



Richfield Historical Society
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richfieldhistoricalsociety.org

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Mill House
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Spring/Summer 2022
V25N2

Gehl Company by Herb Lofy

At the 2008 Thresherec the Richfield Historical Society featured the Gehl Company, headquartered in West Bend Wisconsin. Gehl was primarily known as a short line farm equipment manufacturer specializing in agricultural material handling equipment. In other words, they manufactured feed and manure handling equipment for the farm livestock industry. Naturally, some of this equipment served construction, landscape and other businesses as well.



Gehl Tent at the 2008 Thresherec

The company roots go back to 1859 to the Louis Lucas Foundry located on what was then known as River Street in West Bend. Originally the business was established for local needs; mostly farm implement repair. Lucas sold the business in 1873 to Jacob Young and John Kunz. In 1878, Young and Kunz brought Charles Silberzahn into the Lucas Foundry as a partner.

Silberzahn's mechanical expertise led to the development of the first commercially produced Hexelbank feed cutter in 1889. Silberzahn and his sons bought out the original Lucas Foundry investors in 1890 and incorporated the business as the Silberzahn Manufacturing Company. This was the forerunner of the Gehl Bros. Manufacturing Company.

Silberzahn's timing could not have been any better. Since the fourth quarter of the 1800s, Wisconsin was transitioning into a dairy industry. There now was a need to process crops for livestock. Corn especially needed to be cut into small pieces to make it palatable to cattle. Silos were also becoming popular in the early 1900s to store chopped fermented feed.

In 1902, John Gehl along with partners Henry Thoma and Peter Berres. took over the Silberzahn Company. By 1904-05, John's brothers Nicolaus, Michael and Henry Gehl bought out the previous partners; and in 1906, the company's name was changed to Gehl Brothers Manufacturing Company.

Through the years, the company survived a major fire in 1906 and the ups and downs in the agriculture economy. World War I brought record prosperity to the ag sector; but by 1920, the boom evaporated leaving terrible years to follow through the early 20s. Then the Great Depression hit in 1929. During this period, the Gehl Brothers weathered the period by continually improving and expanding their line of equipment. The ensilage cutter continued to be the flagship implement through the 20s and 30s. However, manure spreaders were included in 1927 and hammer mills in 1929. In 1932, Gehl Brothers started to manufacture coal stokers for the residential market. The next generation of Gehl's joined the business in the 30s and 40s.

A major step forward in farm labor saving equipment came in 1942 with the development of the flywheel cut forage harvester. This came at the time of the labor shortage caused by World War II. Although the initial choppers, built in 1942-43, had some problems and were recalled and rebuilt, the machine became very successful, replacing the ensilage cutter.



1948 Gehl FH48 Forage Harvester.



1956 Gehl SP80 Self - Propelled Chop All Forage Harvester.

The Gehl chopper continued to improve thru the decades. In 1968, Gehl introduced cylinder cut harvesters. This was a major move forward in feed processing. Gehl marketing and sales guru Terry LeFever hit the road throughout the mid-west demonstrating the unit and eventually moved market share from 7% to 25% in ten years. It was at this time that Gehl Brothers Manufacturing became known as the Gehl Company. Gehl expanded domestic manufacturing capability, opening a plant in Madison, South Dakota to produce skid loaders and round balers in 1973.

Was restored by retired Gehl employees. Not running when we received it. Engine restored by Dave Becker (Dave's Repair Allenton, WI). Driven by Ralph Wiedmeyer, former Gehl Employee.

The 1960s through 1990s saw an incredible change on the farm landscape. Gehl's market share relied heavily on what was the backbone of American feeder livestock and dairy agriculture – the medium sized farms. Basically, the 30 to 100 cow dairy farms and several hundred to a thousand head beef farms were important to Gehl. As was evidenced with the poultry and hog industry, bigger was now where farms were headed. Although Gehl had developed a very

successful line of skid loaders and other construction equipment along with expanding the production capacity in the US and over seas, the decision to exit the farm equipment line came in 2006. However, there are still tens of thousands of Gehl agricultural machines in use around the world.

(I wish to acknowledge the Gehl history information contained in this article is from a 2008 book by Bill Beck entitled "Three Generations of Success." I highly recommend this publication to people interested in local history and the Gehl Company.)

