



Richfield Historical Society
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Spring 2020 V23N1

Blacksmith Shop
Kathy Lauenstein

Holy Hill: Majesty, Mystery, Myths, and Miracles (Part I)

by Susan Brushafer

Collections
Norb Berres

It's very likely that Wisconsin residents have heard about Holy Hill. Perhaps some of them have also visited. It's easy to recall the overall beauty and experience of Holy Hill following a visit, or to view the many pictures posted on the Shrine's website. There are some interesting details, however, that require a little digging beyond a visit to the Shrine or its website. I highly recommend a well-written, informative book entitled *Inside Holy Hill*¹. This book, available at Holy Hill's gift shop, covers many aspects of the Shrine and includes beautiful photos.

Education
Kathy Weberg

At times, this article parallels what *Inside Holy Hill* describes. At other times, it invokes thoughts of the 'mystery' that surrounds Holy Hill. Let's explore!

Event Coordinator
Daryl Grier

The Moulin Kame (Glacier) on Which the Basilica Stands

Holy Hill, also known as 'Hermit Hill,' is the highest peak in the Kettle Moraine, the chain of hills that stretch from the northernmost part of Door County in the north to Madison in the south. At one time, Holy Hill rose 1,409 feet above sea level. (The hill was eventually leveled to 1,335 to create the foundation for the Basilica.) The hill itself is 289 feet high and was created at least 10,000 years ago as a result of a glacier.

Historic Sites
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Herb Lofy*

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Newsletter Editor**
Marge Holzbog

**Lillicrapp Welcome
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*Clara Birkel/
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Susan Sawdey



Washington County shimmers in autumn -
OnMilwaukee
onmilwaukee.com

Project Coordinator
Del Schmechel

Did Father Jacques Marquette Visit Holy Hill...or Not?

One of the biggest questions that surfaces regarding the history of Holy Hill is whether Father Marquette had been a visitor. Perhaps the answer to this question is one of Holy Hill's mysteries. Various sources say that Father Marquette did visit Holy Hill, including the following.

**Volunteer
Coordinator**
Sharon Lofy

In May of 1673, Louis Joliet, fur trader and adventurer, and Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette, along with three companions, started an exploration from the Straits of Michilimackinac, the waterway that connects Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. It is presumed that by fall of that year Father Marquette made a side trip inland, traveling approximately 20 miles west of what is now the business portion of Port Washington. According to information found in Volume I of the 1912 publication, *Washington County, Wisconsin: Past and Present*², legend has it that Father Marquette created a stone rubble altar, and planted a cross on the top of Holy Hill, dedicating the place to his patron, the Blessed Virgin Mary. After that, Father Marquette returned to the landing place of his boats and continued on his journey of exploration.

On October 10, 1920, the *Milwaukee Journal*³ ran an article entitled, "Holy Hill, Wisconsin Shrine, Calls Its Thousands of Pilgrims". This article stated: "Then a Black Robe, Father Marquette in his journeying from the town of Mequon in the search for Rock River, saw the Hill from 15 miles away. It made its mystic appeal to him and the man of religion hastened to the top to rear a cross!"

Another source, *History of Holy Hill*⁴, compiled on October 31, 1928 by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, Hubertus, Wisconsin noted the existence of a lasting friendship between the Potawatomies, their chief Old Kewaskum, and the early settlers, based upon their 'common bound of Faith.' "The early settlers learned that the Faith had been transmitted to the tribe through their forefathers who received it from a great and saintly 'Black Robe Chief' who wore a crucifix and rosary at his belt while he prayed at the Big Hill where he planted a Cross This statement was also corroborated by Old Monches, Chief of the Menomonees. That this priest was a Jesuit, there is no doubt. Moreover, there is a good share of evidence at hand to support the belief that it was none other than the illustrious Marquette: for the French explorers were the very first to penetrate this region."

A very early resident of Holy Hill, Frangois Soubrio, described in the next section of this article, was said to have found many old French manuscripts in the cell of the monastery in which he lived. An article entitled "History of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin"⁵ states that "among them was a written manuscript purporting to be a diary kept by Jacques Marquette during the summer and fall of 1673, in which was a detailed account of his memorable voyage with Louis Joliet to the Mississippi River, via the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, returning up the Illinois River and the western coast of Lake Michigan to Green Bay, from whence they started. His (Soubrio's) attention was particularly drawn to an account of an expedition from a creek, where he (Marquette) had landed on his return voyage, a hard day's march west, to a steep and lofty coneshaped hill which he climbed to the summit and thereon erected a rude stone altar, raised a cross, dedicated the spot as holy ground forever, in the name of his tutelary saint, Mary, and returning left it towering in its solitude." There are sources that say Father Marquette did not visit Holy Hill, such as the following.

A description entitled, "Holy Hill Shrine, Wisconsin"⁶ notes: "...local Indian folklore still spoke of a black-robed chief who wore a crucifix and rosary at his belt. For many years, it was believed that this missionary who first consecrated Holy Hill was Fr. Marquette, but it is now known that he did not come this far in his mission to the area."

Published in 1881, *History of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin*⁷, states the following: "The first visit of white men to the western shore of Lake Michigan is believed to have occurred in August and September, 1673. On May 17 of that year, Louis Joliet, an adventurous French trader, and Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit Priest, with three companions, set out in two canoes, from the Straits of Michilimackinac, on a voyage of discovery. ... These men must have spent at least one night somewhere along the shore of Washington County, and were, so far as historical authority warrants belief, the first white men who ever landed on its soil. ... In October, 1674, Marquette, with Pierre and Jacques, and ten canoes of Pottawatomies and Illinois Indians, coasted from the Portage, opposite Sturgeon Bay, to the mouth of Chicago River. ... There are legendary accounts of a visit of Marquette to St. Mary's Hill, some twenty miles inland, erecting a cross on its summit, and consecrating the spot as holy ground to his Patron Saint, Mary. If Marquette ever visited the spot, it must have been on this voyage, or on his return trip up the coast with Joliet the year before, as he died on his return voyage, and was buried on the Michigan shore."

