



Richfield Historical Society
 Box 268
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www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org



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Volume 17 Number 1

**Gehl Manufacturing Company –
 (excerpted from "Three Generations of Success –
 Gehl Company 1859 – 2009" by Bill Beck)**

The Gehl Family in Washington County

Mathias and Margaret Gehl had nine children. Their oldest son, Michel ("Michael") was born in 1839 and was about six years old when the family moved to Wisconsin. Michael grew to manhood on the family farm near St. Lawrence and married Theresa Netzinger in November 1861 at St. Lawrence Church in St. Lawrence. Theresa Netzinger, three years younger than her husband, was also born in Luxembourg, in 1842, and accompanied her parents to America in 1852. The newlyweds moved to a farm in the Town of Addison, southwest of Allenton, where they resided until 1871. Margaret Gehl died that year, and then Michael and Theresa moved to the family farm near St. Lawrence to help Mathias Gehl manage the property.

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An early photograph of the family of Michael and Theresa (nee Netzinger) Gehl

Left to right, Bottom row: Jacob, Anna, Theresa, Mary, Henry, and Michael Jr.

Top row: John, Peter, Michael, Sr. Theresa, Mathias and Nicolaus

Michael and Theresa had twelve children, two of whom died in infancy. Four of Michael and Theresa's sons became involved in the firm that would bear the family name in 1904. Nicolaus, one of the co-founders of the Company, was born June 1868 and died in Denver, Colorado in February 1928. Johan ("John"), born December 1872, was the long-time Secretary of Gehl Brothers and then served as Chairman of the Board until his death in November 1951. Michael, born in April 1883, had served as long time Treasurer of Gehl Brothers and then succeeded John as Chairman of the Board until his own death in 1969. Heinrich ("Henry"), born in February 1885, was the last of Michael and Theresa Gehl's children to die. He served as President of Gehl Brothers Manufacturing Company for more than a half-century and became Chairman of the Board upon Michael's death.

Mathias Gehl died in 1896, twenty-five years after the death of his beloved Margaret. He was representative of his generation of immigrants, hardworking, proud of his adopted country, and centered on his family and his church. Had he lived another five years, he would have taken great pride in his grandsons' purchase of the Silberzahn Manufacturing Company in nearby West Bend.

In the Beginning 1859 -1901

What became the Gehl Company in the twenty-first century traces its roots to the pioneer settlement at the west bend of the Milwaukee River in 1859. Wisconsin had been a state for only eleven years in 1859, and settlement was rapidly filling up the counties lying south of Green Bay on Lake Michigan, including the small farm service community of West Bend in Washington County. Population of the state more than doubled to 776,000 people between 1850 and 1860. Many of the state's new residents were immigrant Germans, fleeing the political upheavals that had convulsed their native lands in 1848 and 1849. Many more were Norwegians and Swedes, fleeing famine and landlessness in their Scandinavian homelands.

In 1859, Wisconsin was the nation's breadbasket. Wisconsin farmers produced twenty-nine million bushels of wheat a year, more than 15 percent of the nation's total. Blessed by rolling prairies and the fertile soil left behind by the retreat of the last glaciers some 10,000 years before, Wisconsin is drained by the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers. Pioneer farmers were able to ship their wheat and corn to markets in Chicago and the East via growing ports on the Great Lakes, bordering the state to the north and east.

The manufacturing sector of Wisconsin's economy, which came to the fore in the second half of the nineteenth century, was a direct result of the biggest problem Wisconsin farmers faced in the 1840s and 1850s. As it had been for centuries, the scythe was the basic tool for harvesting wheat. But as the farmers expanded their holdings in the rich bottomlands of Wisconsin, they found that the scythe, unless wielded by an army of hired labor, wasn't up to the task of large-scale harvesting. The search for a mechanical replacement for the scythe and other agricultural implements was the incentive for the state's first industrial boom. So, too, was the need for modern weapons in the great Civil War that was about to descend on the American Republic.

Wisconsin was the cradle of the nation's agricultural implement manufacturing industry. Wisconsin inventors began patenting wheat harvesting equipment as early as the 1840s. Jerome I. Case built his first factory in the Lake Michigan port city of Racine in 1847 to produce a mechanical thresher powered by horses. In the years to come, Case threshers, with as many as ten horses providing the motive power, became a part of the Wisconsin landscape wheat fields in October. The Case Thresher allowed the farmer to quickly harvest large fields of wheat, thus avoiding the spoilage that was so prevalent with the scythe.

In 1859, Cyrus McCormick moved his reaper manufacturing company to the booming city of Chicago, just fifty miles south of the Wisconsin state line. McCormick had introduced the first mechanical reaper in 1831 in Virginia, revolutionizing farming in the United States. By 1860, his Chicago firm was selling 20,000 reapers a year. In 1857, George Esterly built a manufacturing plant for a wheat harvesting machine in the

Village of Whitewater. The agricultural implement manufacturing business flourished in a corridor between Chicago and Milwaukee in the years following 1860.

