



*Richfield Historical Society
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Daryl Grier

Historic Sites

Herb Lofy

Library/Program/

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Marge Holzbog

Lillicrapp House

Aerona Smith

Long-Term Planning

Jim Metzger

Marketing

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Membership

Judy Lehman

Mill House

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Cindy Schmechel

Mill Restoration

Harry Niemann

Museum

Jean Happel/Norb Berres

Project Coordinator

Del Schmechel

Volunteer Coordinator

Sharon Lofy



**Winter at the Messer Mayer Mill (Looking south from the Mill House drive)
Donated by Bob and Carol Woods**

January: Month of the Invisible Killer

(excerpted from Mell Ellis (1912 – 1884) "The Land Always the Land")

"Now is the time for testing. Now the reckoning. Short days, brittle and bright or biting and leaden, sandwiched between dawn and dusk, sun fires tinting the purple smoke of horizon clouds . . .

Mostly January is a cruel month. Once it tested our mettle to determine the purity of our courage, and to measure how much was merely alloy. Wrapped now in or technological cocoon, rarely are we forced to take a stand. When it happens, we find we are unable to get our car from the ditch, much less survive a night in the woods.

Few things in nature are as insidious, as relentless as cold. Ice on ponds and lakes creaks, groans, and then booms as hairline cracks streak from shore to shore. A tortured tree protests with a canon burst, which reverberates down the frozen aisles of an otherwise frozen forest. Snow squeaks under foot. Bridge boards and cabin roofs crack as though breaking. Iron wheels scream. The ring of an axe carries miles, and a falling icicle breaks to the musical briskness of shattering glass. Finally, when the far-below-zero cold tightens its grip, the ice stops expanding and begins to contract and an ominous, pervasive, barely audible moan tells of the earth's agony.

Vapor from a spring-fed creek rises to overhanging grass, and trees freeze in a white fringe. Even rocks are rent where moisture in a fissure becomes an expanding wedge of ice. The moon turns the snow pale blue, but the mouse knows better than to surface from its labyrinthian shelter to see the shadow and shine.

Then, just about the time the hardest of humans balks at facing the cutting wind, it swings to the south, and the redbird rises to the topmost branch of the highest tree on its range to cheer this unbelievable hiatus, the January Thaw. . . .

Encouraged, English sparrows rise toward the sun in excited, feathery flurries. Waxwings flutter beneath icicles on the maples to sip droplets of sweet sap. The red fox comes down off the ridge to patrol mouse meadows now that the ice, roofing the tunneled cities, has softened. The following night, the wind goes back into the north, and everyone knows about the lie January almost always tells. . . .

So dress warm and come. Perhaps you will be rewarded by the sight of a flit of juncos, a squadron of crossbills hanging upside down to steal seeds from the spruce cones, or even a huge pileated woodpecker drumming on a dead tree, while in the distance ravens talk in tongues. Bring matches, and then about noon, kick the resinous heart out of a crumbling pine stump, and put on a can of snow above leaping flames for a long drink of stomach-and heart-warming tea. Rested, move again, quietly. Savor the grandeur of the winter woods. Know that here, beyond the reach of compassionate humans with our affinity for coddling the weak, evolution continues its agonizing process to ensure survival of the fittest.”

After reading Ellis, you might see the world anew on your trips to the countryside or while visiting our beautiful historic park or in your daily travels around town. And, you might come to believe in what Ellis called the Eleventh Commandment – “Thou shalt honor the earth.”

A Sticky Business

Nearly 540,000 gallons of maple syrup was stolen – 12.5 percent of a Reserve – with a street value of \$13.4 million!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers was formed in 1966, an ironfisted cartel tasked with taking a business in which few could make a decent living and turning it into a respectable trade This was accomplished in the classic way: quotas, rules. But, there have been side effects to the methods and controls of the Federation – start with high prices. And, then, what about that most troubling of unintended consequences: the black market, the subterranean world of contraband sap.

Part of the firm’s supply at the Reserve was stored in a rented warehouse, and there were no security cameras. But, who would steal syrup? The theft became known as the Great Maple Syrup Heist and was said to be among the most fantastic agricultural crimes ever committed.

So how did they do it? According to the prosecutor, the gang of thieves would truck barrels out of the Reserve to a sugar shack where they would siphon off the syrup, the way you siphon gasoline from a vehicle, feeding it a cask at a time into their own ram-shackled barrels and then re-filling the originals with water. As the operation grew, the masterminds allegedly brought on accomplices and began siphoning syrup directly from the barrels in the Reserve.

