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## Farming In Wisconsin: Settlement to 1873 by Susan Brushafer

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When people think about Wisconsin, first thoughts might include: cheese, cows, football, farms, snow. If you're a member of the Richfield Historical Society, you may be intrigued by farming. In this article, first of a series, we'll look at farming from the state's settlement to approximately 1873, when the Messer/Mayer Mill in Richfield began operating!

The early settlers did not make the trek to Wisconsin and immediately start planting crops. Clearing the land required hard work thanks to Mother Nature's creativity.

**Clearing the Land**

Farming in Wisconsin started courtesy of… the glaciers. The grinding action of glaciers produced silt-sized particles that released nutrients for plant growth. Especially fertile were lands in southern, north central, and eastern Wisconsin. Fieldstones accompanied the glaciers; freezing and thawing brought new batches of stones to the surface every spring. Early pioneers used these stones (some the size of a small car) to build fences. barn walls. silos. and houses.

The earliest known residents of Wisconsin were Paleo-Indians, arriving in small numbers from the south and southwest. They subsisted mainly on a diet of plants and small animals and occasionally larger animals like deer and elk. Over the early years, horticulture became increasingly more important. Beginning around AD 1000, Oneota communities established farming villages on river terraces and lakes. They grew corn, beans, and squash. The people who settled on land now known as Aztalan State Park in eastern Jefferson County thrived through approximately 1300. Archaeologist Robert Birmingham has referred to this Middle-Mississippian village as 'Wisconsin's first farming town.'

Just before Europeans arrived in the Upper Midwest in the early 1600s, Native Americans numbered about one hundred thousand around the Great Lakes. In 1634, French explorer Jean Nicolet, one of the first Europeans to set foot in the land known as Wisconsin, likely met with Ho-Chunk, Menominee, and Potawatomi residents. These native Americans, many heavily dependent upon farming, had been trading with each other for centuries. That trading expanded to the new European arrivals who introduced trade-worthy goods such as metal hoes, axes, and tools for clearing the land.

**Clearing land around 1830**

Newcomers struggled to improve land holdings by converting forest land to tilled land. Farmers desperately needed cropland to support both the family and the livestock. The faster land was cleared the better became the farmer's position.

Settlers 'girdled' trees so they would die and then chopped them down. Removing stumps was probably the hardest part of the process. Whatever the method used, and there were several, stump removal was a slow, arduous process. Many agreed that 80 acres of timber was about as much as one man could clear in his lifetime.

**'Girdled Tree'**
**homeyden.com**

These new residents purchased many eastern-Wisconsin farms with that idea in mind. However, stump land was not allowed to go unused! Often crops were planted amid the stumps before the acreages were pastured.

Most of the early settlers who came to Wisconsin were content with rather small farms. With slow-moving oxen providing the muscle for the fields and with only family labor, each farmer was isolated and independent. Not many early settlers, especially immigrant farmers, had the money to buy large acreages. Small hoardings were eaten up by boat fares from Europe and through the Great Lakes. Frontier supplies were not cheap because of freight costs. Some farmers didn't pay for their land until after the first year's harvest. Credit was unknown, and most farmers hesitated to go into debt.

European settlers who arrived in Wisconsin in the 19th century were not initially interested in farming. The first several thousand settlers in the state moved to the lead region of southwest Wisconsin in the 1820s. Government surveyors began laying out townships throughout Wisconsin in the 1830s. Speculators soon began purchasing real estate from government land offices to sell to farmers and businessmen.

In 1834, the government established land offices in Green Bay and Mineral Point, where surveyed land could be purchased. Potential landowners benefited from the surveyors' careful notations, making it easier to locate land.

French fur traders and Wisconsin Indians continued their trading partnerships into the 1830s and 1840s. Farming was not yet the main economic activity, but settlers had to earn a living and feed their families.

The immigrants who arrived in the 1830s were anxious to find good farm sites. Most hoped to raise a crop before winter to feed their families and make money for supplies. By 1836, speculators, miners, and immigrants were purchasing the newly surveyed lands. Nearly 5,000 farms a year were founded in Wisconsin in the 1840s.

**French Fur Trade**

Most began to produce vegetable gardens and farmed small-scale to take care of themselves, hoping to sell their surpluses in local and national markets. Crops planted were common garden vegetables, some oats, spring wheat, potatoes, and onions. Farmers sold their surplus to traders for goods or exchanged it with Native Americans for venison, ducks, geese, or dressed deerskins.

Jerry Apps, author of *Wisconsin Agriculture, a History*, noted, "*The first farmers were from upstate New York. They had worn out the land there and came here from 1838 to 1850. They were primarily dairy farmers who came here and they grew wheat. The women milked and fed the cows and made cheese and butter in the kitchen. People already in Wisconsin referred to these newcomers as Yankees.*"

Wisconsin became a territory in 1836 with a population of 11,683. By 1850, the population had grown to 305,390. The 'Yankees' were followed by an influx of immigrants who came here starting in the early 1840s with the arrival of the Germans. The Irish arrived next, motivated by the Irish potato famine, from 1845 to 1852.

