



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

**Officers**

**President**

**Vice President**

**Recording/Corresponding Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Past President**

*Susan Sawdey*

*Dave Lehman*

*Ruth Jeffords*

*Lois Hessenauer Del Schmechel*

**Directors**

*Al Mayer*

*George Piontek*

*Pete Samson*

*Dale Smith*

*Connie Thoma*

**Committees**

**Blacksmith Shop**

*Kathy Lauenstein*

**Collections**

*Norb Berres*

**Education**

*Kathy Weberg*

**Event Coordinator**

*Daryl Grier*

**Historic Sites**

*Quint Mueller/*

*Herb Lofy*

**Library/Program/**

**Newsletter Editor**

*Marge Holzbog*

**Lillicrapp Welcome**

**Center**

*Aerona Smith*

**Long-Term Planning**

*Susan Sawdey*

*(acting chair)*

**Marketing**

*Doug Wenzel*

**Membership**

*Warren Wiedmeyer*

**Mill House**

*Clara Birkel/*

*Cindy Schmechel*

**Mill Restoration**

*Harry Niemann*

**Pioneer Homestead**

*Susan Sawdey*

**Project Coordinator**

*Del Schmechel*

**Volunteer**

**Coordinator**

*Sharon Lofy*

Fall/Winter 2020 V23N3

**Holy Hill: Majesty, Mystery, Myths, and Miracles (Part II)  
 by Susan Brushafer**

Part I of this article covered many of the facts and legends that contribute to the majesty and mystery of Holy Hill. Be sure to check the previous edition of your Richfield Historical Society Newsletter.

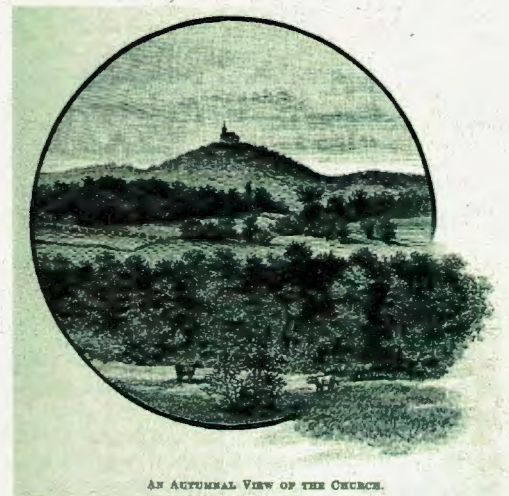
The article so far has explored the evolution of the Holy Hill Basilica, described its earliest resident, pondered the possible visit of Father Marquette, and talked about its architecture.

If Part I has not enticed you, the reader, to visit Holy Hill and do some of your own exploration and investigation, perhaps the second part of "Holy Hill: Majesty, Mystery, Myths, and Miracles" will lure you to the 'Miracle Hill.'

**Miracles at Holy Hill**

Visitors to the Chapel of St. Therese of Lisieux, located below the main church, will see the crutches and canes left outside of the Chapel.

The earliest 'cure,' goes back again to Francois Soubrio, the religious recluse who supposedly found Father Jacques Marquette's travel journal. Additional information about Soubrio relates that one of the 200-year-old French manuscripts described a sacred hill (Holy Hill) west of Lake Michigan. Soubrio was determined to pray on the sacred hill's summit for forgiveness for breaking his chastity vow and for killing his fiancée. Soubrio had traveled as far as Chicago when he contracted a disease that left him mostly paralyzed. His determination to reach the sacred hill motivated him to eventually reach his destination. Once there, he dragged himself up the slope. Soubrio later told neighbors living near the Hill that after spending the night in prayer, he arose the following morning and found he had been miraculously cured. That, in turn, motivated him to build the crude chapel on the Hill, the first of three shrines built on Holy Hill.



Picture taken from *Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*



When the story of Soubrio's cure became common knowledge, in 1879 as noted in Part I of this article, the second of the three shrines that led to the current Basilica was built. By 1898, this was littered with discarded crutches and eyeglasses.

