



Richfield Historical Society
 Box 268
 Richfield, WI 53076
 richfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Officers

President	Vice President	Recording Secretary	Corresponding Secretary	Treasurer	Past President
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<u>Directors</u>	Norm Grier	Harry Niemann	Diane Pedersen	Pete Samson	Connie Thoma
				Winter 2017	V20N3

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- Collections
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- Education
Kathy Weberg
- Event Coordinator
Daryl Grier
- Historic Sites
Quint Mueller
- Library/Program/Newsletter Editor
Marge Holzbog
- Lillicrapp House
Aerona Smith
- Long-Term Planning
Jim Metzger
- Marketing
Frank "Buzz" Carr
- Membership
Judy Lehman
- Mill House
Clara Birkel/ Cindy Schmechel
- Mill Restoration
Harry Niemann
- Pioneer Homestead
Susan Sawdey
- Project Coordinator
Del Schmechel
- Volunteer Coordinator
Sharon Lofy

Joseph and Esther Kainz
Owners of the Kainz Grocery Store in Richfield, Wisconsin
 (written by daughter Karen)

Joseph Kainz was born on June 14, 1916 in Waukesha to John Kainz and Clara Friess. He moved to Richfield when he was young and worked at the Klippel Butcher Shop for many years. He had seven siblings, five sisters and two brothers, Mary who was his twin, Norman, Clara, John, Delores, Helen and Shirley. Clara, Helen and Shirley are still living today.

Esther Kainz (Schmidt) was born August 26, 1918 in Richfield to William Schmidt and Sarah Lischka. Their farm was on Pleasant Hill Road across from Faust Nursery. The Lischka's owned the tavern on the corner of Hwy 164 and Pleasant Hill Road which is now the "Hairy Lemon."

Esther had four siblings, three brothers and one sister. Joseph died when he was fourteen when he was hitching the horses in the barn and fell through the floor. Her other brothers were Raymond and Jerome; and she had a sister, Veronica, who died when she was six months old.



Back row: Linus, Herman, Annie Youngbauer, Joe, Clara Kueffer, Tony, Sarah Schmidt, Bill, and Alois
 Front row: Mike, Grandpa Lischka, Katie Zingsheim, Grandma Lischka, Maggie Breur-Fike

As children, they walked to Friess Lake School which was located on the corner of Hwy 167 and Hwy 164. It is now Bilda's Friess Lake Pub. Esther worked at Holy Hill where she was a waitress and where her mother was a cook. She also worked at the Casing Canning Factory in Hartford.

Esther's girlfriend liked Joe and took her to meet him at the Klippel butcher shop. They were soon attracted to each other and started dating and fell in love. Joe told her that if she would marry him, he would buy her a grocery store. And so they got married on June 14, 1944.

The grocery store they started in was located on Hwy 175 next to what is now "Fat Charley's." Two years later they had to move across the street, and they remodeled a barber shop into their home and grocery store. Joe drove to Milwaukee with his kids in his station wagon to buy whatever was needed for the store to fill up the shelves. He went to Roundy's on Teutonia Avenue and Broadway in downtown Milwaukee for fruits and vegetables.



Esther's current home in Richfield and site of the Kainz Grocery Store.

Joe was a member of the Holy Name Society at his church and also a member of the Richfield Lions Club. He was a dedicated fireman for the town. Whenever he went on a call to a fire, Esther and the kids minded the store. They ran the store for twenty-five years and never missed a day.

Esther belonged to the Christian Mother's at St. Mary's Church and sang in the choir. Joe and Esther enjoyed going to dances at Swartz's Ballroom in Hartford and played a lot of cards (sheepshead) and had squirrel parties with family and friends.

Esther and Joe had five children. Kenneth was born in 1946. Ken and Celeste have three children and two (+ one on the way) grandchildren. The twins, Doris and Dave, were born in 1948. Doris and Jerry have two children and eight (+ one on the way) grandchildren. Dave and Gail have six children and six grandchildren. Karen was born in 1953. Karen and Dave have three children and four grandchildren. And, Theresa was born in 1958. Theresa and Richard have three children. That's a total of seventeen grandchildren and twenty-two great grandchildren.



June 14, 1944



The original sign that was displayed outside the Kainz Grocery Store still remains among Esther's treasures.

Joe and Esther loved to go dancing and were at a Holy Name Dance when Joe died from a heart attack at the Richfield Fireman's Hall on August 31, 1969. He was fifty-three years old, and they were married for twenty-five years. After Joe died, Esther closed the store after a year or two. Then she learned how to drive at the age of fifty-three and got her license. She bought a nineteen seventy-five blue Nova which she still has in her garage today. One winter she hit a patch of black ice and rolled the car into a ditch. She couldn't get the seat belt to release, so was trapped in the car for about an hour. Thank heaven she was just bruised but not injured. The President of Server Products saw her car and rescued her.

Esther is still very active, going to mass every day. She plays sheephead with her friends just about every day of the week. I think that's keeping her mind sharp, and being busy keeps her young.



Back Row (l to r) Jerry, Richard, Daniel, Kenneth, David
Front Row (l to r) Doris, Theresa, Esther, Karen, Celeste, Gail



Esther on Her Birthday

President

Jim Metzger

SOCIETY NEWS

Another great year is almost in the books for the Richfield Historical Society (RHS). As always the many, many hard working dedicated people that represent the RHS have dug in and made this year a great year in a long list of many great years.