Gehl was among the largest employers in SE Wisconsin for many years. In its heyday, three shifts employed over 1200 people at the West Bend plant, adding untold wealth to the local economy. A huge inventory of various Gehl implements ready for shipping was always staged along South Indiana Avenue where the manufacturing plants were located. You could be guaranteed to see semi-trailers hauling equipment whenever visiting West Bend. My father-in-law, Sylvester Weis, worked at Gehl for close to 40 years, retiring in 1981. Sharon worked there from 1969 until our marriage. Her brother Ron had employment there during his college years. The local connection to the Gehl Company runs deep.

This gives a background into why the Richfield Historical Society was fortunate to showcase Gehl equipment at the Threshere. Thanks to the foresite of Terry LeFever and several Society members, RHS has acquired a significant collection of Gehl machinery dating from the early 1900s thru the 1960s. This in part is because Gehl Company was sold to the Manitou Group, a French equipment manufacturer in 2008. The implements we received in 2009 were extra museum items that Gehl Company had collected over the years. Some of the items would probably have been scrapped if another organization or individual could not be found. **Equipment donated included a self - propelled forage harvester, pull type chopper, several feed cutters, and hammer mills. There were a total of 12 farm implements donated to RHS by the Gehl Company along with numerous slides, photos and several totes of historical Gehl promotional movies.**

Our collection of Gehl farm machinery is typically displayed annually at the Threshere. A museum building with timber frame character would be an excellent way to display much of this collection along with numerous other donated items on the second floor. The first floor or basement would accommodate a meeting room and a substantial area for a controlled environment area to store historic documents and important artifacts. The building would also create an area for support equipment for a well. This would also lead the way for eventual restrooms. The Society has been offered a local historic barn that could be moved to the Park. Location of this addition to the Park has become an issue that hopefully can be resolved. It is important to position this building correctly for the role it will play in the overall layout of the historic site.

The Seventh Son by Harriet Earling Dake

Excerpted from the first chapter in the biography of Albert J. Earling, third president of the Milwaukee Road, written by his daughter and was published in issues of CREATIVE WISCONSIN.

Many times I have heard my father tell of the first time he saw a railroad train. He was among the boys, in the summer of 1863, who sat perched on the rail fence along the newly laid tracks of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. They were waiting for the iron horse which was to make its first trip from Milwaukee to Rugby. Eagerly, he kept his intense blue eyes toward the east following the shining tracks as far as he could see.

For a year now, he had watched the crews of men preparing the road bed, laying ties and finally driving the heavy spikes to hold the iron rails in place. His mother had drawn from memory the picture of a steam engine, and he had watched as she made big round circles to show the clouds of black smoke belching from the funnel-shaped stack. But still, he could not imagine how it would look nor how a man could keep it on the narrow track. He had watched with equal puzzlement, the telegraph poles rising to take their places, one after the other, and had questioned the linemen about the

wires they were stringing on the cross pieces-and the carried-messages which had some obscure connection with the movements of the trains.

Occasionally he turned to look at the crowds gathering round the tiny new station house, for the mayor had declared a holiday for the occasion, and all the stores and schools were closed. The Town Constable waited here and there, admonishing people to stay well back, which they were doing anyway, for few of them had ever seen a train. As a loud whistle sounded in the distance, farmers grabbed their horses, mothers clutched their children; and he gripped the rail. The roaring, burning monster bore down toward them; and in fear, the boys fell backward off the fence- all except one- Adelbert Oehrling, his heart beating with the rhythm of the puffing snorting engine as it slowed down for the stop. Then he followed the curious people through the cars, marveling at the seats, the real glass in the windows and the hanging kerosene lamps. As he left, a man tapped him on the shoulder.

"Sonny," he said, "You better plan to be a railroad man when you grow up. It's a thrilling life."

At the station house, he peeked through the window to look once more at the clicking keys of the telegraph instrument, and wondered again how messages could be transmitted to the paper the station master was handing to the conductor. This young man, only slightly older than he, was station master, train dispatcher and telegraph operator, all in one. He made up his mind to ask him how this happened.

As Adelbert headed toward his home in Richfield, two miles up the track, he seemed to be in step with that insistent clickity-click and throbbing in his head were the words- plan to be a railroad man. Plan to be a railroad man, he thought bitterly, as his pulse slowed down to the weary trudge of his feet. He was sixteen now, and his father had apprenticed him to a cobbler. Whatever decisions Constant Oehrling reached for his ten sons, were irrevocable and final.

Albert J. Earling, the son of Charles and Elizabeth Earling, was born at Richfield, Wisconsin, on January 19, 1848. In 1866, having received a common school education, Mr. Earling began his career with the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company as a telegrapher. He advanced through various positions with this company and became president of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railroad Company, 1899-1917, and chairman of the board, 1917-1919. He was the moving spirit in the extension of the Milwaukee Road from the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast.