... There are legendary accounts of a visit of Marquette to St. Mary's Hill, some twenty miles inland, erecting a cross on its summit, and consecrating the spot as holy ground to his Patron Saint, Mary. If Marquette ever visited the spot, it must have been on this voyage or on his return trip up the coast with Joliet the year before, as he died on his return voyage, and was buried on the Michigan shore."

Above were noted several different points of view. **What do you think?**

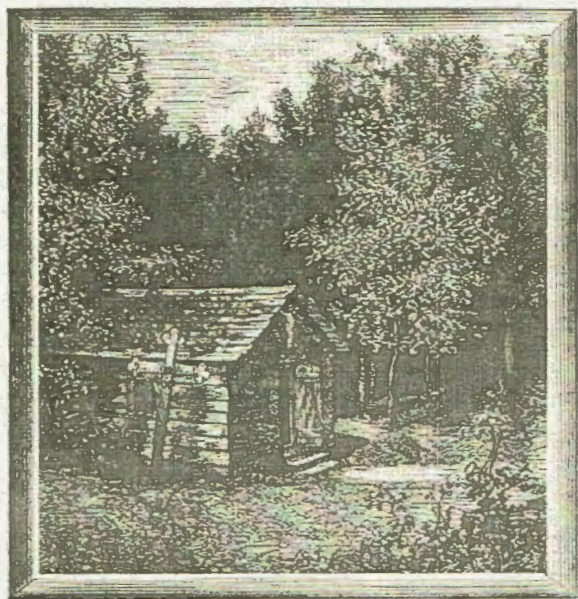
An Early Resident

In addition to the native Americans who lived in the area of Holy Hill, the first and perhaps earliest non-native American to take up residence is identified in many publications that describe the history of Holy Hill.

The publication, *Washington County, Wisconsin: Past and Present*², describes a hermit who lived in a dugout that he had created on the eastern side of the Hill. Awareness of this hermit came to light around 1850 when a farmer on his way home from the Village of Hartford to his farm among the hills of Kettle Moraine made a strange observation.

The website *holyhill.com*⁸, in Chapter Two of History, "The Hermit of Holy Hill" states the hermit's presence as sometime between 1862 and 1864. The full moon had just risen and outlines of the Hill were "sharp as those of a silhouette." The farmer noticed the shape of a cross and of a human being kneeling in front of it. The farmer watched this spectacle for an hour, until the human figure rose and disappeared in the dark woods on the hillside. One morning soon after, the farmer again saw the person, who appeared to be performing 'religious exercises' on the top of the Hill. This news, of course, spread quickly through the vicinity. Eventually, this mysterious man began interacting with the people who lived in the neighborhood of the Hill. He started casually talking about religious subjects and shared his life story with a trusted farmer acquaintance.

*Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*⁹, written in 1889, noted that this recluse remained in the vicinity for seven years, living in a little hut whose primitive condition is pictured below. This is before, as the description notes, "it was stricken by the blight of decay."



The Hermit's Hut

The man was a religious recluse named Francois Soubrio, born about twenty miles from Strasbourg, France in the former (then French) province of Alsace. He had studied for the priesthood, but fell in love with a young girl, and became publicly engaged to her. This, of course, caused disgrace to him and to his family, and caused him to be banned from the Church. To let the notoriety of the affair die down, Soubrio left the area for a year, promising his fiancée he'd return. Upon his return, Soubrio found his fiancée had been unfaithful. Angry with jealousy, he killed her.

Soubrio fled to Quebec and became a monk. Time, however, gave his conscience no rest due to guilt from breaking his vow of chastity when he got engaged, and then for killing his fiancée. In penance, he prayed. He also read the old French manuscripts that he found in a corner of his cell in the monastery where he lived. One of the manuscripts he discovered appeared to have been the journal of Jacques Marquette, written during the summer and fall of 1673. The journal provided a detailed account of Marquette's journeys with Louis Joliet. (See above 'Did Father Jacques Marquette Visit Holy Hill...or Not?' for details.)

Whatever happened to Frangois Soubrio? A plausible explanation is provided by Robert E. Gard in his e-book entitled, *The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names*¹⁰. Gard notes, as did other observers of the time, that Soubrio disappeared as mysteriously as he arrived. Gard further states: "Some say he joined Union forces in the Civil War and was killed in battle. There was a rumor that he was seen in Chicago after his disappearance and it is sometimes told that his apparition is seen in the dusk of evenings, kneeling; at some of the various crosses along his old path, or gliding in and out of a rude chapel."

Three Shrines

Visitors to the current Basilica at Holy Hill may not know that they are in the third shrine built on the site.

*Holy Hill Shrine, Wisconsin*⁶, notes that the Holy Hill area was first settled around 1842 by Irish natives who named their settlement Erin Township, in honor of their homeland. The Irish dedicated the Hill to the Virgin Mary and were the first to call it 'Holy Hill.' Within a few decades, the Irish fell on hard times and were forced to leave the area. In 1854, settlers from Germany began buying the small Irish farms. The description further notes that Holy Hill was for a time known as 'Government Hill' due to the surveying work that was done there. It remained government property until 1855. At that time, the 40 acres atop Holy Hill were purchased by Father Paulhuber, a native of Salzburg, Austria and the Germans' first minister. Gazing upon the hill, Father Paulhuber is said to have declared:

"That beautiful hill yonder, reminds me very forcibly of a hill near our home in my native country. I feel sure and the day is not far distant, when that hill will become one of the most noted places in all this land; when it shall be consecrated and made holy; a place of worship and pilgrimage when tens of thousands shall come to do homage to the Virgin Mary and her Son..."

Father Paulhuber's prediction appears to have come true. The article entitled *Holy Hill, Wisconsin Shrine, Calls Its Thousands of Pilgrims*³, stated that 7,000 pilgrims climbed the Hill on August 15, 1920.