On February 1, 1848, Wisconsin became a state. The Wisconsin Constitution is the oldest U.S. state constitution outside of New England. The original copy of the 1848 document is missing. The handwritten copy contained the signatures of all the delegates who drafted it during the second constitutional convention of 1847. The first to discover the original document was missing was historian Lyman C. Draper, who tried unsuccessfully to locate it in 1882.


CONSTITUTION

STATE OF WISCONSIN

CONSTITUTION

**Constitution**

Settlers encouraged immigration via enticing letters sent to friends and family back home. By the 1850 census, ethnic groups included, in addition to the Germans and Irish, Danes, Swiss, Swedes, English, Scotch, Welsh, Icelanders, Finns, (mainly Canadian) French, Dutch, Belgians, Italians, Russians, and Czechs. Wisconsin's first African American settlements were in the southwestern mining regions. Some residents came from southern states, where they had been slaves owned by miners. Others were freed or escaped slaves. In 1840, there were only 185 free blacks and eleven slaves in the Wisconsin Territory. By 1850, no slaves resided in Wisconsin, and the free blacks' population grew to 635.

For settlers arriving in the late 1840s and 1850s, living conditions were challenging and often dangerous. Winters were long. Roads were nearly nonexistent. The distance to a settlement could be lengthy. Historian Reuben Gold Thwaites noted: *"Sometimes a pioneer farmer was fifty or a hundred miles from a gristmill, a store, or a post office. Often, his only entertainments throughout the years were 'bees' for raising log houses or barns for newcomers. On these occasions, all of the settlers from scores of miles around would gather in a spirit of helpful comradery."*

Pioneers cut timber from their property to build cabins. Early cabins were crude, but functional. The crevices of a typical log cabin were filled with clay. Floors were made of hewn slabs which would eventually 'settle', making it easier to sweep. One half of the attic was floored with slabs. The family could ascend by a ladder to these sleeping areas of the cabin.

**Peck Cabin Lithograph,1837**
**Madison Wisconsin**

The 1850 census included 40,865 farmers in Wisconsin, more than all other occupations combined. Many had been dairymen in New York but saw wheat growing in the Midwest as a more lucrative endeavor. These early settlers constructed homes, barns, schools, and churches that reminded them of what they had left behind in the East. They brought with them good farming skills and often, good business sense. After the fields had been plowed and planted, however, settlers still faced the perils of drought, hailstorms, prairie fires, blizzards, relentless wind, and swarms of locusts.

It would be remiss when talking about the progress being made in Wisconsin if we did not also note that pioneer settlements were built on the homelands of Wisconsin's Native people. They had been subjected to a federal policy aimed at removing all Indian Americans to west of the Mississippi River. In 1830, Wisconsin's Native population outnumbered non-Natives.

The famous Sauk leader and warrior, Chief Black Hawk, born *Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak*, earned his status as a war chief, leading raiding and war parties as a young man. During the War of 1812, Black Hawk fought on the side of the British against the US in the hope of pushing white American settlers away from Sauk territory. Later, he led a band of Sauk and Fox warriors against white settlers in Illinois and present-day Wisconsin during the 1832 Black Hawk War.

**Black Hawk**
**Smithsonian American Art Museum**

By the mid-1800s, the white population outnumbered the Native population by fifty to one. Settlers began to combine separate but distinct cultures like the Ho Chunk, Ojibwe, or Menominee under the terms "Indian" or "red man." Derogatory descriptors were used in reference to the Wisconsin Natives to create an image that contrasted sharply to the world they, as pioneers, wanted to create.

By the mid-1800s, settlers were scattered mainly across the southeastern third of the state, roughly south of a line drawn from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien.

Settlers depended upon oxen to do the heavy work like breaking the never-touched soil, pulling carts, and transporting people. Corn and potatoes were planted by hand, usually by the mother and children in the homes.

What was life like for frontier women? It was challenging. In addition to planting family gardens, they dried and preserved wild fruit for winter use (early settlers didn't practice 'canning'). They cooked meals in the fireplace, using cranes and hooks to hang kettles. A reflector oven was used to do baking. (Reflector ovens were made of sheet iron arranged so that they could be set in front of the fireplace. The heat reflected back into the oven until it was hot enough to bake bread.)

**1800s Reflector Oven**
**worthpoint.com**

Pioneer women acted as nurses when there was illness, and as midwives when babies were due. The woman of the house made all of the family's clothing: underwear, outer garments, knitted socks, stockings, and mittens. She kept the cabin neat, mended clothing, made soft soap, tallow candles, butter, cheese, and, of course, looked after the babies. Besides her human family, a frontier woman cared for small flocks of chickens and milked the family cow or two.

It could be a lonely life with neighbors living far away. Husbands could be gone for extended

times to earn money. Wisconsin farmers headed to logging camps in the north during winter months. Wives and children had to survive the cold, long winters on their own. Female company was scarce with men (in 1840) outnumbering women eight to five.