There were numerous reasons for the industrial boom in southeastern Wisconsin. The area enjoyed a ready market with thousands of wheat farmers living in the state and adjacent Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota, all wheat producing states themselves. Milwaukee's German immigrants were skilled mechanics who enjoyed access to capital amassed by the thrifty German immigrant community. And Milwaukee's ports were able to inexpensively handle iron ore shipped down the Great Lakes from the iron ranges of nearby Michigan and Northern Wisconsin.

THE LUCAS FOUNDRY

The availability of iron ore and the growing success of the agricultural implement manufacturing industry spawned other industries in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The need for iron castings created a thriving foundry industry in the 1850s and 1860s. One of those foundries was started in 1859 on what was then known as River Street in West Bend. Louis Lucas, who had previously worked in West Bend as a tin-plate worker and coppersmith between 1852 and 1859, built the foundry near the lower bridge on River Street, where he carried on the business until 1873. Like most small-town foundries of the day, Lucas Foundry poured castings for making and repairing agricultural implements and other hardware in general use around a farm.



The Lucas Foundry

At the time Lucas was beginning his business, West Bend was the thriving Washington County Seat. More than 800 people lived in the community when the federal census-takers made their rounds in 1860, and the community boasted several milling and lumber manufactories, a brewery, a woolen factory, three churches, a newspaper, and a school. Originally the foundry business was established to provide only for local needs, mostly implement repair.

In the four-year-long Civil War between 1861 and 1865, Wisconsin sent nearly 100,000 of her men to fight to preserve the union. Consequently, the manpower in the Wisconsin wheat fields created an ever growing demand for agricultural implements to replace the hands of those who were away on the far-flung war fronts. McCormick reapers doubled in 1863 to more than 40,000 units as farmers in the Midwest Wheat Belt worked valiantly to feed the troops on the battlefield and civilians on the home front.

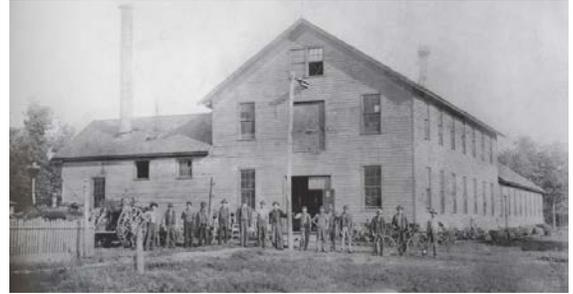
JACOB YOUNG & JOHN KUNZ PARTNERSHIP

In the years after the Civil War, Louis Lucas employed as many as five workers in the foundry on River Street making and repairing agricultural implements, including fanning mills, plows and rotating churns. Lucas sold the business in 1873 to Jacob Young who conducted the business in partnership with John Kunz and others. It is not known why Lucas sold the business, but 1873 was a panic year and businesses across the state of Wisconsin and much of the nation failed as credit dried up.

For Washington County and Wisconsin, the 1870s were difficult years, as farmers diversified into a new model of agricultural productivity. The stagnating local agricultural economy crippled by the transition from a wheat-based commodity structure, searched for a profitable replacement. In the 1870s, Yankee economists and German immigrants began preaching the benefits of a dairy-based economy for Wisconsin agriculture.

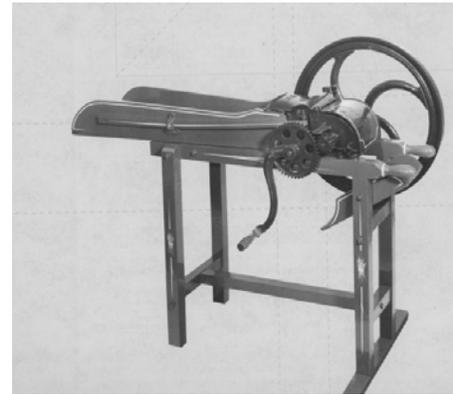
JACOB YOUNG, JOHN KUNZ & CHARLES SILBERZAHN

The post-Civil War transition from wheat to corn and dairy farming in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest was perhaps the state's most important agricultural development in the nineteenth century. In 1878, Jacob Young and John Kunz brought Charles Silberzahn into the Lucas Foundry as a partner. Before joining the Lucas Foundry, Silberzahn was co-owner of a Sheboygan iron foundry that manufactured and repaired products similar to Lucas.



The Silberzahn Factory

Silberzahn brought his mechanical expertise to West Bend and began tinkering with a machine he hoped would revolutionize feed cutting for dairy cattle. Silberzahn had produced a working model of what was to become known as the Hexelbank Cutter during his years in Sheboygan. In 1889, Silberzahn and the Lucas Foundry introduced the first commercially produced Hexelbank Cutter. It was a cylinder type, hand cranked feed cutter used for cutting corn for livestock. The unique machine was sold mostly in Wisconsin, but quickly found favor with dairy farmers in the rest of the United States. The Hexelbank Cutter sold at the time for about \$11.50.



