Richfield Historical Society
Box 268
Richfield, Wisconsin 53076
RichfieldHistoricalSociety.org

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Native Americans in Wisconsin: Part II
Daily Life -- Late 1800s to Early 1900s – by Susan Brushafer

Part I of Native Americans in Wisconsin focused from prehistoric times to the late 1800s. Part II reconnects us with a focus on various aspects of the Wisconsin Native Americans' daily life from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

During the late 1800s, a Native American in Wisconsin faced turbulence and change. By 1871, most American Indians had been placed on reservations. Treaties with our government were discontinued. "De-Indianizing" became a new focus. The U.S. government created policies to assimilate Native Americans into white society.

The Native AmericanThunderbird Symbol represents power, protection and strength.

The General Allotment Act of 1887 (the Dawes Act) transferred tribal lands from communal properties to individually owned 80-acre parcels. Individuals, not entire tribes, owned the land. "Excess" land was sold to whites. The allotment plan failed badly. When it ended in 1934, tribes like the Ojibwe had lost more than 40% of their homelands.

The Dawes Act was reversed by the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). This act encouraged tribes to form tribal governments, draft constitutions, and provide political bodies that would assert their sovereign rights.

The Menominee, Ojibwe (Chippewa), Potawatomi, and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) were among the original inhabitants of Wisconsin. These Wisconsin Native Americans faced assimilation challenges and did their best to maintain their cultural heritages: languages, and passage of knowledge to future generations. Assimilation is a good place to start our exploration into the daily lives of Wisconsin's Native Americans. It was most prevalent in reservation schools.

Schools

How were Native American children in Wisconsin educated? When we think of the Native American learning process, perhaps what comes to mind are children being taught by elders. Parents may have taught boys hunting and fishing, while girls learned cooking, how to process hides, and how to grow crops.

In the 19th century, first Protestant and then Catholic missionaries operated schools for Wisconsin's Native American children. In addition to mission schools, it was also common for groups of parents to hire someone to teach their children for several hours a day, several months a year, before the development of a public education system.

Between 1887 and 1934, the federal government attempted to mainstream Indians through the policies of assimilation and allotment.

In an article entitled "Key Events That Affected Native Americans in the Late 1800s" and published on www.theclassroom.com, Laura Leddy Turner, June 25, 2018 wrote that reservation schools proved least effective as children were still heavily influenced by family cultural traditions. Local boarding schools also failed to break children's ties to Native American beliefs and customs as families simply moved closer to the schools. She further noted that children could learn at distant boarding schools and cites the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. These boarding schools, which took students far from their western homes, were most effective in disassociating students from their cultures, but most students eventually returned to their reservations.

Tom Torlino – Navajo. As he entered the school in 1882. As he appeared three years later.
Souvenir of the Carlisle Indian School
(Carlisle, PA: J. N. Choate, 1902)

"Indian Youths left behind the familiar world of tribal ways for the unfamiliar world of the white man's school." **- Historian David Wallace Adams**

"An Indian Village" was the name of an article published in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* on November 14, 1886. Its focus was on the Menominee Indian village at Keshena. The article mentions the beautiful location of the government school, the largest structure on the reservation. It included school rooms, laundry, kitchen, dining-room and workrooms for 100 Indian children ages 7 to 20. The children were taught farming, carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing.

In the morning, the children worked on the farm, in the shop, and in and about the boarding-school buildings. The school's farm grew potatoes, corn, turnips, hay, and other crops. In the school building, the girls were employed in cooking, washing, sewing, and keeping the rooms in order. Nearly all the work about the school was done by the children themselves to help them acquire new and practical methods of working, allowing them to become proficient in their industry.

In the afternoon, all children had to be in the school room for book learning. The article talks about the teachers' exasperation in dealing with the younger children who "have never had anything of intellectual creation in their lines of long descent." The more mature students appeared considerably interested in learning and advanced quite rapidly. The government agents who ran schools like these tried to "induce the Indians to engage in agricultural pursuits"; they provided the seeds to help with progress in farming. Unfortunately, when students left school, there were no

law offices, mercantile houses, or clerkships for students to enter, paving the way for backsliding in terms of students' efforts to become self-sufficient.

Foods

During the late 1800s, the Wisconsin Native Americans ate a blend of traditional foods and new items introduced by European settlers. Wild rice was a staple for tribes like the Menominee and Ojibwe. The "Three Sisters" of corn, beans, and squash remained important in their diets. They provided complete nutrition and were considered a sacred gift from the Great Spirit (the Creator.)

Traditional foods included:

- **Wild Rice (Manoomin):** A staple for tribes like the Ojibwe; harvested from the lakes and rivers.