**Calling This Place Home**
**Women on the Wisconsin Frontier**
**1850-1925**
**Joan M. Jensen**
**(book cover)**

There were plenty of positive experiences for the strong, adventurous pioneer woman. According to historian Alice Smith, "frontier life had much to offer." Historian Smith cites a woman, Racheline Wood, who urged her sister in Vermont to come to Wisconsin to take a position as head of a proposed girls' school: "*You can make money three times as fast as there, and I believe you will enjoy better health. We have a good society better than any other place in the mining sections of the country.*"

Wheat was the earliest and most important cash crop for white settlers in Wisconsin. It required a small initial capital investment and was easy to grow, allowing farmers to harvest two crops a year. The high rate of financial return made wheat an especially attractive crop for homesteaders during the middle of the 19th century. Farmers and businessmen found it more profitable to grind the wheat into flour. There was a lot of flour made in Wisconsin. Little mill ponds provided waterpower for mills.

Wheat provided a way for new immigrants in Wisconsin to farm cheaply and to deliver a product that many people needed. From 1840 to 1880, Wisconsin was considered "America's breadbasket" because one-sixth of the wheat grown in the nation came from Wisconsin. The early success of wheat farming helped Wisconsin's agriculture develop more rapidly than it did in other states.

Wisconsin can boast an impactful inventor! George Esterly, born in LaGrange, WI, invented the first harvesting machine in 1844. Wheat harvesting was tedious and time-consuming with hand tools alone. Another invention, the mechanical McCormick Reaper, or wheat harvester, had been introduced in the mid-1830s, but by the 1840s, farmers wanted better machines. George Esterly was one of the farmers who, in the 1840s, began to make improved reapers, and soon, other farmers asked him to make harvesters for them. Unlike others though, the Esterly Reapers were innovative, and many considered them better than McCormick's machines. The Esterly Manufacturing Company on Whitewater's east side mass produced his machines. Over the next 35 years, Esterly's company produced reapers and other mechanical farm equipment, such as binders and seeders.


**Easterly Harvesting Machine Company**

Despite its appeal, wheat also had risks and disadvantages. It was hard on the soil, which it quickly depleted of nitrogen. Depending on the challenges of the weather and insect infestation, yield could vary substantially from year to year. By the 1850s, wheat was the state's major economic enterprise. Wisconsin ranked eighth of the thirty-one states in the country producing wheat. During this time, there were 390 flour and gristmill operators. 1850 was the year, also, that draft horses began to replace oxen, although oxen still outnumbered horses.

By the late 1850s, however, the price of wheat began to drop as Wisconsin yields and quality lessened, and competition from farmers in Iowa and Minnesota increased. Disaster struck in the 1860s, when tiny insects known as chinch bugs began ravenously devouring Wisconsin wheat crops.

Wisconsin produced other crops in addition to wheat: tobacco, wool, peas and beans, barley, buckwheat, flax, flaxseed, maple sugar, and bees wax and honey. Between 1850 and 1880, however, wheat was found on more Wisconsin farms than any other crop. Wheat acreage nearly equaled that of the acreages of hay, oats, and corn combined.

Wisconsin's wheat played an important role during the Civil War years. During 1860 to 1865, Wisconsin produced 100 million bushels of wheat, two-thirds of it exported. According to economist Frederick Mark, *"(Wisconsin's) surplus fed the armies battling at the front, and entered conspicuously into the commerce of the drought-stricken England and France. During the dark days of 1862, when these countries seemed about to intervene on behalf of the Confederacy, this food support exerted an undoubted influence in holding them to neutrality."*

After President Lincoln passed the Homestead Act in 1862, Wisconsin drew even more settlers. Homesteaders paid a small fee to file their claim with the government. For that fee they were given 160 acres to improve. They would need to stay on this land for five years, or, they could purchase the land from the government after 6 months at $1.25 per acre. Living on and improving the land was no easy feat. The success of wheat-growing farmers in Wisconsin opened the door to possibilities for the new residents. According to the National Park Service, under the Homestead Act of 1862, 29,246 homesteads were opened in Wisconsin. They accounted for 3,110,990 acres of land, 9% of the land in the state.

**An acceptable dwelling under the Homestead Act**

With its many rivers and streams, Wisconsin was well suited for the construction of flour mills. Farmers were tired of the distances they had to travel to process their wheat. After the Civil War, many flour mills appeared in small and large towns throughout southern Wisconsin, including in Richfield! These mills required waterpower to operate, and Richfield was an ideal location for a mill.

Using the water from Coney Creek, which flowed through his acreage, in 1856 pioneer Johann Messer started a sawmill, using the creek as the sawmill's power source. In 1869, Johann divided his holdings among his children, and the 27-acre parcel that included the sawmill went to his son Andrew. Andrew recognized the potential offered by the cash crop wheat, and in 1871, started constructing a grist mill (grain mill) next to the sawmill. Unfortunately, Andrew was killed in a horse accident in 1874. Andrew's widow, Louisa, sold the business in 1876 to her husband's uncle Johann George Mayer. The Messer/Mayer Mill, ground wheat, rye, and cattle feed for 83 years.