Lately a person, whom I respect, asked me if I thought this level of success was going to be sustainable in future years. He offered that he is involved with and sees many other local organizations struggling with maintaining a core of people dedicated to a specific cause. Many reasons have been offered on why this is happening with no one clear cut reason being the cause. Rather, our current lifestyle has evolved into a series of events drawing us in many directions at one time. This is clearly obvious with young families struggling to balance a hectic work schedule, home ownership, children involved in sports and activities unheard of 50 years ago and still finding time to give back to the community.

One reason I think the RHS will remain successful is that most of the board members, work crew and other numerous contributing people are past that time in their lives and now have time to give back. They also recognize that history must be preserved for future generations, and one way to accomplish this is to be part of a vibrant organization that recognizes this mission. Rarely does an endeavor come along, like the preservation of a complete Grist Mill and many other relevant buildings that will serve to depict a Historical Park showing future generations how people lived in the late 1900s and beyond. Most, if not all, of the board

members have had managerial or professional positions in their working carriers and learned to compromise and make concessions on matters, even if they differed from their own, for the good of the whole.

Another testament to the success of the RHS is the overwhelming support and appreciation of people who had no idea that this Historical Park existed until they were drawn to one of our many fundraising events. They witnessed a core of volunteer workers who worked hard so that their experience at the Park was memorable. They enjoyed very informative tours through our many buildings and were told about typical lifestyles that existed when settlers moving west into Wisconsin started farming and raising families. Many times, once these people had a chance to enjoy a RHS event, they were so pleasantly surprised that they told their friends and became some of our best cheerleaders.

Having said this, it is the Board of Directors that are heart and soul of the RHS along with the many volunteer workers who all make this happen. We are constantly telling our story and encouraging people to join us in making the Historical Park the prime destination in Richfield. If you see yourself as someone who has an interest in preserving history in Richfield and Washington County, contact one of the people on the front page of this newsletter for a personal tour. Please visit our web site www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org for information about the Park, upcoming events and view the many colorful pictures depicting the historical buildings.

My two years as President of the RHS are drawing to a close. It has been an enjoyable experience for me as I look back. I want to thank everyone for their support, especially Del who said "yes" every time I asked him to step in for me. The next president's position will be in the hands of Del Schmechel. Del has a passion for the RHS; and along with great support and leadership from the very capable committee chair people and work crews, I can see a very bright future ahead. The best days of the RHS are still ahead of us, and I look forward to contributing by continuing to chair the Long Range Planning Committee and participating in the various committees as we go forward.

Blacksmith Shop

Kathy Lauenstein

At the RHS Fall Threshere our newly completed Blacksmith Shop was dedicated and open for business. Sparks flew as the forges glowed. The steel was ready. You could hear the anvils ring. Visitors were amazed at the building activities. The visiting children enjoyed trying to solve the smithy's puzzle. Every window had people peaking in.

Cozy and warm and asleep in their beds, the smiths with visions of coal and tools danced in their heads.

The stockings were hung on the anvil with care in hope that St. Nick soon would be there.

The smiths heard Santa had arrived at last. On his merry way he rose dropping coal, spelling out Merry Christmas to all - happy smithing y'all.

Many thanks to the blacksmiths who came from far and near to demonstrate their skill at the RHS Threshere.



Smithy at Work at the Threshere

The Collection Committee evaluates whether, or not, to accept donations which are offered to the Historical Society. We endeavor to select items which will fit our time-period theme, enhance our displays, and perhaps add a new angle to our collections. Our storage capacity is becoming very limited, and we need to often pass on things which could be an asset. But, we have over the years been recipients of many interesting and sometimes rare donations.

Our Wagons

Some of the larger pieces include more than a dozen wagons, ranging from horse drawn buggies to freight and crop wagons for hauling grain, animal feed or general merchandise. It's especially fun to receive a more specialized or unique piece like the original Hubertus mail delivery wagon. It is on display every year. We even have some of the mailman's winter garb, such as his fur boots and gloves. Another interesting and rare item is a horse drawn wagon that, as we were told by the owner, was used to haul bulk flour five miles or so, on a regular basis, from a small mill at a crossroads known as Myra on Decorah Road to West Bend. The recipient at West Bend is unknown to us, but the wagon is mostly complete and a one-of-a-kind. Can you visualize the white cloud coming across the prairie if it was a windy day?

Horse Pulled Farm Implements

We also have in our collection an abundance of horse pulled farming implements. We display cultivators, a variety of potato planters, corn and bean planters and the several types of plows. The most common plow is the early John Deere "walk-behind" type, the kind that has become the classic lawn and garden ornament. A most recent acquisition is a South Bend sulky plow manufactured somewhere between 1878 and 1925 by the South Bend Chilled Iron Plow Company. In those early days, steel was not a plentiful product. It was a fairly-new and expensive material. Cast iron was far less costly, and casting it was cheaper than working with steel. It was, unfortunately, quite soft by comparison and was more subject to wear and breakage. Also, soil tended to stick to its more porous surface, causing the farmer to stop to clean his plow quite often. James Oliver discovered how to chill the iron castings which made them harder, stronger and made the moldboard surface denser, more slippery and less apt to clog.