The Hexelbank Cutter

The introduction of silos into Wisconsin's agricultural economy allowed dairy farmers to store livestock feed, or silage, safely and economically. Cutting feed mechanically for the silos led to the introduction of the Silberzahn Ensilage Cutter with its patented reversible gear. Silberzahn also began production of feed elevators for filling silos and upper stories of barns.



The Silberzahn Ensilage Cutter

GEHL COMPANY BEGINS

In 1890, Silberzahn and his sons bought out some of the original investors in the Lucas Foundry, incorporated it as Silberzahn Manufacturing Company, and concentrated on the manufacture of ensilage feed cutters. **THE ANTECEDENT OF THE MODERN GEHL COMPANY WAS NOW IN PLACE.**

In the 1890s and early 1900s, Silberzahn's ensilage feed cutters had legions of users on dairy farms in Wisconsin and surrounding states. By the 1910s, Gehl Brothers Manufacturing Company, as the Company was later renamed, was marketing the Silberzahn Ensilage Cutter across a broad swath of the American Farm Belt. Sales after 1910 were especially strong in the prairie states of North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas.

By the turn of the century, Charles Silberzahn had been in the agricultural implementation manufacturing business for some thirty years. In 1902, Charles Silberzahn, now 73 years old, decided it was time to sell the

business. John W. Gehl, with partners Henry J. Thoma and Peter Berres, met in the offices of Silberzahn Manufacturing Company in West Bend and negotiated the transfer of stock.

The focus on ensilage feed cutters remained constant throughout the ownership transition. The first Gehl ensilage cutter was built and sold in 1903, and late April 1906, the business was renamed THE GEHL BROTHERS MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

BUILDING OUR FARM EQUIPMENT INVENTORY TODAY WITH GEHL COMPANY

Several years ago individuals from the Gehl Company of West Bend, Wisconsin contacted the Richfield Historical Society with regard to antique Gehl farm equipment in the Gehl Museum. Due to limited space and the fact that the Gehl Company was sold to Manitou (a French equipment manufacturer), the decision was made to disperse numerous items. Members from Richfield went to West Bend and were surprised to find equipment already marked for donation to the Society. Terry LeFever, retired Special Events Manager with a total of 42 years with Gehl, was responsible for directing the antique machinery to the Richfield Historical Society. Since then, the Gehl equipment display has become a regular addition to the Threshere.

Currently in our farm equipment collection:

- We have several hammer mills and feed cutters from different eras which at one time were the signature equipment of Gehl Brothers.
- We have two forage harvesters, one of which is a 1956 self-propelled in operating condition. (It was not running when acquired. So I paid for the repairs done by Dave Becker of Dave's Repair near Allenton.)
- We have two hammer mills, one donated by the Jaster family of Theresa, the other was purchased from the Held Brothers near Slinger, paid for and restored by myself.
- There are two un-restored self unloading Gehl forage wagons donated by a farmer at Oakfield.
- There are several other items including a Silberzahn saw buck and the Gehl snowmobile which was donated by Bill Gehl.
- I also purchased a 1951 forage blower that was never used. I am presently in the process of re-painting it.

SUGARING TIME – A time out of time **(excerpted from “Sugaring Time” by Kathryn Lasky**

There is a time between the seasons. It comes in March when winter seems tired and spring is only a hoped for thing. The crystalline whiteness of February has vanished, and there is not yet even the pale green stain in the trees that promises spring. It is a time out of time, when night can bring a fitful late winter storm that eases, the very next day, into sunshine and a melting wind from the southeast.

Many people complain about this time of year. Snow cannot be counted on for sledding or skiing; cars get stuck in muddy roads; clothes are mud-caked and hard to clean; and the old folks

arthritis kicks up. Everyone, young and old, gets cranky about staying indoors.

But for a few people, this time is a season in its own right. For them it is sugaring time, when sap begins to flow in the maple grove or sugarbush, as it is called. It is a time that contradicts all farming calendars that say crops are planted in spring, cared for in summer, and harvested in fall. This crop, maple sap, is harvested in March, and that is part of the specialness of sugaring time. It is special, too, because young people have a reason to go outside, snow or no snow, mud or no mud, and older people have a reason to believe in the coming of spring.

By the end of the second week of March, the weather begins to change. The nights are still cold, below freezing, but one midmorning the thermometer will be above freezing and climbing. Icicles that have hung like scepters since December suddenly begin to drip like popsicles in August. It begins to feel like sugaring weather. (The snow of early spring is called “corn snow” because the crystals are big and granular, like kernels of corn. But, it is really more sugary in texture.) The next day will be still warmer with scores of small rivulets of melting snow. Streams that have lain as still as black ribbons in the snow, now rush, muddy and raucous, down the hills.