**Messer/Mayer Mill, Richfield, WI**

Wisconsin wheat production peaked in 1873. In the five years that followed, the yield per acre had dropped from 15 bushels to nine. Southern Wisconsin farmers discovered around 1870 that they could no longer profitability grow wheat. In 1860, Wisconsin was the No. 2 wheat producing state in the nation, but by 1870 yields were greatly diminished. Wheat remained the staple crop of most Wisconsin farmers until the late 19th century, when insect infestation and market forces gradually persuaded most farmers to switch to dairy products.

Part II of this series of three articles will focus on agriculture in Wisconsin from the 1870s through World II.

## President — Pete Samson

What a great year 2022 was for the Richfield Historical Society.

We started the year off with a celebration of our 25th anniversary with a great party and continued the celebration for the rest of the year. In 2023, we will be celebrating the 150th year of the Messer Mayer Mill being built with a celebration this upcoming July or August as we continue to get the Mill up and running.

Our successful events have caused our membership to increase. We started off with our Maple Syrup Family Day in March, adding a pancake breakfast that included our maple syrup. Although the weather was 27 degrees, there was a long line waiting to be served. We served over 325 breakfasts! Our goal in 2023 is to serve over 500.

The Art Fair had a record number of vendors and was very well attended. This event continues to grow every year. The Thresheree and Harvest Festival also continues to be very successful, however we will need someone to step forward to become the new chairperson for the 2025 Thresheree. The current chairs are ready to step back and let some new people take the lead.

We also added two new events. Our first Blacksmith Hammer In in October was well attended. We anticipate this event will be a great addition going forward. Many people loved to see the blacksmiths making things, and we look to expand attendee participation from what was available in 2022.

The last event of the year was the Luminary Walk. Despite record breaking winds, we had over 300 attendees. Many families who never had known the Park was there or had never attended an event in the Park came out to enjoy the trails. The Luminary Walk really has nothing to with the overall mission of the Historical Society. This event is solely to encourage those new visitors to come to other events in the future. The Luminary Walk was one of the most commented on events on Facebook.

Next year we will celebrate the Messer/Mayer Mill and its 150-year anniversary. By celebrating the Mill and Park and opening our building in a unique way, we are promoting the History of the Village of Richfield.

Finally, a huge thank you to all of our volunteers. We could not accomplish any of this without you.

## Blacksmith Shop — Kathy Lauenstein

### The Great Coal Debate

Every smith has a different opinion on a bag of coal. Some coal, even if it comes out of the same place, is different. Some coal, if cracked open, has a shine. It has too much oil. It smokes, is hard to lite and doesn't burn giving the heat you need. Some, the size of pea gravel, does a good job of heating steel. But, for the smith that likes to stir and poke in the fire, it's bad. Many smiths have changed to gas, no mess to clean up. It provides steady heat, but it does not have that great coal smell in the shop.

Asking any smith what they want for Christmas? COAL! Poor Santa!

The smiths are planning another Hammer In on the south end of the Park in the Fall. New metal shapes will be available to hammer out. So, come have lunch in the Park and make a day of it. Tour the south end buildings and watch the smiths working in the Park.

## Collections — Deanna Einwalter

### History of Richfield Train Depot

Mr. Laubenheimer (of Laubenheimer Garage) built his tavern, saloon and store on the old Fond du Lac Road. Then, in 1855, he gave the railroad some land for the train depot. The railroad president at the time was Roswell Miller who relinquished the presidency of the railroad to Albert Earling.

Albert Earling started as a train dispatcher at Rugby Junction and then became an assistant superintendent. In Junction and then became an assistant superintendent. In 1888, he became the general superintendent and in 1895 was named Vice President. The village of Richfield became a prominent place for settlers to reside.

The Town of Richfield now had a train depot, general store, Messer/Meyer and, of course the Messer Mayer Mill.

As Collection Committee Chairman, I had the pleasure of obtaining two of the benches from the train depot. Look for them in a display in the upcoming year.

**Railroad Depot**

## Education — Kathy Weberg

For those of you who visit the Richfield Historical Park, you are no doubt aware of the three Little Free Libraries located within the Park. They are located near the Lillicrapp Welcome Center, the Messer-Mayer Mill on the north end of the Park and in front of the two log buildings on the south end. These three Little Free Libraries were constructed as an Eagle Scout project some years ago. They were creatively patterned after the buildings at their location. Mighty fine work!

The Library and Education committees are the stewards of the libraries. Volunteers from these committees check on the libraries regularly to make sure they are stocked with appropriate materials and tidy them up occasionally. However, the whole idea of Little Free Libraries is to have those who visit "take a book, leave (share) a book."

The Little Free Libraries in the Historical Park are undoubtedly very popular. So popular, in fact, RHS needs to replace books frequently. It seems more people are taking books than leaving books. This is a good thing; books are being read! But for us to maintain the Little Libraries, our volunteers frequently need to purchase books at rummage and library sales so we can keep the boxes stocked.

If you have books at home that you are no longer using, feel free to place one (or more) in the libraries. If you find one in the library that you would like to read, there is no need to wait until you have one with which to replace it. Just take it! It works on the honor system.

