



Richfield Historical Society
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RichfieldHistoricalSociety.org

Winter 2025

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Ringling the Dinner Bell

— by **Susan Brushafer**

Can you still hear your mother announcing by yelling out the back door where the kids were playing: “*Dinner is in one hour! Start to clean up!*” We have some choices when it comes to ensuring dinner or any meal is on our family tables: cook the meal at home, visit our favorite restaurant, stop by a food truck, pick up restaurant carry-out, order from a to-our-home-delivery service. This is ‘Dinner 2025’, enjoying prepared food within an hour of thinking about dinnertime.

This article visits our not-too-distant past: what we ate, how we preserved our food, how we cooked our meals. Many innovations occurred between the Civil War and World War II that transformed how people acquired and prepared food.

Food Sources

Imagine a mother in 1880 asking her family what they would like for dinner. Would mom even ask such a question, knowing that father might have plans to plow the field rather than hunt to put meat on the table? Meal planning in the Civil War era through pre-World War II was not as easy as defrosting the pork chops that were bought at Piggly-Wiggly a week ago.



Putting a Meal on the Table

Hunting was a crucial way to supply much-needed protein in a family’s diet in addition to domestic farm animals such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Reliable sources, depending upon the time of the year and weather conditions, were top of mind for serving nourishing meals.

Deer: hunting deer was widespread and a lean protein source. An average, white-tailed deer, commonly found in Wisconsin, can yield between 40 to 60 pounds of edible meat. This amount varies depending on the size and condition of the deer as well as the butchering talent of the hunter. Larger deer species, like mule deer or elk, can provide significantly more meat. Typically, hunters get 40 to 50 percent of the deer's total body weight as usable meat.

A deer weighing 120 pounds that has been field-dressed might yield around 48-60 pounds of boneless meat. Field dressing that deer can take anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the hunter's experience and the conditions he is working in. 'Field dressing' means removing the internal organs from the animal's body cavity as soon as possible after a kill, allowing the meat to cool quickly and prevent spoilage.

To partially answer the question of whether busy dad would have the time and energy to plow the fields and then hunt and field-dress a deer for dinner, I'd expect the answer would be 'No'. Mom would be more likely to depend upon her preserved protein stash for that evening's dinner.

Other wild meat sources included:

- **Wild Turkey**: turkeys were abundant and a popular game bird for hunting.
- **Ducks and Geese**: waterfowl were hunted in areas near lakes and rivers.
- **Rabbit and Squirrel**: considered small game, rabbits and squirrels were also hunted for their meat.
- **Bison**: in the western United States, bison hunting was common, during the late 19th century.
- **Elk and Moose**: these types of large-game animals were hunted in forested regions.
- **Bear**: although less common, bear hunting did occur in certain areas. Black bears are the primary species hunted in the eastern United States, Wisconsin, and California.

Protein sources acquired by hunting were not always easily available. Families had to rely on other ways of meeting their nutritional needs for energy and health. This included home-grown produce and local markets. Eventually, there was more access to a variety of foods due to improved transportation and refrigeration. Refrigeration became available to Wisconsin families in the early 20th century.

The Family Garden

Did your mom ever say to you (circa early 1960s): “Here’s a dollar. Run down to the Red Owl and get a pound of potatoes and five apples. Yes, you can buy a pack of gum. Bring back the change!”

The mom of the 1860s through pre-World War II might direct a son or daughter to “run out to the garden” to harvest vegetables for dinner. Family gardens in Wisconsin grew crops that provided both food and clothing. Vegetables like potatoes, carrots, beans, peas, cabbage, and onions were staples in the family garden. This was in addition to the cash crops like wheat, corn, alfalfa, and soybeans which they sold at the market, to provide an income for the family.



Family Garden

Fruit, both for fresh consumption and for preservation, included apples, strawberries and raspberries. Grains were often grown as a selling product for farm income. By the late 19th century, many families had shifted

to growing oats and corn for both family consumption and animal feed. Herbs were grown to provide variety to meals and for medicinal purposes. Commonly grown herbs included basil, parsley and dill.

We often don't think of crops being grown for clothing and other uses. Wisconsin families grew flax for its fibers, which were used to make linen cloth. They also grew hemp for making ropes, sacks and other durable materials.

Preserving Food

Let's assume mom was able to put food on the family table even in times when fresh meat or fish was not available. She was able to rely on foods she had stocked due to different methods of preservation that evolved over the years. Your own mom or grandma may still employ some of these methods.

During the mid-19th to early 20th centuries meat was preserved by salting, smoking, and drying. In fact, salt-cured meat was a staple for soldiers and civilians alike. The salting and smoking methods continue to be used, especially for foods like fish.