James Oliver – The Man Who Changed the Face of Plowing

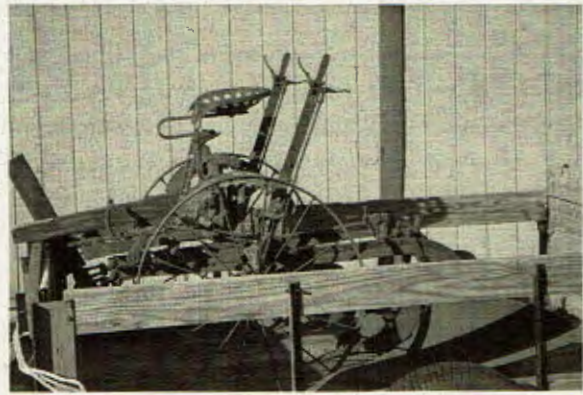
James Oliver had immigrated to America from Scotland as a 12-year-old boy. He made his living in America with a variety of jobs, eventually as a barrel maker at a grist mill where he mastered his carpentry skills. In Saint Joseph County, Indiana; in 1847, he went to work at the Saint Joseph Iron Company, a foundry which made plows and other cast products. There, as a pattern maker and mold maker; he discovered the process of "chilling" the iron by cooling the casting more quickly. This left a harder surface which cut through the soil more smoothly, and the soil did not stick to the moldboard as readily. This was a great improvement.

He had an opportunity to buy half a company with a friend, Harvey Little, in 1855. His quarter share of the company cost him \$88.96. The company became the South Bend Chilled Iron Plow Company. He later bought out Little, and the company name was changed to Oliver Chilled Plow Works. His company soon became the top selling plow company in the country. He exported products around the world. Oliver closed its South Bend factory in 1985 after 130 years of producing horse drawn and tractor pulled implements and the tractors to pull them. Only the boiler house that once held a 600 horsepower Harris steam engine to drive the machinery and its smokestack, remain in a new industrial park, named for the man who once changed the face of plowing, James Oliver.

The Sulky Plow

The sulky plow which we have, so called because it resembles the sulky cart used in harness racing, was the NASCAR of the Victorian era. It has 2 plow shares-1 left hand, 1-right hand. Once the farmer and/or his

wife or kids mastered the mechanics of the machine, it had to be a great time saver. Until that time, to plow a field properly, you needed to walk the horse half the time with the plow out of the ground or plow in 4 directions. With the sulky plow, at the end of a furrow, you raised one plow, turned the horse around, dropped the opposite plow and continued back across the field with the next furrow. It was a clever bit of engineering. As the horse drawn implements began to be phased out, with the advent of engine powered tractors, the single bladed plow became a tool of the past; and horses were used less for labor.



The Sulky Plow

Education

Kathy Weberg

While the Education Committee has a little down time at this time of year, some behind the scenes work continues to go on. The traveling trunks are reviewed and tidied up. Letters will be going out to some senior communities to offer our programs for their residents starting in January. Communication will also be made with four select schools to see if they might be interested in having one of our volunteers visit their classrooms. In addition, scripts for our education day program will be written and assembled so new volunteers will not be "left in the dark."

The Education Committee has taken on cleaning responsibilities in order for displays to be at their best for visitors. The Woodshed was cleared of way too many stored items, swept and dusted prior to the Threshereer. We welcomed back Dennis Mathisen at the Woodshed. He had donated his shoe-making equipment a few years back and demonstrated it once again at this year's Threshereer.

Event Coordinator

Daryl Grier

Christmas at the Mill Brings Many – Linda Derrick

It was a beautiful December day and an Old Fashioned Christmas Celebration. Over a hundred people visited this year's "Christmas at the Mill." For some it has become an annual tradition, and for many it was their first visit to the Park.

For the Timm family, it was a chance to bring Grandma back to the Mill House which once was the home of her grandparents, to walk into the kitchen and see old-tyme Christmas cookies covering the table and to sit in Grandpa's chair by the wood stove and enjoy the aroma of fresh baked bread. Others came back for the Christmas music played on the piano and to join in singing all the old Christmas carols.

There were children who had been to the Park earlier this year on a class trip or with their scout troop. They now brought their families back to visit the General Store all decked out for Christmas, to ride through the Park on the "people mover" and to search the Christmas tree to find the pickle ornament and win a treat.

One family had come to take family photos in the Park. They were pleasantly surprised to be able to join in our Christmas fun as well. Others were new to the area and came to see what it was all about. Everyone enjoyed our event, and many were excited to learn about all the other annual events at the Park. They will be back.



“We found the pickle ornament!” – Children were invited to experience an old German custom.



The Timm family comes to Christmas at the Mill to join in the celebration and to visit the house that was once home to their relatives



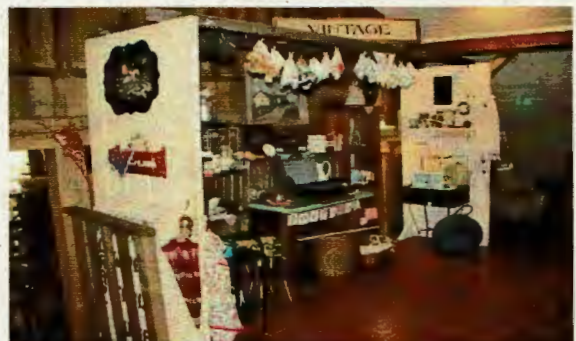
The General Store in the Welcome Center of the Park was all decked out for Christmas and filled with visitors.

Antiques, Appraisal & Chili Lunch - February 18, 2018 –Diane Pedersen

Do you ever long to own a priceless antique or know what your antiques might be worth? By attending the Antiques, Appraisal & Chili Lunch; you will have a chance to find out an estimated value by asking one of the very qualified appraisers. These appraisers have knowledge about a great variety of items from glassware to coins to stamps to military artifacts to furniture to jewelry--and much more.

NEW IN 2018: Not only is the location of the event changed, ([Friess Lake School at the corner of HWY 167 and HWY 164](#)), but it will also be expanded to have antique dealer booths.

There is space for booths at which dealers will display and sell their lovely vintage, pre 1970 collectables and art objects. You may find just the piece that will bring added beauty to your décor.



