



Richfield Historical Society
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RichfieldHistoricalSociety.org

President *Vice President* *Recording Secretary* *Corresponding Secretary* *Treasurer* *Past President*
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Kathy Lauenstein

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Coming Events

Art at the Mill - Saturday, June 20, 2026

Linda Aicher Event Chair

Mark your calendar for our 18th Annual Art at the Mill taking place Saturday June 20, 2026 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Richfield Historical Park located at 1896 Hwy 164, Richfield, Wisconsin.

Admission is \$3 and children 5 and under are free. Parking is free. A short scenic wagon-ride to and from the exhibit area is provided for your convenience or you may want to enjoy the short scenic walk.

This Art Fair features a variety of over 80 unique, talented artists with handmade garden items, beautiful paintings, interesting photography, amazing pottery, unique jewelry, wood products plus many other items. There will also be vendors with nuts, baked goods, jams/jelly, chocolates, soap, candies and various other products.



Art at the Mill 2025

There are no additional fees to visit the historic buildings. Take a self-guided tour of life long ago at the Mill House when there was no running water, a wood burning stove was used for cooking and heating, and see the ice box used for refrigeration.

A visit to the 1871 Messer-Mayer Mill should not be missed. The Lillicrapp Welcome Center has a wonderful general store display or talk with a volunteer about Richfield history. On your way back to your vehicle stop at the Blacksmith Shop.

Art at the Mill will have live music. New this year a variety of food will be provided by Sausage Plus of West Bend. Belshire Brewing of Richfield will have their craft beer and seltzer available.

It's a lovely event while enjoying the Richfield Historical Park.

Funds raised by Art at the Mill are used to support RHS events and maintenance of Richfield Historical Park. For more information, visit richfieldhistoricalpark.org and check us out on Facebook and Instagram.

Community Program

Connie Thoma Chair

On May 28, 2026, Peter Shrake from the world - renowned Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin will speak on the "History of the Circus in Wisconsin." This event will be held at 7:00 p.m. at the Richfield 175 Fire Hall. Admission and refreshment are free of charge.

Volunteer & Member Picnic

Susan Sawdey Chair



From the President

Joni Crivello

Hello Everyone,

As we head into another busy season, I just want to say—thank you. Our members and volunteers are what make the Richfield Historical Society go. Whether you've helped at an event, worked behind the scenes, or simply stayed involved, it truly matters.

What's Coming Up

We've got a great lineup of programs and events in the months ahead. There will be plenty of chances to learn something new, connect with others, and celebrate Richfield's history. Keep an eye out for details ---- and bring a friend along!

Don't Miss: August 2nd Picnic

Be sure to mark your calendar for our Volunteer and Member Recognition Picnic at the Historical Park on August 2nd. This is our chance to relax, enjoy some good food, and celebrate all of you who make this organization so special. We hope to see you there!

Looking Ahead to America 250

We're also starting to look ahead to America's 250th anniversary. It's a great opportunity to highlight Richfield's role in the bigger story of our country, and we're excited to bring that into our upcoming events and buildings.

Get Involved

If you've been thinking about getting more involved, now's a great time. There are several committee positions available. We're always looking for helping hands and fresh ideas. Contact me personally so I can explain these opportunities.

Thanks again for being part of this community—I hope to see you soon, especially on August 2nd!

Joni Crivello, President
Richfield Historical Society
262-617-4798
Joni.RHSboard@gmail.com

From the Vice President

Mary Kokan

RHS benefitted from 13 Richfield Middle School students and their guidance counselor who spent their Day of Service in the Richfield Historical Park pulling garlic mustard under the direction of partners of Katie Wilson and Amanda Schmitz, Washington County Conservation Staff. Many bags of garlic mustard were collected and disposed of thanks to the Richfield Middle School Day of Service.

The RHS Library Committee is busy going through our collection of photos with the goal of adding them to the library of photos that are available for visitors to view on the electronic kiosk in the History Room of the Welcome Center. Some of the photos lack identifying information. We are asking visitors to the Welcome Center to help us identify the people and locations these photos document. The History Room will be open during the Farmer's Market on June 13, July 11, and August 8 from 10:00 – 1:00, as well as Art at the Mill on June 20, and the Thresheree on September 19 – 20.

Currently the kiosk offers photos and genealogical information on many of the Homestead families. With the help of the community, we would like to add photos and genealogical information on families who resided in the Village in the decades of the 20th and 21st century. We are also interested in pictures of schools and students throughout the decades, local businesses, farms, lake communities, and community events. Please contact [marykokan at rhsboard@gmail.com](mailto:marykokan@rhsboard@gmail.com) to provide any pictures or information that you have to share.

From the RHS Committees

Blacksmith Shop

Jeff Beegle/Kathy Lauenstein

A blacksmith's craft begins with the hammer, the most iconic and frequently used tool in the shop. Different hammer

designs allow the smith to control how metal moves when struck hot on the anvil. The **cross-peen hammer** is a staple, valued for its ability to draw out steel efficiently by spreading it lengthwise. The **ball-peen hammer**, with its rounded end, is commonly used for riveting, shaping curves, and finishing work where a softer, controlled mark is desired.