Traditional steps for the preparation of wild rice by Wisconsin Native Americans, late 1800s:

1. **Harvesting** - By hand from canoes, using paddles or sticks called knockers to shake the grains off their stems.
2. **Drying** - Traditionally dried out on birch bark or blankets in the sun. Another method involved drying racks made of green branches where the rice was parched over an open fire, adding a smoky flavor to the kernels.
3. **Parching** - A common practice where wild rice was heated to remove moisture and enhance its nutty flavor. It was sometimes done in a cast-iron cauldron over a wood fire.
4. **Cooking** - Rice was boiled and could be eaten with corn, beans, or squash. Seasonings like meat, grease, or maple sugar were added for flavor. Wild rice could be parched like popcorn as a treat.
5. **Storage** - For long-term storage, processed rice was placed in birchbark containers to keep it dry and safe.

Due to its nutty flavor and chewy texture, wild rice lent itself to a delicious breakfast known as Mahnomin porridge. The name is derived from the Native American word 'manoomin,' which translates as good berry or harvesting berry. The dish is made with cream and maple syrup and can be blended with chopped dried or fresh fruit and nuts.

Did you know? Wild rice is not a true rice. It's a cereal grass that grows in shallow lakes and streams. It ripens from the middle of August to early September.

Three women in canoe harvesting wild rice
wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM119946

- **Corn, Beans, and Squash (The Three Sisters):** Cultivated together and formed the basis of agriculture.
- **Maple Syrup:** Collected from maple trees in early spring.
- **Berries:** Such as blueberries, strawberries, and cranberries, gathered from the forests.
- **Fish and Game:** Including deer, elk, and various fish species from the abundant lakes and rivers.

Foods introduced by European settlers included:

- **Wheat Flour:** Used to make fry bread after being introduced by European settlers.
- **Dairy Products:** Such as milk and cheese; became more common with the establishment of farms.
- **Domesticated Livestock:** Including beef and pork; many Native Americans continued to rely on hunting and fishing.

- **Lard and Sugar:** When the government forced American Indians onto reservations, they were given commodities like flour, lard, and sugar to survive.

A November 22, 2018 Wisconsinlife.org article entitled "Fry Bread" included an interview with resident Katherine Denomie of the Bad River Reservation. She said, "You can make it anywhere. That's why it was good for Indian people because they could make their bread anywhere they were camped at." She continued, "A lot of people don't make it no more by hand. A lot of old ladies do, but not the younger ones." Many years ago, people would make it in a kettle over a fire. Let's have some fry bread with Wild Rice Soup!

Native American Fry Bread

Wild Rice Soup

- 1 cup wild rice
- 4 cups water or broth
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 celery stalk
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 T butter or oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Wild Rice

1. Rinse wild rice and soak in water for 30 minutes.
2. Drain and add to a pot with 4 cups of water or broth.
3. Bring to a boil and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until rice is cooked.
4. In a separate pan, sauté onions, carrots, celery, and garlic in butter or oil until tender.
5. Add sautéed vegetables to rice pot and stir.
6. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
7. Serve hot and enjoy!

www.ricearray.org/editorial/native-american-wild- rice recipes

The Buffalo Hunt: Wisconsin

Wisconsin Native Americans fished and hunted to provide food for their communities. This brings up a good question: In the late 1800s, did Native Americans in Wisconsin hunt buffalo? What do you think? The book entitled *Blood Memory* talks about the 'decline and improbable resurrection of the American Buffalo.' According to authors Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns, "In Wisconsin, bison were once prevalent in the state's prairie and savanna communities. However, they were extirpated from the state by early traders and Native Americans before the first settlers arrived in the 1830s. The last two bison east of the Mississippi River were shot in Wisconsin in 1832." Not having studied the history of buffalo in the U.S., this was news to me. Perhaps it surprises you, too.

Did you know? The American bison, often referred to as a buffalo is, in fact, not a buffalo. Our bison is related to the European bison or wisent, which migrated to North America from Asia. It is not related to the hard-working water buffalo of Asia or the ferocious Cape buffalo of Africa.

Early settlers called these animals "buffalo," and they have been called buffalo by Americans ever since.

American Bison

Dwellings

During the late 1800s, Wisconsin Native Americans lived in a variety of dwellings that reflected their cultural traditions and the changing times. Different building styles were adapted to the local climate and resources available. Bark-covered Wigwams/wickiups were dome-shaped structures made with a frame of arched poles, covered with sheets of birch bark or hides. They were commonly used by tribes such as the Menominee and Ojibwe as places for families to gather for socializing, eating, and sleeping. Depending upon the family size and community, wigwams could hold 10 or 12 people. Larger wigwams, used for houses of worship or as community meeting places could accommodate about 25 occupants. Wigwams were more permanent structures.

