Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine

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The Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin

In This Issue:

Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council
Midwest Region of ALHFAM

MOMCC 2022 Fall Conference

November 10-12, 2022

Celebration, Parties, Milestones

How do historic sites and open air museums celebrate and commemorate events, historic and current, personal and community-related, and of local, state, national, and even international significance?

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Reservation Deadline: October 14, 2022; Mention MOMCC to receive conference rate

Conference packet will be posted on the MOMCC website - www.momcc.org

MOMCC Magazine is the official publication of the Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council. The magazine is published four times a year and is a benefit of membership in MOMCC. Membership information may be found at:
www.momcc.org.

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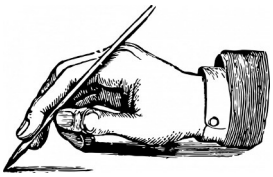
FEATURE ARTICLES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover Photo - The Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin will be the site of the 2022 MOMCC Fall Conference on November 10-12. (Photo credit: Osthoff Resort)

MOMCC is the Midwest Regional Affiliate of
ALHFAM
The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums

Editor's Notebook



By Tom Vance

THIS year's annual ALHFAM conference in Tacoma Washington was their first in-person meeting in three years. Everyone was disappointed when the 2020 meeting went virtual and plans to visit Boston had to be cancelled. The first ALHFAM conference was at Old Sturbridge Village in 1970 and 2020 would have been the 50th anniversary meeting.

The 2023 ALHFAM conference will be held in the Midwest region at Sauder Village on June 23-26. If you haven't attended an ALHFAM meeting, this is your opportunity to experience one close to home. Meeting living history folks from all over the country as well as Canada and even Iceland, can give you a perspective on the living history profession that you can't get anywhere else.

The Midwest was well represented in Tacoma. Three of our members brought home ribbons from the annual plowing contest. President Gail Richardson won second place in the Novice class, Mary Seelhorst won third place in the Apprentice class, and treasurer Debra Reid won second place in the Expert class.

The 2022 MOMCC fall conference is being finalized. It will be held at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin on November 10-12. The Osthoff is a beautiful luxury resort recalling the days of Victorian and Edwardian splendor. The room rate is very affordable, especially if you share a two-bedroom suite with other conference attendees.

Interesting and educational sessions, workshops, and tours are being planned along with good food, entertainment, and networking opportunities. Hotel information is included in this issue and the program will be posted on the MOMCC website soon.

The 2023 MOMCC spring conference will be virtual due to planning for the ALHFAM annual conference at Sauder Village. The spring conference will feature some of the best of past conference sessions.

The fall conference will be held at Tillers International near Kalamazoo, Michigan. It will be largely workshop oriented. Tillers is well-known for its wide selection of historical skills workshops including training and farming with horses and oxen, timber framing, blacksmithing, coopering, joinery, and a selection of other topics. The MOMCC conference will offer some of these workshops at a fraction of the cost of attending Tillers.

Conference sites for 2024 and beyond are currently under consideration. The recent member survey gave us some interesting insights into what the membership wants to see in conferences and the board of directors is planning accordingly to make our conferences as relevant as possible.

I hope to see everyone at the Osthoff Resort in early November. It will be a great time. ❑

The annual ALHFAM plowing contest Midwest winners *include Gail Richardson who took second place in the Novice class, Mary Seelhorst, who took third place in the Apprentice class, and Debra Reid who took second place in the Expert class.*

Period Dance

By Marcia King, Ohio History Connection

IN March 2022, I attended my second ever MOMCC conference. The previous one was the wonderful riverboat trip from Peoria. Since this one would be a more traditional land-based meeting, I wasn't sure quite what to expect. The conference met all my expectations.

This was another great experience for me. I arrived a day early just so I could have time to sight see as I had never visited Springfield before. To know that I was able to see the only house Abraham Lincoln owned was a treat. This was a pleasure for me as I have long admired the man. The Lincoln Museum was well worth the time and for a museum geek like myself, a great experience.

The conference itself was also enjoyable. I listened to some good presentations (loved Harriet Tubman), had some good food, and met many interesting people. I also was very appreciative of whoever arranged the donations for the displaced citizens of the Ukraine. I enjoyed shopping for children's art and craft projects and hope everything made it to the right place.

I want to thank Becky Crabb for inviting me to be a presenter at the suggestion of Mike Follin. Everyone who came to my session participated in the dances and seemed to have a good time.

All in all, I had a fantastic time and look forward to the next one I can attend.

Summary of the Session on Dance

Dancing is wonderful exercise as it promotes balance and good muscle tone. Dance was not only used for exercise in the 1800s, it was used for the social aspects as well. It was one of the few times an unmarried lady could have a private conversation with a gentleman without a chaperone listening to every word. This made for opportunities for flirting and courting. It allowed for news of the day to be shared and of course gossiping was also much in evidence.

There were some general rules to dances. White, cream, or gloves matching a lady's dress were required. Gentleman also wore gloves. If you have ever danced for an hour or more, you know the importance as it is unpleasant to hold someone's sweaty hands. Gentlemen asked ladies to dance, especially if there were wallflowers among the gathering. It was considered rude to let a lady sit all evening with no partners. Of course, gentlemen had to be introduced to the ladies by someone who knew both parties. No lady would dance without a proper introduction.

Partners were changed throughout the dance. You may dance first and perhaps last dances with the escort who brought you but ladies did not dance with the same man all evening. That was considered scandalous behavior, and added to the gossip being passed around!

I also told some anecdotes about things that have happened at Ohio Village while leading dance. For example, one particular volunteer has fallen every time we either had a practice session or an actual dance. And then there was the teenage volunteer who was dancing with an about seven year old who was much more interesting in nose mining than dancing. When it came time to hold his hand, she held his wrist instead.

About the Author - Marcia King is a long-time volunteer at Ohio Village in Columbus, Ohio. She became a member of a dance troupe about 15 years ago and learned to call dances from a staff member at Ohio Village. She loves to get the public involved in dancing.