For tasks requiring greater force or broader shaping, heavier hammers come into play. **Straight-peen hammers** allow the smith to spread metal laterally, making them useful when forging shoulders or working near edges. **Sledge hammers**, often used with a striker, provide the power needed to move large stock or forge thick material. These hammers are essential in traditional shops where teamwork and rhythm between striker and smith can dramatically increase efficiency.

Specialized hammers help refine a piece once the main shape is established. **Rounding hammers**, with slightly domed faces, move metal smoothly while minimizing deep hammer marks, making them popular for blacksmiths and ornamental blacksmiths. **Texturing or specialty hammers** intentionally leave patterns on the steel, adding visual interest and a handcrafted appearance. Switching between hammer types allows a blacksmith to blend strength with subtlety in their work.

Beyond hammers, handheld gripping tools are just as critical to safe and effective forging. **Tongs** come in many shapes and jaw styles, each designed to securely hold specific stock sizes and profiles. Proper tongs give the smith control and confidence, keeping hands safely away from heat while allowing precise placement of metal on the anvil. Many blacksmiths even forge custom tongs to suit their most common projects.

Cutting and punching tools also play a vital role at the anvil. **Hot cuts** and **chisels** enable clean separation or shaping of heated metal, while **punches and drifts** are used to create and enlarge holes. These tools require careful alignment and controlled hammer blows, and they highlight the importance of matching the right tool to the right stage of the forging process.

Together, hammers and handheld tools form a coordinated system, each contributing to how efficiently and accurately metal can be shaped. A skilled blacksmith learns not only how to use each tool, but when to use it—choosing the hammer that moves metal best, the tongs that grip securely, and the finishing tools that bring refinement. This thoughtful tool selection is what transforms raw steel into durable, functional, and often beautifully forged work.

Collections

Deanna Eienwalter

Anvils are one of the oldest, most durable tools in history, evolving from prehistoric, simple stone slabs to forged iron and steel, acting as an essential base for shaping metal. A great majority of modern anvils are made of cast steel (or cast iron) that has been heat treated by either flame or electric induction. We had the pleasure of a donation of an Anvil. Visit our Blacksmith Shop during our events for demonstrations.

Education

Kathy Weberg

The Education Days for neighboring schools is scheduled this year for May 12 and May 14. Participating schools are Friess Lake (HHASD), Erin, HNR (Herman, Neosho, Rubicon), Crown of Life, St. Peter (Slinger) and St. Gabriel. A total of 189 third graders will be arriving at 9 a.m. to spend the entire day at the Historical Park.

Our 25+ volunteers ensure that students leave the Park knowing a whole lot more than when they arrived! On the south end of the Park, students will rotate through sessions at the Blacksmith Shop, the Sugar Shack, the Log House and the Log Barn. These four locations provide activities that are hands-on experiences of yesteryear.

Leaving the drop-off area near the Mill, students have a guided walk to the south end learning about the Garden, the Smokehouse, the Creek, the Out-House where Weston resides and are also able to stop for a photo op at the big oak tree.

On the north end, students will spend time in the Mill House where they learn about the Messer and Mayer

families, knead bread in the kitchen and then make a quick exit through the Summer Kitchen. They have an opportunity to pump water and ring the bell before they wash clothes using a non-motorized washing machine.

Off to the Mill to get details on the importance of grains in Richfield's early days and why restoring that big red building is so valuable historically. Playing old-fashioned games in the field round out the south end's offerings.

While students enjoy every one of these sessions, can you guess which is always, always, always the favorite every year? The Blacksmith Shop! Maybe because there is fire involved??? However, teachers, chaperones and students are generous in their praise of all of the day's offerings. Thank a volunteer when you see him/her.

Event Coordinator

Daryl Grier

Vegetable Garden

We are getting ready to plant the RHS vegetable garden. If you enjoy fresh produce, join our garden group. We do the initial planting together. After the seeds and plants are in, folks go whenever they can to weed, water etc. We all share in the harvest. If you would like to join us, contact Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221, dgrier@charter.net

Events Committee

Our Events Committee meets a couple of months before each event. We don't have a set date. If you have ideas/comments to share about an event contact Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net.

Art at the Park

BAKERY, MUFFINS ETC. FOR ARTISTS AT ART AT THE MILL

We always receive thanks and praise for our wonderful baked goods from the artists. If you like to bake, sign up on the on-line volunteer form. If you don't have email, contact me.

NOTE: We start serving the artists at 7:00 a.m.; therefore, bakery must be delivered the day before or by 7:00 a.m. at the Park. Deliver to: Daryl Grier, 1179 Wejegi Dr. 262-628-4221

Volunteering and Community Involvement

Many schools require that kids do volunteer work. Even if not required, volunteering is a great addition to a school application. For the last several years, Hartford High School kids have worked in the Park helping in many different areas: weeding, mulching, washing windows and much more.