With the salting process, meat was covered with a large amount of salt. This drew out the moisture and made the environment inhospitable to bacteria. The salted meat was left to 'cure' for several weeks, allowing the salt to penetrate deeply into the meat. After curing, the meat was stored in a cool, dry place to ensure its preservation.

The smoking process involved hanging meat in a smokehouse or over a smoky fire. When meat was exposed to the smoke from burning wood, flavor was added while serving as a natural preservative to inhibit the growth of bacteria. Smoked fish is often a common protein that one can find today in most grocery stores. (For a treat, consider a trip to a Door County smokehouse; take in the aroma and tasty freshness of smoked trout.) The smoking process lasted from a few hours to several days, dependent upon the desired flavor and preservation level.

Meat could be air dried. The meat would be sliced into thin strips and laid out to dry in the sun or on a drying rack. The goal was to take out as much moisture as possible to prevent bacterial growth. When dried, the meat was stored, as with salting, in a cool, dry place.



Meat Drying Racks



Poling ice blocks to the hoist in Milwaukee. (Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

Other preservation techniques included the use of ice boxes. A bit of history that precedes the icebox focuses on ice harvesting. Ice harvesting was common in Wisconsin from the 1880s to around 1910. This was a significant industry, especially in the northern states. The process started when ice on the lakes and ponds froze to a thickness of about one foot. It was then hand-cut with long, specially designed ice saws into large blocks. The blocks were transported to a

town's icehouse, a structure carefully packed with sawdust or straw for insulation. In warmer months, the ice could be distributed to homes and businesses for use in their iceboxes, allowing families to keep perishables cool for longer periods.

Canning is still a popular method of preserving fruits and vegetables. The method was developed during the Civil War. By the late 19th century, canning was a widely used process. Canned meat could be stored longer without refrigeration.

Just before World War II, refrigeration technology began to become available to families in Wisconsin. By the 1920s, this 'mechanical' refrigeration started to replace natural ice harvesting. At the same time, more families began to have access to electric refrigerators.

Freezing as a food preservation method dates back centuries to use in colder climates where natural freezing temperatures occurred. Ancient people in these parts of the world would freeze meat and keep other foods on ice or in cold storage areas like cellars and caves.

Cooking Methods

We've touched on our grandparents' and great-grandparents' (and earlier relatives') food sources, and preservation methods. The way mother prepared the family's meals is another tribute to progress over the years. Let's travel through the years, starting with the Frontier and continuing to the Victorian Era (mid-1880s to early 1900s) and to the Great Depression, as we look at food preparation.

To appreciate the cooking method innovations that existed in the early to mid-1800s, it's good to mention cooking methods employed by those expanding the Frontier. The period from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to around 1890 is often considered the peak of the Frontier era. The U.S. Census Bureau declared the frontier closed in 1890 when settlement had already spread across the continent. Some historians keep the Frontier years open into the early 1900s since the last western territories were being admitted as states by 1912.

Pioneers families relied on simple, hearty meals that were easily prepared over campfires or in rudimentary kitchens. Besides common foods already mentioned, the pioneer mom supplemented dinners with buffalo or squirrel. Everyday foods included beans, cornbread, and stews. Moms made stews that blended beef, beans, vegetables and any meat that was available) ...buffalo or squirrel stew, anyone.

The Frontier led into the Victorian Era. During this time, a typical meal could have been prepared with vegetables harvested directly from mother's kitchen garden. The eggs also could have been purchased recently at the greengrocer. Or, perhaps eggs came from the family's poultry yard. Remember, refrigeration was not yet known, so mothers had to do marketing almost daily. This was also a time when the butcher's son would deliver fresh meat for that day's supper. Most meals were prepared from scratch using fresh ingredients.



Meal Preparation Outside the Family Cabin Over an Open Fire

Cooking became more efficient as copper pots were replaced with cast iron pots and pans. New kitchen gadgets were showing up: eggbeaters, pastry cutters, jelly molds, biscuit tins, cheese graters, can openers, and rotary apple/potato peelers.

Many families still cooked over an open fire, especially rural families. Open fires were used for roasting, boiling, and baking.

By the late 1800s, cook stoves also called cast iron stoves or wood-burning stoves were becoming household essentials. They were quite an improvement over earlier hearth cooking. They efficiently burned wood or coal, providing a reliable source of heat for cooking. They offered more controlled cooking and included different compartments for baking, roasting, and boiling. Imagine mom's smile while using the stove's multiple burners, allowing her to cook several dishes at the same time!