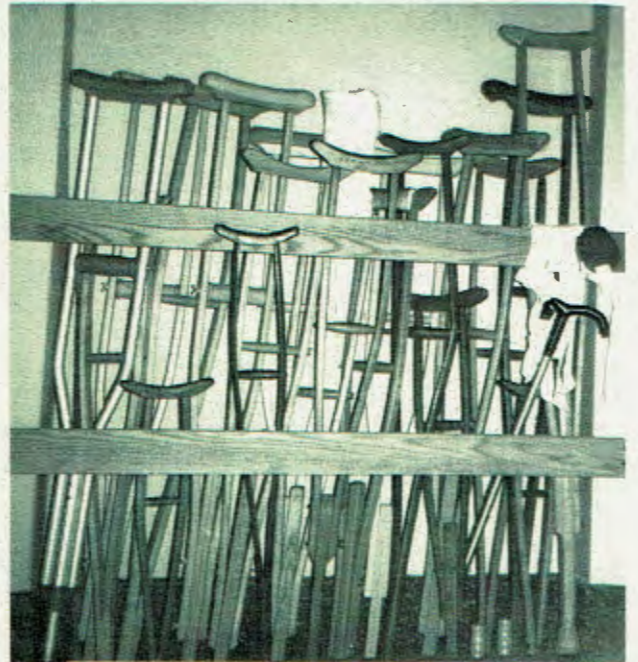
A May 19, 2017 article published in the Catholic Harold<sup>1</sup>, a Catholic diocesan newspaper first published in 1869, made mention of healings that took place at Holy Hill, and that are credited to the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians. Fr. Brick, a Discalced Carmelite priest who had been in residence at Holy Hill for 17 years recalled, "I was out golfing and made a 50-foot putt, and I said, 'Boy, that was a miracle.' The gentleman who I was playing with, unknown to me, had been to Holy Hill and replied, 'No, a miracle is that my wife had cancer and we came to Holy Hill for the healing Mass, and she just left the doctor today cancer free.'"

"Odd Wisconsin: Holy Hill near Hartford Had That Name for a Reason"<sup>2</sup> included the following statement regarding healings at Holy Hill: "Scoffers may doubt and cynics may sneer," a 20th century historian commented, "but the cases of apparent healing at Holy Hill are too numerous and too well authenticated to be dismissed with a pitying smile."

*Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*<sup>3</sup>, refers to the 'Hill' (not yet called Holy Hill in 1889) as the 'Church of Miracles.' In addition to the picture of the Church found on the previous page, it also includes descriptions of many of the cures that took place at the Church of Miracles.

Chapter Six of *Miracle Hill* is entitled "Some of the Cures." This chapter highlights statements, as told as nearly in his own language as possible, of "... an intelligent German farmer, Matt Werner, who has kept for years a sort of public house, at which great numbers of religious pilgrims have stopped during their sojourn at the hill, and he has had an excellent opportunity to inform himself as to the truth of their stories. He is himself a zealous, though not bigoted Catholic, and a man of excellent repute among his neighbors."

- Louis Marms (Hartford) was the first known cure. He had no use of his limbs below his knees and used crutches. Marms went to the Hill every day, and one day left the Hill on one crutch, swinging the other in his hand; the next day he left the second crutch at the Hill, and walked with only a cane. Several years later, having become a big, healthy, heavy man, he kept a store in Hartford, and was known as "Cheap John."
- In 1881, a seventy- or eighty-year-old Englishman who kept a hotel in LaSalle, Illinois said that before he came to the Hill, he couldn't be out in the sun on a hot day without having a terrible headache. After visiting the Hill, he could run about without a hat, have a blistered head, but no headache. "He was a Protestant when he came, but became a Catholic."
- A child who could not walk a step was brought to the Hill by his mother when the child was five years old. One day, the mother was sitting on a bench in the church when another woman dropped her handkerchief. The child slid off of the mother's lap and picked it up.



**Rack of discarded crutches outside Shrine Chapel.**

*Inside Holy Hill, page 79*



- In 1882, John George Merkel of Richfield was afflicted with a malignant cancer that despite medical intervention, continued for two years to eat away at his nose and face. Merkel vowed to make a pilgrimage to the church and repeat a pray each evening of his remaining days. The ravages of the cancer appeared to subside, and after two years, his health was restored.
- Clara Kroeger, a twelve year old from Milwaukee, was afflicted with an eye disease, ophthalmia, which left her almost blind. She had been treated by an eminent oculist for two years with no sign of being cured. Clara's father heard of the occurrences on Miracle Hill and with Clara made a pilgrimage. On the first day at the church, she left her glasses. The following morning, she had no trouble opening her eyes or in seeing everything.
- On August 25, 1887, A. Scherrer of New Munster, Wisconsin was shooting squirrels when an accident threatened to destroy his sight. After being operated on by a well-known oculist in Milwaukee, Sherrer continued to suffer in untold agony. He was induced to visit Miracle Hill. In his own words, Sherrer said, "The first time I went up the hill I was unable to observe any relief, but the next day, while in the chapel of the church, the pain left me. Since then, it has not returned and I can see and bear the light which I could not endure before."
- On a bright day in June, 1887, Ida M. Klingle, age 21 of Burlington, Wisconsin was the lone occupant of the deserted chapel. She suffered weak and inflamed eyes, and although having received medical treatment, had no relief. She wore a visor and a bandage to protect her eyes from strong light. She couldn't see any object distinctly. She visited the church incessantly, and less than one week after her arrival, served a dinner in the hot sun, without hat, visor, or bandage. When handed to her, she was able to read the fine print of a newspaper.