***Participants in the session**, "May I Have This Dance?" at the 2022 spring conference in Springfield, Illinois.*

President's Perspective

By Gail Richardson

AS the hot summer starts winding down, we're finally getting some relief with the cooler weather. Fall will soon be here with all of nature's artistic, colorful hand-painting on the trees and the honeybees will be getting ready for winter.

This June I attended the ALFHAM Conference in Tacoma, Washington. This was my first conference other than MOMCC. It was a tremendous learning experience, with educational development from the sessions, tours, and what to look forward to in 2023 when the ALHFAM conference comes to Sauder Village. I met a lot of new colleagues who have become great friends. I even won a ribbon in the plowing contest, placing second in the Novice Class. I am still in shock over that one.

The MOMCC In-Person Conference Planning Survey was recently sent to all of our members. Thank you all for your replies and answers. The survey plays a vital role in knowing what direction MOMCC is going in the future.

Fall is fast approaching, and the 2022 MOMCC Fall Conference is coming Nov. 10-12, 2022 at the historical Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. I would encourage all of our individual, household, and institutional members to attend. It will be a great time for educational development, learning, networking, and fellowship with friends and colleagues you have not seen in a while.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

Until then,

Gail Richardson
Educational Specialist/SV Beekeeper
Sauder Village

MOMCC Fellowship Application

2022 MOMCC Fall Annual Meeting & Conference

Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake Wisconsin

November 10-12, 2022

For each conference, MOMCC gives out a limited number of fellowships to help offset conference costs. Fellowships cover conference registration in addition to funds for lodging at the conference site.

All applications must be received by October 1, 2022

Please visit **www.momcc.org** for the full application

including necessary qualifications and selection criteria.

The Osthoff Resort is a beautiful luxury resort hotel built in 1886 during the "Guilded Age" of the late 19th century and early 20th century. Check out all it has to offer at Osthoff.com.

Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council

MOMCC was established in 1978 with the goal of furthering the interchange of materials, information, and ideas within the history museum field.

Membership

We welcome membership and participation from administrators, volunteers, interpreters, curators, historians, educators, maintenance/facilities staff, gift shop workers, facilitators, docents, and anyone else with an interest in history and public education. Membership is $30 per year for individuals, $35 for families, and $50 for institutions. Membership application can be found at www.momcc.org.

Our Purpose

The purpose of MOMCC is to further promote excellence and to provide a forum for the interchange of materials, information, ideas, and consideration of issues within the open air, interactive, and historical museum profession.

MIDWEST REGION: The Midwest is defined as the eight states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

OPEN-AIR MUSEUM: Interpreting life as material culture in the context of buildings, objects, and open space. A site or facility that interprets history through exhibits, living history interpretation, and/or educational programs.

Resource Committees

Interpretation, Music, Art, and Material Culture
Leadership and Supervision
Agriculture, Gardens, and Foodways
Media Resources

MOMCC Annual Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2021

Via ZOOM

President Mike Follin called the 42nd annual meeting to order at 2:00 pm with 22 participants.

The treasurer's report and minutes from the last annual meeting were also published in the magazine. Secretary Dawn Bondhus Mueller provided an online copy of the minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting held via Zoom. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Treasurer Debra Reid presented 2021 - 2022 budget online for review. Last year ended well, as the organization broke even. The YTD balance is at a small deficit, but this is not a surprise with the postponed live conference. It was moved and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report and the budget as presented. Motion carried.

Melinda Carriker reports the following membership information: 61 individual; 32 household (nine under them); 32 institutional; and 12 complimentary. There are 166 total active members as of today.

Editor Tom Vance reported the winter issue will be out early in December with articles on Christmas events. The spring issue will be on gardens and Ft. Nisqually. The summer issue is fairly open, and the fall issue on the conference in Wisconsin. One of the editors is retiring, so Tom is looking for someone who would be willing to do some content editing.

The ALHFAM conference will be held June 23-28 at Ft. Nisqually, Wash. The materials regarding the conference aren't final yet, but session proposals can still be submitted. Watch for fellowship opportunities to attend the conference from MOMCC. Sauder Village is planning to host the ALHFAM conference in 2023.

Betsy Urven announced the following results from the election which took place primarily online and with some paper ballots: Gail Richardson elected President; Ann Cejka elected Vice President; and Rob Burg elected Member at Large.

The 2020 Candace Matelic Award went to Kristie Hammond for her thoroughly researched and engaging article, "Fun is Universal: History and Interpretation of the Bilbo Catcher."

Becky Crabb did a presentation on the upcoming Spring Conference March 17–19, 2022 in Springfield, Ill. The theme is "Unraveling our past and moving forward," and the call for papers has been extended. Monique Inglot updated the group on the Fall Conference at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisc., November 10-12, 2022.

It was moved and seconded to close the meeting at 2:22 pm. President Gail Richardson reopened the meeting at 2:23 pm.

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 2:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Bondhus Mueller