Cast Iron Cook Stove

Following the Victorian Era, the United States fell into the Great Depression.. The Country experienced a severe economic downturn, high unemployment rates, and widespread poverty. It was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 to 1939. It all started with the stock market crash of October 19, 1929. The economic strain led to family disorganization. Unemployed men felt like failures because they couldn't provide for their children. Families often suffered from malnutrition and inadequate clothing.

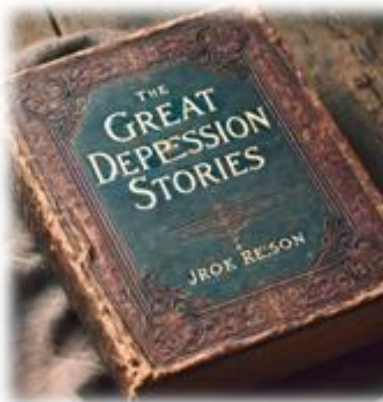
Where people could continue to cook home-based meals, recipes of the Great Depression often embraced a practice referred to as 'stretching ingredients to make meals expand further'. Oatmeal and breadcrumb fillers were added to meatloaf or soups.

The cooking methods used in the Victorian Era, including open fire cooking and use of cast iron stoves continued. One-pot meals like stews, soups, and casseroles became popular. They could be made with minimal ingredients and were filling. It became common for mom to bake bread, biscuits, and other simple baked goods using basic ingredients like flour, water, and yeast. Frugal cooking included cornbread, Johnny cakes, buttermilk biscuits, and potato soup.

The Great Depression brought with it its own cooking tips which some of our mothers and grandmothers may have shared with us:

- Grow Your Own – home gardens featured vegetables and herbs, thereby reducing the need to buy produce.
- Use Every Bit – the 'waste not, want not' mentality became a critical reality. Vegetable scraps were used to make broth and meat bones were simmered to extract every last bit of flavor.
- Cook Big – this referred to batch cooking. Preparing larger quantities of food at one time made available portions that could be stored for later use, saving time and resources.
- Keep It Versatile – ingredients like rice, beans, and pasta became dinner staples. Besides being friendly to the budget, they could be used in various dishes.

Have your parents or grandparents shared Great Depression food 'stories' with you? I'll share one I heard. As children, my brothers and I asked a lot of questions, as kids tend to do. We must have asked my mom about the kinds of treats they enjoyed when they were little. My mom, whose family owned a farm



in Minnesota during the Great Depression, said that getting an orange in her Christmas stocking was a coveted gift. A favorite treat of mom's during the Great Depression was homemade bread, slathered with lard, and sprinkled with sugar ... when it was available. You can guess our reaction as children who were used to plenty of fresh fruit and homemade cookies.

Great Depression Easy Recipes

Even in tough times, people seem to find room for dessert and infuse creativity. Enjoy the following, quoted from *Stories and Recipes of the Great Depression of the 1930s*.

Water Pie - parade.com/1042184/nettiemoore/great-depression-water-pie-recipe/
Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups water	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup sugar	4 tablespoons butter, cut in small pieces
3 tablespoons flour	1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust



Water Pie

- Preheat your oven to 400°F
- Place the unbaked pie crust into a 9-inch pie pan
- In a medium bowl, combine the sugar and flour
- Pour the water into the dry ingredients and stir until the mixture is well combined
- Add the vanilla extract to the mixture and stir. Pour the mixture into the prepared pie crust
- Dot the top of the pie filling with small pieces of butter
- Bake for 30 minutes; reduce oven temperature to 375°F; bake an additional 30 minutes, or until the filling is set and the top is golden brown.
- Allow the pie to cool completely before serving. The filling will firm up as it cools.

Cream-Fried Squirrel

Soak pieces in salt water; drain. Add fresh water, boil until tender. Fry in heavy cream, season to taste.

Home Rendered Lard

"We put a large roaster of fat in the oven for all afternoon because if you did it slowly or baked it all day at low temperature it stayed nice and white. It is also dangerous because as the lard melted it had to be poured into jars and sealed immediately."

Brown Sugar Cornstarch Pudding

Mix 1 cup brown sugar (some recipes used 1/2 c. or 2 c.), 4 T. cornstarch. Add 1/2 c. cold water. Add to 1-1/2 c. boiling water. Cook till thick and smooth, while stirring; add vanilla and nuts. Serve in berry dishes with cream.

Final Thought

The next time your grandparents, mother, father, or you yell out the back door "*Dinner is in one hour! Start to clean up!*", pause a moment. Think about the hard work that went into meals served not-so-many years ago.