Additional information regarding the above cures can also be found in *Inside Holy Hill*<sup>4</sup>, (a very detailed and descriptive book about Holy Hill, sold in the Holy Hill Gift Store).

### **Did You Know You Can Do THIS at Holy Hill?**

You can visit, pray, hike, eat, and shop at Holy Hill. Did you know that you can also sleep there?

Welcome to the Holy Hill Guest House. The retreat facilities are housed in two buildings, the 'New Guest House,' and the 'Old Monastery Inn.' According to the [holyhill.com](http://holyhill.com)<sup>5</sup> website, the Guest House is a center for spiritual retreats and maintains a strict no drugs, no alcohol, no smoking policy.

The two buildings both offer overnight facilities that are older and are not handicapped accessible as there is a full flight of stairs to the New Guest House rooms. The four levels in the Old Monastery are connected only by stairs.

The New Guest House was built in 1962 and renovated in the spring of 2017. It is located above the Gift Store. It includes fourteen rooms, each hosting two single beds and a private bath with shower. A communal kitchenette is available for all guests' use.

The Old Monastery Inn is the original monastery, built in 1919. It was converted into retreat rooms after the new monastery was built in 1935. This is a historical building that retains all of the character, including some of the quirks, of the original structure. Twelve of its fifteen retreat rooms have two twin beds each. All rooms are located on the third and fourth floors. There is one large, common bathroom per floor. Guests may also enjoy a conference room, retreat kitchen, and chapel.

Room rates for both the New Guest House and the Old Monastery Inn are \$40+tax for single occupancy and \$50+tax for double occupancy.





The Holy Hill Guest House may be the perfect way to truly become acquainted with the history and beauty of Holy Hill!

<https://www.holyhill.com/guest-house/photos>

### **Hauntingly Beautiful?**

Do majestic, mysterious locations like Holy Hill inspire haunting and other supernatural or unnatural occurrences? Perhaps. There are rumors as well as documented anecdotes regarding what most of us would consider being weird happenings that occurred in the vicinity of Holy Hill.

An article entitled “5 of Wisconsin’s Spookiest Places”<sup>6</sup> relates an eerie phenomena supposedly witnessed in the cemetery on Holy Hill grounds.

The Carmelite Cemetery at Holy Hill, known as Holy Hill Cemetery, is located on the grounds of Holy Hill, and is the resting place of the Carmelite bothers who served at the church. It’s said that visitors to the cemetery have trouble capturing photographs of the Milwaukee skyline, easily visible from the cemetery, because of the ‘thick mist’ that appears in the developed images. Witnesses have also described visits to the cemetery at night. They noted that the so called ‘mist’ begins to form, enveloping them. Then, the mist suddenly takes on the shape of a man before as quickly disappearing. These visitors have mentioned that they were able to identify the eyes, face, hands, and the apparition’s beard. At the same time, they are able to see the trees behind the figure, straight through the middle of his silhouette. Folks have speculated that it could be the spirit of Francois Soubrio, the religious recluse first observed on Holy Hill in 1850.

Does this make you curious about what might show up in a picture you take? What if the phenomenon involves a non-human entity?

### **The Bear Wolf**

Many articles cite the relatively recent 2006 sighting of a creature known as the Bear Wolf of Holy Hill. On March 17, 2015, a reporter for *Monstrum Athenaeum*<sup>7</sup>, a website devoted to weird phenomena, interviewed the person involved in the encounter.

On the night of November 9, 2006, Steve Krueger, a contractor for the Wisconsin DNR, was driving his truck to pick up deer carcasses. According to Krueger, “the incident happened well North of Bray Road in Washington County on Hill Road. The truck did shake. The first time was a light shake. The second was more vigorously which is when I looked into the rear view mirror. The creature never climbed into the back of the truck. It was reaching into the truck and when I pulled away, the deer it grabbed onto and my ATV ramp that must have been tangled into the legs, both came off the truck.”



---

Krueger noted that he did not check his rear view mirror after the first time that his truck shook because, "I just thought it was a strong wind gust at first."

Krueger described the creature he encountered as "dark in color." He said it had big pointed ears on the top of its head, and a bigger snout than what a bear has.

After Krueger saw the unknown creature, he made an aggressive animal report at the local sheriff's department. The Department sent two squads out. Both DNR wardens and Sheriff Deputies contacted Krueger 'off the record,' and gave him information that confirmed that "they think the encounter was real."