Longhouses, used by some tribes were large, long communal living structures that could house multiple families.

Tipis/teepees, the most common home seen in movies and documentaries on Native Americans, were made with a frame of poles and covered with buffalo hides. These were temporary dwellings used by nomadic tribes and hunters who needed to move frequently.

Log cabins were influenced by European settlers. Some Native Americans began constructing log cabins, especially when they were pushed to adopt more sedentary lifestyles due to loss of land and resources.

As noted earlier, the U.S. government pushed for Native Americans' assimilation as the 19th century progressed. Many Native Americans, however, continued to maintain their traditional dwellings alongside or within these new settlements, preserving their architectural heritage as much as possible.

Central Heating?

We may think it's romantic to light a wood-burning fireplace, and it's certainly convenient to adjust a thermostat. How did Wisconsin Native American tribes in Wisconsin heat their wigwams and longhouses? A central fire pit served as a communal area for cooking, eating, and socializing. The smoke from the fire would escape through a hole in the top of the wigwam. The design of these dwellings, with materials like bark that have insulating properties, would help retain heat. The communal lifestyle within these structures also meant that body heat from multiple inhabitants contributed to warming the space.

Season by Season

Tribes like the Potawatomi were semi-sedentary. They subsisted by engaging in a mix of hunting, fishing, gathering, and farming to support their communities. They lived in villages in the summer and separated in the autumn into smaller family groups. These smaller groups moved to winter hunting grounds. The men hunted and fished; the women planted and harvested crops and collected wild plant foods. The following describes the activities that Wisconsin Native Americans engaged in during both warm and cold seasons. The change of seasons dictated the rhythm of life and work for male Native Americans, ensuring that the community was provided for year-round. Summer activities for men included:

- **Farming**
- **Hunting and Fishing** – Native Americans took advantage of the warmer weather to hunt game and fish in Wisconsin's abundant lakes and rivers.
- **Trade** – Summer meant trading; men traveled to trade goods and furs with tribes or European settlers.
- **Cultural Activities** – In Summer, men participated in cultural events, such as Powwows, which involved dancing, music, and social gatherings.

Winter was not the time for hibernating! Men engaged in activities like:

- **Hunting** -- Despite the cold, hunting continued as an important activity to provide food and furs for the community.
- **Craftsmanship** -- They crafted tools, weapons, and other items necessary for daily life.
- **Storytelling** -- Imagine sitting around the fire pit in your wigwam! Winter was a time for storytelling, where elders would pass down traditions and knowledge to the younger generation.
- **Winter Sports** -- Some tribes played traditional winter games like Snow Snake, which is like curling.

November is Native American Heritage month. The 2022 Executive Director of Native American Tourism of Wisconsin (NATOW) had explained that Snow Snake "is an ancient tribal tradition that stretches back thousands of years that people still play to this day. It's really a fun form of competition and community gathering and togetherness that I think people really enjoy in the winter months in tribal communities."

Snow Snake – Home.nps.gov

Wisconsin's Native American women played crucial roles in their families and communities. As with their male counterparts, responsibilities varied with the seasons. Summer activities for women included:

- **Agriculture** -- Women were often responsible for planting, tending, and harvesting crops, particularly the earlier mentioned 'Three Sisters' - corn, beans, and squash.
- **Gathering** -- They collected herbs, berries, and other wild foods that supplemented their diet.
- **Crafting** -- Summer was a time for making pottery, weaving baskets, and creating beadwork for use at home and for trade.
- **Cultural Preservation** -- Women passed down traditions, stories, and cultural practices to the younger generation.

Winter was also a busy time for Native American women, continuing to ensure the well-being of their families and communities:

- **Food Preservation** -- Food was processed and stored to ensure a supply throughout the cold months.
- **Clothing Production** -- Winter was the time for making and repairing clothing and blankets made from animal hides and other materials.
- **Community Activities** -- Women participated in indoor activities that fostered community bonds, such as storytelling and teaching.
- **Ceremonies** -- They took part in winter ceremonies and rituals, which were integral to the spiritual life of the tribe.

Health and Medicine

We may reach into our medicine cabinets when we're not feeling well. We can make an appointment with our doctors. We can even meet with our physicians virtually! How did Wisconsin Native Americans handle health and illness?