The First Shrine

*Holy Hill, Wisconsin Shrine, Calls Its Thousands of Pilgrims*³, further stated that "in 1858 the Hill had a large cross of white oak erected on its summit, thought to be the oldest artifact on display in the Basilica. The German inscription translates to: "I am the Life who believes in me will be saved." This cross originally stood 15 feet tall. Legend has it that a French hermit experienced a miraculous cure after worshipping at the cross. (*Although not specifically named, might that French hermit have been Holy Hill's earliest resident, Frangois Soubrio?*)

A variation on how the placement of the cross on the top of Holy Hill originated is offered in an article entitled, *O Holy Hill, The Basilica Is Brightly Shining*¹¹. According to the article, "Between 1857 and 1858, several parishioners from the German parish of St. Augustine's in nearby Richfield constructed a large oak cross. They processed it to the top of Holy Hill, where it was later blessed."

*Holy Hill Shrine, Wisconsin*⁶ notes that the first shrine on Holy Hill, a log structure, was dedicated by Fr. George Strickner on May 24, 1863. The October 10, 1920 Milwaukee Journal³ article, however, provides a somewhat different, detailed description, stating that "...in 1868. An humble log church, only 15 feet square, was erected, but at its dedication the Hill called and 1,500 people came to crowd its summit. The sermon was preached from the entrance to the little chapel." It was a simple log chapel named 'The Shrine of Mary-Help of Christians.' In 1875, simple wooden Stations of the Cross were set up alongside a newly-graded road up the hill.

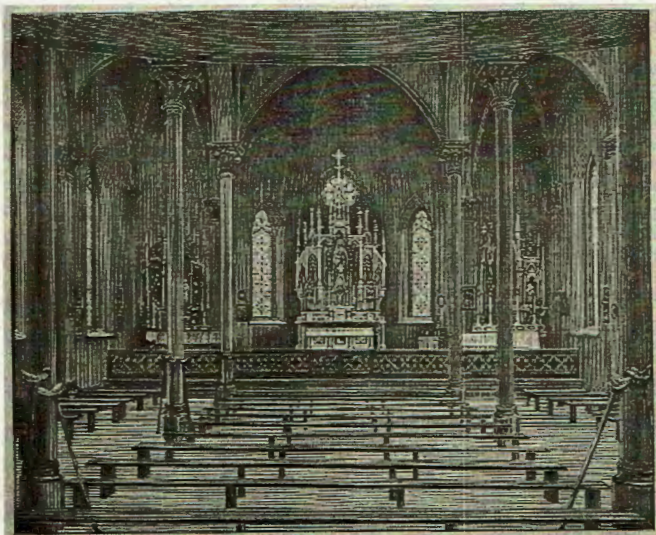
The Second Shrine

After the story of Frangois Soubrio's cure circulated, many pilgrims came to Holy Hill. In the winter of 1879, a Father Raess submitted a proposal to the Archbishop of Milwaukee, John Martin Henni, for a new shrine at Holy Hill. In the spring, construction began on a proper, brick church.

Volume I of *Washington County, Wisconsin: Past and Present*² stated that in 1881, St. Mary's Help Congregation, a neat brick church, was completed on the summit of Holy Hill, near the spot where the former small chapel stood. Its dimensions were 42x90 feet, with an 80-foot high spire. A parsonage had been built on the site of the hermit's cave. The description continued by noting that St. Mary's Congregation was in the charge of priests from the neighborhood until the Carmelite monks took over in 1906. The monks enlarged and improved the church property. The administering priest at that time was Reverend Kilian Gutmann, O.C.D.

Further information, as identified in the article *O Holy Hill, The Basilica Is Brightly Shining*¹¹, states: "The plans for this new shrine called for 200,000 bricks. This was problematic, as the horse-drawn carts could only pull 200 bricks at a time. The solution was to substitute local fieldstone for parts of the building, including the foundation. *Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*⁷ notes that "the bricks were made at the foot of the hill, and cost thirteen dollars a thousand... . A new chapel, built of all bricks, would later house a 1,200-pound bell and a magnificent pipe organ."

For those interested in detailed descriptions of the Second Shrine, I highly recommend reading *Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*⁹, written by William Ayers Armstrong. It includes an in depth history of Holy Hill up to 1889, with a focus on his account of climbing the Hill and relates a description of the architecture of the second shrine. The following picture depicts the second shrine.



Interior View of the Church

An article published on January 5, 2010 by the Wisconsin State Journal, entitled "Odd Wisconsin: Holy Hill near Hartford Had That Name for a Reason"¹², noted that "by 1920, 60,000 visitors were coming each year". A monastery was constructed in that same year. The cornerstone was installed in 1926 by Archbishop Messmer. The double-spired church opened in 1929; the main church was dedicated in 1931.

The Third Shrine

Holy Hill was declared a Shrine with "Portiuncula privilege" by Pope Leo XIII in 1903. In 1906, the Discalced (Latin for 'shoeless') Carmelite Friars of Bavaria were invited to Holy Hill by the Archbishop of Milwaukee, Sepastian G. Messmer. The Archbishop felt that due to the increased popularity of Holy Hill and the many pilgrims visiting the Shrine, it needed resident caretakers, preferably under the care of a religious order. The Discalced Carmelites Order of Bavaria is dedicated to St. Mary, solidifying Archbishop Messmer's choice.



**Cornerstone of the present Shrine Church
Inside Holy Hill, page 18**

Jumping ahead to more recent history, on November 19, 2006, this Wisconsin Shrine was elevated to the status of Basilica and adds further detail in the following paragraph.

“O Holy Hill, The Basilica Is Brightly Shining”¹¹, adds further detail about the Basilica’s dedication: “At the dedication Mass, Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan remarked in his homily that “There is a lot of holiness upon this holy hill.” Then he recalled the loving work of so many faithful Catholics who have built, rebuilt and sustained the site for more than 140 years.”