A word about the Little Free Library effort. The organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It was founded in Hudson, Wisconsin in 2009 and now boasts 150,000 libraries in 110+ countries. The libraries in the Richfield Historical Park are registered and so have the insignia stating that on the boxes.

## Event Coordinator — Daryl Grier

We had two new events in 2022: Blacksmith-Hammer In and the Luminary Walk. Both brought visitors who had never been to the Historical Park. Adding a pancake breakfast to Maple Syrup Family Day succeeded beyond our most optimistic expectations. We learned what we need to change for next year to make these events even better!

At every event, we hear someone say that they live nearby or drive by but have not been into the Park. Asking a friend, relative or neighbor to come to an event is a great way to get the word out about our

wonderful Park. I told a neighbor about Maple Syrup Family Day, she brought her granddaughter and loved it. She next attended and volunteered at the Thresheree.

RHS provided food and beverages for the Bike Race held in the Nature Park on Sunday, October 14. It was not as cold as 2021, but it sure was chilly! Once again, all volunteers said they had a good time and hope we will be asked to provide food and beverages again. We made about $650 and learned a lot that would make it even more profitable for us if we are asked to do it again.

At the Events Committee meetings, we review the last event and make notes to improve each event for next year. We have a worksheet to document each event. So we have a good foundation upon which to launch next year's event.

Our committee can always use new ideas. Please join us at any meeting or contact me if you have ideas to share, including what we could do to improve an event.

We meet at the Fire Station #1. Dates vary, depending on when the next event will be held. Our next meeting will be on Friday, January 13th.

## Historic Sites — Quint Mueller/Herb Lofy

Several months ago, Al Mayer mentioned that 2023 marks the 150th year of the Messer/Mayer Mill.

It's interesting to think about the history of the Mill, especially the early years. Could you imagine what it was like to live in that era? Consider the day to day labor to provide the basic necessities. The garden and food preservation were vital, along with butchering the occasional farm animal for meat. No central heating-just wood stoves in the kitchen and parlor that had to be refueled often, not to mention what it took to get the firewood in the first place. No pressurized water system in the house-just a pump handle to secure water over a hand dug well outside. Worst of all was the trek to the outhouse in the winter. It was that or the "chamber pot" to relieve oneself. Beyond the basic necessities, think about what it took for a livelihood. The farm, the mill or the support businesses, such as the blacksmith shop, creamery, general store and even the local tavern provided the network for survival.

Events in the Historical Park provide some insight as to what it was like years ago. The Thresheree gives attendees a glimpse of what was required for life and work of our ancestors.

Now there is another generation of Thresheree volunteers that have been involved for years, and they are positioned to keep the Thresheree and especially the threshing activities intact. They have new ideas to improve the educational experience. It's rewarding to see the interest to preserve what started as a simple threshing demonstration on the Lofy Farm back in 1998.

Back to Historic Sites. Al has been managing a tremendous crew this year. There have been many, many small projects started and completed throughout last season and that pattern will continue this year. The larger projects, of course, are more noticeable. In 2023, look for the completion of the new handicapped entrance ramp for the LWC (Lillicrapp Welcome Center.) We are rebuilding and reconfiguring this structure to be more wheelchair friendly and to make it a little less obtrusive to the appearance of the building.

One of the other big projects for 2023 will be the stripping and repainting of the Mill House. This is a big project that is long overdue. We've been having trouble keeping paint on that building since RHS was started. Due to the scale of work involved and the layers of old lead paint, this will be a professionally contracted project. While our crew could pull this off, we try to consider the safety of our crew as well. A big project

like this, also takes away from progress on other projects that require the RHS crew.

And we can't forget the Engine Shed project. Al and his crew are working hard on that. You can look for the exterior of it to be completed in 2023. Work on the interior structures and workings of the mill equipment are continuing, including restoration of the mill water turbine.

If you would like to join in the fun (I really do mean fun in this case – It's not just work for our crew, they have fun at the same time) or just to get a better look at what's going on with projects in the Park, please contact Herb, Quint, or Al. Our contact information is listed elsewhere in this newsletter or on the RHS website (RichfieldHistoricalSociety.org.)

## Library/Program/Newsletter — Marge Holzbog/Connie Thoma

The programs for the next four months will be as follows:

**January 26th.** will feature Dan Wittenberger's topic of pioneer farming and the implements used. He will present a video pertaining to the topic.

**February 23rd.** will feature Scott Smith who is manager of Pabst Place in Downtown Milwaukee located in the Old Pabst Brewery. Along with his presentation on "The History of Brewing in Milwaukee," we will have a beer tasting and snacks. Sure to be an interesting and fun evening.

**March 23rd.** will feature Kathe Conn Crowley who is an author, creative professional and recognized leader in areas of education, public programing, institutional management and philanthropy for thirty years. She is a frontier storyteller and sure to present an entertaining evening.

**April 27th.** will feature James Willard from the Wisconsin Historical Society's Old Wade House. He will be talking about early transportation in Wisconsin featuring Washington and Ozaukee Counties.

Our meetings are free and open to the public. They are held at Fire Station #1 on Hwy 175 at 7:00 p.m.