MOMCC Secretary

MOMCC 2021-2022 Financial Report & 2022-2023 Budget

End of Year - September 1, 2021 to August 31, 2022

Prepared by Debra A. Reid, Treasurer

	Actual - Year Ended	2021-2022	2022-2023
Income	**Aug 31, 2022**	**Budget**	**Budget**
Membership Dues	$ 4,600.00	$ 4,750.00	$ 4,000.00
Advertising (Magazine)	510.00	810.00	500.00
Magazine Sales	0.00	0.00	0.00
Auction	1,025.00	500.00	1,000.00
*Fall 2021 Conference	1,320.00	3,000.00	10,000.00
**Spring 2021 Conference	4,905.00	7,500.00	1,200.00
Fall/Spring Previous Conferences	0.00	0.00	0.00
Misc. (incl. donations) Tomlin Memorial $2,885	3,268.00	100.00	100.00
Interest	2.22	1.84	1.50
Total Income	$15,630.22	$ 16,661.84	$16,801.50
Expenses			
Magazine Expenses	$ 3,576.00	$ 3,600.00	$ 3,600.00
Membership Service			
Printing/copies	0.00	75.00	25.00
Postage (mail 4 magazines, ballots, dues renewals)	1,072.47	950.00	1,000.00
Supplies	0.00	30.00	0.00
Liability Insurance (paid for three years)	732.45	0.00	0.00
*Fall Conference	2,810.00	1,000.00	7,500.00
**Spring 2022 Conference – Springfield	5,675.21	7,184.00	0.00
Marketing (GoDaddy; 3 yr. web domain; e-voting cost)	0.00	200.00	250.00
Board Member reimbursements	0.00	0.00	750.00
Cr. Card Fees (Affini Pay 333.14, BofA 25.94, .60)	359.68	1,000.00	300.00
Wild Apricot website	1,188.00	1,300.00	1,188.00
MOMCC Conference sponsorships, 4 @ $25	0.00	100.00	100.00
Audit	0.00	250.00	250.00
Matelic Award	200.00	200.00	200.00
***ALHFAM Fellowship	550.00	500.00	550.00
Disaster/Outreach Fund (restricted)	0.00	250.00	250.00
MOMCC Archives (The Henry Ford, $200/yr.)	0.00	0.00	200.00
Miscellaneous	173.00	0.00	0.00
Total Expenses	$ 16,336.81	$ 16,639.00	$ 16,163.00
Net Income (Loss)	$ (706.59)	$ 22.84	$ 638.50

Assets/Fund Balance: Unrestricted, Checking & Savings - $14,938.87; Temp Restricted - $5,258.66; Restricted (Endowment) - $13,569.80; Total - $33,767.33.

* Fall 2020 conf postponed to Nov, 2022; Fall 2021 conference postponed to Nov. 2023.

** The Spring 2021 conference postponed to 2022; Spring 2022 first face-to-face conference since Spring 2020.

*** Includes $550 for president to attend ALHFAM conference.

ALHFAM 2023: Call for Proposals
The Future is Now! Rethink, Rejuvenate, Regenerate
Sauder Village, Archbold Ohio
June 23-26, 2023

What do we want our future to be? Museums have a unique contribution to make to envision a desirable future. The collections which document the past, and the engagement with communities in the present, provide a solid foundation for thinking about the future. How do we go about this when faced with challenges that require our immediate attention? Sauder Village in Archbold, Ohio, provides the perfect retreat-like setting to discuss what it takes to make museums an indispensable component of planning for and sustaining a viable future.

We can no longer just talk about what might happen or how we might change. Instead, we must rethink the work we do, rejuvenate our approaches, and move beyond sustainability by pursuing regenerative actions. Join us as we envision this future and explore best practices in marshalling change, engaging with communities, forming partnerships, and ensuring financial security, and cultural sustainability, among other topics.

Preference will be given to proposals that align with the theme, and that feature case studies, research findings, strategies or implementations that address these critical needs. Topics should always specifically address the incorporation of practical applications to conference attendees. Session topics may include but are not limited to:

- What is sustainability? How does it relate to regenerative work?
- Living History: Need to rethink? How to rejuvenate? Uses to prompt positive change?
- Diversity, equality, accessibility, and inclusion as regenerative work.
- Engaging through collecting, interpreting, and exhibiting controversial or sensitive topics.
- What is a Green Museum? A key link in cultural sustainability & regenerative practice.
- Working with boards, administration, staff, volunteers, and the community to thrive.
- Creating and implementing strategic, interpretative, or master planning.
- Programing related to STEM, STEAM, STEMIE, or other cross-disciplinary approaches.
- Creating or utilizing visitor studies in formative, summative, and transformative research.
- Agriculture and/or environmental interpretation in keeping with growing Green potential.
- New or repurposed use of historic structures (preservation is a Green action!).
- Attracting and utilizing the skills of new staff and volunteers of all ages – key to rethinking!
- Use of technology, social media, Web, podcasts, and digital experiences to engage.

Program Committee Members

Tracie Evans, Co-Chair, Curator of Collections, Sauder Village, Archbold, Ohio
Debra A. Reid, Co-Chair, Curator of Agriculture, The Henry Ford, Dearborn, Michigan
Susan Brouillette, Manager, Campus Experiences, Ohio History Connection, Columbus, Ohio
Jon Kuester, Director, Historic Wagner Farm, Glenview Park District, Glenview, Illinois
Kiersten Latham, Director, Arts, Cultural Management, and Museum Studies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
Laurie Perkins, Historian, Michigan History Center, Lansing, Michigan

For Questions Contact

Tracie Evans tracie.evans@saudervillage.org or **Deb Reid** DebraR@theHenryFord.org

The Osthoff Resort
In Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin

Edited by Tom Vance

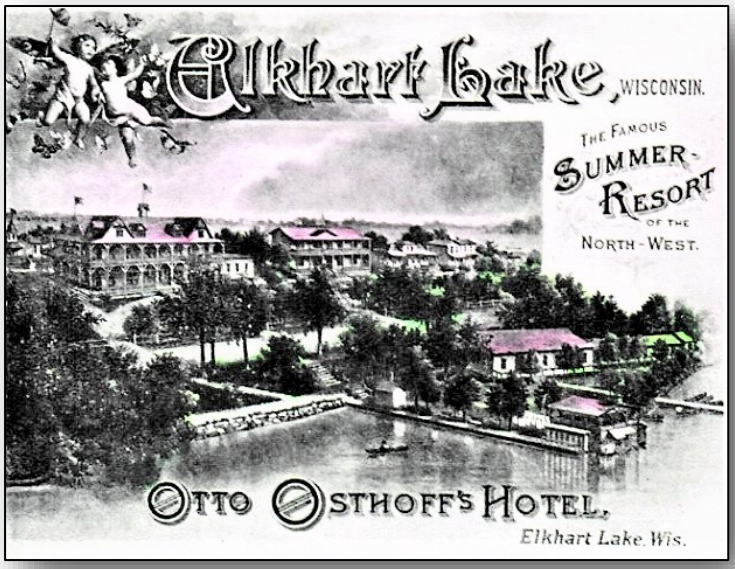
THE year was 1886. More than two decades had passed since the last shot was fired in the Civil War. Grover Cleveland was serving what would be the first of two presidential terms and would also become the first president to marry while in office. Coca-Cola was created and the St. Louis Browns defeated the Chicago White Stockings in the World Series.