Architecture: The Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians at Holy Hill

Not everyone knows that Holy Hill is listed on the National Register of Historic Places! Here is the Register entry:

Holy Hill (added 1992 -- #92000139)

Also known as:

Shrine of Mary.Help of Christians
1525 Carmel Rd., Erin

Historic Significance:	Event, Architecture/Engineering
Architect, builder, or engineer:	Philipp.Richard, Gaul.Hermann J.
Architectural Style:	Romanesque
Area of Significance:	Religion, Architecture
Period of Significance:	1925-1949, 1900-1924
Owner:	Private
Historic Function:	Funerary.Landscape.Religion
Historic Sub-function:	Cemetery, Natural Feature, Religious Structure
Current Function:	Funerary, Landscape, Religion

*Inside Holy Hill*¹, a concise, detailed history of Holy Hill provides extensive details regarding the Basilica’s architect. The pictures included in the book are exquisite. This book is available for purchase only (to the best of my knowledge Holy Hill’s Gift Shop. *(I hope this article sparks your interest in learning more; if so, Inside Holy Hill belongs on bookshelf!)*

Conrad Schmitt¹³, the architecture firm that provided design and fabrication within the Basilica provided interesting details on its work:

“Frank Larscheid, an employee during the 1920s and 1930s of Conrad Schmitt Studios (CSS) designed and fabricated many of the stained glass windows in the Shrine. He also designed the altars and the carved pew ends. “

During the 1950s, Bernard O. Gruenke, Sr. headed the decorative painting at Holy Hill. German professor Peter Recker brought to the United States by Gruenke and employed by CSS was part of the design team for the reredos *(a screen or a decorated part of the wall behind an altar)* and mosaics. Professor Recker had worked at the Vatican, restoring historic mosaics. Years later, Gruenke composed the angels on the proscenium’s arch *(arch that separates the main altar from congregation seating)* and the Days of Creation designs.



Completed restoration of the Basilica of Holy Hill, National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians –
Photo: Korom.com
<http://conradschmitt.com/project/immanuel - -presbetarian-church-2/>

Holy Hill's Historical Marker

Many of us who enjoy travel throughout the United States find ourselves drawn to sites that feature historical markers – on-site information regarding a significant event, person, or location. Holy Hill features its own historical marker. The following is found on the Wisconsin Historical Markers¹⁴ website.

“The marker is one of a series of markers placed by the Washington County Landmark Commission. Unlike the other markers in the series, this marker has not been assigned the usual five-digit number.” (*No explanation is given for this omission.*)

Washington County Landmark Commission Marker

Enjoying This Article So Far?

In Part II of this article, “Holy Hill: Majesty, Mystery, Myths, and Miracles,” we will explore miracles that have taken place at Holy Hill, a service many visitors are not aware of, and strange phenomena reported in the Holy Hill area.

References/Citations

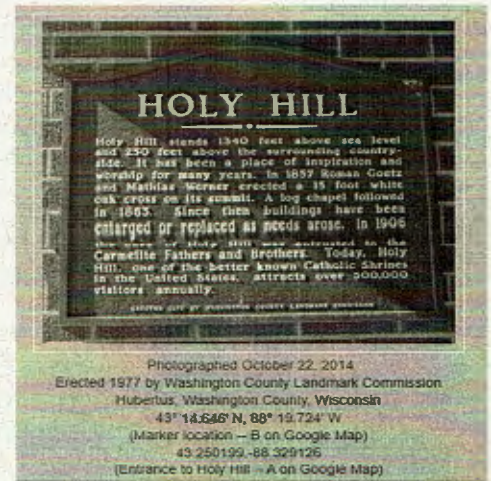
- ¹ *Inside Holy Hill*, Cornel Rosario
- ² *Washington County, Wisconsin: Past and Present*, Volume 1, 1912
- ³ *Milwaukee Journal*, “Holy Hill, Wisconsin Shrine, Calls Its Thousands of Pilgrims”, October 10, 1920
- ⁴ *History of Holy Hill*, Discalced Carmelite Fathers, Hubertus, Wisconsin, October 31, 1928
- ⁵ “History of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin”, *Wisconsin Genealogy Trails*, transcribed by Barbara Ziegenmeyer, http://genealogytrails.com/wis/washington/history_erin.htm
- ⁶ *sacred-destinations.com*, “Holy Hill Shrine, Wisconsin”
- ⁷ *History of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin*, November, 1881, Western Historical Company, Chicago, (Library of Congress)
<https://archive.org/details/historyofwashing00west/page/n5/mode/2up>
- ⁸ https://www.holyhill.com/basilica/history/cha_william_pters/66 “The Hermit of Holy Hill”
- ⁹ *Miracle Hill, A Legendary Tale of Wisconsin*, Ayers Armstrong, 1889 (Library of Congress, copyright February 21)
- ¹⁰ *The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names*, Robert E. Gard, e-book
- ¹¹ “O Holy Hill, The Basilica Is Brightly Shining”, *The National Catholic Register*, www.ncregister.com/site/article/o_holy_hill_the_basilica_is_brightly_shining, December 13, 2006
- ¹² “Odd Wisconsin: Holy Hill near Hartford had that name for a reason”, *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 5, 2010
- ¹³ <https://conradschmitt.com/project/immanuel-presbyterian-church-2/>, “Pallium Display, Basilica of Holy Hill, National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians”, Holy Hill and Conrad Schmitt Studios
- ¹⁴ *Wisconsin Historical Markers*, <https://www.wisconsinhistoricalmarkers.com/search?q=Holy+Hill>

SOCIETY NEWS

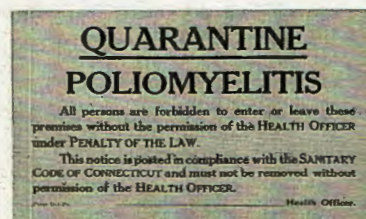
President

Susan Sawdey

A note from the President -----Well this isn't the way I thought the Richfield Historical Society would start 2020. The term *best-laid plans* refers to something that has gone awry, something that has not turned out as well as one had hoped. The expression the *best-laid plans* carries the connotation that one should not expect for things to always turn out to plan. (Grammarist) That pretty much sums it up.



If you are over the age of 70, you most likely remember the similar quarantines and social distancing that occurred during the polio scourge of your early childhood. Restricted use of pools, movie theaters being closed, quarantines and limits on public gatherings were common place. Our situation has been a bit reversed as back then parents were very concerned about their children, and now our children are concerned about their parents.