### **Bigfoot Seen at Holy Hill**

In September of 2014, a bizarre creature was sighted at Holy Hill. J. Nathan Couch, on December 29, 2014, posted information about the strange encounter. The *J. Nathan Couch*<sup>8</sup> website notes that the creature was four feet tall, muscular, hairless, and possessed backwards bending legs like a goat or dog would have. After Couch posted this information, numerous people reported similar sightings from around Southeastern Wisconsin.

A gentleman named 'Spence' posted on one of the older blog entries about a strange creature sighting near Holy Hill. His experience occurred in autumn of 2006 or 2007.

Around 9:00 or 9:30 p.m., Spence said he was traveling east on Highway 167 towards Holy Hill. On a winding section of road about a mile west of Holy Hill Road, he saw a creature that stood between 6' 5" and 7' feet tall. It weighed approximately 200-300 pounds. Its hips were as tall as the hood of Spence's truck.

Spence invited others to come forward with any encounters they'd had. Supposedly, during 2006, there was an outbreak of hairy hominid and anomalous bruin sightings across Washington County and surrounding areas, with the initial sighting taking place a few feet from the entrance of Holy Hill, on Highway 167.

### **Another Mysterious Creature Sighting**

J. Nathan Couch also hosts a FaceBook site called *Washington County Paranormal*<sup>9</sup>. On November 1, 2014, Couch reported a posting to his site by a woman named Mindy Rossette. On October 28, Rossette stated that at about 9:40 p.m. on September 17, she and her daughter were traveling near Highway K and 167, near Holy Hill.

They encountered a creature that was "maybe four feet tall, hairless, grey/brownish, and running on its hind legs." She said that the creature seemed to brace for impact as her car barely missed it. As soon as she arrived home, she sketched the creature, posted the sketch on Couch's website, and asked if anyone might have encountered something similar.

### **Majesty, Mystery, Myths, and Miracles**

All of the above words describe one of the most frequently visited historical sites in Washington County. Parts I and II of this article provided both facts and legends about Holy Hill. Since Holy Hill is located just outside many of our backdoors, each of us has a grand opportunity to visit, pray, hike, eat, shop, and stay at 'Miracle Hill.' If you haven't visited before, or if this article provoked your curiosity, take a drive. Enjoy the scenery. Explore Holy Hill. Be open to discovering your own versions of Holy Hill's majesty, mystery, myths, and miracles!

**Eyewitness sketch of a mysterious creature that dashed in front of a moving car near Holy Hill. By Mindy Rossette.**





## References/Citations

- <sup>1</sup> "Beauty, Inspiration, Miracles At Holy Hill", *Catholic Harold*, Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S., May 19, 2017
- <sup>2</sup> "Odd Wisconsin: Holy Hill near Hartford had that name for a reason", *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 5, 2010
- <sup>3</sup> *Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*, Ayers Armstrong, 1889 (Library of Congress, copyright February 21)
- <sup>4</sup> *Inside Holy Hill*, Cornel Rosario
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.holyhill.com/guest-house/about>, About our Guest House
- <sup>6</sup> *5 of Wisconsin's Spookiest Places*, "Volume I Magazine", October 7, 2014
- <sup>7</sup> *Monstrum Athenaeum*, [monstrumathenaem.org/interview-did-krueger-survive-attack-from-the-bearwolf-of-holy-hill/](http://monstrumathenaem.org/interview-did-krueger-survive-attack-from-the-bearwolf-of-holy-hill/)
- <sup>8</sup> *J. Nathan Couch*, <http://www.jnathancouch.com>
- <sup>9</sup> *Washington County Book*, <https://www.facebook.com/washingtoncountybook>

## Beckman Mill – Connections to the Messer Mayer Mill by Dave Lehman

Six miles west of Beloit, Wisconsin is the originally called Howe's Mill, later called Newark Mills. It was built in 1845 on the east bank of "Coon Creek" - short for "Racoon Creek" - in Rock County's Newark Township. (The Messer Mayer Mill is built on "Coney Creek," but "Coney Creek" is not short for "Racoon Creek.") The Newark Mill was later destroyed in 1858 by a fire, and then rebuilt in 1868. These dates also sound familiar, as the Messer Mayer Mill was originally begun in 1856 with the construction of a sawmill using a Mulley up-and-down, vertical saw blade. The Messer Mayer Mill was originally named for its founder John Messer, and after his death was renamed for his son, Andrew.