## LWC Welcome Center — Ruth Jeffords

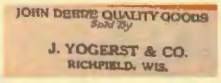
### FURROW MAGAZINE; an item of interest at the LWC

Endless items of interest can be found in the General Store at the Lillicrapp Welcome Center. An old copy of ***Furrow Magazine*** is one of them. This magazine was found by Dan Marks during the time he was tearing down a building on his farm. Dan's farm originally belonged to Henry Schowalter in 1920. Dan bought the farm from Donald (son of Henry) Schowalter's family.

Mr. John Deere was a blacksmith who developed the first commercially successful, self-scouring steel plow in 1837; and he founded the company that still bears his name.

The first John Deere "***Furrow***" magazine was printed in 1895 as "A Journal for the American Farmer." The copy at the Welcome Center is the Fall issue from 1920 which would be the 25th year. Today it is a monthly publication. In the past, it was sent free to John Deere customers *(i.e., you had to buy a John Deere tractor to get it).* The goal of the "***Furrow***" remains the same as when it started years ago . . . to print stories that people, especially farmers, like to read; and provide them with knowledge they can apply to their operations. Today, on-line annual subscriptions are available for a fee.


The Furrow





## Marketing — Doug Wenzel

As I ponder what to write for this issue (this is a slow period for marketing,) I also wonder what advertising was like in 1800s America. As it turns out, the Messer-Mayer Mill was built during a period of revolution in marketing and advertising.

A little background: In the eighteenth century, many American colonists enjoyed imported British consumer products such as porcelain, furniture, and musical instruments. Advertisements in colonial America were most frequently announcements of goods on hand, but even in this early period, persuasive appeals sometimes accompanied dry descriptions. Benjamin Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette was one of these exceptions, reaching out to readers with new devices like headlines, illustrations, and advertising placed next to editorial material.

Most newspapers, however, never printed ads wider than a single column and generally did without illustrations and even special typefaces. Magazine ad styles were also restrained, with most publications segregating advertisements on the back pages. Equally significant, until late in the nineteenth century, there were few companies mass producing branded consumer products. Patent medicine ads proved the main exception to this pattern. In an era when conventional medicine seldom provided cures, manufacturers of potions and pills vied for consumer attention with large, often outrageous, promises and colorful, dramatic advertisements.

In the 1880s, industries ranging from soap to canned food to cigarettes introduced new production techniques, creating standardized products in unheard-of quantities. They needed new ways to find and to persuade buyers.

National advertising of branded goods emerged in this period in response to these profound changes in the business environment. Along with the manufacturers, other businesses also turned to advertising. Large department stores in rapidly growing cities, such as Wanamaker's in Philadelphia and New York, Macy's in New York, and Marshall Field's in Chicago, also pioneered new advertising styles. For rural markets, the Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward mail-order catalogues offered everything (including the kitchen sink) to Americans who lived in the countryside. By one commonly used measure, total advertising volume in the United States grew from about $200 million in 1880 to nearly $3 billion in 1920.

You and I have grown up surrounded by advertising of all sorts, in broadcast and print media at first and now via the internet. It was only a few generations ago that people were forced to live without helpful advice from Mr. Clean, Tony the Tiger, and Ronald McDonald. How did they manage?

## Membership — Dorothy Marks

**In regard to members, we gained twenty-eight new memberships in 2022! If you have not renewed your membership for 2023, this will be your last newsletter. So, be sure to send in your renewal.**

We did it! We turned the Horse Shed into a very nice boutique. We were given the "green light" by Al, Pete, Quint, Herb, Sharon, Marge and Susan S. They believed in us. It began with the nice men from the Thursday crew who removed the wood and lumber from the shed. Then, we needed a nice rustic sign for the front. Dennis Schmitt came to the rescue. It is perfect, and it was hung on a beautiful iron bracket that was made for us by Kathy in the Blacksmith Shop.

In the Spring and Summer, we lined up nine vendors and formed an agreement whereby we would work together on a 25% / 75% basis. The day before the Thresheree we set up six tables and skirted them with patriotic banquet table wrap and covered every table with a red tablecloth. Our theme was patriotic, inside and out. Ideas throughout the Spring and Summer from our teammates Ruth, Susan, Mary, Debbie, Eileen and Carol were all implemented. Also, during the Summer we created a recipe book that contained recipes only that called for maple syrup. The books turned out very nice thanks to Susan.

Our vendors provided us with wonderful items. Patrick, an RHS member, makes beautiful wood quilt squares for barns. He was nice enough to create for us small ones for garden sheds. We had unique note cards that are done by T. A. Siegel Photography, lovely pottery items by Nancy and three different styles of jewelry; antique looking jewelry designed by Michelle (Celestial Day Spa) and unique jewelry designed by Kayla who is part of the Blacksmith Shop. Her jewelry is made from nails that are used in horseshoeing. We also had a donation of nice jewelry from a member (Liz), which included pieces she purchased in her travels to foreign countries. One of our LWC members and teammates makes soaps and knits beautiful socks, mittens and hats, all of which sold like hot cakes. Our seamstress/quilter from Plymouth donated her beautiful items which were dinner napkins, placements, purses, tote bags and much more.