Nearly 10,000 barrels of syrup were stolen and trucked to points south and east where the market is free. So far four men have been brought to trial.

P. S. A large portion of the syrup was ultimately recovered, and the story of the “Heist” is currently being made into a movie. “Vanity Fair” 2016 Holiday Issue

Since you are already reading this Newsletter, you are probably a member of the Richfield Historical Society or someone with a keen interest in the history of the Richfield Historical Park and are well aware of the accomplishments of the Society to date. This year is winding down quickly and is shaping up to be another good year any way you want to measure it. At this time, I will not go into summarizing the outcome of our many events the RHS hosts every year as elsewhere in this Newsletter each event will be commented on.

There were many accomplishments made in the Historical Park in 2016 that are not obvious to everyone. It has been anticipated that the Emerald Ash Bores will have a devastating effect on the Park in the near future. One hundred fifty new trees were planted in the Park and maintained by a local Boy Scout on the way to earning an Eagle Scout Badge. Also completed, by another Boy Scout on his way to Eagle Scout, has been the completion and installation of the three "Little Libraries" in the Historical Park. The Girl Scouts have just completed a foot bridge between the Mill House and the Lillicrapp Welcome Center. These are great additions to the Park at almost no cost to the RHS provided by the efforts of local Scouts. A major part of these projects call for the Scouts to fund raise for the purchase of all of the materials needed as well as any installation costs.

The Thursday Crew has had a very busy year constructing the Blacksmith Shop. They have gone to great lengths to control costs by taking apart a donated abandoned barn and salvaging most of the lumber needed. In many other areas, the "Crew" begged, borrowed or bartered for much of the other materials needed, again saving money. The Horseshoe Fundraiser also contributes to the money needed for this project. The "Crew" also constructed a concrete pad used during our fundraising events. These are just a few of the accomplishments from this hard working group.

Early this year the Capital Campaign Committee decided it was time to revisit Phase Three of the Mill foundation restoration. With a healthy bank balance in place, from fund raising and other sources, it was time to get an updated proposal. An alternate construction method was also considered for the Phase Three south wall. A local engineering company provided a cost range estimate for the alternate construction method. At this time, the Committee is waiting for the plans to be revised and a hard number for each of the construction methods so we can make a decision hopefully early in 2017.

All of the wood components of the Mill basement were treated to a powder post beetle abatement application to slow down the wood deterioration. At the same time, a fan was installed to draw outdoor air through the basement to help control the present high humidity level.

The Lillicrapp Welcome Center continues to evolve and has become one of the major attractions at the Park. The theme, at this time, is that of a "Country General Store." There are many period correct items in this display, and it has drawn many favorable comments from people visiting during our 2016 events. The museum, located in the Welcome Center, is currently featuring early photography equipment and a rich display of early Richfield photography.

The Mill House is another major attraction in the Park and continues to improve. It is a museum in its own right. It features much of, if not most of, the original furniture and amenities used by the various families that occupied it. It was also the focal point during our last event, "Richfield Christmas at the Historical Park." It was dressed in its finest Christmas attire with the smell of cider and cookies ever present.

As you may have guessed, there is much going on at the Park all year long. If this activity is something that you may have interest in, contact any person shown on page 1 of this Newsletter for further information.

Collections

Jean Happel/Norb Berres

This year our RHS attention has been largely drawn to the fine progress the Thursday Crew has made on the Blacksmith Shop. Back at the Mill, however, the planning, scheming and technical thinking goes on in pursuit of the eventual rebuild of the south wall and the refurbishing of the mechanical parts that will someday be the completed mill.

These two projects have taken the spotlight because they are major additions to the Park. However, back in the shadows there is a plan developing for using the lower level of the Messer Mayer barn for a simpler, more humble display of how ordinary agricultural life was before the rural electrification of America. Since the Town acquired the property and its buildings, the lower level of the barn has been mostly a storage area for lumber, odds and ends and a few small wildlife critters.

The Museum Committee, now known as the Collections Committee and having the responsibility of bringing in and cataloging artifacts for display, has been accepting donations of many items which are not directly related to the Mill and the work done there but which represent the everyday activities and lives of the people who lived there. We are ready, this spring, to begin to organize the lower level of the barn into three areas of display, each showing the devices and furnishings for a different aspect of their daily lives.