In 1871, Mr. Earling married Margaret Peebles. Their children were Harriet, George P., and Sherburn M. Mr. Earling died on November 10, 1925.



**Albert J. Earling - President
Milwaukee St. Paul Railroad
1899 - 1917**

President

Pete Samson

This year began with our very successful 25th Anniversary Celebration. It was wonderful to see those of you who were able to celebrate with us, from founding members to distinguished guests, local leaders and friends of the Park. The other 25th anniversary events planned for this year will include a new event we are calling Behind the Scenes Day, that will take place in July. Members will be able to see some unique spaces throughout the various park buildings not open to the general public. And in October, we are adding a Blacksmith Hammer-In Day. I know you will enjoy both of these new events.

We recently held our annual Maple Syrup Family Day (MSFD.) For the first time, we offered an all you can eat pancake breakfast. This event turned out better than we could have imagined. We served over 325

individuals and was so successful we will be doing it again next year. Thank you to all the folks who stood in line for 30-45 minutes in 27 degrees, just to enjoy our breakfast.

Although the sap did not run as we originally expected, as of this writing it definitely caught up in April. Our crew has been working overtime to make our award-winning syrup.

I always look for more ways to involve our members in activities in the Park. Our Thursday crew is always busy working on some project that will improve the Park. No matter what your background is, just show up at 8:00 a.m. on any Thursday, and we will welcome you to our crew.

I would also like to thank everyone who helps make the Richfield Historical Society such a great organization.

2022 Maple Syrup Season by Del Schmechel

The sap flow year got off to an extremely slow start. This is most likely due to lower-than-normal moisture last year combined with no snow cover. Maple trees have a very shallow root system that may only extend 24 inches deep. Without adequate snow cover, the frost can freeze the roots solid. Sap should be drawn up from the roots and into the trunk and limbs when the temperature falls below freezing that is if the roots aren't frozen solid. Under normal conditions, this sap descends the trunk and fills our sap bags when the temperature is about 40.

There are many variables that affect sap production. For the most part, they are out of our control. Such as temperature, rainfall and snow cover. It is also necessary to accept that our trees are part of a natural forest where the trees are somewhat crowded together. This means that these trees have to compete for ground water, nutrients and sunlight, all factors that affect tree health and sap production.

Last year we finished our 7th and final batch of syrup on April 1st. This year we only collected sap 3 times before March 30 allowing us to bottle one batch. Surprisingly, the sap started flowing on March 30 when we collected 144 gallons. We collected an additional 166 gallons of sap on March 31st. We will continue to collect sap and process it as long as the trees cooperate



Typical Maple Syrup Crew (photo 2016)

(left to right) Jeff Watson-Bocher, Dave Derrick, Del Schmechel, Dave Reich, Pete Sampson, Jerry Perkowski, George Piontek

Blacksmith Shop

Kathy Lauenstein

Tools in the Blacksmith Shop - What are they called?

Tongs - Tongs are used to manipulating hot pieces in and out of the fire. When the stock is hot, tongs of the appropriate size and shape are used to firmly hold while working - Box Jaw, Flat Tong, Wolf Jaw and Round Tong, to name a few.

The Vise - The Post Vise, also called a Leg Vise or a Blacksmith Vise, is designed to take the shock and force of forging. The leg sends the force to the ground.

Forming Blocks – The Swage Block has a series of graduated concave spaces. These spaces can also be used to form sheet and bar, hot or cold. The Block is pierced with holes. In addition, many Swage Blocks have dished depressions on one or both faces. These are for sinking sheet metal to make such forms as ladles and spoons and bowls. In the RHS collection, the Shop has Top and Bottom Hammer Swages to work with but no Forming Block. Many times the smith will bend or sink metal in other things to get the job done. Come and stop in to see the smiths at work and visit us at the Blacksmith Hammer - In Mill Day in July.

Collections

Deanna Einwalter

It is feeling like Spring, and we received a few nice items this year already.

Doll - Centuries of doll making have left us with some wonderful examples of the beloved playthings of our European ancestors made of wood and leather, papier-mache and eventually bisque porcelain. Before World War I, Europe was the doll-making capital of the world; and beautifully crafted bisque-head dolls with wooden or cloth bodies came from such companies as Armand Marseille.



This spring we received a beautiful Armand Marseille doll, an early 1920s doll that was donated by the Nelson family. The doll's head is made of bisque porcelain, and the body is a composite (mixture of saw dust and glue.) Her arms and legs also articulate.