Wisconsin Native Americans took a holistic approach to health, incorporating

Medicine Bags

both physical and spiritual practices to deal with illness. They accomplished this variety of ways, including:

- **Herbal remedies** — Medicinal plants and herbs roots, leaves, and barks such as black cohosh, mandrake, apocynum, and spigeliam were often administered by individuals with special knowledge and training.
- **Sweat baths** — Like today's saunas both help to cleanse body and spirit.
- **Spiritual healing** — Prayers, songs, ceremonies, drumming, dance provided spiritual healing.
- **Protective charms** — Flagroot, dogbane, snakewort, milkwort, etc. protected against illness and ensured safety on journeys.
- **Smudging** — Herbs like sage, cedar, and sweetgrass were used to promote healing, balance, and harmony; a smoking smudge wand was used for purification.

Clothing

Traditional clothing styles of Wisconsin Native Americans were both functional and symbolic, reflecting their cultural identity and the resources available to them. Here are key elements of their traditional attire:

- **Moccasins** -- Both men and women wore moccasins made from a single piece of deerskin that had a seam up the back. The most traditional style had a central puckered seam running down the upper front and over the top of the foot.
- **Breechclout** -- Men wore a breechclout, which was a strip of deerskin passed between the legs and over a belt leaving flaps in the front and back. This flap was often decorated with quillwork.
- **Leggings** -- Leggings were made by folding a rectangular piece of deerskin lengthwise. They were often decorated with beaded embroidery or ribbon appliqué, fastened to the belt with deerskin thongs.
- **Robes** -- Deerskin robes were worn in cold weather to provide warmth.
- **Ribbonwork** -- Silk appliqué and ribbonwork were common decorative techniques used on woolen cloth garments. It was particularly popular among the Potawatomi, Menominee, and Ho-Chunk tribes.

Collage of moccasins, leggings, breechclouts, robes, ribbonwork created with copilot.microsoft.com

These clothing items were often adorned with intricate beadwork, quillwork, and other decorations that held cultural significance and showcased the artistry of the people. The use of natural materials like deerskin, fur, and plant fibers was most common, and the styles evolved over time, especially with the introduction of European materials and trade goods.

If Wisconsin Native American clothing interests you, check out this excellent article published by the Milwaukee Public Museum:
https://www.mpm.edu/educators/wirp/great-lakes-traditional-culture/material-culture/clothing

Artistry

The artwork of Wisconsin Native Americans in the late 1800s reflected their rich cultural heritage and deep connection to the land. Some characteristics of that artwork included:

- **Beadwork** -- Beadwork commonly decorated clothing, bags, and other personal items. The designs were intricate and held symbolic meanings.
- **Woodcarving** – Many tribes practiced woodcarving. Carved items ranged from practical tools to ceremonial objects.

  Many of us think of totem poles when we think of woodcarving. In Wisconsin, Native American tribes, such as the Menominee, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and others, totem poles were not traditionally part of their cultural practices. Wisconsin's Native American history is reflected in different ways, such as through effigy mounds, historical sites, and artifacts that date back thousands of years.

Did you know? Some of you reading this article may remember the totem pole that was displayed outside of the Milwaukee Public Museum. It was not part of Wisconsin's history. That was an ancestral pole that had its origins in Haida Gwaii and was brought to Wisconsin.

- **Basketry** -- Each tribe had distinct techniques, patterns, and uses for their baskets. Materials like grasses, reeds, and tree bark were commonly used.
- **Pottery** -- Clay vessels were created for both everyday use and ceremonial purposes. The pottery often featured geometric patterns and stylized motifs. In Wisconsin, the Oneotas, who inhabited much of the Midwest prior to European arrival, were recognized for their distinctive pottery vessels. These were usually globular in form and could have plain or decorated surfaces. The decorations were applied before the clay had fully dried and prior to firing. Oneota pottery was known for being shell-tempered, meaning finely crushed clam shells were mixed into the clay to strengthen the pottery walls, allowing for larger, lightweight, thin-walled vessels.
- **Quillwork** -- Before the introduction of glass beads, quillwork was a prevalent art form. Dyed porcupine quills were woven into decorative patterns on leather and textiles.

Wisconsin Native American artwork was not only beautiful but also served practical purposes and conveyed social and spiritual meanings. With the late 1800s being a time of change for them, their art was one of the many ways they preserved their identity and tradition.

Our story isn't quite finished. Watch for "Native Americans in Wisconsin: Part III, Into the 21st Century."

Art.com, 'Menominee Indian Woman with Papoose'

President & Vice President — Pete Samson/Joni Crivello

Winter is officially over, and the Richfield Historical Society is in full swing of planning for our exciting 2024 event season. Our Thursday working crew has never missed a beat and has worked hard clearing trees, cutting wood, repairing buildings and preparing the Park. The Richfield Historical Museum, behind the Mill House, is getting a refresh along with new lighting. Please take the time during the next event to view this updated exhibit of antiques. The Mill House painting and restoration project officially is completed. The Messer/Mayer Mill House is ready for another 100 years!