We will have 1/3 of the area set up as a hen house. We have two incubators for hatching and warming new chicks till they can be on their own. We have several feeding troughs for the chickens, and we will need to construct some egg laying nests. Next to the hen house will be the horse stall and an area for storing harnesses, saddles and other tack, and perhaps a hay feeder. The third area will become the home of the family cow. We have a rare 1916 milking machine and will have a stanchion or two as well.

Somewhere in our membership there ought to be two or three budding artisans who would find pleasure in creating this trio of displays, or any small portion. It all begins with conversation.

Education

Kathy Weberg

Many of us attended one-room grade schools when we were growing up. Those of us who did have plenty of good stories to tell. Compared to today's education practices, it was a simpler and less complicated way of educating. And yet, we did get a good education.

You may be interested to read a book called "Rural Schools of Washington County," available at libraries in Washington County and for sale at the County Historical Society in West Bend. This book was written by the Retired Educators of Washington County. Richfield Historical Society members Beulah Timm, Marge Holzbog and Joan Lanser also provided information.

Written in 2000, the book is divided into town sections. In the Town of Richfield, the following schools were identified initially: District #2, Richfield; District #3, Friess Lake; District #4, Hubertus; District #5, Amy Belle; District #6, Hillside; District #7, Plat and District #8, St. Augustine.

The Hubertus School closed in 1923 although the building was used for various purposes until it was torn down in 1992. Amy Belle and Hillside schools became part of the Germantown district in 1964, and Hillside School was sold later and is now a day care center. Some schools use different district numbers today. This book has a wealth of information along with old and updated photographs. Check it out for yourself: Call number is 390.9775, R31. And enjoy!

Event Coordinator

Daryl Grier

Planning an event is an on-going process. Some things need to be worked out almost a year before the actual event. Our committee meets about once a month; we don't have a set date as we meet when we need to work on specific issues. Our next meeting is January 19, 2017. If you would like to see what we are working on or would like information about a meeting, contact Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net.

- Currently, we are working on our new summer activity: "Step Back in Time." This will take place on the 2nd Sunday of the month, May thru August, from 12 p.m.-3 p.m. Dates are: May 14, 2017, June 11, 2017, July 9, 2017 and August 13, 2017. Three buildings will be open: the Lillicrapp Welcome Center/General Store, the Mill House and the Mill. Tours will be given, and there will be hands-on activities included. Some of the activities will be:
 - Scrub Clothes
 - Grind Coffee
 - Shell Corn
 - Ring a Dinner Bell
 - Carry "Ice" to the Ice box
 - Play "What's That Sound"
 - Touch a Millstone
 - Pump Water
 - Wash Clothes as was done in the past

Parking will be at the Lillicrapp Welcome Center. Tours are \$5 per adult, \$3 kids, 6 and under free. We'll also have some refreshments for sale. We'll have flyers at all of our upcoming meetings and events, but the advertising of our beautiful park is YOU! Give a flyer to your neighbor and relatives; bring friends out to "Step Back in Time." We will need a few volunteers to help with the hands-on activities. If you would like to help, contact Daryl Grier, 262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net or Sharon Lofy 262 297-1546 hsl1725@yahoo.com.

Threshereee – Sweets 'n Stuff

Thanks to all of the fabulous volunteers who helped out at our annual Threshereee! Once again, it was a great success. The baked goods that you made for Sweets 'n Stuff were thoroughly enjoyed by all. Also some really great items were donated for the "stuff" side of the tent. Please save your books for next year as the book sale went well. And, lastly if you have household treasures that you would like to donate, contact me. Daryl Grier dgrier@charter.net, 262 628-4221

Adopt a Garden in the Park

Volunteers do great things to keep our buildings looking good. There are also volunteers who work on the grounds. Some of the ground volunteers and their work includes:

- The "garden" volunteers plant and weed the vegetable garden.
- The Thursday Crew mows the lawn.
- Chuck Basil mows lawn, tends to the vegetable and flower gardens and so much more.
- Kathy Weberg and Lois Hessenauer pulled up a lot of weeds in front of the kiosk at the Mill.
- Judy & Dave Lehman worked around the wood shed.
- Master Gardeners have cut buckthorn.

BUT..... We would like to clean up all of our gardens and then mulch them to keep the weeds down. We have a list of what could be done to make our park really beautiful. You do not need to be a gardener to adopt a garden! We work together so that you will know what to pull, and we'll have plants to replace the weeds.