The Beckman Mill was originally named after Carl Ferdinand Beckman (called "Gus".) Like the Messer family, the Beckman family was an immigrant family from Germany in the 1850s. Following the death of their father in 1908, Charles Beckman and his brother, Henry, took over the Mill, through the 1930s, shelling and grinding corn, and producing buckwheat flour. This was similar to what went on at the Messer Mayer Mill at that time, as they also had to convert from grinding wheat to producing buckwheat and grinding corn, due to a blight, which significantly damaged wheat crops in Wisconsin. The Beckman's flour was sold as "Strictly Pure Fresh Ground Buckwheat Flour," but interestingly, in paper sacks, not burlap sacks, as were used by the Messer Mayer Mill.



The original Beckman Mill dam was built out of wood in 1868, and lasted until it was initially replaced by a concrete dam in 1924, and later replaced by an even stronger concrete dam in 1999, taking 20 months to build, as pictured here.

The Messer Mayer dam, built by the Mayer family on the "Coney Creek," was smaller, approximately 12 by feet tall by 25 feet. It has a similar history with a concrete dam being built in 1913 to replace the original wooden dam, and then, in 1923, the dam and earthen berms were washed away, requiring it again to be re-built. In 1968, this dam also failed, and still needs replacing to this day.

***Beckman Mill dam, 7 feet high, 145 feet wide, buttressed with a center piece, required 5,718 'man-hours' to construct.***



In 2003, to the west of the Beckman dam and mill pond, a fish ladder was constructed to allow for the protection of two key endangered fish – the Starhead and Redfin - as required by a 1939 Wisconsin natural resource law. The Messer Mayer dam did not require a fish ladder.

The Beckman Mill itself also had to be re-constructed in the 1920s as it was on the verge of collapse.

*“The original foundation was deteriorating, the floors were sagging and the roof was leaking badly. Moreover, the milling equipment was inoperable due to wear and neglect.... The first step in the restoration process was the removal of the mill’s drive-through and south additions. Next, the building was jacked up and supported on huge I-beams to provide access to the decaying foundation. Once the weight was off the limestone walls, they immediately collapsed due to their instability. To provide a sound base for the structure, extra wide footings were poured followed by vertical, concrete walls on top of them.... To retain the original appearance, the existing limestone wall was re-laid against the inner and outer surfaces of the walls creating a ‘sandwich’ effect. The result was not only an authentic look, but a foundation system of unusual strength.”*

Somewhat similar processes have been used in re-storing and shoring-up the foundation and walls of the Messer Mayer Mill.

Like our Messer Mayer Mill, the Beckman Mill is powered by a vertical turning Leffel undershot water turbine. The Beckman Mill also uses a second turbine manufactured by Beloit, Houston-Merrill. The Leffel turbine was installed in the lower level of the Beckman Mill in 1872, and operates with a series “f blades” that spin when driven by a stream of rapidly flowing water from the Coon Creek. These blades seem to differ from those in the Messer Mayer Mill, which are adjustable to vary the speed at which the shaft, attached at the top of the turbine, rotates

The Beckman Mill turbine turns the shaft, which goes to the second floor of the mill, connecting to the actual grinding millstones. This shaft, with a set of horizontal gears on top, drives the “spur gears,” which are connected to the top “running stone,” that actually cuts and grinds the grain against the stationary “bed stone.”

These stones are mounted inside a circular wooden box called a “vat.” Like the special stones in the Messer Mayer Mill, these stones in the Beckman Mill have a center hole through which the grain flows from the second floor, and are cut from



***“Beckman Mill fish ladder, 150 feet long, 12 feet wide, with a water depth varying from 3 to 5 feet”***



***“Reconstructed Mill with new siding, roof, windows, paint, and foundation with a covered drive-through entryway for the horse-drawn wagons bringing the grain to be milled.”***



a quarry outside of Paris, France. The “spur gears” were made of cast iron and wooden teeth designed to reduce the shock, noise, repair costs, and danger of sparks which are much greater when using strictly iron teeth.



*“Leffel undershot water turbine – with what appears to be stationary blades – with a vertical shaft connected on top that rotates as the turbine rotates”*



*“Leffel undershot water turbine - with what appear to be a picture taken through the window of the Beckman Mill showing the ‘vat’ containing the mill stones; note the vertical boxed wooden shafts which carry the leather belts with small cups that carry the grain to the upper floor to be sifted, sorted, and subsequently stored for bagging; as well as a scale in the right foreground used to weigh in-coming sacks of grain and out-going finished sacks of flour”*

A Beckman Mill “Visitor Center” was constructed in 2006 by the “Friends of Beckman Mill’s” volunteer work crew – not unlike the Messer Mayer Mill volunteer work crew which, among many projects, re-constructed the Lillicrapp House that was moved from Amy Belle Lake to become the “Welcome Center’s General Store” gathering place, and hopefully in the future, the library research center for history. The “Visitor Center” at the Beckman Mill, similar in some ways, houses a general store, gift shop, creamery display, blacksmith shop display, and modern rest-rooms, as well as a meeting room and office on the second floor.