America was enjoying the prosperity of the "Gilded Age" as fashionable travelers packed steamer trunks and sought respite from the summer dust and heat of the city. Many headed for the exciting new Osthoff Hotel in Elkhart Lake in southeastern Wisconsin, opened in 1886 by German entrepreneur Otto Osthoff and his wife Paulina.

Otto Osthoff's Hotel could accommodate 120 guests. According to Lola Roch, longtime general manager at the resort, "The original building featured a parlor and dining room on the first floor with a grand set of stairs leading to a ballroom on the second floor. Lodging was on the upper floors. An amusement hall was added the next year and a third pavilion later on, generally in the curved shape of the current hotel – though the buildings were not attached."[1]

Quickly, The Osthoff became a favorite of affluent travelers who appreciated luxurious accommodations and an ambiance featuring quality entertainment and fine dining.

"From the beginning, Elkhart Lake was a little bastion of culture," according to Lola Roch. "All the hotels here brought in performers and even vaudeville acts of national acclaim. It was a thriving seasonal community and they had to harvest ice from the lake during the winter to keep the food cold during the summer season."[2]



Early Advertisement for Otto Osthoff's Hotel *in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. (Photo credit: elkartlake.com)*

City folk from Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee were taken with the idea of traveling north by rail for a summer holiday. More than 2,000 visitors weekly poured into the tiny village of Elkhart Lake in pursuit of a place beside the fresh, spring-fed lake that, more than a century later, is still valued for its water quality.

By the dawn of the 20th Century, six resorts had emerged in or around Elkhart Lake. The boom continued well into the 1900's, fueled by the inauguration, in 1909, of Interurban service into the village.

In the next 90-plus years, the tiny resort community and with it, The Osthoff Hotel, experienced a rich and colorful history. The town became a gambling haven and a Prohibition-era hideaway for gangsters, where speakeasies coexisted with dairy farms and revenue men tracked moonshiners. The popularity of slot machines took the village by storm and with the roaring twenties came an influx of roulette and poker at four well-established Elkhart Lake gambling halls.

In 1940, the Osthoff opened The Funspot, a beautiful art deco bar and dining spot which also included all the obligatory gambling devices. Enforcement of the gambling laws was lax until the casinos were shut down in the late '40s.

The original Osthoff Hotel building *featured a grand staircase and ball room on the second floor. The building as torn down in 1989 to make way for the current Osthoff Resort. (Photo credit: Wisconsin State Historical Society)*

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1. Interview by Brian E. Clark, for the article, "After 130 years, the Osthoff Resort on Elkhart Lake is still going strong." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 2, 2017, Accessed July7, 2022, https://www.jsonline.com.

2. Clark interview of Lola Roch.

The Osthoff hotel subsequently fell on hard times and was sold to Chicago residents Sulie and Pearl Harand in 1955.

They founded the Harand Camp of Theater Arts that specialized in teaching drama, song interpretation, and ballet. Through the years, thousands of children attended the camp, learning how to be at home on and off the stage. Plays were performed at the camp and at the Forrest Tucker Theater at the nearby Siebkens Resort.

The camp operated until 1989, when the Dairyland Investment Company bought the property, re-routed South Lake St., and demolished the original buildings to create the present Osthoff Resort. The only remaining pieces from the original building are a hearth and staircase newel from a winding staircase.

Capturing the grandeur of the original Osthoff Hotel, today's resort opened its doors in 1995 and offers all-suite accommodations and four seasons of recreation, from sailing to ice skating as well as stunning scenery and an unmistakable Old World charm. It quickly earned the prestigious AAA Four Diamond rating, making it one of the premier resort destinations in the Midwest. In 2002, the Wisconsin Innkeepers Association presented The Osthoff Resort's general manager with its coveted "Innkeeper of the Year" award. With the completion of a major expansion in 2005, The Osthoff Resort added a massive new wing featuring a 10,000-square-foot conference center, 100-seat restaurant, destination spa and 48 additional two- and three-bedroom suites featuring both lake and woodland views.

Special events, from a re-creation of a traditional German Christmas market on the Osthoff grounds to the nationally acclaimed "Jazz on the Vine" music and wine festival, draw visitors year-round. And while the old train depot still stands in the center of Elkhart Lake more than 100 years later, you'll find most visitors today arriving at The Osthoff Resort by car.

Early History of Elkhart Lake

The Potawatomi Indians first called Elkhart Lake "Meshay-way-o-deh-ni-bis" (or Great Heart Lake) after its shape resembling an elk's heart. Scooped out by the glaciers, the lake is wrapped by the lush woods of Wisconsin's beautiful Kettle Moraine. Early settlers from the Rhine region of Germany were attracted to the area for its farming potential. Soon after, visitors came by stagecoach, then train, drawn to the lake, the charming resorts around its shores, and to the abundance of recreation opportunities.

In the early 1950's, the arrival of motor racing breathed new life into the region, attracting elitist road racers with their exotic BMWs and Porsches. In the beginning, gentlemen race-car drivers actually held their races on the streets of the village and county roads. These were soon discontinued because of problems with crowd and traffic control, and Elkhart Lake became home of the Road America road-racing circuit. This permanent track was built into 570 acres of rolling hills southeast of the village and became the longest natural road racing track in North America. Soon, the village regained its old luster as it became a major stop on the international auto-racing circuit, spoken of by racing glitterati in the same breath as Monte Carlo.

In all, Elkhart Lake has just over 1,000 permanent residents. Nearly everything is within walking distance, from landmark resorts to newer galleries and boutiques, giving it added charm. Regardless of season, weekends always bring vacationers strolling the streets. The appeal, it appears, is indeed timeless. ❑

Sources

Clark, Brian E. "After 130 years, the Osthoff Resort on Elkhart Lake is still going strong." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 2, 2017. Accessed July 7, 2022. https://www.jsonline.com.