Laubenheimer Descendants - An ice cream churn, cabbage slicer and sausage stuffer were donated by Gary and Sharon Breitenbach and were from his grandparents Helen and Clarence Laubenheimer, brother of Robert William Laubenheimer from the Laubenheimer's Garage.



Back in the day, this country was vastly agricultural, and many families lived off the land, cultivating their own vegetables and herb gardens and raising the own livestock and poultry. They would have used the milk from their livestock to make ice cream. The cabbage slicer and sausage stuffer were also a staple in the household to can their own vegetables and make their own sausage. . . we thank all the wonderful people in our community that donate items and help us provide a great place to learn our culture.

Education

Kathy Weberg

In spite of Covid, the Education Committee is doing its best to keep up with its spring offering to area schools of our Education Day(s.) Two years ago, our two education days were canceled, and last year we had one school attend with many restrictions. This year, we are somewhat back to normal with three schools opting to attend a full day on May 19.

When changes need to be made out of necessity, sometimes we find that many times they actually work out better. So this year, students will be sifting flour outside the Mill to get a hands-on perspective of what actually happens

in the Mill albeit on a much bigger scale. Each session will be a little bit longer thus enabling more information to be dispensed and/or explored.

If anyone is interested in observing just what is happening on this day, please feel free to come out to the Park at 9 a.m. Do give me a call first: 262-628-0252.

Event Coordinator

Daryl Grier

Maple Syrup Family Day - Comments from Various Maple Syrup Family Day Chairs

Cold and windy.... BUT....it made no difference to the many people who came to Maple Syrup Family Day. At the Historic Park, attendees learned about life's activities of long ago.

After a fun ride on the people mover to the north end of the Park, inside the Lillicrapp Welcome Center visitors viewed a recreated general store. Historic photos of Richfield in the History Room as well as the display in the General Store took the visitors back to the end of the 19th and early 20th century Richfield. In addition to the displays, the attendees expressed a great deal of interest in the house itself and the story of how it was moved to its present location in the Richfield Historical Park

The Pancake Breakfast, a new addition to Maple Syrup Family Day, was a hit with many more people than had been estimated in advance. The line was long while hungry visitors waited for their stack of pancakes drizzled with 'real' maple syrup and a side of sizzling sausages. The wait was worth it! RHS learned a lot in this first time event and promises faster delivery next year.

Visitors, young and old, consumed hot dogs, hot cocoa, chili and homemade goodies near the Sugar Shack and Granary. Maple cotton candy, the signature treat of the Richfield Historical Society, again proved to be very popular and entertaining to see it being made. An additional benefit, it is much less sticky in March than in the summer time.

Inside the Sugar Shack, the wood burning sap evaporator was bubbling, filling the Sugar Shack with steam. Mother Nature provided enough sap to produce syrup that was all sold. Later in the next week, the sap started running again, and we produced much more of that wonderful syrup. You can pick some up most days at the Sugar Shack or at the Community Program on April 28th.

The Pioneer Homestead was bustling with activity for all ages. Lard rendering started with young people helping grind pig fat, which was then cooked down in a large outdoor rendering cauldron over a wood fire. Next, the fat was ladled into crocks where it solidified into lard. Soup bones and root vegetables cooked over an outside open fire developed into a historic soup or stew. Back inside the log cabin, you were greeted with the smell of fried chicken. Meanwhile, the kids were churning butter at the kitchen table. Homemaking tasks included wool being carded and then spun into yarn. Meanwhile, goats could be heard bleating as you headed toward the log barn. Chickens welcomed visitors into the barn where kids learned to shell and sort beans for our upcoming spring garden planting. The spinning wheel challenged luck and added a fun activity. Perhaps you would win a RHS prize, a bottle of maple syrup or a stuffed Richie the Raccoon. Everyone won something, even if it were only a piece of candy.

Across the road from the Pioneer Homestead, kids participated in a variety of grain processing tasks with the equipment displayed by an RHS good friend, Lavern Schmitz.

The Blacksmith Shop was a flurry of activity with the 'smiths' pounding hot iron and shaping it into hooks and other useful items. What a great way for the younger generation to see how metal tools were made long ago. We had a special visit from a group of visually or hearing impaired people visiting our event.

In the Mill House, a wood fire in the kitchen stove gave the room a cozy feeling as it had for decades past. We enjoyed sharing stories with visitors about the history of the families who built and lived in the House while showing off the beautiful original parlor furniture and the many other original family pieces throughout the House.