If you would like to adopt a garden, we have many gardens to choose from, large and small. Contact Daryl Grier 262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net or Sharon Lofy 262 297-1546 hsl1725@yahoo.com for more information. This could be a fun family project!

Library/Programs/Newsletter

Marge Holzbog

The Richfield Historical Society Book Club meets the third Wednesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at the ‘Nut Man’ - located on the southwest corner of State Highway 175 and Hubertus Road. All are welcome to come and participate in thoughtful and often lively discussions while enjoying a sip from your favorite beverage.

- January 18, 2017 – “One-In-A-Million Boy” by Monica Wood
- February 15, 2017 – “Barkskins” by Annie Prouz
- March 15, 2017 – “Heat and Light” by Jennifer Haigh

Christmas at the Mill – 2016’s Last Event – Dave and Linda Derrick



Visitors were treated to a wagon ride through the Park with stops at the Mill House for treats and caroling and at the Welcome Center to see Lofy’s General Store all decorated for Christmas.



Finding the pickle ornament is an old German tradition; and if you found it on the Mill House tree, you won a prize.



Homemade cookies filled the Mill House kitchen table. Cookies were served at both buildings along with hot and cold beverages.



Christmas carols were played on the Mill House parlor piano and visitors sang along.

2017 Coming Spring Events

Antique Appraisal and Chili Lunch

February 19, 2017 ~ 10am to 3pm

**Richfield Fire Hall
2008 State Rd. 175, Richfield**

**Appraisal Fee per Item: \$5
(Photos for large items only)
Tasty Homemade Chili and Fixin's: \$6
Beverages: \$1**

Again This Year
**Chili Dogs: \$2 ~ Homemade Pie: \$2 a Slice
Silent Auction ~ Some Antiques for Sale**

richfieldhistoricalsociety.org



Milling Around Memories

*Maple Syrup Family Day - March 25, 2017
11 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.*

As with past years, we will be holding several talks to explain the history of all things maple.

There will be demonstrations of tapping trees and the collection of sap.

If adequate sap is available, we will demonstrate processing it into syrup.

Historic Sites

Herb Lofy

2016 was a year of significant progress in the RHS Park. The main project for the year was the Blacksmith Shop. As of this writing, wood shingles are being installed on the roof. The project is quite an accomplishment by the "Thursday Crew." Not only was there the construction but also the dismantling of the Kohl barn for materials. The teardown was accomplished with the help of Charlie Meyhew of Re-Barn LLC. Thanks also to the Kazmierczak family for donating the salvaged materials. Del Schmechel donated many hours organizing and coordinating this project. The crew deserves a heartfelt thank you from the Richfield Historical Society.

Another significant accomplishment was the construction of the pedestrian bridge between the Mill House and the Welcome Center. Dave Derrick oversaw this project which was the work of Girl Scout Troop 2280. The bridge makes a connection between the two houses over the flume that carried the water to the Mill. The trusses for the bridge were donated by Bill Bremer of Rubicon. What a great addition to the Park!

Eagle Scout projects for 2016 included three "Little Free Libraries" completed by Nathan Seibold from Troop 167 Friess Lake while Cy Brehm from Troop 139 St. Gabriel oversaw the planting and nurturing of 150 bare root stock trees in the Park.

Ongoing clearing of the Historical Park continues. The area east of the main exhibit field used during the Threshere has been opened to the creek.

Lillicrapp House

Aerona Smith

2016 Threshere – the weather was just perfect for our Threshere event last September. We were pleased to have many new visitors tour the Lillicrapp Welcome Center (LWC), visitors from as far away as the Netherlands. Several private tours also took place this summer and fall. A Boy Scout troop toured and enjoyed hands-on activities in the General Store and photography room. They got to grind coffee, weigh eggs and vegetables, pose for pictures, and try to identify sounds and objects of long ago. We are looking to continue these types of tours. A new decorative bulletin board made by Ruth Jeffords with vintage advertising ads done by Marge Holzbog make a wonderful display in the ‘summer kitchen.’

Our special exhibit this year was “Christmas at the General Store.” Early vintage ornaments and garlands dating from the 1930s thru the 1950s were displayed on a white 1950s table-top tree. Another tree on display is approximately 90 years old and is known as a “feather tree” (German origin). The greenery on this artificial tree is made from dyed goose or turkey feathers. The decorations on this tree are made from the same period, the 1920s.

