Message from the President

June is here

Well, here we go, off into summer. By the time this is out we will have had our strawberry sociable and be planning our fair display. We will be needing volunteers for the fair booth. Let us know if you can help.

I hope to see the membership at one of the many programs we will be having this summer. See upcoming dates to the right.

Also we are looking for nominations for the “Hero of History,” so submit your ideas now.

Also in November we have election of officers. Consider running for an office. Any member can run, and you can help shape the future of the society. Bring your special talent to help us grow.

As I write this, we are few days from the sociable. I hope to see you all there and have a great summer.

Rich Faltz

Below, the William Buchholz farm in 1901.

The annual historical society rummage sale took place during the Westfield Village-wide rummage sale over Memorial Day weekend. Thanks to all who donated items to sell, those who volunteered to work and to those who came to buy. Board members Gary Sorensen, center, and Norm Bernard walking towards the building, both volunteered at the two day sale. MCHS made over $800 from the sale which will go into restoring and repairing the blacksmith shop where the rummage sale was held.
Reminiscent Ramblings
By Norm Barnard – Westfield, WI

Back in the mid sixties, 1966 to be exact, I had just graduated from high school in Westfield and had that all important college degree on my mind. Knowing that there would be commensurate cost involved, I sought employment at the Alto Creamery located on Center Street. Memory fails me as to how and why I chose there to land but land I did. Probably because employment was offered and it was convenient in location.

It was a pretty good learning experience as it gave me perspective on one aspect of the dairy industry in America’s Dairyland. I had summer jobs prior to 1966 that were of the agricultural nature but for me it was time to move on to something different. This particular job was that of a cheesemaker; if a novice at the craft can be deemed a cheesemaker. The real cheesemakers at that time in my life were the foremen of any particular shift and came in the form of Raland Kohnke and Gordon Sonnenberg. I don’t know that wizened veterans would apply, but for all of us kids that found employment there, these guys were OLD. Probably all of 45 to 50 years. Looking back on it all, NOW, everyone is just plain younger than me. We kids were merely laborers in the process but if I had to list past occupations on a resume, cheesemaker would get the nod. For those of you who may wonder how it all goes down, I’ll make an attempt at a description based on my memory.

Cheese, naturally, starts out as whole milk. I don’t know if there is a certain fat content requirement but you can Google that if you need to. A very large vat, resembling a long, deep, rectangular box was filled with milk. I don’t know how much milk it held but I would put the number of gallons at 500 or so. It was a lot. The vat was probably 15 feet long, maybe 5 feet wide and 3 feet deep. If you weren’t overly short in stature, you could bend over the edge and touch the bottom of the vat. Once the vat had been filled with milk, a prescribed amount of rennet was added to start the process of curdling the milk. Once the milk had set up, we used a pair of large wire cutters to cut the solidified milk into tiny little curds. One wire frame cut the solid vertically and the other cut it horizontally, resulting in very small curds much like cottage cheese in appearance. Then, a set of large paddles were attached to motors located above the vat which traveled back and forth, the length of the vat to keep the curd separated and allow the whey to be drained away. The drain was at one end of the vat and at the bottom.

As the whey drained off, the small curds were allowed to sink to the bottom of the vat forming a solid mass which had to be “ditched” in order to get all of the whey out of the cheese. This was done with large, stainless steel rake like instruments (every tool used in the process was stainless steel) with a long handle and a ditch was created down the center of the vat, allowing the whey to drain off. Once that was done, the result was two long narrow masses of compressed curd lining each side of the vat. If memory serves me, I believe there were testing procedures through the entire process, performed by the foreman, to dictate when each procedure would take place.

The next process was the milling process. This began by cutting the two huge lumps of cheese into manageable size pieces with a large 4 or 5 bladed cheese knife with the appropriate length of handle so that it would reach across the width of the vat. This was the most hazardous part of the job because it involved a man on one side of the vat pushing the knife through the cheese and the man on the other side guiding the knife to completion of the cut. The knife blades were attached to a long horizontal bar that slammed against the side of the vat. Use your imagination to predict the outcome should a finger get between the horizontal bar and the side of the vat.

The milling machine was a large, electrically operated device that could be rolled along next to the vat and the cutting portion was able to be tilted up and away from the vat when it was not in use. Those large hunks of cheese were then...
compressed curds previously cut by the large knife would be picked up and fed through the milling machine. The result now was a larger curd like you buy when you find cheese curds in your local store. However, they are still in a raw stage and a measured amount of salt is added to the large curds and those huge paddles are implemented once again to stir the curds and keep them separated. This also allowed for more whey to drain off. The final step either involved huge 50 gallon size barrels or the cheese could be pressed into large blocks that resulted in about 40 pound blocks of finished product. The blocks were generally wrapped and boxed for aging and the barrels generally went to another processor for making some sort of cheese product. That’s pretty much it in a nutshell. You can view this process if you visit Dairy State Cheese up in Rudolph, WI. You can see it all unfold from their store/showroom through large glass window that lets you see the whole process. Provided you have a lot of time. It doesn’t happen in ten or twenty minutes.

That’s all I have for this issue. I can get into some of the “war stories” and name names in the next issue of

Historian, author and professor Dr. Patrick Jung presents Rethinking Jean Nicolet

Over 40 people attended the presentation on Jean Nicolet and Northeaster Wisconsin Indians in the first of a series of presentations recognizing the 350th anniversary of Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet’s voyage up the Fox River

School records and information available in our archives

Researchers often find information about their family members in our school archives. MCHS has extensive school records and are happy to help find information about family members or others you might be looking for. We also like help from you in identifying people in photos. Below are from the new collection of photos donated by Becki Kearns. It’s 1912 Twin Lake school class and teacher.
Find us on Facebook
Be sure to LIKE us on Facebook and enjoy the changing posts about history in Marquette County. You can add comments about your own experiences or information about each post.

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$225 Lifetime
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Business memberships are $50. They support local history plus receive advertising in our quarterly newsletter.

Go to www.marqcohistorical.org and have fun looking at our website.
Member Becki Kearns worked with MCHS secretary and curator Carol Claesges to transfer copies of school and railroad photos that Becki has collected, scanned, and organized over to the MCHS files. It has added photos of schools we hadn’t had in our archives. The collection is available to view at the museum on our computer. A board member or trained volunteer can help you view the photos. Our digital collection is an ongoing project that will take years to complete. One day, we’d like to make more of it available online. It’s one of our long range goals.

Visit the Marquette County Historical Society Booth at the Marquette County Fair
July 6 - 9

Harness Racing in the old, old grandstand. The grandstand in this photo was torn down in 1941.