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Photo credit: Osthoff Resort

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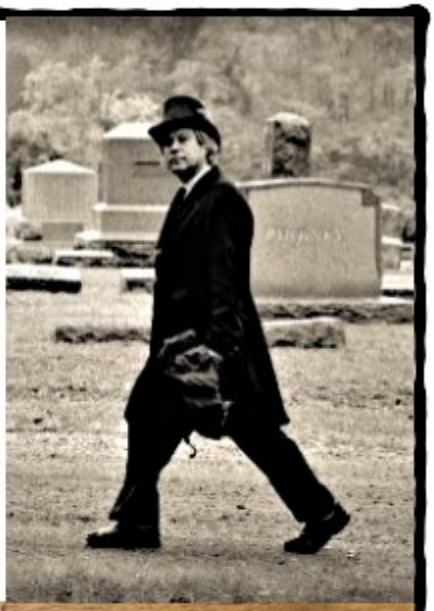

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The U.S.S. Cobia
And Her Role at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum
By Jayne Kranc

IT'S a common enough question. What do you do when one thing becomes the most important thing in your collection or at an event? It can be frustrating to spend a lot of time working on a program or reenactment and have everyone that pulls up say, "What time is the battle?" or whatever the particular draw happens to be. The staff often feel like saying, "We are so much more than that!" and with good reason. But sometimes when you have something special it's best to just roll with it. One site that has done that remarkably well is the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, Wisconsin with its WWII submarine, and the USS Cobia deserves all the attention she's given. The museum was one of the sites chosen for a pre-conference tour at the 2015 MOMCC fall conference and is one of the sites selected again for a pre-conference tour at the 2022 fall conference,

The Cobia arrived at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum on August 17, 1970. Prior to her arrival, she was used in Milwaukee from 1959-1970 as a training vessel for the local US Naval Reserve. A national historic landmark and an international submariners memorial in honor of the men and women who built the Manitowoc subs and the men who served on them, she is arguably the crown jewel of the museum in Manitowoc's collection even though she is not actually one of the 28 subs built there. She has nearly 35,000 visitors annually, is the most intact World War II submarine in the nation, and is home to the oldest working radar in the world. During guided tours, which last about 45 minutes, visitors learn how submarines operate and what life was like for the men on board.

The museum advises visitors to allow at least three hours for touring the museum and the Cobia. They also feature overnight programs on the Cobia which offers families and scout troops an opportunity to experience a first-hand taste of submarine life. We need all the experiences we can get to facilitate an appreciation of history and insight into America's past and this one is very popular. They also host a very successful Halloween program. Visitors who want to know what happens when the lights go out can take the Haunted Submarine tour. These are held on Halloween night from 7:00 p.m. until midnight and while most visitors get involved for the novelty of it, many of them become fans of the museum.

Though the exhibit, "USS Cobia Below the Surface: A Submarine Simulation Experience," visitors learn what life was like aboard the Cobia during the war, from everyday mundane tasks to what it felt like to be in a submarine during a depth charging. They recreate an actual battle from

The USS Cobia – *WWII submarine, is on exhibit at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.*

the Cobia's war patrol log. Then visitors can obtain a sailor's ID card before heading out on the tour. From information on the card, they can develop a personal connection with that crewman through his story and duties.

The tour guides also lend a personal touch, as many of them are sub vets, like Jud Nelson, the wonderful guide that was provided to the MOMCC members for their conference tour in 2015. The tour guide staff does general cleaning aboard the sub as well, and dedicated volunteers, though small in number, help maintain and restore the equipment and machinery on board.

The hospitality and enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers was greatly appreciated by the MOMCC members who attended the all day workshop in November 2015.

Special thanks go to Jud Nelson, sub veteran and tour guide, and Karen Duvalle, submarine curator. ❑

About the author – Jayne Kranc has a degree from Mundelein College in English/Communications and worked for Plitt Theaters in Chicago for eight years as well as volunteering as a Girl Scout leader for 34 years. Now retired, she was an interpreter at Buckley Homestead County Park for 34 years and now does substitute teaching for the Lake Central Indiana School system.

Traditional Live Traps and Their Place on Homesteads[1]

By Gary S. Foster, PhD, and Richard L. Hummel, PhD

TRADITIONAL animal traps were an important part of folk life on early farms and homesteads in America, but are little acknowledged or displayed at historical and living history sites. The bounty derived from traps augmented larders and smokehouses, extending food supplies, and providing variety in diets heavily dependent on pork. Every wild resource eaten kept another ham or bacon side from being sliced and another chicken from being slaughtered. The inclusion and display of traditional traps in a historical presentation can open the door to discussions about early settler's dependency on the natural environment and resources around them as well as early foodways.

Trap Sprung, *1844 by William Sidney Mount (1807-1868), Oil on panel, 12 7/8 x 17 1/16 in. (32.7 x 43.3 cm), Public Domain, Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection.*

Traps were labor- and time-saving devices that were set and checked every day or two. They required less time and effort than active hunting, allowing folk more time to attend to other chores. Children managed some traps, learning responsibility and how to help support the household. Trap types targeted particular species with the environment determining indigenous fauna in a particular geographic area. Folk were familiar with nature, observing wildlife to determine when, where, and how to set traps. Folk traps included kill, maim, and live traps used for controlling nuisance animals, for the fur and pelt trade, and for food.

Kill Traps

Kill traps, such as deadfalls and neck snares, killed the entrapped animals, whether the desired species or not, and were constructed at the trap site using local resources such as saplings as spring poles on game trails or runs. They were designed for animals as large as bear or small as rabbit. They were set away from homesteads because domestic animals and pets could fall victim to kill traps. They were checked daily to prevent predators from disturbing trapped animals. Some kill traps took strength to set and were not managed by children. On occasion, unintended animals, like deer, might fall victim but were a welcome bounty. Kill traps were typically used in the late fall and sometimes in mild winters. If the intended species was bear, however, hibernation negated winter use and spring use was negated by the possibility that sows had cubs, an ethical prohibition of bear trapping in the spring. Smaller game, like rabbits, could be trapped all three seasons, and unintended animals, like groundhog or opossum, might be processed as a meat source. Some species were not eaten (e.g., fox, coyote, skunk), but might be processed for pelts.