Be sure to see the Messer/Mayer Mill, an original example of 19th century technology, with its frequent updates thanks to ongoing labors of RHS volunteers.

Gardening

Vegetable Garden: If you enjoy fresh vegetables the old fashioned way, join our volunteer garden group to help plant, weed and harvest the RHS vegetable garden. Manure will be spread, and it will be tilled prior to planting in late May. We'll have seeds and some plants...tomato, broccoli, squash and others.

I'll contact everyone who is interested in planting a few days before we plant. If you can't be there planting day but would like to have some vegetables, stop by once a week or so & weed & pick.

Communication is very important. So when you get home from the garden, send me an email, or call me and I will let the other gardeners know what needs to be done. For example, I need to know that you weeded the beets and beans but that other things still need weeding, or that you picked the yellow beans but there are lots of green beans.

Flower Gardens: The gardens in front of the Mill kiosk and the area around the Wood Shed have been "adopted." There are other flower gardens that need help, especially around the Mill House and Horse Shed. You don't have to be a gardener; we have folks who can show what you need to pull and what to leave. (As a real plus, you can frequently do this task while sitting down!) Don't worry if you do not know a dandelion from a rose, I'll have written instructions. Note that we need more wheelbarrows and trowels. If you can bring some that would be great. Be sure to put your name on anything that you bring.

On May 18th, 25 Hartford High School students will be at the Park working in the buildings along with the chair of each building. They will also be cleaning up flower gardens and moving mulch. I could use a few more "supervisors" to give them direction, not to do the work but tell them what to do. If you are able to help on planting day at the end of May, weather dependent, or May 18 with the students, or any other time in either the vegetable or flower gardens, contact Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221, dgrier@charter.net

Historic Sites

Quint Mueller/Herb Lofy

It was snowing just as this was starting to be written, but then Spring in Wisconsin can be just a bit unpredictable. Hopefully, Spring will be here to stay by the time you're reading this. As the days warm up and the ground starts to dry, we will be able to address some of the outside projects again.

In the last two newsletters, we talked about the Mill House painting project. The paint analysis process has now been completed, and the results are in. That was an interesting process and will likely be the subject of a future article by itself. Besides the paint analysis, the Mill House painting project is turning out to be much more extensive and expensive than anyone originally envisioned. The two big factors in this are the need to remove the paint down to a bright wood surface for good paint adhesion and the fact the early layers of paint contain lead. This last point is critical from a safety and cost basis. The Messer/Mayer Mill House is one of the star attractions of the Richfield Historical Park, so rest assured that we're looking to preserve this historic building for future generations. The RHS Sites Committee is currently finalizing the plan for this repair project. The next step will be to present it to the RHS board for approval. Stay tuned as this project progresses.

As a parallel project to the painting, we are also looking into upgrading the electrical service to the Mill House. The current electric service entrance is on the exterior of the south side of the house, which makes the painting project more difficult in this area. It's the perfect time to address this. Keep in mind, the Messer/Mayer Mill House was built in the 1800s, with the addition being added about the turn of the century (1900.) Electric service was not part of those original plans. The Sites Committee is putting a plan together for this as well.

What does the Sites Committee do? We hear that question periodically. Well, here is an attempt to answer that question. First of all, the "Historic Sites Committee" is tasked with a wide range of responsibilities. We handle pretty much anything that is outside and in the Historical Park. If that sounds very generic and a bit fuzzy, you're right. It includes everything from mowing the grass and filling potholes to managing a new building project, as well as maintenance of all the grounds and buildings in the Park. The above painting and electrical projects are prime examples. The biggest part of the Sites Committee's responsibility centers around identifying, planning and establishing priorities for the long list of projects that our crews take on each year. Of course, the actual work is handled by our hardworking group of volunteers referred to as "The Thursday Crew." Actually, some of the "Thursday Crew" work on other days as well.

As always, our goal is the keep the Richfield Historical Park in the best condition possible. If you see a project that you might like to help with, please contact our project coordinator, Al Mayer (Al's contact information is elsewhere in this newsletter.) or one of our many volunteers. They'll be sure to put you in touch with the right person.

Library/Newsletter/Programs

Marge Holzbog/Connie Thoma

The Library Committee has made plans for a summertime "Meet and Greet" to be held each Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. each Sunday following the Art Fair to the Sunday before the Threshere, with the exception of the 4th of July weekend. Neighbors, significant donors and new and old members will receive a mailed invitation and follow-up phone call extending an invitation to drop in and enjoy a beverage and treat. The "Meet and Greet" will give the Committee an opportunity to thank our visitors for their interest and support of RHS while adding a little history of the organization its activities and future plans.

