a relationship with the Village to discuss the necessity of their removal.

One hundred fifty bare root stock trees are on order through the Washington County Tree Program to be planted in the RHS and Nature Parks. Species include Bur Oak, Red Oak, Swamp White Oak, Quaking Aspen and Paper Birch. We expect delivery late April. We will also plant some 2 - 3 inch diameter park grade trees in strategic areas yet to be determined.

The Sites Committee has been in contact with two Eagle Scout candidates looking for eligible projects. One project would be the design, construction and installation of several "little free libraries" for locations in the RHS Park. The concept is to provide a small shelter mounted on a post where visitors to the Park could take or leave a book at no charge. The other project is to be finalized.

As to the 2016 Thresheree, the dash plaques are done. The feature for the September 17th and 18th event is "Anvils and Blacksmith Tools." Anyone with anvils and related tools is welcome to display at the show. If interested, please contact Quint Mueller at 262-644 5857 or me at 262-297 1546 for more information.

The “Little House” Letters by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Last year, the never-before-published autobiography of Laura Ingalls Wilder became a surprise best seller sending the tiny South Dakota Historical Society Press scrambling to fill orders. Called “Pioneer Girl” it told the gritty true story behind Ms. Wilder’s beloved, fictionalized “Little House” series.

Now the author’s longtime publisher, Harper, is releasing a collection of letters from Ms. Wilder that it hopes will be read as a sequel, or companion volume, to the autobiography. The letters pick up in 1894, about a decade after “Pioneer Girl” ends and continues through the end of her life in 1957. The letters include some of the darker episodes of her family history and reflections on the emotional intensity of reliving her childhood.

The nine volume “Little History” series has sold more than 34 million copies to date, according to Harper, an imprint of Harper Collins.

The Bronte Book Boom

Biographer Claire Harman was as at the British Library in 2011 reading Charlotte Bronte’s letter to her unrequited love interest, Constantin Heger, when she realized that this was the pivotal heartbreaking experience that spurred Bronte to become a publisher author. It would motivate her to write “Jane Eyre,” an instant hit in 1847 that raised eyebrows with its subversive story of a poor, unattractive governess who considers herself the intellectual and romantic equal of her employer. The novel has been in print ever since.

This year is the 200th anniversary of the author’s birth, and several U.S. publishers are releasing books that bring new meaning to Jane’s triumphant line: “Reader, I married him.” New books include a biography, a collection of short stories riffing on that famous line, and two novel-length adaptations – a literary scavenger hunt through the pages of Bronte’s novels as well as a darkly comic recasting in which the governess is a serial killer.

- “Charlotte Bronte: A Fiery Heart” – Claire Harman
- “The Madwoman Upstairs” – Catherine Lowell
- “Reader, I Married Him” – Tracy Chevalier
- “Jane Steele” – Lyndsay Faye

LILLICRAPP HOUSE

Aerona Smith

The Lillicrapp Welcome Center Committee had its first meeting February 15th and are busy preparing for the upcoming 2016 year. We are happy to welcome a new volunteer and committee member, Eileen Clines. The Welcome Center will be open for all RHS 2016 events at the Park (including Christmas at the Mill House.) Our new exhibits will be on display beginning July 23rd during the RHS Art at the Mill event. Our theme this year will be “Christmas at the General Store.”

In the early days during the Christmas season, the entire family would visit the General Store to view the new stock of holiday goods. It was a magical time especially for the children. Regular displays were pushed aside to make room for special Christmas exhibits. The children especially enjoyed the toy section. Showcases were packed full of tempting treasures. When economic times were difficult, gifts were often useful or edible; for example, hats, scarves, mittens, or fruit.

At the Art Fair at the Mill and other following events, we will have a new look in the old Lillicrapp summer kitchen. Its focus is photography. Be sure to stop in to view our old camera collection put together by Norb Berres as well as our Messer/Mayer Mill, Richfield, Hubertus, Colgate and Pleasant Hill photographs from our historic collection. Thanks to Connie Thoma, we have a wonderful display board which allows us to display some 50 large scale photos from our collection.

We continue and are always interested in obtaining items for the General Store. We especially are looking for a large double wheel coffee grinder and a glass showcase with oak trim. If you know anyone interested in loaning or donating items, please contact me at 262-628-9909. A special thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. The General Store is coming along nicely.