Maple Syrup Family Day was well attended despite the snowy weather the day before. We served over 500 pancake breakfasts, hosted an exciting maple syrup contest, and attendees enjoyed eating at our food stands with record numbers touring our historic buildings. The success is due to our wonderful volunteers. It takes over 50 volunteers to host this event.

The dedicated Richfield Historical board members and volunteers enable Richfield Historical Society to offer quality programs and events. Thank you for your support and input. If you are reading this article and wonder how to get involved, please contact RHS via website or phone. We are always looking for new ideas and people to enhance our membership and board.

Visit our park, enjoy the historical buildings, walk the path of the forefathers and enjoy an upcoming special event that offers community and beautiful scenery.

Blacksmith Shop — Kathy Lauenstein

Summer is in the air. Hope you visited the shop on Maple Syrup Day! The shop was filled with some great smiths at work. Plans are to have them at the Thresheree and Blacksmith Day in the Park. Come see these smiths hard at work. If you have any questions, ask them. They can talk about smithing all day.

When you heat metal and you push or twist it in the direction you want it to go, it's amazing how it moves. Come visit us.

Collections — Deanna Einwalter

History of Laundry 1800s

A tub of hot water, a washboard in a wooden frame with somewhere to rest the bar of soap – this is a familiar image of how our great- grandmother washed the laundry. Factory–made washboards with metal or glass scrubbing surfaces certainly spread round the world in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Bars of soap were cheap and plentiful in the late 1800s. Soap, starch and other aids to washing at home became more abundant and more varied. Washing once a week became a norm. Come visit our homestead buildings and museum to see our wash tubs.

Laundry Wash Tubs

Education — Kathy Weberg

Our four traveling trunks have recently received some nifty new additions. Good news and bad news: The bad news is that the General Store Antique Mall in Kewaskum has been sold to Miller Furniture (across the street) and closes at the end of May. The good news is that I have picked up some nice items to add to our traveling trunks at a reduced price (my donation.) Items need to fit into our trunks without a lot of bulk or weight and have a *history* to them that we can share. Residents in senior communities, hopefully, will identify with some of these items and be able to share memories that these items bring forth. Pictured are baby/toddler toys.

Baby & Toddler Toys

Among other items that I found were a cross- stitched apron (remember when we did that!!), salt and pepper shakers (remember when collecting them was a big thing!!), a copper oil can, an actual Spry can to go along with the Spry recipe book. You'd be surprised how many people do not know what Spry is.

We also recently received a donation of a lovely doll from members Joan and Bud Moertl with lots of homemade doll clothes. Thank you – and I am always eager to see what *you* may like to donate to the cause.

Events Coordinator — Daryl Grier

Bakery for Art at the Mill - We serve the artists baked goods, muffins etc. at Art at the Mill. An email sign-up will be sent prior to the event; but if you don't have email and would like to bake, please let me know. They really appreciate our baked goods! We do start serving at 7:00 a.m. so the bakery must be delivered the day before or by 7:00 a.m. June 15th. Daryl Grier, 1179 Wejegi Dr. 262 628-4221

Vegetables - The RHS gardeners enjoyed the fresh produce from our garden last year. If you enjoy fresh vegetables and have an hour or so each week to help with the garden, please join us.

Seeds have been purchased along with red potatoes which we grew for the first-time last year and did they produce! We will also have some plants, tomatoes, broccoli, and peppers. Manure will be spread, and it will be tilled prior to planting in late May.

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.

Events - You can read the articles in this newsletter written by the chairs for each of our events. I don't need to say much about our first event of the year, Maple Syrup Family Day, except to say it was GREAT! There were many comments about the tasty breakfast, fun activities, syrup contest, cotton candy, hot dogs and sweets.

If you have any suggestions or comments about any event, contact Events Chair, Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net .

Silent Auction and Sweets 'n Stuff

If you have been clearing out things that you have not used in a while, the Historical Society can help. At the Thresheree in the Sweets 'n Stuff tent, we sell household items (rummage) including books. Auction items are also needed for the Silent Auction.

Contact Daryl Grier dgrier@charter.net 262 628-4221 or Delores Parsons parsons3@charter.net if you have any questions or would like to donate. We do look at each item and determine if it is best used for the Silent Auction.

Art at the Mill – Saturday, June 15, 2024 – 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Linda Aicher

Art at the Mill 2023

Join us for fun and adventure searching for the many treasures available at the 16th annual Art at the Mill located at Richfield Historical Park, 1896 Hwy 164, Richfield, WI. (1/2 mile north of 164 & 167 roundabout.) This year we will have over 90 talented artists and a few select vendors showcasing paintings, pottery, wood, textiles, glass, metal, jewelry, candles, soaps, jellies, candy plus many more selections.