Antique Dealer's Booth

Enjoy a delicious bowl of chili while you are waiting for your appraisal. Mild, Tasty Fire House and Chicken Chili are featured items on the menu.

Choose your favorite bowl of chili along with fixings such as onions, sour cream and cheddar cheese. Take a look at all the great Silent Auction items and make a bid.

Richie Raccoon will be at this fun event from 11am to 1pm. Bring the kids and have their picture taken with the Richfield Historical Society's mascot!

Each Item Appraised - \$5.00 (Appraisals from Photos for Large Items Only.)

Bowl of Homemade Chili with Fixings, Cornmeal Muffin, Brownie, Beverage - \$7.00 Hot Dogs - \$1.50; Chili Dogs - \$2.00 / Slice of Homemade Pie - \$2.00

All proceeds support the projects of the Richfield Historical Society.

Questions: Call (262) 628-1827

Maple Syrup Family Day - March 24, 2018 – Pete Samson

Our Sugar Shack, located in the south portion of the Park, will offer information and tours on how our maple syrup is collected and processed. It takes 40 gallons of collected sap to make 1 gallon of syrup. We will have some of our award winning syrup for purchase. Hot dogs, beverages, treats, and our own maple flavored cotton candy will be available during the event.

In addition to the Sugar Shack, stop and see the old Grist Mill and the original Messer Mayer Home, the new Blacksmith Shop as well as the General Store at the Welcome Center. The Historical Park should be enjoyed regularly, not only on our event days. The river and trails running through it make it especially scenic. So, come often! Mark your calendars for March 24, 2018????????????????????? You won't be disappointed.

Historic Sites

Quint Mueller

Even though the Mill is surely the most exciting project underway in the Park at this time, it isn't the only one. Some projects, such as painting, have to be put off until warmer weather, while others continue through the winter months. Winter work includes several areas that are planned to be thinned of underbrush to provide better visibility of key areas, to improve safety along the driveways, and to improve overall appearance.

Some of the projects anticipated for the 2018 season include repainting the woodshed, completion of the Mill painting project, repair of the yard areas damaged by construction of the Mill foundation, construction of the Engine Shed and many, many small projects that maintain the Richfield Historical Park to the standards that we have come to expect from our dedicated crew. 2018 should be an exciting year for RHS!

Library/Program/Newsletter Editor

Marge Holzbog

As a member of RHS, you will receive three newsletters such as this one during 2018. In your newsletter, you will receive notice of our various events and general meeting programs. Additionally, you will hear from each committee chairman regarding their activities as well as a lead article which brings to you something specific about the village of Richfield's history.

In 2017, the Library sub-committee interviewed 20 senior Richfield farmers who recounted for us their 20th century farming experiences. Their interviews have been published in "Life on the Farm" and is available for purchase from RHS for \$12.

In 2018, this sub-committee will be interviewing those "in the know" about 20th century "Downtown Richfield." It will be an interesting accounting of the many lives of our still standing historic buildings as well as those which are no longer there. It will include many reflections of the days "gone by" by those who did business at the many enterprises. The story of "Downtown Richfield" will be available for purchase later this year.

Lillicrapp Welcome Center

Aerona Smith

Our last event for 2017 was "Christmas at the Richfield Historical Park." It was an extremely busy and enjoyable afternoon. Many visitors stopped in to view the Christmas displays in both the General Store and Photography Room. Holiday punch and Christmas cookies were enjoyed by all. The children played the game "What's That Sound" and identified general store items of long ago.

One of the Christmas displays in the General Store was an early 1920s decorated "feather" tree. While Christmas trees had been a long-time tradition in 19th century Germany, deforestation became a problem with the harvesting of so many trees. A solution to this problem was the introduction of a new type of artificial tree known as the "feather tree." As early as the 1880s and 90s, German immigrants living in Texas and Pennsylvania introduced the feather tree to the US. By the early 20th century, feather trees gained in popularity in this country. In 1913, Sears & Roebuck sold them in their catalog.

Early feather trees were mostly of the 'table-top' variety. Wire branches were covered with green dyed goose or turkey feathers and then wrapped around a central dowel which formed the trunk of the tree. The central dowel was then inserted into a barrel or square shaped wooden base. Artificial red berries were attached to the ends of some of the branches and wire candle holders to others. Branches were placed widely apart so ornaments were easily seen and lit candles would not burn other branches. Tree sizes ranged from 3" to 98," and new colors included white, blue, and gold. Import of feather trees stopped during World War II. After the war ended, feather trees lost favor and other artificial trees replaced them.



The Welcome Center "Dressed" for Christmas



The Feather Tree

A special thank you to all LWC committee members and volunteers for all your help in 2017. It was a great year!

Long-Term Planning

Jim Metzger

Long-term planning is defined as looking out five years and putting together a plan that guides the expansion and growth of the Richfield Historical Park. I am pleased to say that Phase Three of the Mill foundation restoration is nearing completion. You may remember that when the Town of Richfield bought the land and buildings that now comprise the Historical Park, the foundation of the Messer/Mayer Grist Mill was in serious disrepair. The RHS Board of Directors put a plan together that included monumental fundraising providing for three distinct phases for the repair of the foundation.

Now that the foundation restoration is nearing completion, the next phase is restoring all of the mechanicals in the building. An engine shed will be built on the south side of the Mill to contain the 25 HP flywheel engine. It will power the Mill much like the one that was used in "the day." The engine will be coupled to the gearbox that transfers power to the drive shaft. The water turbine, which was buried underground for decades, was resurrected during Phase Three. It was power washed and determined to be salvageable with parts from the Leffel Turbine Company, which is still in business today. All of the existing overhead line shafts, belting, clutches and bearings will be taken down, disassembled, restored and put back into position. Initially, the goal will be to drive the original mill stones which were the first form of grain grinding used in the Mill. Later on, power can be directed towards the roller mills which were the more modern and productive way grain was ground into flour. Always, in the back of our minds, will be the thought that someday the Mill once again will be powered by water. After all, our Capital Campaign motto still is "Let's Get it Grinding."