There are many volunteer opportunities at RHS events: selling beverages, serving/assembling food, replenishing items, to name a few. If you would like to support your park, contact RHS at richfieldhistory@gmail.com

Historic Sites

Quint Mueller/Herb Lofy

A brief report on activities from the RHS Sites Committee.

Meetings are planned for the third Monday. However, recently we've had to move the schedule, due to other commitments. An email is sent out at least several days in advance to confirm the schedule. Meetings are held 6:30 at the Lofy home located at 4434 Pleasant Hill Rd. Interested RHS members are welcome.

At this time, Drake Kulasiewicz, an Eagle Scout candidate from troop 110 Daniel Boone, is preparing to coordinate a Park project for a pedestrian bridge near the traffic bridge between the Mill and Mill House. This is to alleviate congestion, especially during events in the Park. He will be presenting the project to the Village in the near future and plans to get started as the weather improves.

Entering the Historical Park from Pleasant Hill Rd, you will notice an improvement in the gravel drive. Just before freeze up last Fall, the Village DPW and Christopher Marks added and graded material acquired from Wissota Sand and Gravel. Thank you for the improvement to the driveway.

Just a quick reflection on the great team from the RHS board, the Thursday crew (all the projects in the Park), the Sunday crew (working on the equipment in the Mill) and the countless volunteers that come forth time after time to make the Richfield Historical Society the organization it has become.

This was a highlight during a recent visit with Dave and Sharon Reich. Dave is dealing with a health issue that makes it impossible for him to participate at this time. He has contributed so much over the years; and, in conversation, reflected on the people he has gotten to know and work with at RHS. He expressed nothing but praise for the friendships and relationships. His attitude is remarkable for someone dealing with health issues. We're sure an email (cuddy1@charter.net) or card (3664 Neuberg Ct. Hubertus) would be very much appreciated by Dave. Please keep Dave and Sharon in your thoughts and prayers.

Library/Newsletter

Marge Holzbog

The History Room at the LWC Welcome Center will be celebrating the Nation's 250th Birthday. Our kiosk will have a short photo piece about the celebration and the north wall will display photos of early Americans involved in the founding of America taken from the Ken Burns book "The American Revolution."

The swing board should prompt your memory of early days in our area schools. We have some never before seen class photos from a teacher's collection of Friess Lake and Amy Belle Schools from earlier days.

LWC

Ruth Jeffords

SWEEPING

IS

A

NEVER-ENDING

TASK

Brooms have been a staple item in General Stores since the 1800s and continue to be commonly sold in various stores today. Across history, brooms have been crafted from many types of natural fibers. One notable fiber is Broomcorn Sorghum, which originated in Africa and was introduced to America by the mid-eighteenth century.

Broomcorn Sorghum in America: On March 24, 1757, Benjamin Franklin from Philadelphia sent a letter to Rhode Island statesman Samuel Ward, mentioning, "*I enclose you some of the grain called Whisk Corn, or Broom Corn. - - - they make the Whisk Brushes for Velvet (fabric) and are excellent Brooms.*" Commercial production of broomcorn began in 1797 near Hadley, Massachusetts, and expanded quickly, marking the start of the American broom industry.

Broom Press of the 1800s



The Shakers were deeply involved in broom manufacturing, making it one of their signature products. Renowned for their industrious spirit and innovation. Shaker member Theodore Bates invented the broom press, a device for flattening a round broom. While round brooms were less effective at covering floor space, the Shakers preferred flat brooms for greater efficiency.

Modern Broom Styles: Today, a wide variety of broom styles are available, each suited for specific cleaning tasks. Common types include Upright Brooms, Angled Brooms, Push Brooms, Soft Brooms, Whisks, and Commercial Brooms.

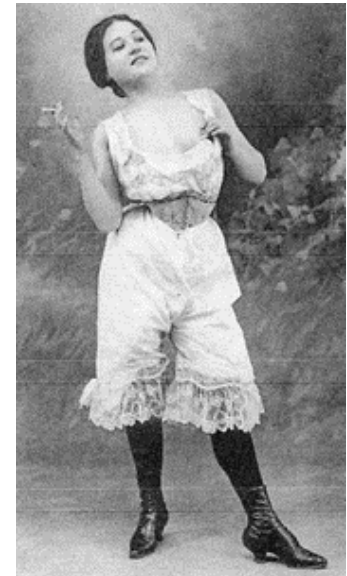
AND NOW BACK TO SWEEPING!

From Dresses to Bloomers: **The Evolution of Women's Clothing in the United States**

For much of American history, women's clothing was tightly regulated by social expectation, cultural tradition, and sometimes even by law. From heavy, restrictive dresses to the controversial adoption of bloomers and women's trousers, clothing became a visible symbol of women's struggle for autonomy, equality, and practical freedom. This document explores how women's fashion evolved in the United States and examines the social penalties and legal consequences women faced for wearing pants.