Then, outdoors we had our farm/garden produce tent. That included items from the "Silver Maple Farm" and honey products from the "Bee Blessed Honey Farm." Quail eggs and peacock feathers were also available. One of our good members, Molly, took care of the farm/garden tent all day for us. That was much appreciated. Kathy, from the Blacksmith Shop, donated lovely items she created. We LWC members baked items containing maple syrup, and we received wonderful baked items from Sweets 'n Stuff (Daryl). We sold out long before Sunday.

To top it all off, we designated one table to RHS. We had a beautiful white Christmas tree with red and blue lights that Ruth loaned us. On that tree we displayed the beautiful RHS ornaments that were made by the Slinger Middle School students. We sold T-shirts, caps, maple syrup, maple syrup cruets, our maple syrup recipe books and lye soap made by Susan from the Pioneer Homestead.

Being that the baked goods are so popular, we want to add coffee to our 2023 venue. We also will be recruiting volunteers since Mary, Debbie, Susan and myself stayed with the boutique all day for both days.

There aren't enough words to express our appreciation to everyone who played a part in achieving this success, and for a first try. After all was said and done, the hard work was fun; and we ended with a nice profit for RHS. If this sounds like fun, feel free to join in with us since we are going to do it again.

## Mill House — Cindy Schmechel/Clara Birkel

Twenty-twenty-two was a great year at the Mill House. Thanks to all of our volunteer tour guides and helpers and to those who visited during the events when the Mill House was open for tours. We entertained almost

600 guests at the "Victorian Funeral" display in the formal parlor of the Mill House during the Thresheree. We hope that our guests enjoyed learning about the traditions of funeral practices during the Victorian era and enjoyed seeing our lovely decorated parlor with the vintage Victorian wicker display casket. We hope to surprise you all with an equally interesting special display for the 2023 Thresheree.

We also mourn the loss of our wonderful benefactor, daughter of George and Martha Mayer, dear Carol Mayer Woods. She was the last child that was born in the Mill House, was a treasure trove of memories and a lively, beautiful lady. She would entertain us for hours with her stories of what it was like growing up in the Mayer household.

Thanks to Carol and her husband Bob Woods, the Mill House has received many original pieces of furniture and other artifacts over the years that belonged to the Mayer family. They certainly add to the history and authenticity of the historical old house. She was a wonderful lady, a treasured friend to the Richfield Historical Society and will be greatly missed.

In the coming year, the Mill House will receive a make-over of sorts, with new paint and repairs to the outside of the house. By the time the job is finished, it will look as beautiful as it did in its heyday. We are looking forward to seeing the house shine again and hope you will stop by during our events to take a look. We look forward to a new year of greeting new guests as well as old friends.

## Mill Restoration — Al Mayer

Welcome to 2023!

It was 150 years ago this year that the Messer Mayer Mill began producing flour in the town of Richfield. Obviously the Mill didn't have all of the equipment that it has acquired since, but what it does still have is the original and complete process that made wheat into flour in 1873.

**George Mayer on the Mill Platform**

When the Mill was built, it originally had two sets of millstones on the Miller's platform. One of the sets was disassembled and replaced with a roller mill which was also removed prior to RHS acquiring the property. Many parts, from the removed grist stone, are still in the Mill, including the hoist, the wooden cover "hoop," and even the set of stones that were taken out of service! These items are an asset to our tours and help to illustrate some of the inner parts of the intact, original gristmill operation.

The bolter, elevator, and bagging area are also of the original milling operation. An interesting observation when studying the workings in the Mill is that the integrity of the system installed in 1872 is still intact as its own process. Wheat ground today through the millstones will go up the same elevator, through the same bolter, and into the same bagging area as 150 years ago.

With the rebuilding of the Engine Shed and the machinery inside of it, we're working towards the day that we can operate the millstones the way they were run so many years ago. Our hope is to have the Superior engine running this fall, and possibly operating some of the equipment in the Mill.

If you would be interested in helping to make this a reality, please contact Al Mayer at 262-909-0129, or visit the Park on a Sunday, between 10 and 2. We'd be glad to see you!

## Pioneer Homestead — Susan Sawdey

### WHY LIVING HISTORY? For the kids of course!!

For far too many years, memorizing places, names, and dates was the way to "learn" history. Instead of being taught in a way that allowed students to immerse themselves in the time period being studied and that helped them feel a connection with historical figures, history students have been fed lists and facts to be committed to memory.

Living history is not solely a retelling of historical facts. Its importance lies more in presenting children and visitors with a sense of a way of life and recreating events and activities accurately. I have always seen "Living History" as "Hands-on History," an opportunity for the reenactor and those observing and participating to learn what life was like, how things were made, what people ate, what people wore, and how life was lived. Basically, it's a way to portray those things you can't learn from a book. Living history is a chance to dress up and learn by doing and a chance to teach others using techniques that were used long ago.