Finally after a freezing cold night, the morning is sunny. It is not the pale, thin, low-angle sunlight of November, but the direct, strengthening light of a sun that has passed the year’s equator, the vernal equinox. It is the sun of longer days that feels warm on the cheeks, makes birds sing, and helps all things loosen up and stretch. The frost designs on bedroom windows has melted by early morning, bright lances of sunlight do a crazy crisscross dance and out the window can be seen a bright sunlit world. Sap’s rising. It is going to flow today. And, it will flow today, because sunlight is the energy for the tree’s sugar-making process. Last year, sunlight from the sky, carbon dioxide from the air, and chlorophyll in the green leaves worked together to make the sugar that nourishes the trees. All winter, the sugar has been stored in the bark and wood of roots and stems. Long before the first leaf is seen, watery sap carrying the sugar begins to stir under the bark, reviving the tree for a new cycle of growth. So, it is tapping time in the sugarbush.

Now, for two days, a southeast wind brings spring rain to melt the snow and unlock the frozen earth from its winter prison. There are ragged snow patches scattered here and there on the meadows like torn remnants of the white blanket that covered it for nearly four months. The trees have nearly finished their run of sap; the sap has been gathered and waits in a storage tank behind the sugarhouse for boiling. It must be boiled within a week or it will spoil. Forty gallons of sap will become only one gallon of syrup. Tending the boiling sap is busy work. Someone always has to be either skimming foam

from the sap, stoking the fire, or testing the temperature. The foam is a natural way the sap cleans itself of foreign matter, such as bits of bark and “niter,” a kind of salt sometimes called “sugar sand” which rises to the top when the sap is boiled.

Outside the wind will freshen, the sky will grow bluer and puffy white clouds will sail across the sky. But inside the sugarhouse it is different weather. The maple fog is growing thicker. There are a few slivers and slats of light from the cracks between the wallboards. Now, one must be watchful for the telltale signs of sap turning to syrup. Sap turns to syrup at 218 degrees Fahrenheit. Things can move fast, too fast. Sap can turn to syrup, then to cream, within a few seconds and a few degrees, then burn in the pan. As the temperature rises, there are signs that the sap is about to turn. It becomes darker, taking on a golden amber tone. The bubbles will look different too, becoming very fine just before the sap turns to syrup, and then suddenly quite huge and explosive. And finally there are liquid “aprons” or sheets. (There is a test for sheeting – if the liquid drops off a testing spoon in rapid little droplets, it is not sheeting, but if it gathers along the edge of the spoon slowly and does not immediately dribble off in separate drops, then it is said to be sheeting. Only syrup sheets, not sap.)

When the temperature reaches 218 degrees and it is sheeting, you have syrup. Now there will be a first drawing off and a hydrometer will be used for checking the specific gravity or density of the liquid. Syrup should weigh eleven pounds per gallon. This is the weight at which it keeps best. If it is too heavy, it may crystallize; if it is too light, it may ferment. The hydrometer will float at a red line marked at 31.5 if the syrup is the proper weight.

Some of the syrup will be put in small glass jars for grading. There are three grades – Fancy, Grade A and Grade B. Fancy is the purest, just barely amber. Grade A is light amber and more mapley in taste and Grade B is darker with an even stronger flavor. In the old days, people used maple sugar instead of cane sugar because it was cheaper and more readily available. They wanted the maple sweetener to be as much like cane sugar as possible, sweet but unmapley or mild in

flavor. That system worked fine one hundred years ago when Fancy meant best and best meant most like cane sugar. Today, however, Fancy is not always the best for people who want real maple flavor. Many will buy Grade A instead.

Through starless nights, the fires will burn in the sugarhouse. The only light will be the fiery orange glow of the fire. It is not enough light to read by. So, a person can only think and dream and tend the fire. It is a gentle darkness that smells like maple clouds and reminds you of a winter now gone and a spring just born.

On a windless, starry night, it started again, coming down softly, almost secretly, and covering everything with a sparkling whiteness. It is an April snowstorm, the very last snowfall of the season. Within those few weeks, it is all over, the shortest season of all is finished. The sap has stopped running, but its sweet syrup will be tasted throughout the rest of the year. There will be pancake breakfasts, maple candy for trick and treat at Halloween, gifts for Christmas and more” sugar-on-snow” parties in the winter to come, when the whole world will lie under a blanket of snow for months and months.

THIS YEAR’S FAMILY DAY AT THE SUGARBUSH at the Richfield Historical Park

March 27th was Family Day where everyone had the opportunity to learn about tapping the trees in the sugarbush at the Richfield Historical Park and how sap is collected and boiled at the sugar shack. The day was bright and sunny with temperatures warming after our long, cold winter. The event was well attended.



Bob Bayer – Gathering Sap



Bob Bayer – Teaching Sap Collection



Kathy Weberg & Daryl Grier - Dishing out the Goodies

SOCIETY NEWS

PRESIDENT

Frank "Buzz" Carr

Hello to all old and new members of the Richfield Historical Society. I am honored to be your new President. It's a tough act to follow our retired President, Quint Mueller, who served all of us so ably for the past two years. I am pleased to say that Quint left us with a healthy Society, healthy in the superb group of volunteers, full complement of events, fine condition of our treasured buildings, good relations with the Village and a great reputation in Richfield and among our peers in the region. We owe a great deal to Quint, and I'm sure you all join me in thanking him for all the hard work and dedication he displayed over the past two years.