Women's Dress in Early America

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, women in the United States were expected to wear long dresses and skirts layered over corsets, petticoats, and other restrictive garments. These styles emphasized modesty and femininity while severely limiting movement and physical comfort. Clothing reinforced the belief that women belonged primarily in the home and should appear delicate, dependent, and ornamental rather than active or mobile.



Bloomer Girl

The Dress Reform Movement

By the mid-19th century, concerns about health, mobility, and women's rights began to inspire what became known as the Dress Reform Movement. Reformers argued that traditional women's clothing contributed to serious health problems, including respiratory issues, muscle weakness, and internal organ displacement caused by tight corsets and heavy skirts. Dress reformers believed that rational, comfortable clothing would allow women greater physical independence and social participation.

The Rise of Bloomers

One of the most famous outcomes of the Dress Reform Movement was the bloomer costume, introduced in the early 1850s. Bloomers consisted of loose trousers gathered at the ankles and worn beneath a knee-length skirt. The style was popularized by women's rights advocates such as Elizabeth Smith Miller and Amelia Jenks Bloomer, after whom the garment was named. Although bloomers offered unprecedented comfort and freedom of movement, they were widely mocked in newspapers and popular culture.

Public Backlash and Social Penalties

Women who wore bloomers or trousers in public often faced ridicule, harassment, and social exclusion. Cartoons portrayed them as unfeminine, immoral, or ridiculous. Many women abandoned the bloomer costume not because it was impractical, but because the negative attention detracted from other women's rights efforts such as suffrage. Social penalties proved to be one of the strongest forces maintaining traditional female dress norms.

Legal Penalties for Wearing Pants

In addition to social punishment, some women faced legal consequences for wearing pants. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, several American cities and states enforced laws or ordinances against cross-dressing. These laws did not always explicitly ban women from wearing pants, but they empowered police to arrest individuals who

violated gender-based dress expectations. Women such as Dr. Mary Edwards Walker were repeatedly arrested for wearing men's clothing, illustrating how fashion regulations were used to enforce gender conformity.

World Wars and Changing Attitudes

World War I and World War II marked significant turning points in women's clothing. As women entered factories, farms, and military support roles, practical clothing became a necessity. Trousers were increasingly accepted for work purposes, although many women were expected to return to skirts after the wars ended. These periods demonstrated that women could wear pants without undermining social order, slowly reshaping public opinion.

Acceptance of Women's Pants

By the mid-20th century, women's trousers gained broader social acceptance. Fashion designers, Hollywood figures, and feminist activists helped normalize pants as everyday attire. Although some workplace and school dress codes continued to restrict women's clothing choices into the 1960s and 1970s, most legal barriers disappeared. Pants came to symbolize equality, functionality, and women's right to self-expression.

Conclusion

The evolution from dresses to bloomers and pants reflects more than a change in fashion—it represents a broader struggle for women's autonomy and equality in American society. Women who challenged clothing norms faced mockery, punishment, and arrest, yet their persistence helped redefine acceptable dress and expand personal freedom. Today, the freedom for women to wear pants is often taken for granted, but it stands as a lasting symbol of social progress and resistance against restrictive traditions.

References: [Encyclopedia Britannica](#); [Library of Congress](#); [LegalClarity.org](#); [HistoryNet](#); [Tatter.org](#). [Wikipedia](#) articles on bloomers, dress reform and women's trousers.

Mill Restoration

Al Mayer

Walking through the door into the Messer/Mayer Mill has always been for me a sense of entering into a simpler, but very innovative time in our nation's history.

One unmistakable fact is that everywhere you look in the Mill is the extensive use of wood. As an example, looking at the bolting equipment it is obviously a big wooden box. And, inside the reel is made of wood to support the sifting screen. At the bottom of the unit, the auger that moves the sifted flour is a horizontal wooden pole with wooden "paddles" set in it to move flour along to its next destination as it rotates. Throughout the Mill, various wood species are evident as the craftsmen's material that made it possible to invent, create, build, and improve the equipment.

Along with the innovation of new equipment and designs, came the knowledge of the characteristics of different species of wood that worked best for different uses. White oak is used extensively in areas that require brute strength and minor moisture exposure. The hurst frame and shaft supports, along with major building timbers, are prime examples of the use of this material.

The sheaves that we are reconstructing used white oak for the spokes for its strength and rigidity when clamped to the main power shaft in the Mill. The wood for the round outer surface is made of maple. It is a strong hardwood that resists wear and provides good "traction" when a belt is driven around its surface.



Wooden Bolting Equipment

Many of the spokes and light framework applications in the bolters and sifters use hickory for its strong but flexible qualities. The building exterior is cedar, well known for its weather and rot resistant properties.

We're always looking for anyone that takes an interest in learning more about these earlier trades and would like to join us to help bring the Messer/Mayer Mill to an operating historical artifact.