Included in the $3 admission (children 5 and under free) are wagon rides to and from the exhibit area in addition to admittance to the historical Mill, Mill House and Welcome Center.

Food options will be provided by Richfield Lions. Enjoy your food or a beverage while listening to live music. New this year Richfield's Belshire Brewing will have their craft beer and seltzer available. There will also be soda,

water and ice cream available. Don't forget to check out the Silent Auction Tent to place your bid.

Enjoy a day at the Park exploring all that is offered. Please tell your friends and neighbors about this upcoming exciting day.

Historic Sites — Herb Lofy/ Quint Mueller

The Mill House paint/renovation project is completed. Approximately forty percent of the siding was replaced along with improvements in weather protection. All the window sashes were removed, repaired and cleaned. All work was either done or coordinated by Thoughtful Craftsmen from Milwaukee. They specialize in historic home restoration. Thanks to RHS liaison Tim Einwalter, along with Pete Samson and Joni Crivello, for keeping membership up to date on work as it progressed.

The Sites Committee is now focused on researching roof replacements for the Mill House, Granary and Horse Shed. It was determined with appraisals of roofs in the Park that these were in most need of replacement, and a recommendation will be presented to the RHS board. Tim has applied for a possible Washington County grant to help pay for the roofing projects.

Stephen Baldwin, a board member with SPOOM (The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills), has contacted us and suggested we consider hosting a national SPOOM conference in the future. Stephen and several other SPOOM members attended the 150th celebration RHS hosted at the Park last summer. They were impressed with the Historical Park and our hospitality. The Sites Committee has presented the criteria to the RHS board for consideration. If a decision is made to host, an ad hock committee will be formed to coordinate the event. Anyone interested in serving on this committee or helping with this event please contact the RHS board. This will help us make a decision.

Library/Program/Newsletter — Marge Holzbog/Connie Thoma

Thursday, September 26, 2024 – 7 p.m.
Blacksmithing – Jeff Beegle

Thursday, October 24, 2024 -7 p.m.
Videos of Richfield in 50s and 60s – Sue Schmidt

Thursday, November 21, 2024 – 7 p.m.
Women Who Dare – Jessica Michna

The Library Committee at events will be adding a few table activities in the History Room to insure that our visiting children are kept busy and learn something of the activities children of an earlier day found interesting.

The Library/LWC Committees meet the third Thursday every month at 1:00 p.m. at Fire Station #1. Members report on their various activities such as researching Hartford Newspaper gossip columns, arranging for new swing board displays, planning for outside plantings, etc. We would be honored to have you join us.

LWC Welcome Center — Ruth Jeffords

THE LWC IS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD!

A few updates are planned for the front yard at the Welcome Center. We'll be adding to our flagpole herb garden by adding a few whiskey barrels to highlight the plantings. The barrels will be a positive addition to what is currently planted around the flagpole. Herbs will be identified using attractive, historically informative signposts for each plant.

Another enhancement is the area directly below the front south-facing window near the ramp at the LWC. Many spring bulbs appear there now, but a bit of year-round greenery will also be added such as small Evergreen bushes and Dogwoods. And if space permits, Forsythia and Potentilla bushes will also be incorporated to add a bit of summer color - and all plantings are disease and deer resistant! As space permits, native flower plants will be scattered about which will continue to bring out the beauty of the area. Look for more eye-catching appeal at the Welcome Center during your next visit!

Marketing — Doug Wenzel

Do you have friends? Do you know people? If you answered yes, then RHS needs your help! We're always looking for new ways to spread the word about our coming events. Conventional advertising such as newspaper and radio ads are expensive, and we have a very limited budget. We use social media posts; and these are a big help, but there's a lot more we can do if you'll volunteer a few minutes of your time.

When you see a post on our Facebook or Pinterest site that has to do with an upcoming event, how about reposting it on your own page? That way, our message is spread to your friends and family.

Is there a bulletin board where you work? We post images of our event flyers at our social media sites. How about printing one and posting it at work? (Or contact me, and I'll send you a copy.)

Maybe you are part of a Nextdoor.com group, or there's a homeowner's association where you live. These are opportunities to post our flyers.

We can't spend a lot on advertising, but to paraphrase the Beatles, we get by with a little help from our friends!

Membership — Dorothy Marks

So far 2024 is looking good; we gained six new memberships, and I hope the momentum continues.

Mill House — Cindy Schmechel/Clara Birkel

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the Mill House will once again be open for tours for the Art at the Mill event on June 15th. It has been a very long year of painting, fixing and replacing; but we passed the finish line a few weeks ago, and we are getting excited to be open again. We have lots to do to get the House in tip-top shape inside such as hanging curtains and shades, putting recently acquired family photos on the walls, replacing knick-knacks, displays and furniture to their original spots and just tidying up a bit. We will let our fellow volunteers know if we would like to have any help and the dates we'll be there.