Our location is just north of the Mill and Mill House. Look for the “Lofy Wagon” display in our front yard. The Lillicrapp Welcome Center is handicap accessible.

MARKETING

Frank “Buzz” Carr

Once again this year, the Marketing Committee has decided to concentrate on advertising to help increase the attendance at our events. We have decided to spend most of our allocated advertising funds with Conley Media. This gives us an advantage in reducing the cost of each ad because Conley is supporting us by giving us substantial discounts in their various publications.

Conley covers most of Washington, Ozaukee and Waukesha counties with a series of daily and weekly publications. We will advertise in most of them for the Threshere and the Art Fair and select publications for our other events. The goal is to maximize the penetration of our ads while minimizing the cost. Please support Conley by reading their publications. They are being very generous to our society by giving us these cost breaks, and you will notice that we are featuring Conley as a sponsor in all the ads and posters for our events.

HOWEVER, THE BEST ADVERTISING IS FREE and is your responsibility. As members of RHS, you can help us by telling your friends and neighbors about our events and encouraging them to attend. Our events are certainly entertaining to the community, but they are also FUNDRAISERS. The more people that come, the more money we make to support our efforts in the Park and to get the Mill grinding. You are supporting us by being members, and we appreciate that. So take the next step, and go out there and campaign with those you know on our behalf by spreading the word about the great work we do. Thank you all for your efforts.

MEMBERSHIP

Judy Lehman

Hello Richfield Historical Society Members . . .

We are excited to share with you, *our members*, our first newsletter of the year. This will be a great year!

- working to preserve the Messer-Mayer Mill
- continuing the building of the Blacksmith Shop
- adding to the Welcome Center/General Store
- displaying the original furnishings of the Mill House
- readying the Log Cabin, the Barn and the Sugar Shack for our events
- preparing and selling food to help fundraise for our many projects
- writing letters and telling our story to help fundraise for the Society
- taking out our traveling trunks which offer windows into the past to those who cannot get to us
- inviting children to experience what it was like to live in a house and work at a Mill in the eighteen hundreds
- doing research on various things about the area
- taking pictures

- taking in as donations interesting items used in earlier years
- planting flowers and vegetables.
- repairing and painting, lawn cutting and tree care
- enjoying meetings and presentations and getting together
- eating yummy snacks and desserts
- meeting new friends and perhaps beginning new adventures not yet imagined.

What a treasure this Richfield Historical Society!!!!!! What new views and peeking into the past will we do next? What things of the past interest you? We are all needed - invite your friends. It is a fun way to learn new things and share things that you know.

MILL HOUSE

Clara Birkel/Cindy Schmechel

Do You Know Where Your Ancestors First Set Foot on U.S. Soil? - Linda Derrick

If they came to America in the mid-1800s, like so many families that settled in and around Richfield, you might think they first landed at Ellis Island. However, if that's your assumption, you would be mistaken. Ellis Island didn't open until 1892.

Like the ancestors of the families that lived in the Mill House, many immigrants who settled in southeastern Wisconsin arrived before 1892. In fact, 11 million people came to America's shores prior to the opening of Ellis Island. More than 100 million Americans can trace their ancestors to the early immigration period of 1820 through 1892.

So, where did people arrive before Ellis Island existed? They came to America's first official immigration center which was a place called Castle Garden. It was located on the banks of New York City. Castle Garden (today known as Castle Clinton National Monument) is a major landmark. It is part of a 25-acre waterfront park at the tip of Manhattan that remains one of the oldest public open spaces in continuous use in New York City. Native Americans once fished from its banks; and the first Dutch settlers built a low, stone wall with cannons (called a battery) to protect the harbor and the fledgling city of New Amsterdam.



If you think your ancestors may have been among those who landed at Castle Garden, you might want to check out this free website: www.CastleGarden.org. There is no cost to search the database. You may find out when your ancestors arrived and what ship brought them to America. This website is an invaluable resource for family historians, the interested public, educators, scholars and students.

More immigration history on the Messer and Mayer families will be featured at this year's Threshere as part of the Mill House Tours. We invite you to see this exhibit and all the other wonderful happenings at the Threshere on September 17th and 18th at Richfield Historical Park.