President**Joni Crivello****President Joni Crivello****Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Historical Society,**

It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I introduce myself as the new President of the Richfield Historical Society. My name is Joni Crivello, and I am both excited and humbled to take on this important role in our community. My husband, Randy, and I moved to Richfield in 2013. As luck would have it, our house was located walking distance from the remarkable Richfield Historical Park. I met the infamous Thursday Crew and became a member volunteering at several events. I eventually joined the RHS board as a Recording Secretary, then Vice President. I look forward to continuing the outstanding work of the Society, strengthening our commitment to honor and sharing the community's history.

I would also like to acknowledge the incredible leadership and hard work of our outgoing President, Pete Samson, as well as the entire board. Their dedication has been a guiding light for the Society, and their legacy will continue to influence the direction we take moving forward.

Understanding our past is crucial to shaping a brighter future. I am eager to work with our dedicated board members, volunteers, and the broader community to continue fostering an appreciation for the history that makes Richfield unique. My goal as President is to enhance visibility of the Society, engage more people in our efforts, and develop new ways to connect with long-time residents, newcomers, and the surrounding communities.

The past is never truly gone. It is with us in the stories we tell, in the traditions we uphold, and in the decisions we make. As your new President, I am committed to ensuring our society remains a beacon of historical preservation, education and engagement. But none of this work can be done alone. I ask for your partnership, your enthusiasm, and your ideas. United, we have the power to bring history to life for both present and future generations. **Sincerely, Joni Crivello**

Past President**Pete Samson**

At the Richfield Historical Society (RHS), we take pride in showcasing our history to visitors near and far. On one recent evening, a call from a kind lady planning a visit the next morning led to an unforgettable experience.

Around 8 p. m., I received a call from Rochelle Burt, who, along with her husband Simon, was vacationing in the Wisconsin Dells. They expressed interest in touring the historic mill and were hoping for an early visit the next day. After confirming their request, I reached out to our dedicated volunteers, Al Mayer and Joni Crivello, to assist with the tour.

The next morning, we greeted Simon and Rochelle who revealed they were visiting all the way from Sydney, Australia. While traveling from Washington state to Chicago, they conducted a Google search for historic mills and found RHS listed as the top result. Intrigued by the opportunity, they made the call—and here they were, ready to explore our treasured landmark.

Their initial plan was to spend just an hour at the site, but the rich history and charm of the Mill captivated them so much that they stayed nearly two hours. To enhance their visit, we extended the tour to include the Mill House, which they greatly appreciated.

As the tour wrapped up, Simon and Rochelle expressed their gratitude not only with kind words but also with a generous donation to support the Park. Encounters like these remind us how far our efforts to preserve and share history can reach.

This wasn't our first encounter with international visitors this year—earlier, we hosted guests from Germany. It's wonderful to know that the Richfield Historical Society continues to attract people from across the globe.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of volunteers like Al and Joni, who are always ready to help showcase our historical gems. Their enthusiasm and hard work ensure every visitor, no matter where they're from, leaves with a memorable experience.



Al, Simon, Joni, Rochelle

We look forward to welcoming more visitors and sharing the stories of our beloved Park with the world.

Blacksmith Shop

Jeff Beegle/ Kathy Lauenstein

Blacksmithing is an ancient trade, dating back to early times when bronze tools began to replace tools made of stone.

Before the Industrial Revolution, every iron tool was custom forged by a blacksmith. Such tools were expensive. You didn't replace one if you could help it. You had your tools repaired by your local blacksmith.

The blacksmith shop was always one of the first businesses established in any frontier community. The blacksmith shop was the center of this new Richfield community. The community was dependent on the shop and what it was able to produce and repair. During the day you could hear the clang of a hammer on an anvil, and you could smell the smoke from the forge in the air.

The heart of the blacksmith shop was that forge, where the metal was heated so it could more easily be worked. A forge had a bellows, to make the fire hotter by adding oxygen, thus the blacksmith was able to regulate the heat. Near the forge stood an anvil of hardened steel. Here the blacksmith was able to shape metal with a hammer and other tools. Curved objects were shaped around the anvil's horn. The anvil's "pritchel hole" was used when the blacksmith punched holes in a piece of metal. Special tools for cutting and shaping metal were attached to the anvil's square "hardy hole."

But once mass-produced metal items became more readily available, the demand for the blacksmith's custom-made products was reduced. This affected the blacksmith's way of life. So for shops to remain viable, these shops had to adapt to changing technology. And many shops did just that.

As farming became mechanized, and as newfangled automobiles required frequent repairs, some blacksmith shops evolved into mechanical shops. Others specialized as farriers—shoeing horses and mules—a trade that continues to this day.

Stay tuned next for a description of the blacksmith's tools in our next article.