Maim Traps

Another trap type used by folk was maim traps or paw snares. These were also constructed on game and animal trails. They ensnared animals like wolf, coyote, and fox – non-food animals trapped for pelts, and food animals like rabbit and groundhog. The traps held entrapped animals by the paws; animals sometimes chewed paws off to get free Paw traps were checked daily to prevent that cruelty, and to prevent predators or escape. Maim traps/snares sometimes took strength, were dangerous to set, and were not the responsibility of young children. Entrapped animals, whether desired or not, had to be dispatched by rifle or

1. This is the composite of information from nine informants from the Upland South of Kentucky 50 years ago that was intended as a thesis in Folk Studies at Western Kentucky University. Data were lost in a fire at Eastern Illinois University in 2004, and only memory stokes the intellectual fire. This article places live traps in historical and cultural contexts and is not intended as a "how to" on trap construction. Instructions for trap construction can be found online.

club – a waste if not eaten or skinned. That was a risk of kill and maim traps.

Live Traps

Kill and maim traps were active traps in that trigger mechanisms activated deadfalls or snares. Some live traps were also active, using notched trigger sticks or figure-four trigger sticks to drop doors, pens, or cages on animal(s). Other live traps (quail and aquatic) were passive, having no moving parts to capture the animal(s). Animals enter and find no way out.

Live traps entrapped animals unharmed. If not desired for food or pelt, they could be released. Secure traps, not threatened by potential predators, could be checked every other day since the entrapped were unharmed. Most live traps were built at the homestead and taken to trap sites. Because live traps were safer in construction, placing, and setting, children were often given the task of managing them. They learned about nature and wildlife, part of the folk knowledge of geography. From that familiarity, live traps were developed to capture mammals (large and small), as well as avian, and aquatic species.

Mammal Live Traps

Red meat was a dietary custom of the folk, and they developed traps when the environment offered it. Traps ranged in size and capacity from black bears in the Upland South to rabbits everywhere. Traps were not limited to species sought, but to species caught, including deer and feral hogs in bear traps, and raccoon, groundhog, and opossum in traps for rabbits. Consuming or releasing unintended specimens was a family matter – some were preferred, some were acceptable for reasons of hunger, and some were rejected, depending on cultural definition. On occasion, small traps could even catch a skunk or a snake, warranting caution when checking.

Bear traps were built of logs at the trapping site, forming a narrow log pen, some four feet by eight feet with a guillotine door tripped by a notched trigger stick. The trap, just beyond the trigger stick at the back of the trap, was baited with honey, fruit preserves, lard, or grain. A bear caught was shot from between the gaps in the log pen or perhaps set free for bear baiting with dogs as sport. A well-constructed bear trap was used for years, being repaired as needed. As mentioned earlier, bear traps were mostly used in the fall. In winter, bears were in hibernation and in spring, sows often had cubs and were off limits for ethical and practical reasons.[2]

Smaller mammal traps such as rabbit box traps, known as rabbit gums in the Upland South, were made at home of four boards about 18 inches long. They had guillotine doors, and were carried to trap sites – fields, blackberry patches, and around gardens for rabbit control. The traps were active, using trigger sticks. Occasionally, hollow sections of black gum trees were used as rabbit traps (and for hives or bee gums).[3] Hence the name "gums." Multiple traps were often used to ensure garden protection and enough rabbits to feed the family. They were baited with apple or other fruit stuck on or just behind the notched trigger stick. They were used in spring, fall, and winter. Rabbit fever, tularemia, was prevalent in the summer, and folk avoided eating rabbits then (see Figure 1 and two Mount paintings for rabbit box traps). The box trap or gum could also catch other animals including skunks.

Figure 1 *– A rabbit gum with a notched trigger stick, a fulcrum, and a guillotine door at the edge of a field. Bear traps were larger versions, built of logs rather than boards. The notched trigger was released when the animal pushed by it to get to the bait. Large traps could catch deer, hogs, and turkey, and small traps could catch opossum, raccoon, and groundhog. (Photo credit: Mcgrath 2015).*

Most animals caught were a food source or released unharmed. In summer, rabbit traps were left in place but not set. Minor repairs to small traps were made in place. Mammals were not the only wild food resource. Folk utilized other food resources like birds.

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2. The last bear live trapped among informants was by Petre Coleman in Pike County, Kentucky, 1923. It was a boar, caught for its meat. With winter approaching and the smokehouse and larder already lean, bear meat was welcome.

3. Black gum trees are often hollow, susceptible to heart rot fungus.

Figure 2 – The pen trap for turkeys used a figure-4 trigger, which was precarious and easily fell apart, to drop the pen over one or two turkey hens, or any other species. Bait was stuck on the stick or scattered on the ground at the back of the trap. (Photo credit: Homestead Survival 2022)

Avian Live Traps

Bird traps were wooden boxes or pens, often using figure four triggers. They often captured birds of no value to folk, but were a children's activity that taught construction, patience, and trapping. Captured birds, even when released, instilled confidence in children that they could contribute food to the family. Children came of age and embraced their culture, acquiring its stock of knowledge including live trapping.

A larger version of children's bird traps was used to trap hen turkeys (see Figure 2). Also used as a rabbit trap, informants in the Upland South knew it as a turkey trap. It might even catch two hens, but a trap large enough to catch a tom turkey was usually impractical, and some thought the tom too shrewd to enter a trap. Turkey traps, baited with grain, were used in late fall and winter. In spring, hens were on the nest, and trapping would disrupt broods.

The tobacco stick[4] (or willow stick) quail trap was a box or pen (about three feet by three feet) resembling a small log house or pen. The top was closed with rived boards or willow sticks (see Figure 3). Set in fields or at edges of grain crops, traps were baited with oats or other grain and weighted with large rocks or pinned to the ground with stakes to discourage predators like foxes or coyotes. Traps were checked daily and hens were removed through the top. Traps could capture entire coveys of quail – 20 hens or more. The rooster was thought too smart to be trapped and would sit on top of a trap, watching over his brood. Some hens were released in even numbers so they could pair up to form new coveys.[5]

Mammal and bird live traps were not the full exploitation of the folk environment. There were aquatic species that augmented their diets and extended their larders, including turtles, frogs, fish, and crustaceans such as crawfish. Aquatic traps were passive with no trigger mechanisms, and caught multiple specimens and species.