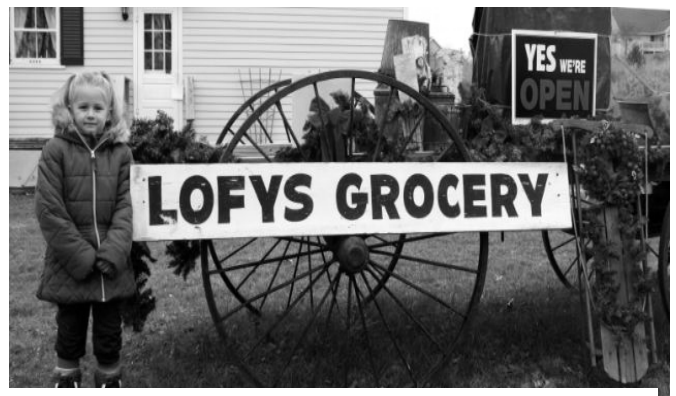
This was the first year LWC was open for the ‘Christmas in Richfield’ event. On December 3, 2016, we were happy to join the Mill House in celebrating Christmas at the Historical Park. As visitors approached the Welcome Center, the Lofy Wagon came into view, decorated for the Christmas season. Once inside, there was much to see. Showcases and counters were filled with old-fashioned displays such as wooden sleds, trains, dolls, games, and, of course, what would a General Store be without a candy store display.

The holiday punch along with many different varieties of Christmas cookies were enjoyed by the children as well as the adults. The children enjoyed playing “what’s that sound” in hopes of winning a prize. Everyone seemed to be in the Christmas spirit.

A special ‘thank you’ to all LWC committee members and volunteers for all your help and support. It was a great year!



Volunteer behind General Store Counter



Lofy Wagon with Little Girl

Long Term Planning

Jim Metzger

This year was another great year for the Richfield Historical Society with its various events that were carried out in the Historical Park and other Richfield locations. As well as our events continue to grow and succeed each year, there is always the need to look forward and analyze how we can make them more effective. There is also a need to balance the continued growth of an event with the available core of volunteers it takes to make an event successful. So it becomes obvious that caring, concerned people make this happen.

The RHS Board of Directors is made up of caring, concerned individuals that provide the leadership and direction that is necessary to make the Historical Park one of the prime destinations in Washington County. Also part of this group is the dedicated “Thursday Work Crew” that perform many, many tasks that may go un-noticed to the casual Park user. Many RHS and non RHS members serve as event volunteers that go about their duty in a competent, cheerful manner that makes these events memorable. All of the above people donate thousands of hours collectively to the development of the Historical Park. Every dollar raised for the development of the Park is spent on the Park. There are no paid positions in the RHS. RHS members are among the most generous donors year in and year out.

So how does all of the above tie into long range planning? People, caring concerned people, make this all happen. As with any business, or the RHS, people make the difference between an entity being successful or not. Long range planning is based on the research of a particular area in Richfield; and, in this case, it is depicted at the Historical Park. The development of relevant buildings, attractions and events, both fund raising or educational in nature, combine together to provide an educational experience centered around the history of what life was like for the early Richfield settler. This idea, combined with a fundraising mechanism, makes this all possible.

As with any organization, RHS is always in need of volunteers. Volunteers can start slow and get as engaged as they may have time for. We are always welcoming new members to become an integral part of the decision making process and serve on the Board of Directors. If you have an interest in joining this active creative group, contact one of the Board members shown on the cover of this newsletter for a personal tour. We look forward to hearing from you.

Leaving a Legacy with a Planned Gift – Norm Grier

Leaving a legacy often means handing down what we value most. For many of us, that includes making certain that our children and grandchildren will inherit our precious history and heritage. Many people also choose to remember and support worthy causes they believe in and respect. To be sure that your efforts are preserved and shared for generations to come, consider including the Richfield Historical Society in your estate plans with a “planned gift.”

A gift of **life insurance** allows you to make a much larger gift to RHS than would otherwise be possible for a relatively modest cash outlay. And, you can always change the beneficiary anytime on a policy you own to address your changing circumstances.

A **will or trust** allows you to securely support your family’s well-being along with your favorite charities. It isn’t difficult to draw up a will or trust. Generally you need the help of an attorney. But first, take the time to decide your personal objectives and determine who should receive your assets after you are gone. Charitable bequests can be from cash assets such as bank accounts, stocks, bonds, real estate, or other property.