The debilitating and deadly impact is eerily similar. Symptoms of fever, aches and stiffness bring back a flood of memories, worry and panic. History... We are always creating it... we are forever a part of it... and sometimes we forget it. Hopefully by the time this message reaches you, life will be back to "normal." We miss you, and you make what we do at the Richfield Historical Park meaningful. Come visit us at an upcoming event. We look forward to sharing our history with you!

To read more about polio, visit the Smithsonian National Museum of American History web page at www.si.edu/spotlight/antibody-initiative/polio

Blacksmith Shop

Kathy Lauenstein

Wow! Do you have a 2020 vision? RHS smiths have it - Great new ideas for our "Step Back in Time" event. The "make it/take it" project is a small minnow fish that children and adults can make. It's a quick and easy project where you add in the details making you the artist. The project will be worked on at the north end of the Blacksmith Shop during the show. Come make one.

RHS smiths are very busy hammering out new bigger and better ideas for the Threshere. Hooks, tools and things you will need are in the planning stage. And as always, the smiths will forge out extra surprises for you to see. We hope to see you and your friends at all coming events.

Collections

Norb Berres

High Mileage Banjo - Recently, while forbidden to leave my home, so as to protect our village from any Asian virus, I received a donation of a 4- string banjo with a world of provenance. Although the once world traveling instrument looks now like it was left out in the weather all winter, nay for several winters, the hand lettering on the case still reads "Clem and Marandy Badger State Barn Dance, Milwaukee" in grade school letters done in gold paint.

The Barn Dance Company was a travelling hillbilly music group starring such music legends as Pee Wee King, who was born in Abrams, Wisconsin in 1914 and died in May, 2000 at the age of 86. Pee Wee King, who apparently was not a large man, was born Julius Frank Anthony Kuczynski. He married Lydia Frank in 1936. He joined the Grand Ole Opry after that and was there for 10 years. He had started playing with the Badger Barn Dance at the age of fifteen. His biggest hits were "Tennessee Waltz," "Slow Poke" and "You Belong to Me." He and his band played a long time as regulars on WLS radio in Chicago.

Another Wisconsin native with the Badger State Barn Dance was Sally Foster, who was a solo singer in the mid 30s on WLS Barn Dance. She later performed with the Maple City Four and recorded such memorable hits as "We Buried Her Under the Willow Tree," "Don't Take the Sweet Out of Sweetheart," and "Ma, He's Makin Eyes at Me." They were all available on 78 or 45rpm. Her real name was Louise Rautenberg, and she began her career as Louisville Lou.

The host of WLS Barn Dance changed her name to Sally Forster, and she kept it. WTMJ in Milwaukee had a radio show in 1934, and one of the early acts was Frankie King and the King's Jesters. He went on later as Pee Wee King.

The weather beaten banjo we now are the proud owners of, followed these and many other folks all around the nation in the 30s and 40s, doing Hillbilly music which later became sanitized as "Country Music." It shows its mileage and maybe someday it will get its restoration back to its glory.



4 String Banjo



WTMJ Badger State Barn Dance

Education

Kathy Weberg

The Richfield Historical Society's Education Days were scheduled for May 13 and 14. As with everything else this year, it will not happen. But, that did not stop us from planning. Our goal was to have as many hands-on activities as possible for the third grade students.

One of our stations for the day would have been a stop at the garden area as part of our "walk-up" to the Pioneer Homestead area. Typically, there is nothing growing there but weeds in the middle of May. So this year, I planted green beans in a big pot, following the growing guidelines and hoping that there might actually be beans on the plants. So here are my bean plants that the kids would be able to check out.

To follow through with another hands-on activity and tie this all together, it was tentatively planned to have the participants pack Mason jars in the Mill House summer kitchen with beans (from the grocery store) and learn a little bit more about canning procedures which would have been done in the summer kitchen. Regardless, I'll keep on caring for the bean plants, and maybe I'll have a meal of green beans!



Kathy's Green Beans

Events

Daryl Grier

Maple Syrup Family Day Canceled – Pete Samson

What a difference a year makes! We went from our most successful Maple Syrup Family Day last year, to no event this year. We had a great event planned for you that included:

- A spinning wheel that included chances to win prizes
- Maple Sugar Cotton Candy
- Candle making, cheese making and wool washing at the Pioneer Homestead
- A new blacksmith demonstration at the Blacksmith Shop
- Hosting 30 – 50 members of families of deaf children, who were looking forward to this event as well.

At this time, we are not sure if Maple Syrup Family Day will be rescheduled for later this year. We look forward to seeing you all at the next Maple Syrup Family Day event. Watch for postings on the website.

On a positive note, we were able to produce a fair amount of maple syrup, although not as much as previous years. The weather did not cooperate with us. Syrup is still for sale, \$7 ½ pints / \$13 pints, by contacting Pete Samson, Dave Derrick or Dave Reich.

Step Back in Time - Daryl Grier

June 14, 2020 & August 9, 2020 - 1p.m. - 4p.m. Arrive early to visit all four buildings.
Richfield Nature/Historical Park, 1896 Hwy 164, Richfield, WI 53076
Fun & engaging activities for the entire family.

Learn how day-to-day duties were done long ago, some activities include:

At the Blacksmith Shop make a metal fish to take home

Learn how to make maple syrup at the Sugar Shack

Learn about laundry washing, pioneer cooking at the Log Cabin as well as corn shelling at the Log Barn

Admission: \$5; Children 5 & Under, Free. Refreshments available for sale.
For more information visit richfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Doing a Lot of Purging? All proceeds benefit our society - Daryl Grier

At the Threshere, we can help you get rid of stuff! Just donate auction items for the Silent Auction or household treasures (rummage) for Sweets 'n Stuff. All proceeds benefit our society!

Reminder: Save books to be sold at the Threshere in the Sweets 'n Stuff tent.
Contact Daryl Grier, dgrier@charter.net or 262 628-4221 about donations.