A schedule of upcoming events in the RHS Blacksmith Shop can be found at richfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Collections

Deanna Einwalter

Our buildings are filled with beautiful artifacts that come from all of our generous donors. We thank everyone for helping make our historical buildings beautiful. We work hard at recording all of our artifacts and recently we converted our files into a museum software. The process is long but will be rewarding at the end. If you have anything you might want to donate or would like to volunteer and help our park stay beautiful, contact us.

Education

Kathy Weberg

Remember when elegant tables were set for special holidays and special family events? In the formal dining room, using those fine linens with cloth napkins? wine glasses, the “real” silverware that needed to be polished? The “good” china? I remember, but it doesn't happen at my house anymore! Beautiful, frequently hand painted, salt and pepper shakers adorned that table also. Do you recall how individuals had collections of salt and pepper shakers? My dear childhood neighbor, Dora, had quite the collection.

So why not include some salt & pepper shakers in our traveling trunk? I picked up a few sets, along with those of my mother, to add to trunk #2. One of our goals when going out with our trunks to senior communities is to encourage sharing of memories. The salt and pepper additions will give residents, with a little coaxing, an opportunity to share the collections they had in their past years. I can't wait to hear their stories.



Salt & Pepper Shakers

Our traveling trunk has three visits scheduled in January. Two of them are doubles: two presentations on the same day at the same facility, so it's really five presentations. A couple more are on the books for later in the year. This is a wonderful outreach for RHS which has been going on for many years and continues to be very popular.

Events Coordinator

Daryl Grier

As chair of the Events Committee, I'm pleased to work with each event chair to determine what needs to be done to start a new event or make improvements for next year on an existing one. The Committee is another example of people working together to provide opportunities to connect with Richfield's past and experience our beautiful Historic and Nature Parks.

We benefit from new members who bring fresh ideas to each committee. So, if you have comments to share, come to a meeting, or give me a call. We don't have a set meeting date as we meet before each activity. Our next meeting is January 13, 2025 at 9 a.m. at the Richfield Fire Hall, 2008 Hwy 175. Our focus will be on Maple Syrup Family Day.

Our 2025 Events are:

- Maple Syrup Family Day: Saturday March 22, 2025 - 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Art at the Mill: Saturday June 21, 2025 - 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.
- Thresheree and Harvest Festival: September 20 & 21, 2025 - 9 a.m. -5 p.m.
- Blacksmith Day: October 4, 2025 - 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Luminary Walk: November 1, 2025 - 5 p.m.-8 p.m.

Historic Sites

Quint Mueller/Herb Lofy

The start of the new year brings with it new and old. After all, we are an historical society. One of the highly visible projects that has been started since the last newsletter is the Mill raceway berm east of the dam remnants. While many have referred to this as a new road, it is not. It is being constructed to allow limited traffic, such as the people mover during events, but it is not intended to be a road or driveway. The main purpose is to provide a means of delivering water to the mill turbine, short of reconstructing the mill pond and dam. That is not to say the mill pond and dam have been abandoned. Not at all, but they are much, much bigger projects and will require significant approvals to move forward, plus a large amount of funding. In the Spring, you will see work continuing on this project. Once the ground froze, we had to cease operations. It is also dependent on the availability of suitable fill, so it could be an on again off again project.

The final work on the Mill House roof replacement will hopefully be complete by the time this newsletter is published. If you recall from the previous newsletter, the Mill House cedar roof was being replaced with new synthetic shingle roofing that looks very much like a weathered cedar roof. Besides the cost, it offered some significant advantages over the cedar roofing, including two to three times the life expectancy of cedar as well as fire resistance that cedar does not have. Currently, the new gutters are being installed.

Some of the other roof projects planned for 2024 have carried over to 2025. We simply ran out of time and weather for the RHS crews to safely perform the work in 2024. Both the Horse Shed and Granary are set to have their roofs replaced. The Horse Shed will be the same material as the new Mill House roof. The Granary roof will be a standing seam metal roof. Not only is the standing seam roof much more economical, it also will provide RHS with many maintenance free years before it has to be addressed again.

The next roof projects will be the Messer/Mayer Mill and the Mill Barn. While both are currently in need of replacement, it is likely that only the Mill can be addressed in 2025, due to the cost. The full cost of the Mill roof is projected to be in the neighborhood of \$88,000, much like the Mill House. Once again, Great Lakes Roofing has come to our rescue and generously donated the labor to install the roof. (They did this for the Mill House as well.) That still leaves \$56,000 in materials. This is just the Mill. The Mill Barn is also projected to be in the \$88,000 range, but we do not have a commitment for the labor at this time. RHS needs your help! Please consider donating to help RHS preserve these buildings for generations to come.