Further down the road reconstruction of the old Sawmill, on the east wall of the Grist Mill, will be considered. Actually the Sawmill was put in place first before the Grist Mill was built. Looking even further on, a building that can provide display space for museum items and include a kitchen and sanitary facilities where indoor events, small parties and receptions could be held is a possibility. All the while this is transpiring, the other historical buildings in the Park will have to be maintained. All of the painted structures are very maintenance intensive needing almost yearly exterior touch-up work. As mentioned before, the Emerald Ash Borer is devastating existing Ash trees in the Park. Each year many new small trees, of assorted varieties, are being planted to replace the Ash trees.

The Events Committee will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our current fundraising events tweaking them from time to time. Our fundraising events are the engine that propels us forward with the much needed capital to fulfill our goals.

As always, dedicated people are the driving force behind the RHS. We are always looking for individuals to join the RHS and contribute time and talent in any form that suits their capabilities and life style. If you see yourself as a person that would like to join this energetic group, contact any person on page one of this Newsletter. For a better prospective and to gain a better understanding of our mission, please visit our web site www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org.

Marketing

Frank "Buzz" Carr

Richfield Historical Society Technology – Lois Hessenauer

Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr, WWW, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube – Are these words familiar to you or do they sound like a foreign language?



These are a few of the more popular forms of electronic communication through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, etc.




Back in 1997, Six Degrees was the first social networking site. It allowed users to create a profile and to become friends with other users. While the site is no longer functional, at one time it was actually quite popular and had around a million members at its peak.

Has the Richfield Historical Society embraced social media? You Bet!! The organization has one foot in the water but not both feet – yet. The Society’s first website was created in 2005. It served our needs until 2014. At that time, the Marketing Committee designed a new website. A student from Moraine Park Technical College did all the coding for the website. This fulfilled a requirement for the student as well as saved the Society a great deal of money. The website is maintained and regularly updated by a member. Take a look at the wealth of information provided there: richfieldhistoricalsociety.org.

The next step into social media for RHS was Facebook in 2010. Once again, a member set up the Society’s Facebook page. Designated members regularly ‘post’ to spread the word about the Society’s many activities and events. It has been very instrumental in getting donations for materials needed for projects. In October, 2017, a milestone was reached with 1,000 Likes/Friends. Visit facebook.com/richfieldhistoricalsociety and ‘Like’ the posts. If you have a Facebook page, share the RHS posts with your Facebook Friends.

The third venture into the social media world was through the very popular Twitter. Very short ‘tweets’ (140 characters) advertise RHS events and programs. Keep in touch: twitter.com/richhist. Once again, if you have a Twitter account, retweet the RHS entries.

Pinterest is the latest method RHS uses to acquaint others with the Society. Pinterest is a social network that allows users to visually share, and discover new interests by ‘pinning’ images or videos to their own or others’ Boards (i.e. a collection of ‘pins,’ usually with a common theme) and browsing what other users have pinned. You can view the RHS Pinterest ‘Boards’ by using this: pinterest.com/richfieldhistor. A few of the RHS Boards are: Fun at the Park, Maple Syrup Time, and Horses, Steam Engines & Threshing.

The Society’s Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest sites can be accessed directly from the RHS website by clicking on the    symbols located on the right side of every page. Give them a ‘click.’

RHS is interested in possibly getting its other foot in the social media water. If you have a friend, relative, or neighbor who has extensive knowledge of this, check to see if he/she would be willing to volunteer time to increase our knowledge. Contact Lois at 262-628-2841.

Buzz Reporting:

I recently visited China on a family trip to visit my daughter who lives in Shanghai. We spent time in Shanghai, Xian and Beijing. All of these cities are now modern cities with many shops, restaurants and fancy hotels that would rival any U.S. or European city. That is not why they are usually visited by most western tourists, however. The fact is that most of the tourists are interested in the ancient history of these cities, not the modern amenities that they offer. Shanghai is a port city that has grown from a small fishing village many thousands of years ago to the largest city in China with a population of over 25 million people. It is the fashion and financial capital of China. It is also the city that many of the European powers occupied in the late 18th and 19th centuries that was their doorway to China. European neighborhoods were off limits to the Chinese except for the servants who came on a day basis. They could not spend the night in parts of their own city. Xian is the old Imperial capital of China dating back 2,200 years to the origin of the country of China. It is famous for the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (who China is named after) and has the

underground army of terra cotta warriors. Beijing is the current capital of China and is near the Great Wall and contains the Forbidden City. All of this history, and much more, is resident in this ancient country and people come from all over the world to experience it.

The publicity of these world wonders happens from countless articles, TV shows, documentaries, travel agents and by tales told to their friends by recent visitors. We at RHS, of course, don't have the opportunity to have such great publicity, but we had a pretty good year. We had Outdoor Wisconsin (Milwaukee PBS show) visit us twice; we advertised in several of the Conley newspapers in and around Washington County; we were on the Hartford radio station; we advertised on Washington County Insider (washingtoncountyinsider.com); we put out many road signs and we put out countless flyers at merchants locations in the villages and cities near Richfield. The results were effective with good attendance at all of our events. The Marketing Committee is responsible for all this activity, and I congratulate them for all their hard work.