The Events Committee can always use new ideas for our events. If you have suggestions, comments or ideas, come to one of our meetings or contact me (262 628-4221 dgrier@charter.net.) Our next meeting is June 8th, 9a.m. (hopefully!) We meet at my house 1179 Wejegi Dr., Richfield. Some items need to be discussed well in advance of the event, including advertising; how & where. We'll be discussing some issues about:

- Step Back in Time: 1-4 p.m. – June 14, 2020 & August 9, 2020
- Art At the Mill: Saturday July 25, 2020 - 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Threshere: September 19 & 20, 2020 - 9 a.m. -5 p.m.
- Christmas at the Richfield Historical Park: Saturday December 5, 2020 - 12 noon -3 p.m.
- Antique Appraisal and Chili Lunch: Sunday February 21, 2021- 9 a.m. to 3p.m.

This year began as many others. The Sites Committee, while still working on winter projects, spent time making plans for the 2020 season. As with most other organizations, most of those plans have come to a screeching halt for the short term. We don't need to explain why, only to say that the safety of our volunteers and members come first. Enough said about that.

Still on course for the 2020 season are two highly visible projects. Most of you know about the first project, that being the resurrection of the Engine Shed. More will be said about that project elsewhere in this newsletter.

The second project is one that we have been hoping to accomplish for several years now. Those of you who bring a tractor, or other wheeled exhibit, to our annual thresher here know how difficult it is to move traffic from the parking area to the main show grounds on the one lane driveway. We are truly hoping to see a new route this year. We have been working with the Village of Richfield and the Wisconsin DNR, with Jacob Rosbeck's and Quam Engineering's help, to get approval to install a culvert bridge in place of the current pedestrian bridge at the southeast corner of the clearing south of the Messer/Mayer Mill. Stay tuned.

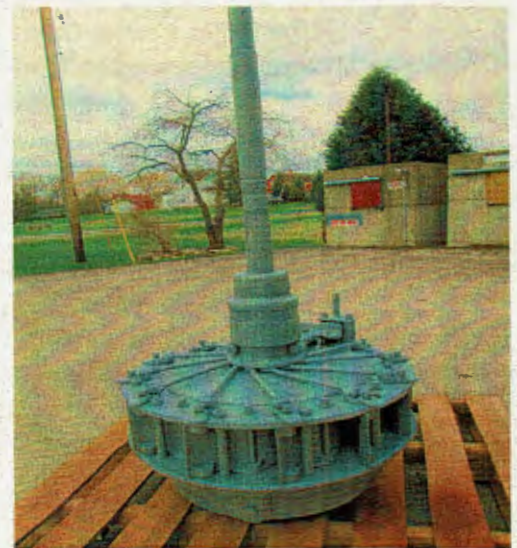
Although lawn repair was a task that we had on our list at this time last year on a smaller scale, it has become a project by itself. Between the Mill and Engine Shed construction, and last year's Thresher here, the grounds took a beating. Not only did rain and mud lead to many ruts and lawn damage, it also prevented our crew from making repairs last season. Weather-wise, we appear to be off to a good start this year. Now we just have to be able to safely work together. Hopefully, we will have much of the green grass back by the time our summer events come around, if we are able to hold them.

A behind the scenes project that is starting to take shape is the Periodic and Preventative Maintenance plan. As part of the Society's long-term planning goals, the Sites Committee is developing a revolving plan to help allocate resources for building, grounds, and equipment maintenance.

The mill turbine restoration is well underway. Over the winter, many parts have been repaired or recreated. The turbine is almost done and ready for display, until it can be reinstalled in the Mill turbine well.

Herb Lofy - The 17.5 inch Leffel Turbine that at one time powered the Messer/Mayer Mill is restored. When it was removed in the fall of 2017, in conjunction with the south foundation wall rebuild, it was totally covered with mud and silt. The Richfield Fire Company used hi pressure water to remove most of the dirt. I brought it to my farm in the fall of 2018 and again pressure washed and sandblasted to clean for disassembly.

Tom Steinbach volunteered to help me take the machine apart. We spent several sessions over the period of a month removing nuts and bolts to finally have everything apart for more sandblasting. I then investigated what parts needed to be repaired or replaced. I contacted Matt Harvey of Harvey Diversified Trades at Campbellsport and we formulated a plan for repairs. The project then sat until January of this year when we concentrated on finishing the project. Matt made the miscellaneous parts over several months while I concentrated on painting all the parts before assembly.



Leffel Turbine

Project completed early April. It's now functional and mounted on a pallet so it can easily be moved for display. No restoration has been done at this time on the globe which held the turbine for operation.

This year will likely prove to be one that will require all of us to be flexible and innovative in how we accomplish our goals. As you hike in or drive through the Richfield Historical Park, please keep in mind the RHS crews may not be able to address all of the tasks that we normally would. If you see a piece of trash, a branch in a path, or other items out of order and you are able; please take a moment to help us out by putting that trash in a barrel or moving that branch to the side. If you're not able to, drop one of us a note to point out the issue. We'll try to address it as soon as possible. You can always find our contact information (Quint, Herb, or Del.) on the RHS website.

Until we are able to gather again, stay safe and well!

Library Committee

Marge Holzbog



RHS member Bob Laubenheimer has gifted us with a wonderful display of Indian arrowheads collected by family member William Laubenheimer during his lifetime. It is believed all were collected in the Richfield area.

The RHS Library Committee is working to gain information on the tribal source for the arrowheads by contacting the curator at the Milwaukee Public Museum responsible for the Native American exhibits and/or the Newberry Library in Chicago, a repository for early American history.

The framed display will be on view at the Welcome Center at the Richfield Historical Park,

William Laubenheimer Arrowhead Display

Lillicrapp Welcome Center

Aerona Smith

On display in our General Store are Victorian Calling Cards from the 1880s through the 1890s. Calling Cards also known as "Visiting or Compliment Cards" originated in France in the mid-1700s. Their popularity later spread to Europe, Britain, and eastern United States. At first, these cards were plain in design and included the person's name and title. Both men and women used Calling Cards to announce their arrival, to express condolences for illness, or just to say hello.

To the Victorians, role, status, and social class were of the utmost importance. Their Calling Cards were perceived as "high style" and appealed especially to the "upper class." However, their use did filter down to include all classes.