We're at the Mill on Sundays 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. working to get the millstone working again. Recently we're working on rebuilding the main power shaft timbers. **Stop in and check it out!**



Wooden Sheave

Programs

Connie Thoma

On May 28, 2026, Peter Shrake from the world-renowned Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin will speak on the "History of the Circus in Wisconsin."

As you probably know, we take a break with no meetings in June, July and August. We start up again in September with Professor Patrick Steele an expert on baseball. On September 24th, he will be presenting a behind the scenes look at "The Milwaukee Braves and Why They Left Town."

Our October 22nd meeting will be a return visit with author Susan Apps Bodilly speaking on "One Room School Houses." Susan wrote a book with her famous father Jerry Apps on this subject. She will have books to sell.

On November 19th, another returning author will be Rochelle Penington speaking on "The Christmas Tree Ships." In the 1800s, it was very popular for several shipping companies to ferry ships loaded with Christmas trees heading to the large cities of Milwaukee and Chicago. Several never made it because of the treacherous waters of Lake Michigan. In November, Rochelle previously joined us speaking about her book "The Endurance" a story about Ernest Shackleton.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at our monthly meetings held at 7:00 p.m. at the Richfield Fire Hall on Hwy 175 and believe everyone will enjoy these topics. Admission and refreshments are available free of charge.

Project Coordinator

Al Mayer

It's been a long winter and an awfully wet Spring! It seems all through January and February that Thursdays were the day of the week that we would have single digit temperatures along with deep snow, limiting our crew's outside projects. We're usually able to get most of the firewood cut and split during this time of year for the next maple syrup season.

After all the rain, we were able to get started re-shingling the Horse Shed roof, which we should have completed in the near future. One of the areas we are focusing on this year is re-painting the siding and trim on the Welcome Center. The colors will remain the same. However, a new coat of paint is badly needed and always a "welcome site".

We have been able to work on sanding and remaking the large road signs that we put up at major intersections that feature the Threshere and Art Fair. They will now also include the Luminary Walk.

We've got a great crew of guys that work a varying array of projects at the Park every Thursday morning from 8 a.m. – noon. Anyone's welcome, sometimes gals show up too. Plan to stop in on a Thursday and see if this is the kind of "social" club you would like to be part of. **Thank you for being a member!**

Volunteer Coordinator

Sharon Lofy

Maple Syrup Family Day was a great success. Thank you goes to the chair and organizers of the event. Also, thanks to all the volunteers that help run this event so smoothly.

Art at the Mill will be the next event. Already many things are in place. Art at the Mill starts organizing for next year's event as soon as possible. Keep the date in mind (June 20, 2026). You will be getting an email or call for your help.

Thank you for all the plant certificates that you purchased. It is a great fundraiser with Nehm's Greenhouse. May your vegetable and flower plants flourish!

Plans for this year's Thresheree are being discussed. Some plans are in place and others take a little more time. As many of you know, Delores Parsons is the Chair of the Thresheree Silent Auction. She has done a great job and helped it to grow each year. But, sorry to say that she is moving and will no longer be the Thresheree Silent Auction Chair. She will still help this year. We are looking for someone to take her place. Chairing the Silent Auction might be able to be divided between two people. The Thresheree Silent Auction is always a big success and money maker. Hoping that we can still offer the Silent Auction to our visitors. Give Delores a call (414-852-3733). She is happy to answer any questions that you might have. Maybe if it doesn't work for you to become Chair, you might know of someone to pass this information onto. Possibly you know of someone who would like to share the Chair with you.

Again I can't thank you enough for all the hours of volunteering that you do for all our events!

Past RHS Events

Maple Syrup Season a Sweet Success - Pete Samson Past President

This year's maple syrup season proved to be one of our most rewarding yet. With a total of 148 trees tapped including about 40 newly added trees in the Park—we were able to expand our efforts after a few slower production years. The decision to grow our tapping area paid off in a big way.

Over the course of the season, we collected more than 1,800 gallons of sap, which yielded nearly 40 gallons of pure maple syrup. The process required dedication and teamwork, and we're proud to report that we completed 13 batches. Each batch started with approximately 150 gallons of sap and produced around 3.5 gallons of finished syrup.



The Crew

One of the highlights of the season was the incredible volunteer support. On many days, more than 15 people came out to help collect sap and keep things running smoothly at the Sugar Shack. Their enthusiasm and hard work are what make this tradition so special.

We were excited to certify a new sap maker this year—Leah Duckert-Kroll—who joins a growing group of skilled volunteers helping carry this tradition forward.

2026 Maple Syrup Family Day Another Great Success - Pete Samson Past President

Maple Syrup Family Day was once again a tremendous success this year. What many people may not realize is that planning for this event begins nearly six months in advance. As the date gets closer, the excitement builds, especially during the week leading up to the event when setup begins in full swing. Securing sponsors and organizing more than 50 dedicated volunteers is no small task, but it all comes together to create a memorable day for the community.