I have been in charge of this effort for the past two years, but now a new Marketing Chair is coming on board. Diane Pedersen is taking over the role of Marketing Chair, and I have full confidence that she will do a great job. The one thing that you all can do this coming year is the same as the benefit China tourism gets from travelers – tell stories about our wonderful historical park and the terrific events. There is nothing so powerful as word of mouth from friends to convince those who have never been to our park or events to visit us. I thank you for past efforts to help us in this regard and hope that you will continue to publicize RHS in the years to come.

Membership

Judy Lehman

Membership Reminder: Renew your membership for 2018. The price is still \$20, and we trust we can count on you to remain with us on this interesting journey. It will be an exciting year!

Thank you to those of you who have already renewed membership, and we are encouraging present members to renew their memberships as soon as possible. We are hoping to have everyone accounted for by January 2018. Invite a friend or give a gift of membership for the holiday season - we could double our membership impact.

If you are interested in helping with membership or becoming the Membership Chair Person, please contact me; and we can get together and get you on board. It is always great to get new ideas and folks involved.
Judy Lehman, 262-623-6071

P.S. Did anyone do the puzzle? What would you like your Membership Chairman to do?

Mill House

Clara Birkel/Cindy Schmechel

MESSER-MAYER MILL HOUSE – CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Since the Mill House was built around 1867-68, we don't know much about how the first occupants of the House, Andrew and Louisa Messer and their small children, would have celebrated the Christmas Holiday. In the years following the Civil War, Christmas traditions spread across the country and many were brought by the new German immigrants to Wisconsin. With the influence of these immigrants, their holiday customs and traditions were widely accepted and copied. They included a decorated pine tree, the night visit from Kriss Kringle, Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus, gift exchanges, Christmas cards and charitable giving around the holidays.

Traditionally, Christmas was a religious holiday, usually celebrated by going to church services. The services were usually low-key affairs, with the Christmas story being read from the Bible and singing of a few hymns. In later years, children's programs became more popular and included the little ones dressing up as the Holy Family and acting out the Christmas story or singing Christmas carols as their proud families sat in the church pews.

The tradition of the decorated tree did not really catch on until the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to Queen Victoria putting up a decorated Christmas tree for her German husband, Prince Albert. Since the Messer family probably held fast to their German traditions, we can only assume that they had a small tree, likely placed on a table-top. They may have decorated it with small fruits, nuts or sweets as well as small gifts as was the German way. It would have been lit with candles on Christmas Eve.

The parlor of the Messer household may have been decorated with fresh pine boughs, pine cones and other natural items found in the surrounding area. Louisa may have baked traditional German Christmas cookies and cooked a family dinner of roasted chicken or goose with homemade stuffing and a variety of root vegetables. If gifts were given to the children, they would have probably been hand-made wooden toys, knitted socks, mittens, hats or scarves or other small gifts of fruits or nuts. Lacking a fireplace, the children would have hung their stockings from the backs of chairs. Christmas gift giving became more popular around mid-century, when people began giving larger gifts that could no longer be put on the tree, but rather beneath it.

Although charity had always been preached from the pulpits across Europe and America, giving to the poor became a more prominent theme during the nineteenth century. Writers such as Charles Dickens were credited with relaying the plight of the poor; and ministers began preaching about giving to those less fortunate, especially around Christmastime. In the 1890s, the Salvation Army began its annual Christmas tradition of raising funds to help feed the poor.

After Andrew Messer had an unfortunate accident and was killed in 1874, his widow Louisa sold the Mill and House to John Mayer, Andrew's uncle and brother to his mother, Katharina Mayer Messer. John's oldest son, Carl Wilhelm (C.W.) Mayer helped operate the Mill. In 1887, C.W. married Marianna Kurtz; and in the 1890s, they built a large addition to the original six room farmhouse, adding another three bedrooms, a beautiful new kitchen turning the old kitchen into what is now the formal front parlor. They had seven children, and Christmas celebrations probably filled the Mill House with lots of noise and excitement.

By then, Christmas traditions had changed; and the tree was much too big to set on a table. Rather, it was placed in the corner of the parlor directly behind the front door. It was likely decorated with lovely German glass ornaments and surrounded by beautifully wrapped gifts. The children were not allowed to see the tree until Christmas Eve. The parlor doors were locked and the keyhole stuffed with cotton to prevent little eyes from peeking. The children would have been excited, waiting for Santa Claus to visit, now looking much like the Santa image we see today thanks to illustrator Thomas Nast (1840-1902) and the book written by Clement C. Moore (1779-1863) called "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

As the years passed, C.W.'s eldest son, George Mayer took over the running of the Mill and the farm. George and his wife Martha raised their two children in the House and some things changed as far as the family's holiday celebrations were concerned. After having a conversation with Carol Mayer Woods, the last baby to be born in the House, she remembered her Grandmother, Marianna Kurtz Mayer still using cotton to stuff the parlor door keyhole, so little Carol and her older brother Vernon couldn't see the decorated Christmas tree until the appointed time. Carol remembers taking part in Friess Lake School's Christmas programs and singing Christmas carols in the church choir. Her Mother, Martha Maurer Mayer, would

usually make a roasted chicken that was raised on the farm and stuff it with her delicious homemade stuffing for their Christmas dinner.

Christmas was a much quieter affair for the George Mayer family in comparison to when George and his six siblings were young. If they had company at all, it was usually only a small gathering. Carol remembers gifts of socks or underwear (it was during the Depression); and she had a godmother who always brought her a gift, usually a book or two, as Carol always loved to read.