I must confess that I am a bit daunted as I start my term as President. Our Society has been very successful in all its activities, and I will do my best to keep everything going well. But we do have a few challenges. Our primary goal is to get our uniquely intact mill operating for the first time in about 60 years. This requires the completion of the rebuild of the foundation, and that means that we need a lot of money. We have raised over \$400,000, but after last year's foundation work, it was determined we need to raise about another \$400,000. These funds will complete the foundation reconstruction and get the machinery in the mill in operating condition. We have a very dedicated group of volunteers who can and will complete the tasks associated with the machinery, but our volunteers cannot rebuild the foundation. This job

requires hiring contractors. So our greatest challenge is raising funds. I appeal to all of you to help us with this task. Please contribute what you can and/or contribute any ideas that you have as to how we can raise funds. My number is 414 526 6030. Herb Lofy, our Capital Campaign Committee Chairman, can be reached at 262 297 1546. Call either of us any time with ideas. **LET'S GET IT GRINDING!**

In closing, I urge all of you to come and visit us at the Historical Park. The events are listed in this newsletter. The 2013 events were all well attended, and we hope to do even better this year.

The highlight feature at this year's Fall Threshere is the dedication of the Lillicrapp House. This building, the first house on Amy Belle Lake, was donated to RHS, moved to the Park and restored by our volunteers. It will be our Society headquarters. Bring your friends and come see it along with all the other features we offer at all of our events. You will enjoy yourselves – especially if you haven't visited in a while. And, don't forget to visit our website, Richfieldhistoricalsociety.org and/or follow us on Facebook for updates to all that is happening at the Park. Best wishes to all, and thank you for your support.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Sharon Lofy

The "Traveling Trunk" has visited Linden Grove, Tamarack Place, Village at the Falls, Riverview Village (all located in Menomonee Falls) and Harvest Home Assisted Living in West Bend. In April, the trunk will be on its way to Emerald Way in West Bend and to Sussex Senior Center, Sussex. Thank you go to our wonderful volunteers: Kathy Weberg, Lois Hessenauer, Daryl Grier, Cindy Schmechel, Clara Birkel, Jane Kyle, Buzz Carr, Mary Kugel, and others that will be helping with later visits. Also, Lois Hessenauer has presented a new power point presentation describing the Messer/Mayer Mill and the Richfield Historical Society at a few locations.

Tuesday, May 13 and Thursday, May 22 will be the dates for our Annual Kid's Activity Day at the Richfield Historical Park for the third graders in our area schools. Thanks go to Kathy Weberg for all her time and talents. She makes this a smooth running educational and fun event. The area schools (teachers and students) and volunteers look forward to this enjoyable event.

SPRING - where are you? Hopefully when you are reading this newsletter, Spring has appeared. This winter has provided us with an abundance of cold and snow. Now it's Spring's chance to turn on its charm.

Richfield Historical Society will again sponsor a plant fundraising event. This year Nehm's Greenhouse and Floral will be making our plant fundraising event possible. Nehm's is a family operated business located in the Slinger area. The greenhouse offers: hanging baskets, planters, proven winner plants, annuals, perennials, vegetable plants and garden supplies. The full service floral shop has green and blooming plants, fresh and everlasting floral arrangements, along with other gift items.

We will be offering \$10 and \$20 gift certificates for use at Nehm's Greenhouse and Floral. An order form is enclosed in this newsletter. Gift certificate orders need to be mailed before May 1. They need to be redeemed by May 31. (If you need extra gift certificates after placing your order, let me know. Arrangements can be made to receive extras. Any questions, give me a call (262-297-1546).)

When placing your orders, remember - Mother's Day, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Thank You and Get Well wishes. Don't forget yourself! This is also a great way to get your children or grandchildren interested in gardening. They could have their own certificate to pick out flower and vegetable plants, even some seeds. So brighten your day or someone else's with flowers. Please pass this order information on to family and friends. A portion of these sales goes to the Messer/Mayer Mill Restoration Fund.

We are very thankful for all the years that the Faust Greenhaus worked with us on this event. They will not be open this year. Our hope is that Nehm's Greenhouse and Floral will be a great match for this plant fundraising event. When you redeem your gift certificates, please thank Nehm's for helping us to continue this event.

Nehm's Greenhouse and Floral - 262-644-5688 - www.nehmsflowers.com
3639 Hwy 175 (1/2 mi. S of Hwy 60 on Hwy 175) Slinger

EVENTS COORDINATOR

Connie Thoma

February 16th the Richfield Historical Society hosted our 5th annual Antique Appraisal Fair and Chili lunch. While it wasn't a huge success, by that I mean we did not make \$1,000,000, but it was fun. The chili was delicious thanks to our fabulous cooks. We did about 90 appraisals. I think the patrons went away happy. Hope to see you there next year on February 15, 2015.