Beyond the big projects above, the RHS crew will be tackling many smaller projects around the Park. As any homeowner knows, the list of maintenance projects is ever constant, even more with older buildings. As always, a big THANK YOU to the RHS crews that keep our park the gem that it is.

Library/Newsletter

Marge Holzbog

In the History Room at the Welcome Center, the Library Committee is charged with maintaining and protecting documents and other materials important to our existence as a state recognized historical society. When visiting the History Room, you will see a wall of photos dedicated to the Woods Family. Carol Woods was the daughter of George Mayer, the last miller on the property. She and husband, Bob Woods, lived on the property for many years. Our photo swing board also allows us to feature other photography from our collection. On the north wall is a protective frame of arrowheads donated by the Laubenheimer family. They were collected by William Laubenheimer.

The Library Committee is committed in 2025 to draw together artifacts and records to make them viewable to our visitors allowing them to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the history of the community of Richfield. So please stay tuned as 2025 activities begin.

LWC Welcome Center

Ruth Gruen Jeffords

KITCHEN TALK

At the LWC Welcome Center many interesting, historical items are on display for viewing. A frequently overlooked area is the tiny kitchen on the south side of the house. Upon your next visit, please go in and look at the many display items we have collected; it really takes you back in time! For this article, I will discuss the FLOUR SIFTER; an integral baking tool!

Back in the early days when flour was ground at the Messer-Mayer Grist Mill (this grinding operation ceased in 1901), the ground flour was often coarse and lumpy due to the primitive nature of the grinding process. For that reason, flour sifters were created; the very first of which was developed in 1819 by Jacob Bromwell (1789-1866). The Bromwell name is ever-present today on many other kitchen items including: graters, cookie sheets, colanders, shredders, copper tin cups, chestnut roasters, stove-top popcorn poppers, as well as fireplaces - to name a few. Check around your kitchen to see if you have something with the Bromwell name; and if you do, it's a high-quality item! Today, Bromwell is the oldest U.S. housewares company. Also, most of their products are American made! And their sifter styles have rarely changed!

The sifter will break up any lumps in the flour, which means you can get a more accurate measurement. Sifted flour is much lighter than unsifted flour and is easier to mix into other ingredients when making batters and doughs. Sifting easily allows folding of the dry ingredients into the batter. When making frostings, the sifter is also a big help to sift powdered sugar into the butter. The result is a lighter, more delicate frosting to use on your baked goods.

Are flour sifters necessary? These days, most commercial flour is refined and clump-free, meaning there's no real need to sift it. However, my mother always told me to sift everything together (flour, spices, salt, sugar, powdered flavorings, etc.) And that's what I do when making "scratch" cakes – because Mom said so!



2-Cup Sifter



Crank Sifter



3-Cup Sifter

Marketing/Long Range Planning

Doug Wenzel

2024 was another year of learning and growth for our marketing efforts.

We expanded our social media presence with an Instagram account. In recognition that it's getting harder to keep our social media posts fresh, the Marketing Committee met in December to discuss some new strategies. Keep an eye out for some new Facebook / Instagram material in the coming months!

We continue to do the bulk of our paid advertising with the Washington County Daily News and the Germantown Express News. Our thanks to Conley Media (WC Daily News) for a generous discount that helps keep our advertising costs down!

In addition to these two sites, we also have presences on Yelp, Google Business, TripAdvisor, and Next Door Neighbor.

We send press releases and pictures to a variety of magazines and news outlets, and we are sometimes favored with some very nice articles. Thanks also goes out to Best Version Media (Germantown Richfield Neighbors) and Out & About Wisconsin in this regard.

We'll do another direct mail piece in 2025, as we have done for the past five years (Wow, has it been that long already?) Watch for it in Richfield mailboxes in early March.

Membership

Dorothy Marks

2024 brought us fifteen new memberships.

This year our "Boutique at the Horse Shed" again had a nice selection of beautiful items provided by fourteen vendors. We had a very good day on Saturday, but it all ended by Sunday morning due to the rain. The Threshere was cancelled. Hopefully, next year we will have a beautiful sunny weekend as we've had in the past.

For the last few years, I have been going to the Welcome Center every Thursday with my grass trimmer, blower, gardening tools etc. to keep the grounds manicured. After Herb Lofy mows the lawn and I do the trimming, it looks very nice. To add to the beauty, a nice addition of three new whiskey barrels containing a variety of herbs were placed along the brick walkway. The serenity it brings is heavenly. I chose Thursdays because the "Thursday Crew" is there working very hard to keep the buildings and grounds pristine. The "Joyful Noise" they make is heartwarming.