Today, with the Richfield Historical Society in charge, we try to bring back as many of the old traditions as we can. We decorate a tree (although now artificial) with beautiful ornaments as well as follow the German tradition of hiding a pickle ornament on the tree. The lucky kid who finds the pickle get to pick some candy or a small prize for their efforts.



The Mill House "Dressed Up" For Christmas

During our Christmas at the Mill event, the ladies of the Society busy themselves in the days and weeks leading up to our Christmas celebration with baking beautifully decorated cookies and candies that we share with our guests. A big treat is having one of the ladies of the Society fire up the wood-burning kitchen oven and bake a few

loaves of homemade bread to also share with our guests. The aroma of freshly baked bread is a wonderful way to greet our visitors. We serve hot coffee and apple cider and truly enjoy meeting the people who come to visit the Mill House at Christmastime. We invite you all to come next Christmas and share this special time of the year with us and to see the traditions of the Messer and Mayer families being carried on by the Richfield Historical Society.

Coming Next Issue:

The 4th in a CONTINUING series of articles on the history of the Families of the Mill House.

Past articles included:

- 1 -- "A Journey to Richfield" (Dec 2016 Newsletter) which told the story of Andrew Messer who built the Mill House.
- 2 -- "Making a Life in America" (April 2017 Newsletter) continued the story, including the next family to live in the Mill House; i.e., the Mayers.
- 3 -- "Living into the 20th Century" (August 2017 Newsletter) followed the Mayers as they lived and prospered into the new century.

Don't miss the 4th in this series coming out in our Spring 2018 Newsletter edition. Entitled: "The Next 50 Years in the Mill House" covering the 1930s to the 1970s.

Mill Restoration

Harry Niemann

Quint Mueller Reports

It's clear that winter is finally here. The ground is frozen, and we have snow. Although work in the Park always continues through the winter months, some of the projects do pause. As most of you know, the

exciting news is the repair/reconstruction of the Messer/Mayer Mill foundation. Progress during the month of December is anticipated to be quite significant, so anything written here could be out of date by the time of publication. As of now (the middle of December) work is moving forward after a brief pause in November for a change in plans, due to unanticipated soil conditions directly beneath the Mill.

As the contractor excavated the soil beneath the Mill in preparation for the new foundation, they encountered soil that was unstable. This presented an unsafe situation for both the crew and the Mill itself. A revised plan had to be developed to accommodate the newly discovered conditions. Unfortunately, this resulted in some compromises needing to be made. Some of those changes involved different methods of construction and will be largely transparent in the end, but the biggest change is the height of the turbine. Since the soil could not be excavated to the required depth of the original plan (which was already to result in a higher than original turbine location), it meant that the turbine would need to be raised an additional 4 ½ feet. The short story is that the power produced by the turbine will be approximately half of what it was originally. Never fear, there will still be enough power to turn the stones for demonstration purposes. This was the goal anyway.

As of this writing, two concrete pours have been made. In the coming weeks, concrete will be poured, in stages, to complete the inner and outer walls. After a large enough portion of the walls have been poured to support the Mill structure, the long red beams will be removed and the holes where they had been closed in. The last step will be to add the stone face on the outside to bring the Mill foundation back to its original appearance.

The turbine has been removed from the Mill and is now in the process of being cleaned and refurbished for operation. Although it was quite clogged with mud, after many years of being buried under the collapsed inner wall, it is in remarkably good condition. Everyone is excited to work on this. Making it even more exciting, is the fact that the manufacturer of the turbine (James Leffel & Company) is still in business and is able to offer at least some support. This will likely not be completed by the time the new south wall is ready to be constructed. That will make the reinstallation of the turbine a little more "interesting," but not impossible. The original turbine was replaced twice after the Mill was built and in operation. In other words, it will be possible; but it will just require a little more thought and ingenuity. Stay tuned to the RHS Facebook page for weekly updates on the progress of the Mill foundation.



Work on the Mill Foundation



The Leffel Turbine

Project Coordinator

Del Schmechel

As I look forward to the future, I am happy to report we have a chair for our Pioneer Village. Her name is Susan Sawdey, and I'm confident she will bring new life to this area of our Historical Park. Susan told me

her desire was to make it appear she was living in this cabin as she would have when it was first built. It will be more like visiting a friend's home than a museum. I am sure our visitors will find this to be an enjoyable experience. (It must be hard to imagine family life when everyone lived in one room. The thought of a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom or living room would have had little meaning back then. Togetherness wasn't an option. It was a necessity.)

Our Historical Park will always look for ways to improve and make it interesting and educational. I always look forward to our Education Days when our park is filled with third graders. They move from building to building where our docents share their knowledge of life in past years.

Our newly dedicated Blacksmith Shop will be another great venue for visitors young and old. It is a vast improvement from past years when blacksmithing demonstrations were done under a shade tree. Now we have a wonderful building with room to display our collection of tools of the trade. As with all of our attractions, the Blacksmith Shop will require repeated visits to see everything.



The Motz Cabin

I will soon be starting my term as President of our society. My goal is to look for ways to improve our place in this community. To that end, I look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions. I encourage everyone to consider membership and our volunteer opportunities. If you are already a member, please help us spread the word of what we have to offer.

Volunteer Coordinator

Sharon Lofy

Our 19th Annual Thresheree was a great success! There were so many things to see and do and so many great volunteers who shared their talents and put in many hours of work. We do thank them.

All the exhibitors and vendors also need thanks for all their time spent setting up, exhibiting and taking down. They were also on hand during the Thresheree to answer many questions related to their display. Steam engines (3) took turns running the threshing machines (separating the grain and straw from the bundles that were forked onto the conveyor of the threshing machine.) They also powered the saw mill which sawed logs into wood planks. There were two saw mills at the event. Horses were hard at work doing field demonstrations. A nearby tent was filled with horse information. Many exhibitors brought their tractors and equipment for static display for all to view.