Victorian Cards were very ornate and showy. New printing technology allowed more color and decorative card designs. Women's cards were about 2 1/2" by 3" in size. They were carried in a small fancy case, sometimes made of silver, ivory, or mother of



**1880s -90s Victorian Cards
1856 Lady's Card Case**

pearl. Men's cards were smaller and rectangular and meant to fit in their breast pocket. Victorian Calling Cards were made in 2-parts. The first part (top portion) of the card, featured colorful photos (called "Scrap" pictures) using Victorian symbols of friendship. Some of these symbols included flowers, birds, animals, and decorative scenery. The top part was attached to the 'card stock' (bottom portion, second part) of the Calling Card. This part contained a signature and / or message.

The price of these 1880s and 90s cards varied, but frequently sold for approximately 12 cards for 15 or 20 cents. Victorian Calling Cards were replaced in the 20th century by the 1 cent Postcard.

Long Range Planning

Susan Sawdey

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE - RHS digs into the 2020-2024 Plan

As the Richfield Historical Society was ringing in 2020, we were also ushering in our NEW 2020-2024 Plan. The Plan is made up of four Strategic Priority areas: Volunteers and Membership, Marketing, Board Operations and Facilities. The Richfield Historical Society is committed to monitoring progress toward these goals by reviewing the plan regularly. Our organization will develop annual goals each year, utilize strategic monthly agendas to stay on track and implement midcourse corrections for specific items in need.

Some of our more exciting goals are:

- Development of interactive informational points of interest such as QR (quick response codes) placed throughout the Park. This would allow visitors to access information about our buildings outside of our events and encourage them to come back to learn more.
- Establish a plan for an annual recognition activity for our members, volunteers and donors. We recognize you contribute to the success of the Richfield Historical Society's mission, and we look forward to showing you our appreciation!
- Use marketing and awareness tools to develop our destination focus. We have a "hidden gem" and are ready to show it off!
- Increase our collaboration and partner with other historical societies and governmental agencies to amplify our common goals.

Marketing

Doug Wenzel

First of all, let me say how excited I am to be able to serve RHS in the role of Chairman of the Marketing Committee. My wife and I joined the Society a couple of years ago and have been participating as volunteers. I appreciate the opportunity to serve in this expanded capacity.

Our first marketing project of the year has been the printing and distribution of a direct-mail flier that promotes the Society's first-half 2020 events. If you live in zip code 53076, 53033, or 53017 (5,949 residences in total,) you should have received a mailer with descriptions of the Antique Appraisal and Chili Luncheon, Maple Syrup Family Day, and both Step Back in Time events. On the back of the mailer are tickets for \$50 drawings at each occasion. Our plan has been to monitor the numbers of tickets turned in at each of these events and make a judgement as to whether the cost (about \$0.24 each) is justified.

Of course, our best-laid plans have been laid low by the Covid-19 coronavirus. You will read all about its effects

on our events in the other committee articles. The challenge for the Marketing Committee now is how do we continue to promote RHS when our event schedule is to be determined? We need to keep our name in the public eye again, if for no other reason than to support recruitment of new members until such a time at which we can meet. The Committee still has goals to meet, even though many of the Society's activities are suspended.

Watch this space in our next newsletter to see what we've come up with !

Membership

Warren Wiedmeyer

Lifetime RHS Membership - What does it say about you when you decide to become a member of the Richfield Historical Society? Well, for one thing it means that you are actively supporting the vision and mission of the RHS through the contribution of monies of a certain amount. The annual membership fee for the RHS is \$20 for a family. The fee for a Lifetime membership is \$1000.

Now consider, for a second, the implications of becoming a Lifetime member. To do so you have to provide the RHS with a one-time payment of \$1000. This is an exceptionally big number for most of us. To put it in other terms, one would have to be a member of the RHS for 50 years before that \$1000 payment makes any sense, and that is not even considering how much that money would be worth if properly invested for 50 years!

Sending a check for \$1000 to the RHS for that amount says a lot about the sender. It basically says that their monetary commitment to the RHS is exceptional - like the difference between \$20 and \$1000. It is a HUGE difference in monetary support. It also says that their commitment is a lasting one - not a fleeting one.

One of the biggest problems we have at RHS is that we typically lose 20 to 30 members every year. The facts are that those 20 to 30 people had signed up to become members 1 to 3 years ago, but for whatever reason, are no longer interested in making it a priority to continue their membership. Why this happens is subject to debate, but nevertheless it is a reality.

Which brings me back to the Lifetime members. These people don't view their monetary commitment to the RHS as a "year-to-year" thing. They see the RHS as something worthy of being supported for the "long haul." And for them, becoming "Lifetime" members is their vehicle demonstrating that level of financial support.

As Chairperson of the Membership Committee, I applaud and thank every one of our Lifetime members. For some, the \$1000 fee may not have been a significant sacrifice while for others it could have been. However, ALL of them have expressed the same level of dedication to the RHS. So, with the intent of publicly acknowledging them for their significant monetary commitment to the RHS and for being dedicated to seeing the vision and mission of the RHS being carried forth for the foreseeable future, here is the current list of the Lifetime members:

Frank and Mary Beth Carr of West Bend
Tony and Joni Crivellow of Richfield
Ron Engelke of Hubertus
John Frey of Hartford
Amy Geier of Hastings, MN
Gail Mayer Goodrich of Pembroke Pines, FL
Irv Hanson of Colgate
Gordon and Margie Knutson of Hubertus
Christopher Larson of Slinger

Bob and Sue Laubenheimer of Slinger
Kent Mayer of Crawfordville, FL
Benjamin and Ruthmary Parmenter of Napa, CA
John Parmenter of Albuquerque, NM
Sarah Parmenter of Watsonville, CA
John and Deb Price of Whitefish Bay
Scott Sieckman of Colgate
Paul and Meg Wickesburg of Menomonee Falls
Robert and Carol Woods of Kenosha

In the next issue of the RHS Newsletter, there will be many more examples of exceptional support that our members are exhibiting.