This year's event offered activities for all ages. One of the highlights was the Maple Syrup Contest which featured 35 entries, all competing for the coveted Blue Ribbon. The Richfield Historical Society proudly earned a Blue Ribbon in the Very Dark category—congratulations to the entire team!

The Pancake Breakfast was, as always, a crowd favorite, and the Sugar Shack gave visitors of all ages a chance to experience the fun of collecting sap and learning how syrup is made. The spinning wheel demonstrations and maple cotton candy were incredibly popular with over 500 people taking part.

The Blacksmith Shop continues to grow each year, drawing visitors in with the unmistakable sound of hammer striking metal and showcasing the craftsmanship involved in shaping iron into useful tools and art.

A major highlight this year was the Pioneer Homestead area, which became the biggest attraction. Visitors enjoyed hands-on activities and had the opportunity to explore a variety of maple products.

Many guests also took rides on the people mover to visit the historic buildings throughout the Park. At the Mill House, interactive activities kept children engaged while teaching them about local history. At the Mill, visitors learned about the ongoing efforts to bring milling operations back to life. The Welcome Center provided additional insight into the Village of Richfield and its rich heritage and provided a look at an old-time General Store.

After a full day of activities, many visitors returned hungry and enjoyed fresh sourdough bread, jelly, hot dogs, hot chocolate, and a variety of delicious desserts before heading home.

A special thank you goes out to all the volunteers, especially those helping parking and guiding guests throughout the event. Their efforts ensured everything ran smoothly.

It was a fun and successful day for everyone involved—and planning has already begun for next year!

Wisconsin Stories

Wake Up to Wisconsin's Dairy Past – by Susan Bruschafer

It's just before dawn. In fact, the clock says 4:15 a.m. Did you hear that? It's the farmer's rooster signaling the arrival of a new day. And we wake up to life on a dairy farm from the mid - 1800s through the early 1930s. During these years, Wisconsin dairy farms transitioned from 'wheat is king' to dairy.

Hit the snooze alarm? Nope, not on this farm. All family members had a daily schedule. Let's join them as they go about family responsibilities.

A Look at the Farm Family's Day

The Dairy Farmer had a schedule that involved many outdoor activities. These didn't vary a lot from season to season. The farmer's schedule required diligence and care. Imagine beginning your day by milking the cows, feeding livestock, and cleaning equipment and stalls. Tired already? These chores often occurred early in the morning, 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. every day, varying by need. By midday, fieldwork was underway and could include cutting hay, filling the silos, and spreading manure.

During this time, the farmer also repaired things like fences, machinery, and barns. When evening approached, the second milking of the day took place. If the farmer needed to deliver produce or other farm products, evening could be the preferred time as a full day came to its close. Some farmers used their evenings to do bookkeeping. Yes, the family dinner was, of course, part of the evening's activities as was planning tasks for the following day. Did the farmer have help? Children were heavily relied on along with hired hands, if the family could afford to employ them. Harvest and winter prep often required extra hands.



**Antique Farm Photo, Ebling
Richfield Early 1900s**

Meanwhile, the **farmer's wife** had a light day of planting flowers and baking bread. (pause...) That didn't happen on this farm! The farmer's wife had quite a demanding job, sometimes overlapping into the farmer's day. Her schedule was also heavily packed between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. She prepared breakfast for the family. That might include breakfast for any hired hands.

Before the 1900s, most farm families heated water in kettles or cauldrons on wood-burning stoves. Although early mechanical water heaters were available to city dwellers between 1900-1920, many rural areas lacked electricity until the 1930s. They used coal or wood-fired kitchen stoves as the home's main heat source. Thanks to The Rural Electrification Administration (1935) Wisconsin farmers began installing electric water heaters. If fuel delivery was available, they might have oil-fired heaters. The farmer's wife usually started the woodstove and heated the water.

Her morning continued with cream separating, skimming milk, and washing pails. The farmer's wife then moved onto feeding the pigs, chickens, and sometimes calves. She gathered her hens' eggs and checked on the brooding hens (hens whose instincts switch from egg-laying to mothering: from pre-hatching to teaching the chicks how to eat.) That morning continued with seasonal and needed-soon tasks like churning butter, making cheese, washing, mending, ironing, preserving food by canning, drying and pickling, baking bread and preparing the main meal of the day, dinner, which you and I refer to as 'lunch.' The farmer's wife also planned the lighter evening meal, supper, which consisted of leftovers, bread and milk, or something simple.

Many farmers' wives also were church ladies, helping with the activities of the local house of worship.



Was there time after supper to engage in some relaxation? Big sigh ... after cleaning up from supper, our farmer's wife, especially on smaller farms, might help the farmer with a second milking. She might strain and cool milk for pick up the following morning. She would ensure the root cellar was properly stocked. She might do some sewing or quilting by lamplight. And, of course, the farmer mom confirmed that the children's schoolwork and chores were done.