Aquatic Live Traps

Folk aquatic traps varied more by size than form. The larger the traps, the larger the specimens and the diversity

Figure 3 – A willow stick pen used for a quail trap. (Photo credit: Bird Trap 2022; Nyerges 2020).

4. Tobacco sticks were repurposed for trap construction; about 1.5 inches square, five feet long, and made of hickory or ash, tobacco leaves were spiked onto the sticks and hung in tobacco barns to air dry.

5. To place the trap, a trench about 20 inches long and 3 inches deep was kicked in the ground with a boot heel or dug with a shovel. A narrow board was placed across the trench about 4 inches from one end and 10 inches from the other. The pen was placed over the trench with the inside edge along the outside edge of the board, and it was pinned or weighted to the ground to frustrate marauding foxes, raccoons, and coyotes. This left three inches of trench outside the pen and the other end of the trench near the center of the pen. A small heap of oats was placed in the center of the trap. The covey discovered the oats, walked around the pen peering through the gaps between the pen sticks, found the trench and one by one walked the trench into the pen. When the oats are consumed, the covey walked around the inside perimeter of the pen, walking across the trench on the board, peering out the gaps for escape. See Foster 1996.

Figure 4 – The size of the hoop fish trap, four or more feet in diameter and 16 or more feet long, needed several people to set and work it. This contributed to community bonds. (Photo credit: Duluth Nets 2019).

Figure 5 – Smaller traps or baskets were often made of willow, manageable by one and could provide enough for a meal or two for a large family (Photo credit: Paleo Planet 2010).

of species. Folk used jug lines and limb lines, but each line could catch only one fish. Aquatic traps caught multiple fish without being attended and most could go days without being checked. They were labor-saving and could provide a quantity of fish. Surpluses could be shared with neighbors to strengthen social bonds or released as a matter of conservation. Most traps were used in spring, summer, and fall. Winter and traps did not mix well, especially for larger traps in deeper water. When water iced over, it confounded trap fishing.

Willow hoop-net traps were the largest. Hoops were made of stout willow, three to six feet in diameter, and traps were 12 to 20 feet long, with hoops every three to four feet apart. Traps were weighted with scrap iron/horseshoes and some traps used iron tires of wagon wheels as hoops. These were more awkward to transport and set, but more likely to stay in place. A woven net, home- or locally-produced, surrounded the hoops. Size of the mesh determined size of fish trapped. When stretched out, the trap was cigar-shaped. At the end of the trap, beyond the last hoop, the net was pulled together and tied. It was emptied by untying the gather.

The mouth end of the trap used progressively smaller hoops and netting to create a funnel entrance into the trap, easy for fish to enter and difficult to exit. The mouth of the trap was set into the current to accommodate the proclivities of fish to swim upstream (and into the trap).

Large traps, marked by floats, needed deep water and boats to set them in rivers. Large traps were sometimes baited with blood bags filled with animal parts and trash organs to attract bottom feeders like carp, red horse, buffalo, and catfish, though game fish also found their way into the traps. Traps were suited to slow-moving currents. Rapid water dislocated and deformed the trap and its funnel mouth (see Figure 4).

Smaller versions were made of willow saplings, known as fish baskets. Willow hoops were 18 to 24 inches in diameter and traps were three to six feet long, using three or four hoops. Willow saplings extending beyond the last hoop were pulled together and wired. Progressively smaller willow hoops formed a funnel entrance at the mouth end. These traps, baited with blood or meal bags, were placed in streams and rivers from banks, and tied to trees or stakes. Fish attracted to the bait often attracted other fish. Despite the smaller size, these traps could catch a number of fish, and were checked every three to five days (see Figure 5).

The smallest traps, made of willow, were about two feet long and less than a foot in diameter. Baited with small cloth bags filled with chicken gizzards, livers, necks, or bacon, they were set in both muddy and rocky shallows to catch crawfish (craw-daddies), a delicacy similar to lobster or shrimp. The trap was used in spring, summer, and fall, and checked every few days because it was susceptible to raccoon raids. The traps could catch 100 craw-daddies or more. Crawfish have mud veins, and it was common practice to let them live in clear water for a few days to clean out the vein. Crawfish were usually boiled whole, and desirable meat was in the tails and claws, but some sucked the meat from their heads. Crawfish were also used to season beans, ramps, and greens.

Fish weirs were another aquatic trap, and were corrals built on the beds of shallow stretches of streams with rocky bottoms and between deeper pools that held desired fish (see Figure 6). Weirs were made by moving rocks into funnel shapes that lead into holding pens, though stakes were also driven into creek beds closely together to create corrals. Weirs often required considerable labor, communal efforts, and could cover an acre or more if creek conditions were right. Serving as fresh fish markets, fish, confined in shallow holding ponds, were netted, speared, or clubbed. Remnants of prehistoric fish weirs still survive in Southeastern waterways (Rogers 2008).

Figure 6 – A small fish weir, the largest style of live trap built, some covering more than an acre and made of rocks strategically piled or wooden stakes pushed into the creek bottom (Photo credit: Ayad 2022).

Two aquatic food sources for folk, bull frogs and snapping turtles, were not suitable for trapping. Traps would have to be set with their tops above the water, so frogs and turtles did not drown. Snapping turtles can be large, 70 pounds or more, would kill fish in the trap, and would damage or destroy the trap. Frogs were better gigged or speared and turtles were better hunted or serendipitously encountered for an opportunistic meal. As a consequence, folk in the Upland South ate fried frog legs and turtle soup less frequently than fish, making them memorable delicacies.

Perhaps in the Low Country wetter lands, frog and turtle traps would have been collected. In that way, traps are a product of the natural environment filtered through the cultural environment to determine what is "eatable" and how to catch them. Still, the repertoire of aquatic folk traps was consistently successful, bringing a yield of nature's bounty to the table.