Mill House

Cindy Schmechel/Clara Birkel

The Fainting Couch - Several years ago, the Messer/Mayer Mill House received a large shipment of original furniture pieces from the Mayer family. We were thrilled to receive the original 1890s front parlor furniture used by C.W. Mayer and his wife, Mary Anna Kurtz, which was still in beautiful shape. It had been lovingly cared for by Mayer

family descendants who were living in Florida. We were also excited to receive the original bedroom set of George and Martha Mauer Mayer from their daughter, Carol Mayer Woods and her husband, Bob Woods. As caretakers of the Messer/Mayer Mill House, we could not have been more thrilled to see all these pieces of furniture returned to their original home.

Among the many pieces of original furniture returned to the Mill House on that day, was a lovely old fainting couch. It had been recovered over the years and came back to the Mill House now covered in a chartreuse velvet material. We currently have it on display in the sitting room with a display of C.W. Mayer family photos in beautiful antique picture frames on the wall above.

We were given a short history of the fainting couch, but we do not know exactly when the Mayer family took possession of it and don't exactly know where in the House it had been kept. We do know that after Martha Mayer passed away and George Mayer was living alone in the House, he put the fainting couch in the kitchen under the window and used it as his main sleeping bed until he moved from the House in 1971.

Curious about fainting couches, we did some research on the history and found that, yes indeed, the Victorian era ladies' corsets were cinched too tightly, causing them to "faint." Their ribs were displaced, their lungs were squashed and some organs were actually compressed against the spine or shoved down into the abdomen. In addition to making it hard for a lady to breathe, hearts struggled to pump and guts struggled to digest what little food they could manage to get down. Whether the argument of the day was either for or against tightly-laced women's corsets, it was assured that women suffered from suboptimal blood pressure, the inability to breathe properly or had low blood sugar all of which were believed to be potential causes for the Victorian ladies swooning onto their fainting couches.

Other possible reasons for a lady to swoon onto her fainting couch were the enormous layers of clothing she wore. Aside from her tightly cinched corset, a bustle pad and underwear; she wore a full skirt (supported by a crinoline, usually made from horsehair) petticoats (sometimes lined with steel hoops) and a bonnet. She may have fainted from overheating in the summertime or simply just the sheer weight of the clothing she wore, which combined with her corset, would have been very difficult to handle.



Mayer Fainting Couch

Another reason for a lady to swoon onto her fainting couch could have been chronic poisoning. During the 19th century, while people were aware that arsenic was poisonous; they didn't seem to know that environmental exposure from its fumes could also have an adverse affect. Arsenic was used in everything from the paper a butcher wrapped your meat in to fabrics and paints, and, in fact, by the end of the 1800s, 80% of all wallpaper was arsenic laced. Arsenic poisoning caused a variety of symptoms including headaches, cold sweats and fainting. In addition to arsenic, lead, and mercury; other toxic substances were commonly found in makeup during the Victorian era. Lead was a common ingredient in hair dyes and was frequently found in wine, along with arsenic and copper.

We would hope that the Mayer household did not have all those toxic chemicals floating in its air and that the ladies of the house weren't cinched up tightly in corsets or layers of heavy clothing, but simply enjoyed their fainting couch (also known as a daybed) as a beautiful, comfortable piece of furniture as something to lay down on while taking a well-deserved nap or just reading a good book.

Mill Restoration

Harry Niemann

In the beginning, there was water, then came a dam, a ditch, and then the water came to the Mill. The water turned the millstones and there was flour, and it was good. Except, sometimes in the winter and late summer there was not enough water to turn the stones. But, the people still needed flour.

At that time in the late 1800s, there was this new fangled thing called a gasoline engine. Many manufacturing companies jumped on the bandwagon and started producing engines. Many of these companies only lasted a short time and then disappeared. In the fall of 1895, C. W. Mayer ordered a 22 horsepower engine from the Chicago Gasoline Engine Co. In November of 1895, after a few weeks of running the engine broke down. By December 5 of 1895, it was back up and running. In January 1896, the old engine was removed; and a new one of the same make and model was installed. It was started on February 4, 1896. It operated about a week, and then it too broke down. In February 1897, a new 35 horsepower engine was installed. It was described as a 5 ton Norman engine. This engine proved to be reliable and provided the necessary power to operate the Mill.

The engine was installed at the south end of the Mill, and through an arrangement of pulleys and belts was connected to the millstones. A 15 by 20 lean-to shed was built over the engine to protect it from the weather. An access door led from the millstone platform in the Mill to a balcony on the upper north end of the shed, and a stairway on the east end led down to the engine floor.

Trying to trace the Norman Engine Company has proved fruitless. It was apparently one of those companies that disappeared. The engine was sold for scrap probably during World War II. Scrap drives were common during both world wars. I can recall as a child growing up in Sheboygan during World War II where there was a civil war cannon and a pyramid stack of cannon balls on display in downtown Fountain Park. They too were sold for scrap.

Our new Superior engine was located on an antique engine website. It was originally used in a Texas oilfield. It is a 25 horsepower Superior engine that ran on natural gas from the oil wells. It was owned by a man from Ohio from whom we purchased it. A friendly trucker from Slinger with a flatbed returning empty from Florida, stopped, picked it up and brought it to our park.

Some repairs were needed, but our Thursday crew was able to do them and get it operating on LP gas. It will be installed in the original location in a replica of the Shed that is being built to house it. The Shed will be built using lumber milled from the trees cut down in the Park.

Pioneer Homestead

Susan Sawdey

Wool Processing on the RHS Pioneer Homestead

As cold weather leaves, pioneers find themselves packing away their knit hats, gloves, shawls and sturdy wool blankets. Springtime also begins the process of making and repairing warm clothing months before the chill sets in again. Pioneers would have to make all these items by hand over many days and hours of labor.

The process all starts with the family's sheep. In 1870, sheep were easy enough to keep, requiring open pasture to graze, a water source, and protection from predators. It would be about May or June when the man of the homestead would perform the annual sheering. Sheering was the easy part; this fluffy yet course, dirty wool needed to be washed, dried,

Wool