**President**

**Susan Sawdey**

### **The COVID ERA – This Is History**

The RHS Mission Statement Reads:

The mission of the Richfield Historical Society  
is to discover, collect, preserve  
and promote the history  
of the Village of Richfield.



---

As of September 12<sup>th</sup> we will have been doing this for Twenty-three years! Whether we are ready or not we are in for a few changes and are busy making adjustments to acclimate to the current climate we find ourselves in.

We will continue to **discover and collect** new stories from original Richfield Family members, but will undoubtedly adjust our interviewing strategy. We will continue to **preserve** and add to our collection of engaging artifacts but will be modifying how people see them. Lastly, we are committed to **promoting the history** of Richfield. We pledge to remain visible and accessible to our members and visitors but our events may look and feel a bit different. As we navigate through this uncharted territory we hope to use our 23 years of experience and draw new ideas from our ingenious members and volunteers. Let's hope 2021 allows us to spend more time together.

## **See you at the Historical Park - Susan**

### **Annual Community Appeal – Norm Grier**

You may not have noticed, but in addition to canceling of our 2020 events, the corona virus also eliminated the RHS annual fund raising appeal. Each year approximately 4,500 letters are mailed to RHS members, friends and residents of Richfield. The mailing has been timed to arrive at our homes a week or two before Richfield Art at the Mill. Our art fair was a Covid-19 casualty and, for much the same reasoning, so was the mailing. In past years, dedicated volunteers created the contents and had them printed. A crew of sixteen or more gathered to spend the better part of a day collating the contents and stuffing envelopes prior to getting them to the printer for addressing and transport to the post office.

In addition to providing an update on RHS activities of the past year, this letter provided an insight to our plans for the Park in the coming year. The mailing reinforced the fact that RHS is much more than our summer events. It reminded the reader that funds are required for the work of maintaining and improving the Richfield Historical Park and that now is the perfect time to show support by sending a check. The annual appeal makes a solid community connection while providing income to support our budgeted activities.

As you did not receive such a letter this year, please consider this newsletter our annual summer “ask.” Like that iceberg there is much more to be accomplished than can be initially seen. Without your continued support, much RHS work will not happen. We, therefore, appreciate your continued support. Thank you most sincerely.

### **Blacksmith Shop**

**Kathy Lauenstein**

Wow! Not what we envisioned What 2020 has taught us is that we need glasses to see in the future better, but hope you'll come see us when we're open. We'll have a great show!

On a visit to the Blacksmith Shop as the large door opened the air inside was cool, and it still had that great coal smell. The tools had a layer of dust on as they hung in the rack. For now, you will have to imagine the sound of the anvil with each hammer blow and to see our friends coming to visit and support us. Time will tell when we are open again. The Park being quiet still has a nice feel. Come take a walk or drive thru and enjoy.



## Education

**Kathy Weberg**

The first-rate volunteers have given of their time and talents even during this difficult social-distancing time by providing guided tours for two very different groups. The first group was a summer day care group of nine children, ages 6 through 12. A visit to the Richfield Historical Park provided an opportunity for them to participate in two activities besides having lunch and walking the trails. Susan Sawdey opened the log buildings; and in the log house, the children packed cucumbers in canning jars, added dill and brine and sealed them up. They also washed wool and had a quick tour of the log barn. Then Pete Samson took over and gave them the low down on making maple syrup.

Two weeks later a family of adult brothers, looking for a way to do some bonding, came for a visit. An expanded tour was provided by the Mill House chairpersons, Clara Birkel and Cindy Schmechel and by Norm Grier in the Mill. The group moved to the south end of the Park where once again Pete and Susan did their thing with the log buildings and the sugar shack.

Because each of these groups were small, our volunteers felt very comfortable and safe with the COVID protocols. They would be willing to do this for any small group desiring a tour of this kind. There isn't much going on these days. So if your family or small group would like to get out and do something, here is an opportunity. The majority of the tour is outside. Please call me, Kathy Weberg, 262-628-0252 or email, [kathyweberg@yahoo.com](mailto:kathyweberg@yahoo.com) for more information. We can tailor a tour to fit your needs! The price is right, too! Give me a call!

## Historic Sites

**Quint Mueller/Herb Lofy**

The challenges of 2020 are rather obvious. As they apply to our own lives, they also apply to RHS and our projects. That being the case, we are still pushing ahead, albeit at a bit slower rate than usual. The big project of 2020 is still the rebuilding of the Engine Shed, and it is underway. Materials have been gathered and organized. By the time this newsletter arrives in your mailbox, we will have some visible progress to report. Although we are still hoping to complete the structure of the Engine Shed this season, we will at least have a good start. Given the current situation, a solid start will be a good accomplishment. Safety is always our priority, and this year that has taken on a new definition.