March 27th was Family Day at the sugarbush in the Historical Park. The art of sap collection and syrup making was explained by Bob Bayer to those attending. It was a beautiful day, bright and sunny, and the event was well attended by many area families.

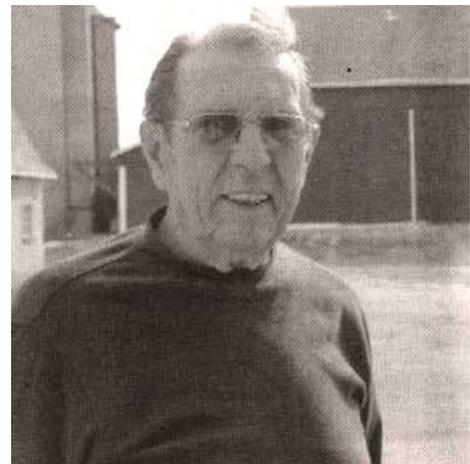
All our Chairpersons are busily preparing for Art at the Mill July 26th Vintage Baseball and Car Show Aug. 17th the Thresheree Sept. 20 & 21 and the Swap Meet Oct. 4th. Mark your calendars and tell everyone you know about our events because word of mouth is the best and cheapest advertising. We need you to make our events successful. Hope to see you soon!

FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Herb Lofy

A THANK YOU TO JOHN & EVIE KOHL AND MONSANTO

The Richfield Historical Society recently received a \$2500 donation from John and Evie Kohl thru the Monsanto Company. The money is via the "America's Farmers Grow Communities Foundation" at Monsanto. Annually the company selects farmers in counties across the US asking them to name a non-profit organization in their area to receive the donation. At the February 27th Society meeting, John Kohl and Monsanto representative Steve Chamberlain presented the check to the Richfield Historical Society. We salute the Kohls and Monsanto for their generous contribution. The money will be used to help fund Phase 3 repairs to the mill foundation.



John Kohl at His Farm

Many people when in church or at a meeting grimace when the minister or speaker talks about raising money. Unfortunately the fact remains that without funds eventually the church, institutions or organizations will not be able to move forward. This is the case with the mill foundation repair project. The Richfield Historical Society is very happy with the progress that has been made with the completion of Phase One-the rebuilding of the west foundation wall and the repair of the east and north walls. Phase two is the construction of the retaining wall and ramp leading to the new basement access door. Most of Phase two can be done by our volunteers and donated labor.

However Phase three will be the most complex and expensive to date. It involves the removal of the exterior and interior south walls. These walls are approximately 25 feet high. The walls create the chamber where the turbine that is the power source for the mill is contained. Very extensive excavation and stabilization will be necessary to complete this part of the project. We need to move on this work because until it is done there can be no work on the mill equipment to get it grinding or reconstruction started on the sawmill attached to the southeast corner of the grist mill. (The saw mill predated the grist mill by about twenty five years and was the first building on the property. It was powered by a large waterwheel. Most of the material for the saw mill has been acquired and been in storage for over five years. The goal originally was to start this project in 2013, but it was determined that the foundation on the mill had to be repaired first.)

Jeanne Engle has been retained by the Society to give us direction and use her expertise in raising funds. She has helped raise substantial monies, but close to \$500,000 still needs to be raised. She is willing to visit with people you may know that could help us. If you wish, you can be a part of the contact by sharing your personal interest with prospective donors. A story on your part during the visit might be what it takes to convince a donor to substantially help our cause. This fundraising effort is something we all need to become part of. Give Jeanne a call at 608-442-0546 and help make 2014 the year our goal is met.

Think Beyond Your Lifespan, Remember RHS in Your Estate Plans – Jeanne Engle

Do you hold a 401(k), traditional IRA, or other qualified retirement plan? Do you want to ensure the most tax efficient distribution of these assets in your estate? Designate the Richfield Historical Society to receive all or a portion of the balance of your plan through your plan custodian. By doing so, you avoid double taxation (exposure to income and estate tax). Because RHS is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization, it will not have to pay income taxes on any proceeds from an IRA or a 401(k). It's not the same with your heirs. They would be responsible for income taxes on these types of retirement plans if you named them as a beneficiary. In the meantime, you continue to take regular lifetime withdrawals from your plan. Should you decide to name RHS as a beneficiary of a retirement plan, consider the following: the legal name you should use is the Richfield Historical Society, Inc., PO Box 268, Richfield WI 53076 and the federal tax ID is 31-158978.

HOUSE COMMITTEE

Clara Birkel/Cindy Schmechel

On Thursday, March 20th, a small group of volunteers gave the Mill House a light cleaning, such as dusting and vacuuming, before the Maple Syrup Family Day event on Saturday, March 29th. The Mill House was open for tours that day from 1 to 3 p.m. We are also planning another light cleaning day before the first of the Education Days in May. We will announce that date at a later time, but it will most likely be sometime during the first week in May.