Please take a moment to fill and return the enclosed survey- either by mail or electronically. (See enclosed.) We are interested in your thoughts with regard to this newsletter. We thank you.

Please note the May Community Program information on page 14.

LWC Welcome Center

Ruth Jeffords

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

It's that time of year when the grass becomes a sea of emerald and magnificently beautiful flowers suddenly appear – another miracle of life! The Lillicrapp Welcome Center is fortunate to have had many volunteers help with planning, planting, and maintaining our beautiful grounds during the past years. Now that the groundwork has been set, we have discussed plans to expand that beauty. While the flagpole planter has been enhanced with gorgeous geraniums over the years, this year an herb garden is planned for that space. Herbs have many purposes, such as adding cooking flavor or for medicinal purposes. Gardeners also pick and dry the herbs for a variety of crafts such as wreaths, note cards, luminaries, to name a few. By the time of the Threshere & Fall Harvest Festival, you'll be able to see that we've done.



Our Vision



Marketing

Doug Wenzel

Spring is a time when a lot of our marketing efforts go on behind the scenes. We make sure that our upcoming events are all posted in the appropriate online event calendars, so we can be found when people are searching for something fun to do. We update our brochures, and put fresh copies in the Park information boxes.

If you live in one of the three zip codes that comprise Richfield (53076, 53033, and 53017), you should have gotten our direct mail flyer. We use this flyer to reach all Richfield residents with our calendar of events, an outreach for donations, and an invitation to join RHS. Thanks go to Janet Scholl for her excellent graphic design!

Our first event of the year, Maple Syrup Family Day, was a great success despite the imperfect weather. We put a lot of effort into getting the word out in our local media, which helped to draw people in. The hard work of the RHS volunteers at the event will ensure lots of returns in the future.



Direct Mail Flier

I'm looking forward to promoting our newest event, the Blacksmith Day / Hammer-In, to be held October 1st. This will be a lot of fun, with all the blacksmith's skills on display, the historical buildings open for tours, and the Park at its most colorful.

Membership

Dorothy Marks

Thank you to all of our new members for joining the Richfield Historical Society. In 2021, we gained thirty new memberships; and so far, in 2022 we have thirteen new ones. Each year, we may lose a few for various reasons, but we are gaining more than we lose. Not every member is able to become a volunteer, but we are gaining quite a few new enthusiasts. We have members throughout the country, and just recently we now have one from Germany.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the Pleasant Hill Bar and Grill, the majority of our historical picture gallery is now on display. It is very nicely done. Hope you can check it out.

Mill House

Clara Birkel/Cindy Schmechel

Thank you to all of the volunteers who worked so hard to put on a fun and successful Maple Syrup Family Day. The Sugar Shack and Pioneer areas were the busiest areas in the Park, but thanks to the "people mover" we had a good number of visitors come to take tours at the Mill House as well. We had a fire burning in the beautiful old kitchen stove so that we all stayed nice and warm and everyone seemed to enjoy their tours of the House. We had over 150 people visit the House and, as always, we enjoyed meeting every one of them. Some were return visitors and some had never been there before, but they all appeared to really appreciate learning the history of the Mill House and about the families who had lived and worked there many years ago.

We are looking forward to the remaining events of 2022 and sharing the stories of the Mill House families and of some of the interesting places within the Mill House itself. One of those places is the root cellar, accessed

only through a trap door in the floor of the utility room. Long before there was electricity and refrigerators, there was still a need to keep food preserved, cold and safe to eat. So, the root cellar was used as a place to store a harvest-full of vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, turnips, parsnips and other root vegetables, plus it was also used to store cabbage, winter squashes, beets, garlic, onions and a myriad of canned goods. The jars of jams and jellies made by the lady of the house would also be stored there. Sometimes fruits, such as apples would be stored separately due to the ethylene gas they give off which could hasten the over-ripening or even the spoilage of some of the other crops stored nearby. Water, milk, cream and breads could also find a place in the root cellar along with beer, wine or homemade alcoholic beverages. Salted meats would find a place in the root cellar, too. Typically, a variety of vegetables were placed in the root cellar following the autumn harvest.

Many crops keep longest at just above freezing (32 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit) and at high humidity (90 to 95%). The optimal temperature and humidity ranges vary by crop; and some crops keep better at temperatures further above near-freezing, but below room temperature, which is usually 65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Root cellars kept food from freezing in the winter and cool in the summer to prevent spoiling and rotting. We hope to be able to show off our root cellar this year at our "Behind the Scenes" event in July.