It has taken longer than anticipated, but we now have received all of the permits required to install the new culvert bridge south of the Mill. This will be large enough to allow tractors and steam engines to pass over it. The big significance is that it will allow for a show traffic loop to be created within the Park. The current driveway from the north end to south end of the Park is only wide enough for one-way traffic. The addition of the link between the front show area to the tractor display and threshing area will allow a much more efficient route for exhibitor traffic. We are now in the process of arranging for the installation of the culverts. We're hoping to complete the installation later this season. It will be dependent upon weather and soil conditions; and spring can be a challenge, as that location is often quite wet early in the year.

Thanks to Dan Wittenberger, we are well on our way to having much needed new storm windows for the Mill House. Dan has been working hard on building these windows from scratch over last winter and early this year. Next in the process is final sizing and glazing before installation. Each window in the Mill House is of slightly different dimensions. Next winter, this process will start over for the Lillicrapp Welcome Center (LWC).



As always, we want to recognize the "Thursday Crew" and the many other volunteers that do their part to construct and maintain the Richfield Historical Park. Truly, without you we could not have accomplished the many extraordinary projects that have been completed in the Park. Our volunteers are one of the ways that RHS stands out as an historical society. Many do not have the volunteer resources that we have been able to rely upon.

As most of you know by now, this year's premier event, the annual Thresherec, had to be cancelled. This was a decision that no one took lightly. Not only is it our biggest single fundraiser of the year, it is also the event that our volunteers hope to showcase our accomplishments for the year. Our volunteers are very proud of what they have been able to accomplish year after year, as they should be. In the end, though, the decision had to be based upon the safety of all who attend. This includes the many volunteers, exhibitors, and spectators. Never fear, we are already planning for the 2021 Thresherec and looking forward to presenting a show that is, in every way, worth coming back to. Until we are able to gather again, stay safe and well!

**Library Committee**

**Marge Holzbog**

During the month of July, all RHS members received a complimentary copy of Professor Patrick Jung's book on Holy Hill. A limited number of copies are still available for purchase at \$10.00.

Other RHS publications available for purchase include:

Richfield Remembers the Past	\$50.00
Life on the Farm	\$15.00
Downtown Richfield	\$15.00
Feeding the Crew	\$15.00

All would make wonderful holiday or special occasion gifts!

Contact: Marge Holzbog - 262 251 3882

**Marketing**

**Doug Wenzel**

Some of you may be familiar with geocaching, a leisure activity in which players use GPS coordinates and clues to find hidden "caches" - typically containers of small trinkets which the players may exchange. The caches also contain logbooks that the players sign and date. There's a website called geocaching.com that is a source for finding information about these caches. They're all over the place, including five in the area of the Historical Park / Nature Park!

The RHS Board was approached recently by a young lady, an avid geocacher, about creating a relatively new type of GPS-based activity in the Historical Park. It's called an Adventure Lab, and it involves finding locations and answering questions in order to verify that the "find" has been made. It's an activity that includes learning a little about the place, not just finding a cache. She suggested that the Park was an ideal spot for such an activity.

Since then the RHS Marketing Committee has been helping her get her adventure lab up and running. She's done a great job and has created an activity that seems sure to bring some new visitors into the Park and raise interest in RHS. It's fun!

If you'd like to give it a try:

1. Start by downloading the Adventure Lab app onto your phone. You can find it in the iPhone or Android app stores.



For iPhone go to <https://apps.apple.com/app/apple-store/id1412140803?mt=8>

For Android go to <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.groundspeak.react.adventures>

2. If the app allows you to create an account from your phone, go ahead and do so. Alternatively, you can create an account online at [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) and use that information to log into the app.
3. Use the app map to locate the icon in the Park, click on it, and follow the directions to find the locations and answer the questions. By playing around with the app you'll find a compass function that gives you directions and distances to the five adventure locations.
4. Note - Some of the app functions may only work when you are actually at the Park. You have to be within the preset "geofence" to get the questions. That way there's no cheating!

Since its creation, the Adventure Lab has drawn several new guests to the Historical Park, most of whom were there for the first time.

## Mill House

Cindy Schmechel/Clara Birkel

### THE SUMMER KITCHEN

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was common for farms and southern plantations to have a variety of outbuildings used for various purposes. There was always an outhouse, of course, along with barns, granaries, chicken coops, pig sties, wood sheds, smoke houses, tool sheds and other outbuildings. Of them all, one of the hardest working was the "summer kitchen." They had been commonly used in upstate New York and the upper Midwest during the summer months; but in the south and mid-Atlantic regions like Virginia, the summer kitchen was used year round as the main kitchen due to their often hot and muggy weather. The southern farmers would construct a separate enclosure to keep the cooking smells and heat away from the main living areas of the house. They were sometimes wood or log structures, but were also built using local brick or fieldstone.