If you would like to join in with us, feel free to stop by or give me a call at (262)525-2022. Sometimes, also, you get to meet interesting people such as dog walkers, hikers, and one day two ladies from Menomonee Falls unloaded their horses and rode the trails. I hope to hear from you . . . work at the Welcome Center is very rewarding.

Mill House

Tonya Kleppin

THE CURATOR'S LAMENT

*Dust settles on forgotten shelves,
Where time-worn artifacts rest themselves.
Each piece of fragment of our shared past,
Begging silently not to be the last.
The curator walks with careful tread,
Among the living memories of the dead.
With gentle hands and knowing eye,
She tends to stories that must not die.
For in these relics, great and small,
Lies the heritage of us all.
A broken pot, a tarnished ring,
Of human struggles they still sing.
Oh, heed the call to guard and keep,
These treasures from time's ruthless sweep
For when we lose what came before,
We lose ourselves for evermore*

“As the Mill House Chairperson, I give credit to poemsplease.com for The Curators Lament, which resonates with my interest in preserving history. Uniting with the members of the Richfield Historical Society will give me the opportunity to help preserve the history that is most important to all of you and to protect the history within the Historical Park through all challenges.”

The Mill House is filled with living memories, objects big and small, that have equal significance. It is the memories of the dead that carried those artifacts to us, to cherish to the end.

The Richfield Historical Society has been preserving history within the Mill House dating back to the 1800s. Telling the stories of our history is vital to have a connection to our past. One may ask... will we be preserving history after another 225 years has gone by, and who may tend to those stories that must remain alive?

History of the Mill House must survive times of ruthless sweep, through the strength of the community, preservation and hard work.

As the new coming Chairperson for the Mill House, I ask: What is something from your childhood home that is no longer a thing today, and what might we be preserving for the future? Some interesting answers.

Rotary Wall Phone~Heidi M

Waterbeds~Dan C

Rain Lamp, Radio Alarm Clock, Fabric Calendar Wall Hanging~Lisa B

iPOD (replaced by the cell phone on 2022)~Samantha A

Memories of our Evergreens by the front porch~Danny P

Ms. Beasley, Family Affair~Lynette V

Player Piano Rolls resting silent~Tonya K

Answering Machine~Wendy C

Homestead Family Farms~Pam S

Pay Phones~Curt K

Mill Restoration

Al Mayer

The Messer- Mayer Grist Mill was constructed in 1870 and started operating in 1873. It was then fitted extensively with newer roller mill equipment in 1893. 1899 ushered in a 6 roll mill; and in 1900, a plan-sifter was installed to improve the bolting process. Through these modifications, there were times that beams and supports were temporarily removed in order to make room to install new equipment.

When we started assessing the best way to get the hurst frame re-aligned and squarely supporting the millstones above it, we found that at some time in the past a necessary main post was removed. Two other posts were placed on either side of it to take its place. This creates a series of questions we are trying to understand, mainly the time that this modification took place.

The original post was installed as the building was being constructed. However, it looks as though it was removed to put in the hurst frame, which is the first equipment installed in the Mill and would have been in the same 1870- 1873 time. So the mystery of how this situation came to be is something that our mill restoration crew is trying to understand.

Before the foundation was renovated below the miller's deck by our crew in the Fall/ Winter of 2017, a portion of the interior stone wall that supported that area in the basement of the Mill had weakened and collapsed. Could it be that the original post footing was compromised years after the Mill was built and the other posts were installed as a make- shift fix to keep the building supported? Over the past year, our restoration crew has slowly elevated the beam to level it and the floors above, and they have reconstructed a post to support it as when the Mill was built.

The more time we spend in the Mill looking at these kinds of situations, we find more items that spark a curiosity as to how each of these different systems were constructed and operated.

If you would like a more in depth understanding of the Messer- Mayer Mill restoration project or if any of this early mechanical stuff interests you, we are at the Mill every Sunday morning, from 10 until 2:00. Stop in and visit us!!



Mill Support Post

Pioneer Homestead

Susan Sawdey

ON A COLD WINTERS NIGHT

If you're like me, there is nothing to watch on TV. I have 120+ channels at my disposal but find myself endlessly scrolling each night looking for something to watch. You must be a history buff if you are reading this newsletter. So I encourage you to spend a bit of time during these cold winter days and nights watching a bit about how the pioneers would have lived in the mid 1800s. This is exactly the type of living we try to recreate for the visitors at the Pioneer Homestead at the Richfield Historical Park.

Victorian Farm (YouTube or Amazon Prime) is a British historical documentary TV series that recreates everyday life on a farm in Shropshire, England in the 1880s, using authentic replica equipment (similar to many of the items you see at the Richfield Historical Park) and clothing, original recipes and reconstructed building techniques.