We look forward to meeting new visitors throughout this year's events and sharing the story of the Messer/Mayer Mill house and the generations of families who lived there.

Mill Restoration

Al Mayer

The Messer/Mayer Mill tells an interesting story as it exhibits the improvements of the agricultural, mechanical, and intellectual sciences that developed through the life of the Mill. This article explains the mechanical developments used to power the Mill and made it operate.

John Messer and his wife Katharine immigrated from Schwabsburg, Germany to Richfield in 1846; and in 1856-57, constructed a Sawmill which was adjacent to the south-east corner of the existing Grist Mill. The Sawmill was erected over the 500 feet of "canal" that passes by the present Mill House and Mill and had to be dug by hand to connect the pond to the downstream of the creek. Some of that earth was used to create the berm that holds the dam and forms the pond site north of the homestead. The dam was built to store and regulate the height of the water for operating the Sawmill.

Construction skills were crucial to building a wooden dam from logs because of the brutal force that a Spring flood, ice flows, and debris can cause to the structure built to contain them. The height of the water in the pond and raceway afforded the use of a 20' waterwheel to operate the Sawmill. Being the overshot type, where the water would enter the wheel at the top, and the weight would cause the wheel to rotate. The power created is determined by the size of the wheel and the weight of the water each tray could hold. It is said that an undershot wheel was used at a later date. This design used the downward flow of water hitting the tray to force the wheel to turn. This was an advancement that produced faster speeds and more power than the overshot design.

When Andrew Messer built the existing Grist Mill between 1870-73, he employed a newer science of water power called hydraulics. The Leffel turbine installed in the basement housed a 17-1/2" rotor in a case that supplied 26' of water above it and would turn the rotor at 400 rpm to produce 25 horsepower of torque. The water flow was 4,340 gallons per minute, but the flow could also be controlled by a simple hand wheel to adjust to desired operating speeds. This new technology powered both the Grist and Sawmills. These are the same hydraulic principles applied 60 years later in building the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River. The use of the turbine would power the Grist Mill and Sawmill through the life of their operations.

Late in 1893, C. W. Mayer expanded the flour milling operations with the addition of modern roller mills, and bolting equipment; because at times, the sole reliance on water power was a limiting factor on his business.

Two years later, in 1895, he purchased the latest in modern power technology, a 22 horsepower internal combustion engine to assist with the milling requirements, and he built an enclosure to house it. The first engine worked a few weeks, broke, worked a month, must have broken again; because three months after it was initially installed it was replaced by another of the same type. Two months later this engine was removed, and a 35 horsepower 5 ton "Norman" engine was installed and was running in early February of 1897. It is also noted that in the late 1890s there was a steam operated circular sawmill rig located north of the then existing Sawmill building.

The wooden dam was replaced with a concrete dam. The turbine or head race would be replaced; but overall, the water turbine and gasoline engine seem to have been a combination that for many years supplied the Grist and Sawmill with adequate, dependable service.

In December of 1927, rural electrification had reached the area, and electric power now ran a newly installed Burr Mill that would grind cattle feed for the local growing dairy industry.

The Messer/Mayer Mill stands as an historical illustration of the use of power development thru the past one hundred fifty years.

One of our goals at the Richfield Historical Society is to see these systems operating the Mill again. The Engine Shed is soon to be sided, and the components inside are being assembled from existing plans.

We are excited and very encouraged that this vision is moving forward. If you are interested in helping us, contact me at 262-909-0129

Pioneer Homestead

Susan Sawdey

A Women's Work Is Never Done

In a pioneer family, men generally did "men's work" and women did "women's work" unless her husband needed her help bust sod, plant the first crop or work in the field. Women's work included milking cows, raising poultry, laundry (including making the soap,) tending the garden (planting, harvesting & processing,) sewing, knitting (including wool washing, carding picking & spinning,) weaving, mending, preserving, childcare, education, and cooking meals.

At the 2022 RHS Maple Syrup Family Day, our pioneer women made our favorite Finnish meal, Caraway Chicken. Here's a look at the work and time a pioneer woman would have had to put into making a few of the ingredients in our meal.

To make Sour Cream:

Two and a half months before your meal, start making cider vinegar for your buttermilk from apples you picked in the Fall. Add apple peels, water and sugar to a jug and cover with cheese cloth. Let set for about 2 weeks, then strain and let liquid sit for one month.