Following the second of the two Education Days, we will be scheduling another “deep” cleaning day at the Mill House, but again that date will be announced at a later time. We always appreciate all the help we can get and look forward to working with the volunteers who always help us make the house spic and span for the events that will follow. We truly have a great group of volunteers who are always willing to help and lend a hand at the Mill House. So we look forward to seeing all of your smiling faces once again!

LIBRARY/ PROGRAM/ NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Marge Holzbog

On April 27th at the Society General Meeting held at 7:00 P.m. at the Richfield Village Hall we will be hosting a presentation by Kevin & Patsy Alderson of La Farge, Wisconsin who are authors of a very exciting book, “Letters Home to Sarah, The Civil War Letters of Guy C. Taylor, 36th Wisconsin Volunteers.” These letters, forgotten for more than a century in an old cardboard box, cover the period March 25, 1864 to July 9, 1865, a total of 165 letters home to his wife Sarah and their son Charley. From his initial mustering and training at Camp Randall in Wisconsin, through the siege of Petersburg in Virginia, General Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, and the postwar Grand Review of the armies parade in Washington D.C.; Taylor conveys in vivid detail his own experiences and emotions and shows himself a keen observer of all that was passing around him.

On May 22nd at the Society General Meeting held at 7:00 p.m. at the Richfield Village Hall we will host return impersonator, Jessica Michna, now in the character of Goode Rebeka, a Salem witch, in her program entitled “Trial by Fire.” Her presentation will focus on the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts where greed and suspicion are the suspected cause of the trials. It is thought today that this event has done more than anything to darken the reputation of seventeenth-century America. Historians tell us that the Salem courts never once thought to ask if the accused at Salem had a fair trial. It is certain what is and is not thought to be a fair trial differs in time and with those who make the judgment.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Judy Lehman

What to write? All of you reading this Newsletter are set for membership for the year. So - here is what I love about being a member of the Richfield Historical Society.

- I love this classy, informative, interesting Newsletter.
- I enjoy the monthly General Meetings, where I learn new things about Wisconsin and our local area as well as meeting characters of the past through impersonators.
- I appreciate getting updated on volunteer progress on our on-going projects like the Traveling Trunk, the Thursday and Saturday work crews, and the Education Committee’s programs for the school age children.
- I like going to and participating in the fun and diverse events of the Society such as Car Shows, the Book Club, Vintage Baseball Games, Antique Appraisals, Chili Dinners, Celebrating Christmas at the Mill House, the Art Fair, the Swap Meet, the State Fair grounds Pancake Breakfast, the Maple Syrup Day, and, of course, the THRESHEREE.

I am so impressed with the hard work and enthusiasm of the people interested in preserving the history of the area, who have researched people’s family histories, worked, and are working on the Lillicrapp House, the Log House, the Barn, the Horse Shed, the Mill House, and the Mill, not to mention the gardens and roads and outhouse and general care-taking of the entire Richfield Historical Park . And always, these same folks have fresh, new ideas for on-going and future projects. There are many who do double work as finders of volunteers and of funding for

our many projects, deliverers of flyers, speakers at community programs, guides and hosts to people who want to visit the Mill. It is awe inspiring to see the support in time and dollars that RHS members contribute!

I probably have missed some important things – Now it is your turn to write in and tell me the things important to you about your membership in RHS so they can be mentioned next issue. Oh, how could I forget - cooking food, serving food, eating food, listening to music, and particularly baking cookies and eating cookies and serving and eating chili. Oh what a time we have!

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

Jean Happel

Quilting in America - France has petit point, England has smocking, Scandanavia has white openwork embroidery. But patchwork is a needle art that is America’s own, and perhaps no other art form so symbolizes the pioneer virtues of thrift, industry and ingenuity that built America.

For the New England colonists and later for the settlers of America’s West, quilting was a necessity, not only because it provided warm bedcovers, insulation against harsh winters, and a means of renewing worn clothing; but also because it acted as a solace to the strong women who spent their days struggling to survive.

Out of these needs as well as a scarcity of fabrics, a brilliant art form emerged – needle art. Generations of quilters in America passed their knowledge from one to the other like links in a chain, forming an unbroken record of history. Every scrap of fabric was precious to the pioneers who had no cloth available other than what they had brought from Europe or could make by hand, which was a long and difficult task. Pioneers also preserved the memories of those gone before by utilizing precious fragments of their clothing in their needle work. The whole fabric of life that went into the building of America was built into these quilts. The quilt in America is so much a part of its history.



Crown of Thorns Quilt

The Society has been the recipient of a lovely historic, family quilt (pattern “Crown of Thorns”) from a family at Amy Belle Lake which will be on display in the Lillicrapp House.

MILL RESTORATION

Kevin Maltby

As you can see, winter is starting to let go of its cold snowy grasp of the Mill’s Phase 2 Retaining Wall Project. I am in the process of lining up additional contractors to bid the job for us. If any member out there knows any masonry contractor that might be interested in bidding the job at a really good price for RHS, please contact me with their information. Other than finalizing plans for the retaining wall and ramp, there isn’t much else going on at the Mill until winter lets go!