Working for a full calendar year, participants rediscover lost skills, crafts and knowledge, assisted by experts who keep Victorian rural practices alive.

Prairie Yard & Garden: Growing Vegetables in the 1800s (YouTube) Oliver Kelley Farm historical site interpreter, Andrea Krist, from the Minnesota Historical Society, discusses the raising and preserving of vegetables in the 1850s. One important feature of the farm includes an operational mid-1800 historic garden where pioneer women and children would have raised vegetables for the family. You'll find catsup wasn't the same back then.

Frontier House (YouTube or PBS.org) is a historical reality television series that originally aired on the PBS in 2002. The series followed three family groups that agreed to live as homesteaders did in Montana Territory on the American frontier in 1883. Each family was expected to establish a homestead and complete the tasks necessary to prepare for the harsh Montana winter. At the end of the series, each family was judged on their likelihood of survival.

See you all in SPRING!

Programs

Connie Thoma

We will begin our spring season of community programs January 23, 2025. They are held at the Richfield Fire Hall on Hwy 175 at 7:00 p.m. in the evening. Our programs are free to the public, and we serve complimentary refreshments.

Our schedule for January 2025 thru May 2025 is as follows:

January 23, 2025 – Gossip Columns from the late 1800s and early 1900s as published in the Hartford Newspaper.
Speaker: Carol Purgett.

February 27, 2025 – History of Oshkosh Tractors
Speaker: Jim Lofy,

March 27, 2025 – American Cemeteries Around the World
Speaker: Al Buchholz

April 24, 2025 – 100 Things in Wisconsin To Do Before You Die
Speaker” Author Dannelle Gay

May 22, 2025 – History of Buffalo Bill.
Speaker: Wayne Rettig

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Project Coordinator

Al Mayer

We've had a lot of activity over here at the Richfield Historical Park throughout the Fall season, and we don't look to be slowing down soon.

Early this Fall, our member, Tim Einwalter, secured historically compatible roofing and the services of Great Lakes Roofing Inc. to reroof the Mill House. We would like to thank them for their incredible donation of time and talent to make the new roof on the house a reality!

Our picnic tables were looking a bit shabby. So they've been sanded and re-stained, defective boards have been replaced, and they are stored out of the weather until Spring.

We have some of our guys on Thursdays still clearing dead trees. It seems there is always another tree in the Park leaning, and ready to fall!

You may have noticed the change of scenery north of the Barn and Mill House. This is a project to help enhance the appearance and function of the head race channel to the Mill. The goal is to have water in the channel to the Mill, the way it was when the Mill was operating. Also, the turbine, when installed, will be allowed to run for short periods of time.

In the coming months, we have the materials (as mentioned in the Historic Sites article) and will be reroofing the Horse Shed and Granary.

This time of year we have time to attend to many of the little projects that get set aside during events and try to catch up on resolving them.

I would like to say that we have a wonderful group of guys that come out to the Park every Thursday and work together on whatever things need fixing, or cleaning, or getting ready for our next event! Everyone is welcome to join us! Our mornings are as much a neighborhood social event as they are a workday.

If your able to find the time, come on out and see us sometime! Wishing you a peaceful and prosperous, and very happy new year!

Volunteer Coordinator**Sharon Lofy**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! Hoping you had a wonderful Christmas. We are now planning 2025's upcoming events. With your help, it will be another great year. Thank you for sharing your many talents and many hours of volunteering. Your help makes the events a success, and our great events make the Richfield Historical Society stand out from other societies.

Again this year, you will be receiving emails listing areas during our events that need a helping hand. Fill in the information and reply. Call 262-297-1546 if you have any questions. If you do not receive a volunteer information email, let me know. I will give you a call if you do not have the email. Be sure to pass the volunteer information on to your friends and neighbors. You would be surprised how many people like to give a helping hand. Volunteers enjoy helping with a friend or relative in the same area. Also, volunteering is a great way for students to receive community hours.

Or perhaps, you have an interest in helping the Society's chairmen. They would be the Mill, Mill House, Welcome Center General Store or History Room, Boutique, Museum, Sugar Shack, Blacksmith Shop, Pioneer Homestead, Thursday Work Crew, Gardening, and baking for programs. Board members also can use a helping hand with computer work, research, mailing and other needs. There are many ways to get involved. We would certainly appreciate any help you could give!

Watch for our Plant Fund Raiser with Nehm's Greenhouse. Certificates will be for \$25 and \$15. The certificates make great gifts. Thank Nehm's for their part in making this possible.

You will be hearing from me throughout 2025. Thanks again!