The Blacksmith Shop was on the top of the "must see" list this year because it was this year's feature. Many blacksmiths were busy showing their artistic talents. Encampments told their stories of who they represented from a past era in history. Displays of gasoline engines showed some of their many uses before electricity (pumping water, shingle making, feed cutting.) The Gehl tent was again a focal point for displaying farm machinery made in West Bend, WI. The Gehl Company has donated many machinery items to our society as well. There were crafters demonstrating spinning, weaving, wood carving, quilting, doll making, soap

felting, outdoor cooking, working on a loom, and rope making. Children could even construct and dismantle a log cabin (size appropriate.) These exhibitors provide a learning experience for young and old. For some it brings back memories from their past.

The food vendors always give the Threshereen an added touch. Who would miss having an ice cream sundae or a root beer float? One could always enjoy some kettle korn, or pick up some honey, honey straws, or bee wax candles to take home. Homemade jams, jellies and pickles were also for sale. New this year was maple cotton candy and corn on the cob.

THANK YOU!!! to all Volunteers for your many talents and many hours of work (before, during and after) that you donated to make the 19th Annual Threshereen a great success. Membership, relatives, friends, neighbors and others wanting to give a helping hand make up our wonderful group of volunteers. It takes many volunteers to present this event. Please keep us in mind for next year, and spread the word to other potential volunteers.



The Encampment



Board Sawing



Peter Schlaefer - Rope Making

We are saddened to report the death of the Society's Second President – Karleen Kraus. Our sympathy to her family.

Events: check our website - www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org for details

Antiques, Appraisal & Chili Lunch – February 18, 2018 (Friess Lake School)

Maple Syrup Family Day – Saturday, March 24, 2018 (Richfield Historical Park)

Richfield Art at the Mill – Saturday, July 28, 2018 (Richfield Historical Park)

20th Annual Threshereen – Saturday & Sunday, September 15th & 16th, 2018 (Richfield Historical Park)

General Meetings: at the Richfield Fire House on Hwy 175 at 7:00 P. M.

January 25, 2017 – “Mrs. Charles Dickens: The Women of Dickens” – Jessica Michna

February 22, 2017 – “Kissel: Wisconsin’s Luxury Car” – Dawn Bonhus Mueller

March 22, 2017 – “Fill Er Up: The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations” – Jim Draeger

April 26, 2017 – “History, Ecology & Indian History of Horicon Marsh” – Bill Volkert

May 26, 2017 – “One Room Schools: Stories from Day of 1 Room, 1 Teacher, 8 Grades –

Susan Apps Bodilly

Sponsors & Goods/Services Donors

Sponsors for our events and Good/Services donors are a very important and appreciated element of the operation of the Richfield Historical Society. The support of these contributors enables the Society to continue the projects which preserve the history of the Village of Richfield and share it with current and future generations. Also, Thank You to all the many Businesses that purchased ads for our 2017 Event Program which is distributed at all of our Events.

Wheat (\$500 or more)

Dr. Don & Janis Crego (Thresheree)
Dr. Dan Kopesky & Family (Thresheree)
Dehumidifier Corporation of America (Art Fair)
E. H. Wolf & Sons, Inc. (Thresheree)
First National Bank of Hartford (Thresheree)
John P. Gehl (Thresheree)
Oarsman Capital, Inc. (Art Fair and Thresheree)
Rebecca Richardson, CFP - Baird
Wissota Sand & Gravel Co. (Thresheree)

Rye (\$499-\$250)

Monches Farm (Music-Art Fair)

Oats (\$249-\$100)

Gehring Sales & Service, Inc. (Thresheree)
Helena Chemical Company (Thresheree)
Integrated Management & Accounting (Thresheree)
Klug's Photo World (Membership Brochure)
Landmark Credit Union (Thresheree)
Pioneer Petroleum (Thresheree-Silent Auction)
United Cooperative (Thresheree)
Straight Arrow Financial Group
Pete Heimerman (Art Fair)

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George Pointek (Sheet Metal Work-Blacksmith Shop)
Graphic Edge (Printing)
Hallman-Lindsay/Richfield (Paint-Several Projects)
Heartland Farms (Potatoes-Thresheree)
Herb & Sharon Lofy (Equipment & Fuel)
Manitou Americas (Tent-Thresheree)
Mid-State Equipment (Equipment Usage)

No Mosquitoes For You (Art Fair)

Pieper Electric (Electrical Installation-South End of Richfield Historical Park)
Piggly Wiggly (Thresheree)
Pine Hill Orchard (Cider-Christmas at Richfield Historical Park)
SPI Lighting (Blacksmith Shop)
Bob Stienke (Blacksmith Shop)
Waste Management (Trash Removal)

Wissota Sand & Gravel (Gravel)
Wolf Bros. Fuel, Inc. (LP Gas)
Zuern Building Co. (Blacksmith Shop)

Thresheree - Silent Auction

(Items valued at \$100 or more)

Colleen Baker
Clara Birkel
Cabela's
Frank & Marybeth Carr
Green Bay Packer's Community Donation
Conrad & Jackie Hannula
Hartford Furniture
Jeff's Spirits
Kessler's
Jeff Klug
Kwik Trip
Ed & Jane Kyle
Lammscapes!
Mid-State Equipment
Milwaukee Bucks
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Pink Lemonade Hair & Spa
Pioneer Bowl/Arrowhead Golf
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Potawatomi Hotel & Casino
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