Mill Handicap Entry

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Kathy Weberg

People get involved with the Richfield Historical Society for any number of reasons. Love of history, camaraderie with those who share the same goals, socializing, the good feeling that is had by doing something to make our community a better place. Most of the RHS volunteers don't have a professional historical background, but they just plow into whatever needs to be done and learn from experience. Well, did you know that RHS does have a bonafide, college-educated historian on the RHS Board? She is Dawn Mueller, Recording Secretary, and is married to Quint Mueller, immediate Past President. In fact, had it not been for both of them having their love of history, they may have never met!

Dawn studied history at Luther College (bachelor's degree) and U. of Northern Iowa (master's degree) with an emphasis on museums. She served in many professional capacities at the Living History Farm in Des Moines, Iowa (LHF) (if you haven't been there, GO!) and just happened to be on duty when Quint visited. Dawn's and Quint's paths crossed that day, and the rest is history (no pun intended). After a long-distance courtship, they were married, and Dawn moved to Hartford where Quint resided.

With her many and varied experiences at LHF, she found a fit here in Washington County as the Director of the Auto Museum in Hartford. She supervises staff and volunteers, creates the budget, handles loan and donation paperwork, updates and changes exhibits, fields correspondence whether it be emails, snail mail, or phone calls and even gets to push cars around and is called upon to get down and dirty with the cleaning detail on occasion. But more than that, Dawn provides the knowledge and expertise needed in running a specialized museum such as the Auto Museum. Dawn has membership in professional museum organizations as well which keeps her up-to-date in the field. (And, if you haven't been there, GO! - It's in your backyard.)



Dawn Mueller

SITES COMMITTEE

Herb Lofy

Although we dealt with a long and cold Wisconsin winter, project planning for the RHS Park has been moving forward. Eagle Scout candidate Hayden Borchardt is working on and coordinating efforts for the new information signs for the Welcome Center (Lillicrapp House) and Mill House. Another Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 139 St. Gabriel is interested in building the handicap ramp for the Welcome Center. Plans are to dedicate the Lillicrapp House at this year's Threshere. While the Thursday crew is wrapping things up inside the house, landscaping needs to be finished when the weather finally warms up. Plans also include development of a gravel parking lot and drive to the handicap ramp.

A proposed project in the Pioneer Homestead is to construct a small log livestock building between the log house and barn. It will be situated to the west putting it on the edge of the woods. Plans are to have small animals there during the Threshere while providing much needed storage the rest of the year. Materials to be used for this building are the logs salvaged

from the Gruen granary dismantled last spring.

Plans for the 2014 Thresheree have been going on all winter. Information for national show books needs to be sent in by November 1st and dash plaques also need to be ordered (with picture included) by the end of November. The orange business cards are ordered and picked-up in January while sponsorship letters go out about the same time. The contract for sanitation needs at the show has to be signed and returned usually in February. I contact the Washington County Sheriff Department (traffic control) and WTKM (live remote broadcast) sometime in March to make sure they plan accordingly. The band for the live remote also has to be booked at this time. Thresheree planning is a year round project.

SOCIETY SPRING PROGRAMS

Richfield Village Hall – 7:00 p.m.

(Programs are open to the public at no charge and all are welcome!)

Note: No programming June, July, and August

April 27th Kevin and Patsy Alderson

“Letters Home to Sarah, The Civil War Letters of Guy C. Taylor, 36th Wisconsin Volunteers”

May 22nd Jessica Michna

Goode Rebeka, a Salem Witch in “Trial By Fire

SOCIETY COMING EVENTS

Richfield Historical Park

Check our website (richfieldhistoricalsociety.org) for information.

July 26th

Art at the Mill

August 17th

Vintage Baseball and Car Show

September 20th & 21st

Thresheree

October 4th

Swap Meet

December 4th

Christmas at the Mill

MILL HOUSE BOOK CLUB

Nutman Coffee Shop 1:00 p.m. – 3rd Wednesday

April 16

“Mary Coin” by Marisa Silver

May 21

“Behind the Beautiful Forevers” by Katherine Boo

June 18

“Come and Get It” by Edna Ferber

July 16

“A Constellation of Vital Phenomena” by Anthony Marra

August 20

“Local Souls” by Allan Gurganus

2014 Sponsors & Donors

Sponsors/contributors for our events and In Kind donors are a very important and appreciated element of the operation of the Richfield Historical Society. The support of these contributors enables the Society to continue the projects which preserve the history of the Village of Richfield and share it with current and future generations. A Thank You to all the many businesses that purchased ads for our 2014 booklet (visit to see a complete list) and all who have donated to the Messer/Mayer Mill Foundation Fund.

Wheat (\$500 or more)

First National Bank of Hartford – Richfield Office
Wissota Sand and Gravel, Co. (2014 Thresheree)

Oats (\$249-\$100)

E. H. Wolf & Sons, Inc. (2014 Thresheree)
Gehring Sales & Service, Inc. (2014 Thresheree)
Klug's Photo World (Sponsor for Membership Brochure)