Bequests can be general (a sum of money to be used for RHS’s general purposes); specific (a sum of money to be used for a specific purpose, e.g., artifact restoration); residuary (RHS receives the residue portion of assets after other terms of your will have been satisfied); or contingency (a portion of the estate is left to RHS if your named beneficiary does not survive you). Be sure you give your attorney our legal name – Richfield Historical Society, Inc., PO Box 268, Richfield WI 53076 – and the federal tax ID number of 31-158978.

Whatever form your bequest may take, a gift of life insurance, or naming RHS as the beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA, 401K or 403B; any of these planned gifts can make a difference in the future. Imagine how much good can be done if many of us remembered RHS in our estate plans. The impact would be immeasurable.

Marketing**Frank “Buzz” Carr**

The Marketing Committee has decided to use several different types of notification techniques for our events in 2017. You are perhaps aware of the new effort to introduce families to the Historical Park in 2017 by having the Park open one Sunday a month during the summer. This is discussed in more detail in the Events section of this newsletter. We feel that we need to publicize these openings along with our other events, because one of our problems is general unfamiliarity with the Park among the residents of Washington County.

We will be using the Washington County Daily News again this year, and we wish that you would all support that newspaper because of the great help Conley Publications gives us by giving us such a favorable rate for our advertising. We are also going to try out Judy Steffes’s online publication, “Washington County Insider,” for 2017. This is an effort to try more electronic media with the hope that those who use this type of information gathering will become more aware of our events. We are also on Facebook and Twitter. We encourage those of you who use Facebook and Twitter to like our posts and tweets and share them with your friends. We will, of course, continue to use posters and lawn signs as we have in the past.

On a different subject, I would like to ask all of you who have email addresses to consider getting the RHS Newsletter online. This will reduce our costs of printing and mailing the Newsletter and may be more desirable for many of you. It would also make communicating with you more efficient for events or news items that occur between newsletters. If you would forward your email addresses to me at carr3492@gmail.com and let me know if you would prefer to get the Newsletter online, that would be great. I promise that we will only use this sort of communication for RHS purposes, and we will not disclose your email addresses to anyone outside of RHS.

Thank you all for your support of RHS. Tell your friends and neighbors about RHS and our events, and have a happy and prosperous 2017.

Membership**Judy Lehman**

Hi RHS ers,

I trust you enjoyed this last year and are already renewing your membership in RHS for 2017. This is your last Newsletter of 2016 - what an interesting year, filled with projects and events and speakers, laughter, connecting, and yummy food.

Please share with the RHS Board your ideas on which topics are of interest to you, which things you would like to see happen at the Park, and whether you are interested in participating on any of the committees.

Support your Richfield Historical Society - it is one of the very best things around! We look forward to working together in 2017!

Mill House**Clara Birkel/Cindy Schmechel****A Journey to Richfield – Linda Derrick**

Imagine being a young boy of seven years old embarking on a journey that would change your life forever. This is what happened to Andre Messer (later called Andrew). In the spring of 1846, he left the only home he knew in Germany to travel with his parents, sister and two brothers halfway around the world to start a new life in America..

We don't have a lot of details about their journey. But, with the facts we do have and the recorded history of other immigrants during that time, we can get a good idea of what it might have been like.

The mid-1800s was a peak immigration period for America, and nearly all immigrants were from northern or western Europe. By 1860, seven out of 10 foreign-born people in America came from Germany or Ireland. Many German and Irish immigrants settled in Wisconsin's Washington County including Richfield, Germantown, Erin and surrounding areas.

We aren't certain why Andre and his family came to America, but it may have been due to the fact that many German farmers had experienced several years of serious crop failures. We do know that Andre's parents (Johann and Katherina) were among the millions of German farmers who left their homeland with a hope of a better life in America.

They likely began their journey on foot, horseback or train. They may have trekked hundreds of miles to get to the seaport of Havre. When they arrived at this waterfront, we know that Andre and his family boarded a ship called "Metoka." Ships at that time, like the Metoka, carried well over a thousand passengers during each trip across the Atlantic. If conditions were favorable, it took approximately two weeks to cross the ocean.

Back then, the ships divided passengers by wealth and class. First and second-class passengers stayed in staterooms and cabins. But most people were in third class, called "steerage." Steerage was a large, open space at the bottom of the ship. If they were lucky, there were shelf-like bunks to sleep on. We don't know which class Andre and his family could afford, but we do know that they had enough money to journey beyond the city of their arrival. Many other immigrants with little money to travel further stayed in the cities where they arrived.