Let's not forget about the **children's responsibilities** besides schoolwork. Chores varied quite a bit by season since there was no 'summer school' to make up missed classes. Imagine today's kiddos having their chores doubled when school returned. That happened in late August to early September so children could finish haying and early harvest work.

Shortly after the rooster crowed, a farm child's day started. Between 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., before a quick breakfast, they would carry warm water from the house to the barn, help with milking, feed the calves, line bed stalls with fresh straw and collect eggs. In winter, the children might also have the chore of breaking ice on the livestock's water troughs. Then, after breakfast they would walk (or sled) to school. Midday for a farm child meant 'after school'.

Much had to be done before sun set. Firewood and kindling were always needed for cooking and warmth. If mom needed help with chores, both boys and girls were expected to chip in. You might hear mom call out, "You're the oldest, watch your sister!" You might find a farm child grinding feed or cracking corn. (The process for cracking corn involved feeding shelled kernels into a hand-cranked grinder to break them into coarse pieces.) The job of grinding feed meant combining corn, oats, bran, or barley and running them through a mill to create a fine mash. In winter, jobs might include shoveling paths to the pump, barn, and outhouse. If there was time before supper, some studying by lamplight might be squeezed in. Children were expected to help with the second milking and feeding, sweeping the barn, and checking on the animals. After supper, there might be mending, reading, or simple games followed by an early bedtime. 5:00 a.m. came around all too quickly!

Don't worry, farm children did have fun. Summer was probably the best since there were picnics, fishing in the pond or stream, catching fireflies, picking berries, and running barefoot. In winter, a frozen fishing hole became an ice rink. 'High Hill' became a sledding hill.

Dairy Farms in Winter

Wisconsin may have erratic weather, but 'cold' is always a factor in Winter. When storms or cold channeled farming activities to less outdoors, more indoors, one might engage in filling the icehouse or hauling timber for firewood. Harnesses always needed mending and equipment needed maintenance. Candle making and soap making might now be called 'revamping old hobbies,' but they were necessities on yesteryear's farms. A farmer's welcome pastime might include reading agricultural journals like *Hoard's Dairyman*, a magazine launched in 1885 by W.D. Hoard, editor of a small newspaper in Jefferson County, Wisconsin

The Cow's Day

For the family, Bessy, Candy, and Cupcake were important members of the extended farm family. Cows had manly, girly, cute, and funny names. Some names were based on a cow's 'attitude'! Besides the interactions they experienced with the farm family, they were watered and groomed. They grazed in the pasture or rested in the barn. Occasionally, a vet would do a check-up and trim their hooves.

Farmer Milking Cow



Dairy Products

As Wisconsin transitioned from being a wheat production to a dairy state, dairy farms played an important part in what our state produced. Dairy farms grew rapidly during the 1860s to 1870s. Primary products included milk (frequently bottled by hand or delivered in cans), butter (a top product before refrigeration), cheese (popular types included Colby, cheddar, brick, and Swiss), cream (use by the family for baking or sold to creameries), and, of course, ice cream (both local parlors and farms started producing the treat by the 1880s). Milk products were sold both locally and regionally. Milk products were sold to urban markets like Milwaukee and Chicago. Cheese that had been aged in ‘cheese caves’ or cellars during the late 1800s was shipped by railway.

From Cow to Creamery

Dairy farms had milk houses. They were small square structures used to ensure the consistent and safe process of milk before it was taken to the creamery. By the early 1900s, concrete walls and floors were increasingly common because they were easier to sanitize. As an aside, Wisconsin became a natural leader in dairy regulation, and separating the milk processing area from the barn.



Crystal Lake Farm Milk House
Marg Chudzicke-Schultz, Pinterest

Milk-House Preparation Tasks

Farmers got the process started with these types of tasks:

- Strain the warm milk through cloth or metal strainers to remove debris
- Cool the milk quickly (often in springhouses, cold water tanks, or later, mechanical coolers)
- Separate cream using hand-cranked centrifugal separators (common after the 1890s)
- Wash and scald pails, strainers, and cans to meet creamery cleanliness standards
- Store milk or cream in metal cans for pickup or delivery
- Record weights for payment at the creamery

The Creamery's Role

Creameries continued the process of milk ‘transformation’ and engaged in these kinds of tasks:

- Weigh and test milk (butterfat testing became standard after the Babcock Test, 1890)
- Separate cream (if farmers hadn’t already)
- Pasteurize milk (increasingly common after 1900)
- Churn butter using large industrial churns
- Produce cheese in combined creamery/cheese factories
- Cool and pack butter for shipment
- Return skim milk to farmers for feeding pigs and calves

Creameries in Washington County

Taken from the Census Report of 1895, Dairy and Food Commissioner, Henry Casson, provided information on creameries, published in a List of Creameries and Cheese Factories in Wisconsin.