The Pioneer Homestead provides the chance to share what we have learned with people of all ages and cultures. This is the best part of the idea of living history, sharing the past and how things were done. It gives our visitors, both young and old, context to the life that was lived and how things have changed in the modern era. The biggest compliment I receive while interpreting the log cabin at the Pioneer Homestead is when a child asks me, "Do you live here?" MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

It's not a surprise that people have come from all around the great state of Wisconsin, a multitude of states and other parts of the world to attend our events at the Richfield Historical Park.

RHS is proud to have wives, husbands, children and grandchildren at our sides "living" history! Join us at our 2023 events.




**Pioneer Homestead**
**Thresheree 2022**

## Project Coordinator — Al Mayer

Back into the throws of another winter season. Time to recharge and reflect on the accomplishments of the year now behind us, and look to the new year ahead.

We've been able to address a number of items on our 2022 "to do" list, some of the more noticeable projects include painting buildings, clearing trees, and further progress on the Engine Shed.

We've completed new storm windows for the Mill House and Welcome Center. A new water tank was added to the garden. We were also able to get a fresh coat of paint on the Outhouse and the Horse Shed this Fall, as well as the Table Trailer. In the new year, we plan to continue the on-going task of removing dead timber in the Park. Many hours have been spent in the last few years cutting and splitting the abundance of dead ash trees, which has helped to keep our wood supply stocked for making maple syrup. Presently the ramp to the Welcome Center is being reconstructed by our members to provide better access to the building.

The crew that gathers every Thursday at 8:00 a.m. has worked at improving elements of the Park each week. All of the work that is done in the Historical Park is done through volunteers giving of their time and appreciation of this property. Anyone is welcome to come out and see what we're working on and join in and help if you so choose. We look forward to meeting you!

## Volunteer Coordinator — Sharon Lofy

All of the Richfield Historical Society's 2022 events were very successful. Our Society has great committee chairs for all of our events. The events are well planned. Their plans are well carried out by Richfield Historical Society's great volunteers. Our hats go off to all the helping hands that chair, plan and carry out the plans for our many events.

So keep our events in mind. I'll be calling for a helping hand. I realize that not everyone can help. Maybe you know of someone that likes to volunteer. Invite them call me or let me know how I can get in touch with them. Thanks again. We are looking forward to presenting these events again this year (Maple Syrup Family Day, Art at the Mill, Thresheree & Harvest Festival, Blacksmith Hammer In, and Fall Luminary Hike.)

Let's not forget about one of Richfield Historical Society's other fund raisers. Nehm's Greenhouse (not Floral) will again partner with us for our annual 2023 Plant Certificate Sale. $25 and $15 certificates will be for sale. In April, you will receive an email containing information and an ordering form. Certificates are good for the months of May and June. If you do not receive information, please call me 262-297-1546. Also, if you need extras after ordering, let me know. Richfield Historical Society receives about a third of the certificate sales. Share your order information with neighbors and friends. The certificates make great gifts.

## Our 2023 Events

**Maple Syrup Family Day:**
**Saturday, March 25, 11-4**

**Art at the Historical Park:**
**Saturday, June 17, 10 - 4**

**Thresheree & Harvest Festival**
**Saturday & Sunday September 16-17, 9-5**

**Blacksmith Hammer In**
**Saturday October 7, 9 – 4**

**Luminary Walk:**
**Saturday November 4, 5-8**

## 1873 EXTRA EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT .... *Messer Mayer Mill Celebrating 150 years*

**Travel back to 1873 with the Richfield Historical Society as Andrew and Louisa Messer began operation of their grist mill, the very same Mill located at the Richfield Historical Park today.**

**Andrew was in a great position in 1873 as the Second Industrial Revolution was underway. Recognizing the potential offered by the cash crop, wheat, Andrew completed the construction of the grist mill (grain mill) at the perfect time.**

**As local farmers dropped off their wheat, current news (and gossip) was easily shared...Imagine...**

**In the East, Ulysses S. Grant was beginning a second term as President of the United States and P.T. Barnum's circus, The Greatest Show on Earth, debuted in New York City.**

**In the West, the Indian Wars continued West of the Mississippi and regular cable car service began on Clay Street in San Francisco.**

**Meanwhile, Coors Brewing Company began making beer in Golden, Colorado. (*Milwaukee beer giants: Pabst, Schlitz, Blatz, Miller and Gettleman had been making beer in Milwaukee for about 20 years already!*)**

**Horse and buggy had become the most popular mode of transport for Andrew, Louisa and other residents. Although railroads were growing in popularity throughout the 1800s, by 1873 the rail boom was in full swing.**

**As train lines expanded people were moving even further west to settle and farm the open land. The railroad also gave people access to different types of food. People were gaining access to foods they never had before. People on the East Coast suddenly had access to oranges from California, beef from Wyoming, and fresh milk.**

**And Aaron Montgomery Ward started a mail-order business by publishing a catalog that featured appliances, furniture, and clothing. It quickly took off and became a popular means of retail for people like the Messer family in the 1870s.**

**Our Messer Mayer Mill will have its 150th birthday in 2023. Watch for details on the summer celebration we are planning in your next newsletter or the RHS website.**

**MESSER MAYER MILL**

**150 YEARS**

**RECEPTION**
**COMING SUMMER 2023**