Andre's family first set foot on American soil in New York. This may be where Andre's name was first recorded as "Andrew." From New York, the Messer family continued their journey and likely boarded yet another ship to travel the Great Lakes to arrive in Milwaukee. From Milwaukee, they would have traveled over land to get to the Richfield area where they settled. Many times, immigrants arriving in Milwaukee would purchase oxen or horses to pull a wagon or cart to carry their belongings to their destination. Andrew and his nine year old brother likely walked most of the way. His younger siblings may have been able to ride.

It is not known where Andrew's family first stayed when they arrived in this area. Often new arrivals moved in with another German family who had settled there earlier. The first year they could have hired out as farm hands. In less than two years Andre's parents purchased 120 acres, and they were farming their own land in Richfield.

Wisconsin life proved to be good for the Messer family. In 1856, they purchased an additional five acres along the Cooney Creek where they built a saw mill. Andrew would have been seventeen years old at the time, and he probably helped his 50-year-old father in building the Saw Mill. For the next several years, Andrew worked with his father to operate the Saw Mill. It was a prosperous venture providing needed lumber to all the families who continued to settle in the area.

In 1869, at the age of 30, Andrew married Louisa Guenther and bought the Saw Mill and 27 acres from his parents. Over the next few years, Andrew was busy building a big grist mill adjacent to the Saw Mill. He also built a home for his growing family, and it was located just to the west of the mills.

For those of you familiar with the history of Richfield, you know that the 27 acre property that belonged to Andrew is today the Richfield Historical Park. Andrew met with an unfortunate buggy accident and untimely death at the age of 37. The mills and property eventually passed to the Mayer family, but that's another interesting story in itself to be told in another future article.

For Andrew, even though his life was short, he had realized the American Dream. He had journeyed around the world to settle in a new land, to make a home and a new life. He left a legacy and a history that today we are fortunate to be able to enjoy when we visit the Richfield Historical Park.



Left:
Andrew in his 20s.



Right:
**Andrew in his 30s
with his wife Louisa**

The Grist Mill and Mill House still stand on their original site within the Richfield Historical Park along with several other original homestead buildings. (The property is recognized on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places for its complex of original milling equipment and the many buildings, the Mill and others associated with the Mill, all on their original site.)

The Park is open daily from dawn to dusk. It is a beautiful setting to enjoy with many hiking trails throughout the Park. The buildings are open for tours during various Society events or by appointment. For details, visit www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Mill Restoration

Harry Niemann

Progress Upate – Diane Pedersen

In just one short year, it will be 20 years since the Town of Richfield purchased the property on which sits the historic Messer/Mayer Grist Mill. The Richfield Historical Society (RHS) has completed many projects to preserve the Mill during those years. You may have read articles of when RHS replaced the Mill's roof, its broken windows, stained the red walls and most recently began the restoration of the Mill foundation walls with the goal of *Let's Get the Mill Grinding*. 2017 will be a highlight for RHS as engineering plans and bids will be let by the Village of Richfield to complete restoration of the final wall or what some know as Phase 3.

Over the years, it became apparent that proceeds from the annual Thresheree and other events would not garner enough money for RHS to restore the foundation. The RHS Capital Campaign Committee was formed in 2010 specifically to acquire funds to restore the crumbling foundation walls. In that time, many of you have donated your time, money and efforts to begin that project; and the time has come to finish it.

The north, west and east walls have been restored. Thanks to your efforts, and others like you who support preservation of the Mill. RHS looks forward to 2017 as the year we can tell you restoration of the final wall, or south wall, of the Mill foundation will be completed. Look for more information on this project during 2017. Happy New Year.

Project Coordinator

Del Schmechel

This past year our Thursday volunteers have been very busy. Our Blacksmith Shop is well on its way to being ready for its grand opening at the 2017 Threshere. I believe this building will be well received by those who visit our park and provide a proper place for the art of blacksmithing to be displayed. (Blacksmith shops are a solid link with the past. Richfield, Hubertus, Plat, Pleasant Hill, Colgate and Meeker Hill all had blacksmith shops.) We were fortunate to acquire many hand hewn beams and rafters to be used in its construction from the Kohl barn that was dismantled in 2016. One of its long beams measured 55 feet in length, and it was relocated to a prominent place in the shop. I often ask people to picture a tree large enough to make into this beam. Then consider the effort to transform it with only hand tools. This is truly our local history on display for current and future generations. I started to list those who helped with this project, but, rather than chance leaving someone out, I will just say “Thanks to all who helped.” It seems that whenever there is a need, someone stepped forward to help out. I have come to understand that this is normal from members of our society.