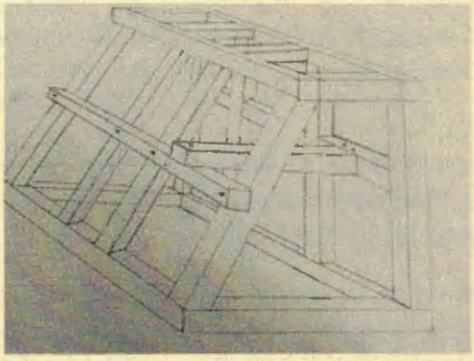
We are also getting our annual display together for the Thresheree, which will hopefully be a lot of fun for the kids. We have done some research about the toys children played within the Victorian era, and we will have lots of things our visiting kids can touch and play with. It will be a fun event, and we hope the kids will enjoy themselves. Stay tuned for more updates and news as we get closer to the event.

Once again, we are looking forward to seeing all of your smiling faces at the Art at the Mill event and to show off our beautifully refurbished Mill House.

Mill Restoration — Al Mayer

The heart of the Messer Mayer Mill built in 1870 are the millstones that grind the raw wheat and transform it into fine flour for baking a variety of nourishing food items. These heavy stones need to be mounted on a sturdy, solid frame that can handle the constant rotating massive weight of the runner stone and the stationary bed stone below it. This frame is made to stay solid, like a good strong workbench, to maintain the accuracy that is needed to mill a consistently uniform, fine flour.

The constant rotation of the stones also create vibration that is transmitted to the building around them that can cause unpredictable weakening of the building itself. For these reasons, the mill stones are mounted atop what is called a hurst frame. This structure is built from massive 12 inch by 12 inch oak beams that can be 12 feet long. They are assembled with a mortise and tenon type union with wooden pegs to keep the structure rigid and stable.



Hurst Frame

The hurst frame is directly below the mill stones, and the millers' deck is built around the top of it. The miller's deck is totally isolated from the frame below it, so there isn't any movement or vibration from the mill stones or the associated gears when the system is operating. Likewise, the hurst frame stands alone directly on the basement foundation and is not structurally connected to any other part of the building so as to eliminate vibration. A few of the timbers that make up the hurst frame in the Mayer Messer Mill are in need of some minor repair, and part of the frame is slightly out of plum which means the posts aren't exactly vertical.

Each of these projects is such a unique learning process of the way machinery of an earlier time was built and brings us closer to the day that we can get the Mill grinding flour like it did 150 years ago.

If you are interested in helping with this mechanical history lesson, stop in at the Park on Sundays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. and check it out!

Pioneer Homestead — Susan Sawdey

Visit the Pioneer Homestead during the 2024 Thresheree to see apple butter being made the "Old Fashioned Way" and read full steps to make apple butter in your next newsletter.

OPEN FIRE APPLE BUTTER MAKING by Leslie Alvis (partial excerpt)

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Good old-fashioned traditions - The skills of past generations were often passed along verbally and through hands-on experience. Children learned the wisdom of their parents and grandparents as they worked alongside them. Sometimes we call the ways of past generations "old fashioned" because they didn't have the modern conveniences we use today. But often the slower ways tied people closer to each other and the rhythms of the earth. This fall our family had the opportunity to experience this firsthand as my husband's grandparents taught us a new skill in an old-fashioned way: making apple butter over an open fire.

Apple butter tradition - Years ago, my husband's grandparents would get together with a group of friends every fall to make apple butter. They peeled the apples by hand—five bushels of them. Then, they gathered together for a full day of cooking, stirring, and canning the delicious results. Several years back, Nanny and Grandpa acquired their own equipment and began teaching their grandchildren the tradition of open-fire apple butter making.

Old-fashioned apple butter - Making apple butter over an open fire is a slow process. Even if you precook your apples to soften them, it still takes lots of hours of stirring and cooking. Peeling bushels and bushels of apples takes a lot of time, too! We spent most of a Friday and Saturday on our apple butter project. But, an important part of the experience is the gift of spending time with friends and family, working and visiting together. We had four generations involved with our apple butter making this year.

In my mind, this is the heritage of doing things "the old-fashioned way." It's slowing down and spending time with your people, learning from each other, and helping each other. Plus, there really is something about the taste of food cooked long and slow over an open fire. No other apple butter tastes quite the same.