Four days before your meal, milk the cow. Let the milk set for a day or two, and then skim off the heavy cream from the top.

Two days before your meal, mix milk with vinegar to make buttermilk, then add buttermilk to the heavy cream and let that mixture set for a least a day to make sour cream.

To make Chicken Stock:

In the Spring, make sure to plant carrots, onion and herbs in your garden.

The day before or very early the morning of your meal, butcher a chicken. Gut the chicken, pick the feathers and then cut up the chicken saving everything for later except the backs, tail and neck. Slow cook the neck, back, tail, carrots, onion and herbs for six hours on the stove top while making all your other meals for the day. Strain out veggies, bones and skin to finish making your stock.

Finally, fry your flour dusted chicken in lard (that you rendered yourself.) Add sour cream, chicken stock and caraway seeds. Cook for one and a half hours.

Whew!!! All that for one chicken recipe!

Project Coordinator

Al Mayer

Spring has come back to Wisconsin! Soon plants will be growing and grass will need to be cut.

We've been keeping pretty busy at the Richfield Historical Park over the winter months. Although we had a series of workdays that were too cold to get together, we've been able to take down and remove many of the dead trees and brush around the barn and dam area. This area looks to have a lot of potential. The north driveway too has been cleared of trees that interfere with the power lines. For a while, this will be an ongoing endeavor as ash trees were so prevalent.

As temperatures warm, attention will turn back to stone work on the Engine Shed. The siding also is moving ahead. About half of the new storm windows for the LWC are complete and installed, thanks to the weekly persistence of the guys working on them. This project is nearing completion. Soon there will be a new water tank for the garden and 4 new garbage can receptacles thru out the Park. Last year we started to clean and bleach the cedar roofs that, over time, have built up with moss and lichen. Treating the roofs after cleaning and adding zinc strips will extend their life considerably. This work will resume this Spring also.

We have a great crew of guys that work at the Park on Thursdays at 8 in the morning 'til around noon. They help out on these and a variety of other tasks that arise during the year. If you would like to see what we are all about, stop out on a Thursday morning. If Sundays would work better, we are at the Park from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. You can call or text me at 262-909-0129.

Volunteer Coordinator

Sharon Lofy

Many, many thank yous for purchasing so many \$25 and \$15 plant certificates for our Annual Richfield Historical Society Plant Fund Raiser 2022. This is a great fund raiser made possible jointly with Nehm's Greenhouse. The plant certificates will bring a smile to those who receive them and will make your gardens picture perfect. HAPPY GARDENING!!

Another thank you goes to all who volunteered for the Maple Syrup Family Day. It was cold, but to see so many people in the breakfast line warmed one's heart.

As the months on the calendar flip over, June will soon be here. Art at the Mill will bring warmer weather. The grounds will be filled with many talented artists. Your volunteer talents and time will again be appreciated.

Richfield Historical Society members (renewed and new members) sometimes have questions about how they can get involved. Give me a call (262-297-1546) or contact another member. Committees are always in need of tour guides. The Thursday Crew is very active with maintenance, yard work, etc. Computer work, marketing, genealogy, baking for events and many other opportunities are available. Volunteer opportunities vary with the different events and the everyday running of a great Historical Society.

**ALL ARE WELCOME AT OUR SPRING AND SUMMER EVENTS.
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!**

**COMMUNITY PROGRAM
MAY 26, 2022 7:00 P.M.
FIRE STATION #1 HWY 175**

The presentation for our May meeting is by Mr. Tim Yauck "The Forgotten Hero."

It is the story of Karl Kellner Wisconsin's forgotten hero. Karl's acts of courage, sacrifice and deeply rooted faith. Hear about the tank battles of Spearhead, the workhorse unit known as "Spearhead," the best in the tank armor ranks 3rd Armored Division of WWII.



14th Annual Richfield
Art at the Mill
Art & Fine Craft Fair

Sat. June 18 - 10-4 pm

70+ Talented Artists
Variety of Vendors - Silent Auction
Live Music - Great Food

Free Parking - Admission \$2
(Children 5 & under free)

Richfield Historical & Nature Park
1896 Hwy. 164
Richfield WI 53076

RichfieldHistoricalSociety.org

Many talented artists will be featured at this event displaying their work in the beautiful Richfield Historical Park.



25 Celebrating Years!

Special
MEMBERS ONLY
BEHIND THE SCENES DAY

July 17
1:00-4:00 pm

Sunday

Richfield Historical Park
1896 STH 164
Richfield, WI 53076

This is a new event we are calling Behind the Scenes Day.