A second project is our new foot bridge between our Mill House and the Welcome Center. This was a joint project with Girl Scout Troop 2280, their parents and with some help from us. The Society was able to provide some of the materials, but most of the credit should go to this wonderful group of girls and their parents. This, as with all of our projects, is documented on our Facebook page where every step can be seen. It remains to be finished with a couple of coats of stain, but that will have to wait until spring. It is wonderful to have a Girl Scout project to stand alongside the Boy Scout projects throughout the Park.

As Project Coordinator, I look forward to keeping our park a destination for families to enjoy. There are many opportunities to become involved and help us keep history alive for future generations.



Blacksmith Shop under Construction



**Bridge Connecting
Mill House and Welcome Center**

Volunteer

Sharon Lofy

A Happy New Year – 2017. Thank you for your gifts of talent and time throughout 2016 for our many events. We are looking forward to 2017 and the many opportunities that we are planning for visitors to enjoy our beautiful park. Thanks to your helping hands, we will present our wonderful treasure for all to enjoy. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments or ways that you would like to volunteer. Call 262 297 1546.

After the holiday celebrations, thoughts of what to plant in our yards this spring start to emerge. Remember our spring Plant Fundraiser. Enjoy the winter season and dream of spring!

SOCIETY SPRING PROGRAMS – NEW LOCATION! Richfield Fire Station #1 (2008 Hwy 175) – 7:00 p.m.
(Programs are open to the public at no charge and all are welcome!)

January 26, 2017 – “Pistols and Petticoats”

February 23, 2017 – “Wisconsin Historic Bars and Breweries”

March 30, 2017 – “Native American Writings”

April 27, 2017 – “Underwater Treasures”

May 25, 2017 - “Never Curse the Rain”

SOCIETY 2017 EVENTS - Richfield Historical Park (unless noted)

Antique Appraisal & Chili Lunch – February 19, 2017 – Richfield Fire Station #1 (2008 State Hwy 175)

Maple Syrup Family Day – March 25, 2017

Art at the Mill – July 22, 2017

19th Annual Thresheree – September 16 & 17, 2017

Christmas at the Mill – December 2, 2017

2016 Sponsors & Donors

Sponsors/contributors for our events and Good/Services 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 2015 Events Program and everyone who has donated to the Messer/Mayer Mill Restoration Fund.

Wheat (\$500 or more)

Dr. Don & Janis Crego (Thresheree)
Dehumidifier Corporation of America (Art Fair)
E. H. Wolf & Sons (Thresheree)
First National Bank of Hartford (Thresheree)
Oarsman Capital Inc. (Art Fair and Thresheree)
Robert Baird – The RBV Group (Thresheree)
Tom Daniels (Thresheree)
Wissota Sand & gravel Co. (Thresheree)

Rye (\$499-\$250)

Monches Farm (Music-Art Fair)

Oats (\$249-\$100)

Gehring Sales & Service, Inc. (Thresheree)
Helena Chemical Company (Thresheree)
Integrated Management & Accounting
(Thresheree)
Klug's Photo World (Membership Brochure)
Landmark Credit Union (Thresheree)
United Cooperative (Thresheree)
Waddell & Reed-The Heimerman Team (Art Fair)

Companies ~ Donate for Volunteer Hours/Match

Donations

3M
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Goods/Services Donors

Colleen Baker (Metal Fence)
Conley Media (Advertising-All Events)
County Wide Extinguisher (Fire Extinguishers-Thresheree)
Digital Edge (Printing)
Duquaine Concrete & Masonry (Mill Retaining Wall)
Graphic Edge (Printing)
Heartland Farms (Potatoes-Thresheree)
Manitou Americas (Tent-Thresheree)
Milwaukee Appliance (Freezer) Greg & Kathy Carter
No Mosquitoes For You (Art Fair)
Piggly Wiggly – Richfield (Ice and Bags – Art Fair)
Lee Rufener (Maple Syrup Supplies)
The Sawmill Inn (Grist Mill Pies for Antique Appraisal &
Chili Lunch)
Waste Management (Trash Removal)
Wissota Sand & Gravel (Gravel-Lillicrapp Welcome Center
Parking Lot & Blacksmith Shop)
Wolf Bros. Fuel, Inc. (LP Gas)
Zignego Ready Mix (Concrete for Band Platform & Barn
Repair)
Zuern Building Co. (Blacksmith Shop)