Apple butter traditions - One of Grandpa's traditions is for the children to toss a couple silver dollars into the kettle to help keep the butter from sticking to the bottom of the pan. (Nanny says they use two because only rich people can afford to throw more money than that into a pot.) After putting in the silver dollars, our kids raced off to get their own pennies to add to the kettle. At the end of the day, they had some shiny clean copper pennies to remember the day by. They washed off Grandpa's silver dollars, and he slid them back in his pocket for next time.

After all the apples had cooked down and the mixture was smooth, we got to experience another one of Nanny and Grandpa's unique apple butter traditions. Their recipe calls for cinnamon red hot candies to be stirred in for color and flavor. So the kids munched on candies while tossing them into the pot by the handful. I think that may have been their favorite part. (Also, I spared myself the angst of running from store to store, trying to find red hot candies at this time of year. I ordered these off Amazon.)

Finishing the apple butter - After the cinnamon candies comes the sugar, 15 lbs. of it! (That's about 1 lb. per gallon of finished apple butter, so that's not quite as alarming as it sounds!) We stirred it in gradually, then cooked it for a couple more hours.

The girls and my husband took turns stirring, and we drank coffee and hot chocolate while we waited. We also set up a sawhorse table for the finishing assembly line. When the apple butter is finished, it will appear "set up" when you dab a bit onto a glass dish and turn it from side to side. No water runs out from the edges, and it holds its shape. At that point, you add cinnamon oil and stir for another half hour while preparing to can it.

Passing down the traditions - Thank you for letting me share this experience of passing down our family's tradition of making old-fashioned apple butter with you. The process and time spent together are so special to us and our family. I hope our apple butter days are a memory my children never forget and may even want to create with their grandchildren someday. Does your family have any special traditions or recipes they've passed down generations?

Making Apple Butter

Project Coordinator — Al Mayer

This year started with an early Spring that turned into a long Spring. The maple syrup season started early, however, as the daytime/ nighttime temperatures didn't fluctuate enough to cause sap to flow up the trees to produce a bounty of syrup. I understand we made about half of our usual amount during this season.

Quite a few of our Thursday work days included rain or very cold temperatures. We were still able to split into firewood many of the dead ash trees collected in the Park. Quite a few of them we removed were starting to lean over creating a hazard of falling on people or vehicles passing below.

The devastation of the ash bore is still evident while driving though the Park, but the grounds have been cleared of almost all dead trees in the areas where people walk and gather.

We look ahead through the following months to tackle a few essential maintenance items that need to be performed. Some of the buildings need to be treated to resist the powder post beetle, which is a destructive insect that bores holes in wood and weakens the structure. Mainly the barn and the log buildings are due for this treatment.

A few of the roofs need cleaning, and some need replacement. We are presently evaluating and investigating our options and will soon be moving on to performing these projects.

Another note to keep an eye on is the stain finish on the access ramp at the Welcome Center.

Every week on Thursday mornings, volunteers come out to the Park at 8:00 a.m. and work together to accomplish large and small projects that help to improve the Richfield Historical Park.

If you think this is something you would like to be a part of, drive out to the Park on a Thursday morning!! You'll find a group of people somewhere, usually near the Mill House. All are very welcoming folks! We'd love to have you join us!!

Volunteer Coordinator — Sharon Lofy

Thank you for your many purchases of plant certificates for Nehm's Greenhouse Fund Raiser with the Richfield Historical Society. In a few weeks, all the flower plants will be blooming. Also, all vegetable gardens will be starting to produce a variety of delicious vegetables. It's always fun to try a few new varieties and watch them grow. Help get the next generation interested in gardening. Maybe they can be your assistants.

Maple Syrup Family Day is behind us. Thanks again to all who volunteered to make this event grow by leaps and bounds. The Art at the Mill, Saturday, June 15th is the Society's big summer event. This event grows every year. It is maxed out for artist's space this year. Looking forward to seeing you there.

It's never too early to mark your calendar for the Thresheree, September 21st & 22nd. It doesn't seem possible that the Thresheree will mark 25 years this year. (It would have been last year, but Covid gave us a year off a few years back.) Thresheree planning is well under way. The Richfield Historical Society wants the Thresheree to continue to present an educational presentation of an era that coincides with the Messer/Mayer Mill.

Please check with friends to see whether they have an interest in helping at the Society's events. We are always looking for helping hands to help lighten the volunteer load, especially the Thresheree being a two- day event. As events grow, so does the lists of things to do to make the events as successful as they have become.

There are many specific areas that need attention throughout the year. Outdoor maintenance – lawn clipping, flower beds, tree trimming, building repairs, etc. need attention. Indoor displays are changed from time to time to display the many donations that the Society has received. Items need attention and special care when the buildings are open for tours. If you ever have any questions or would like to volunteer, please give me a call (262-297-1546). Thanks again!!