MILL RESTORATION

Harry Niemann

Jim Metzger – Earlier this year the RHS Board of Directors elected Diane Pedersen as the Ad Hoc Mill Foundation Restoration Committee Chairperson. The Board felt it was time to re-visit phase three of the foundation restoration. Along with the State Historical Society and a local contractor, the Board is

considering an alternate proposal in the reconstruction of the remaining wall. The alternate proposal calls for a poured concrete wall, as its core, then faced off on both sides with the same stones that make up the wall presently. It would be literally impossible, visually, to tell the difference between this concept and the “phase one” wall reconstruction. If this alternate proposal appears a cost advantage to the Richfield Historical Society, the Village (owners of the Mill) would then send out this alternate proposal for a budget bid. We hope to make a determination by the fourth quarter of this year on which way may be the most appropriate way to proceed with regard to the phase three restoration.

The Board also elected Harry Niemann as the Mill Restoration Chairman. Harry will appoint a committee that will identify and catalog everything in the Mill and its present condition. Also included will be a diagram depicting how power is transferred from its source through the line shafts throughout the building. From there, it will be determined what steps are needed to go forward with our goal of getting the equipment running.

Tim Einwalter, who serves on the Sites Committee, is currently directing all phases of the development of the Blacksmith Shop. Tim also volunteered to oversee the restoration of all of the equipment in the Mill. Tim is a tremendous resource and has volunteered numerous hours to the RHS.

While all this is going on, the Capital Campaign Committee continues to raise funds for phase three of the foundation restoration. If the budget proposal for phase three comes in favorably, it is conceivable we can go forward next year.

Frank “Buzz” Carr – We are continuing to make progress with the lower level access point to the Mill. The retaining wall is finished, the railing is installed on top of the wall, and the door is finished and installed. The ramp going down to the lower level is graded but the gravel has not yet been put in place.

Dave Derrick has been working diligently to install new lighting in the Mill so that our tours present a more complete picture of the machinery. When you take your next tour of the Mill, you will see things that you never noticed before. The new lighting will make you even more aware of how complex the machinery in the Mill is and how amazing it was that the Mill could have been operated by one person. George Mayer, the last operator of the Mill, and his predecessors must have been able fellows.

Harry Niemann has agreed to be in charge of an inventory of the machinery that is in the Mill that was removed from the Mill and is in storage. We need accurate knowledge of what is in existence and how it all worked so that we can plan the operations of the Mill when we get the foundation repaired. So hats off to these men and all the other crew members who have worked at getting the various tasks done in our steady progress towards getting the Mill grinding.

MUSEUM

Jean Happel/Norb Berres

We received a 1916 vacuum operated milking machine. This replaced a farmer with a stool and a pail sitting under a cow pulling the teats squirting milk into the pail. As the dairy industry grew, mechanization became a necessity.

The first method of milking, about 1870, was to insert tubes into the cow’s teats which allowed milk to flow out into a bucket. This was very painful to the cow and could cause injury and even contaminate the milk. Another method tried was using vacuum pressure to mimic a calf sucking. This sometimes allowed blood to pool in the udder which injured the cow. To prevent this, in 1922 a pulsating action was added to the vacuum which allowed milk to refill the teats between spurts of suction. This did not harm the cow. Today, this is still the method used. The milking machine that was donated will be on display in the lower level of the Messer/Mayer barn later this summer.

SOCIETY SPRING PROGRAMS - Richfield Village Hall – 7:00 p.m.
(Programs are open to the public at no charge and all are welcome!)

“Mary Todd Lincoln’s Genealogical Tree” – April 28, 2016 – Richfield Village Hall – Jenna Theissen
“Whispers and Shadows” – May 26, 2016 – Richfield Village Hall - Jerry Apps

SOCIETY COMING EVENTS - Richfield Historical Park

Art at the Mill – July 23, 2016 – Richfield Historical Park
18th Annual Threshereer – September 17th & 18th, 2016 – Richfield Historical Park
Christmas at the Mill House – December 3, 2016 – Richfield Historical Park

MILL HOUSE BOOK CLUB - Meets the 3rd Wednesday every month at 1:00 p.m. at the Java Dancer’s on the corner of Hubertus Rd. and State Highway 175. All are welcome

April 20, 2016 – “The Life We Bury” by Allen Eskens
May 18, 2016 – “When I Found You” by Catherine Ryan Hyde
June 15, 2016 – “Queen of America” by Luis Alberto Urrea
July 20, 2016 – “Circling the Sun” – Paula McLain

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No Mosquitoes For You (Art Fair)
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