The 1913 *Wisconsin Cheese Factories, Creameries and Condenseries by Counties* provides a list of Washington County creameries organized by town:

Barton Township

- Barton Creamery
- Young America Creamery

Erin Township

- Hartford-Erin Creamery (aka “Erin Creamery”)
- St. Lawrence Creamery

Farmington Township

- Boltonville Creamery

Germantown Township

- Germantown Creamery

Hartford Township

- Hartford Creamery
- Pike Lake Creamery

Jackson Township

- Jackson Creamery

Kewaskum Township

- Kewaskum Creamery

Polk Township

- Slinger Creamery
- Cedar Lake Creamery

Trenton Township

- Newburg Creamery

West Bend Township

- West Bend Creamery
- Barton-West Bend Cooperative Creamery

The dairy industry was so bountiful in Wisconsin that 1900s local writer, Carl Quickert, described Washington County as “**our own land of milk and honey.**”

Off to the Creamery!

Farmers used their daily lifeline to transport milk on wagon routes. A Richfield farmer knew every hill, creek, muddy stretch, and rut between his farm and the nearest creamery. Farmers used routes that were smooth and well-traveled. The fewer steep grades, the better. They looked for the shortest haul for transporting warm milk. They needed good winter access. Whether yours is a pioneer family of Richfield or new to our community, you will recognize some of the common wagon routes of the 1890s to 1930.

- Farmers in southern Richfield using the **Germantown Creamery** would follow Hubertus Road or Pleasant Hill Road to Germantown (3-6 miles)

- The **Jackson Creamery** was a 5–8-mile trek following Highway 164 or Sherman Road. The route was a bit longer but had fewer marshes than a western route.



Men Bringing Cans of Milk to a Creamery

- Farmers used Holy Hill Road or Monches Road to get to the **Hartford-Erin Creamery**. While scenic, the 6–10-mile journey was the steepest wagon route due to the glacial ridges. This creamery was set in a strong Irish-German community and was known for its butter production and good relationships
- Milk wagons might follow Pioneer road or Hillside Road toward the **Slinger Creamery**. Although longer at 7-10 miles, farmers liked this route as Slinger was a major crossroads with easy access to shipping by rail. During some years, it also had better prices.
- The furthest location, (8-12 miles), **Cedar Lake Creamery** skirted the Cedar Lake area which was often muddy in Spring. It made driving sense to stay clear of lowlands by taking ridge roads. This creamery most likely served western Richfield farms. It, too, had a good reputation for producing butter.

Distance did matter as milk spoiled quickly. Farmers relied on shaded covered wagons and early-morning hauls. The closer the creamery was to a farm, the better the milk grade and payment received.

Dairy Innovations from Wisconsin 1865–1930s

The mid 1800s to the early 1930s were exciting years for many inventions and improvements. Wisconsin identified as the ‘Dairy State’ and later as ‘America’s Dairyland,’ becoming the Nation’s leading dairy producer by 1915. We can boast several industry-changing innovations.

- **Factory-Scale Butter Churns**

Large, mechanized butter churns replaced home production and allowed creameries to produce consistent, high quality butter at a scale that transformed rural economies.

- **The Cooperative Creamery Model**

The Wisconsin Dairymen's Association, founded in 1872, launched the first cooperative creameries. By pooling milk and sharing profits, expensive equipment became more affordable and helped standardize the state's dairy processing.

- **Scientific Dairying at the University of Wisconsin**

The College of Agriculture led the nation in teaching scientific dairy practices. It offered both short courses and extension programs. Farmers learned modern techniques for herd care, sanitary milk handling, and improved butter and cheese.

- **Refrigerated Rail Transport**

Wisconsin was an early adopter of refrigerated rail cars. They allowed butter and cheese to reach distant markets without spoiling. Through this transportation enhancement Wisconsin continued its rise to national dairy leadership.

- **Immigrant Cheesemaking Expertise**

Immigrants from Sweden, Germany, and Norway brought advanced cheesemaking expertise that Wisconsin farmers were quick to recognize and adopt. These techniques shaped the state's early cheese factories and set quality standards still present today.

Learn More

Founded in 1949, the **National Dairy Shrine** is an American dairying group based in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. The shrine promotes the dairy industry and records its history. Dairying objects in its collection include butter churns, milking machines, a treadle, and items used in the Babcock test for fat content of milk, which was developed nearby at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. **Mike Opperman, Executive Director of the National Dairy Shrine** stated, “The most interesting thing downstairs is the dog treadmill where they would put a dog on a treadmill, and (the dog) would run it, and it would power a butter churn or cream separator.”



Part of Mooseum's Annual Cow Parade



Butter Churns – National Dairy Shrine

Something to Crow About

Wisconsin's dairy past, extending into today's modern present is truly something for our state to crow about. The next time you wake up early to enjoy a vibrant sunrise, step outside or open a window. If you hear a farmer's rooster signaling the day's arrival (and in our community, that feathered alarm clock might be just down the block), give a big stretch and a silent thanks to our early and current family farms.