As America expanded and people began to move farther west, Yankees and immigrants of all ethnic backgrounds moved into the newly formed territory of Wisconsin. The land was rich with natural resources; and as the forests were cleared, farms were established, homes and barns were built, crops were planted and most families flourished. They brought the summer kitchen with them as they encountered the hot and muggy Wisconsin summer weather.

What exactly is a summer kitchen? The basic answer is that it is usually a detached building, built a safe distance away from the main house, equipped with a wood-burning stove, laundry tubs, wash boards and other equipment, shelving and usually a table and chairs. Pots and pans were hung on the walls, herbs and vegetables were hung from the rafters to dry. It was principally a place used to do all of the cooking and baking during the hot summer months, to keep the heat and odors out of the main house. It was also thought to lessen the dangers of fires to the wood frame farm house. But it was quite a lot more than just an ordinary kitchen. It may also have been a place to churn butter, clean freshly laid eggs and sometimes was even used to take a private bath. It may have been used to do sewing or weaving projects, repair clothing or curtains or as a place to work on hobbies.

The cook stove was used every day, not only for cooking, but also for canning and preserving foods, soap making and heating the water for the laundry. On rainy days or in the cold, winter months, water would have been carried in buckets, heated on the stove and then used in the wash tubs or in the wringer washing machine.



clothes were hung outdoors on a fence, bush or clothesline. In order to do the laundry, the lady of the house would have used that kitchen stove to make her own soap; a combination of lard or animal fat, water and lye. Herbs grown in the kitchen garden were hung from the rafters to dry; and as the fruits and vegetables ripened, the canning season began so that the family would have an abundant supply of healthy food for the winter months. Jams and jellies made from apples, cherries, plums and pears, or canned pickles, sauerkraut, beans, tomatoes and other garden vegetables were all preserved for the long Wisconsin winter.

The summer kitchen at the Messer/Mayer Mill House was once a separate, stand-alone building, built in the late 1860s by the Andrew Messer family. It still has its original cook stove. It was attached to the main house via a small vestibule sometime during the 1890s when the C.W. Mayer family built an addition to the original house which included three more bedrooms upstairs, plus a pantry, utility/storage room and a beautiful new kitchen on the main floor. The addition sits on the southwest corner of the main house and is accessed not only from a door leading to the outside, but also through the utility room which has direct access to the root cellar. It was once one of the hardest working buildings on the farm, and the Richfield Historical Society has worked hard to preserve the history of this unique building.



**Mill House Summer Kitchen**



**Mill House Summer Kitchen**



**Mill House Summer Kitchen**



**Mill House Summer Kitchen**



**Are you looking for an opportunity to help your organization,  
the Richfield Historical Society? – Lois Hessenauer**

There are 3 committees which would love to have you join them:

***Marketing Committee:*** Our goals are to help in advertisement of RHS events, promote the Park as a destination, and grow the RHS brand in a way that attracts new membership. We work with traditional media outlets and, increasingly, social media sites. If you have some fresh ideas and a little spare time, here's an opportunity to make a contribution. **All who are interested in serving on the Marketing Committee, please contact Doug Wenzel at dougdotw@gmail.com.**

***Ad Hoc Policy Committee:*** The committee will meet as needed to review changes to current polices and consider new polices to be presented to the RHS Board for approval.

***Ad Hoc Digitizing Committee:*** The Society realizes that its treasure trove of paper documents containing information on homestead families will not last forever. Therefore, a project has been approved to investigate and then digitize these documents. This committee, created just for this purpose, will determine what needs to be digitized, how it will be done, where will the electronic files be stored, etc.

The Policy and Digitizing committees will start in the fall and will be in person with COVID safety measures put in place. **For the Policy and Digitizing Committees, please contact historyrhs@gmail.com and be sure to indicate which committee(s) you would like to join.**

**Thank You** for your consideration in taking advantage of these volunteer opportunities and getting involved – your help is needed and appreciated.

**News Letter Editor -Marge Holzbog**

The newsletter you are receiving today is the third for 2020 (April and June's Holy Hill booklet\*.) Your next newsletter will be coming in January 2021 when, hopefully, we will be able to announce the year's schedule of events and happenings.

Until then, we wish all of you a safe and healthy remainder of 2020.

(\*Members as of June 1, 2020 received the Holy Hill booklet as a complimentary gift copy.)