Conclusions

Traditional live traps caught mammals, birds, fish, and shellfish in the Southeast and Midwest. Other species were trapped in other geographies. Traditional live traps and trapping were successful and live traps are still commercially made (e.g., Have-A-Heart) for nuisance animals such as mice, rats, raccoons, snakes, and even for animals as large as feral hogs and bears. They are used by animal-control officers, wildlife management officials, biologists, and others. Biological supply houses offer hoop-net traps for ichthyologists and commercial fishers of inland waters. Crabbers and lobster fishers use live traps, exemplified by the *Discovery* series, *Deadliest Catch.* Live trapping has been practiced from prehistoric times to the present.

Traditional live traps were used through the 1940s and early 1950s in some geographies. To feed families, users felt immune to state controls of hunting and trapping, though those activities were legislatively controlled early in the nation's history – as early as 1738 in what is now Kentucky, for which statehood came in 1792 (see Kentucky Department of Natural Resources 2022). Feeding a family from one's own land was like gardening and harvesting yields. It was there to be taken, like persimmons in late fall, blackberries in mid-summer, or ramps and polk in early spring. Those who practiced live trapping are now gone, and those who remember it from previous generations are nearly gone. Oral historians should blot the page of history before the ledger is closed, blurring this fragile history.

Open-air museums, living-history sites, and historic-preservation/interpretation resources might display historical live traps. Unlike kill and maim traps, they pose no danger to visitors. Kill and maim traps were not used around the homestead because of dangers posed to domestic stock, pets, and young children, so their absence is honest. Live traps introduce animal trapping and their contribution to the nutritional welfare of the homestead. Place a box rabbit trap or several near a garden plot, and when visitors ask staff or docents about them, the topic of animal trapping (kill traps, maim traps, and live traps) can be discussed. Visitors can learn about diets of historical residents and their dependency on nature and wildlife. ❑

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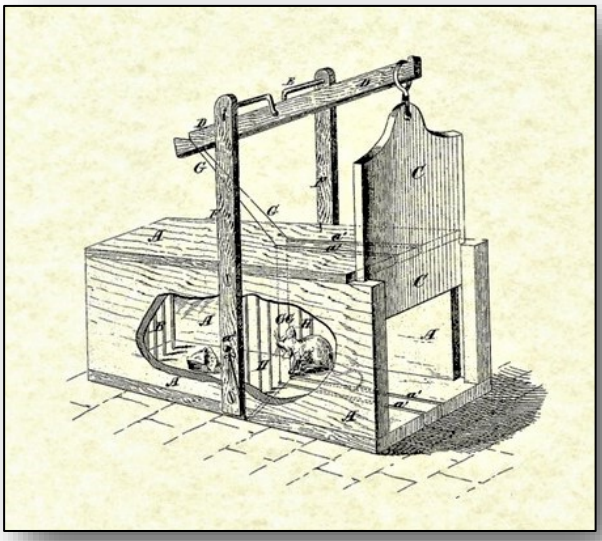
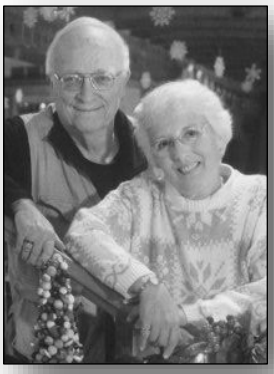


Patent illustration for a Cage Trap – *Patent number 107647, September 27, 1870 by W. K. Bachman. (Credit: U.S. Patent Office)*

About the authors – Gary Foster was born in the southern uplands of Kentucky and educated at Western Kentucky University and Kansas State University. While in the Folk Studies Program at Western, he developed interests in material culture, folk technologies, and oral history. He worked as a professional archaeologist and sociologist, and after 30 years at Eastern Illinois University, he retired as Emeritus Chair and Professor. He still maintains an active research agenda and publishes frequently in the areas of prehistoric archaeology, cemeteries and reconstructions of their communities, urban snakes, agricultural history, and folk technologies and material culture (e.g., whirligigs and traditional live traps). He is co-author of the book, *Cemeteries and the Life of a Smoky Mountain Community: Cades Cove Under Foot,* and several more book manuscripts are under review.



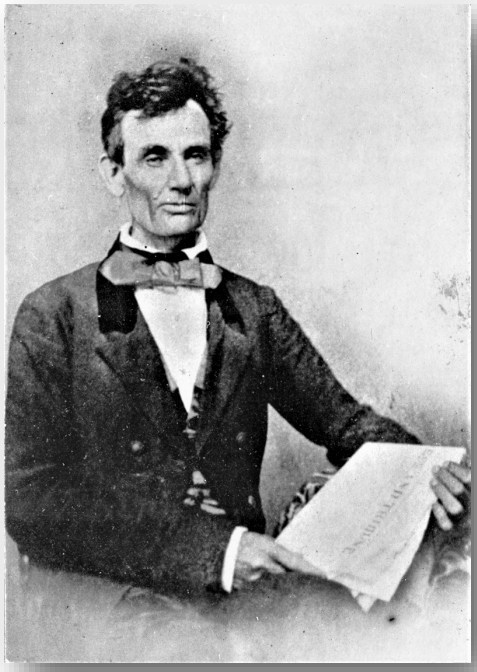
Dick Hummel is a retired professor of Sociology at Eastern Illinois University, where he taught from 1969 to 2001. He earned his Ph.D. in 1976 from Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. He, with his wife Kathy, create programs for the summer open houses at the historic Five Mile House, Charleston, Illinois. Dick and Kathy have been ardent collectors of antique furniture during their 60-year marriage.

The Roads That Lincoln the Lawyer Traveled: An Open-Air-Museum?

By Guy C. Fraker, Lincoln Author

Editor's Note: *This article is based on a presentation by the author at the 2022 MOMCC Spring Conference in Springfield, Illinois.*

THE pre-presidential life of Abraham Lincoln has provided some of the best known Open Air Museums. Lincoln's birthplace in Kentucky is known as the Sinking Spring Farm. When he was two years old, the family moved 10 miles to the north and east to the bucolic Knob Creek Farm. It is nestled in an open valley and still much the same as it was in Lincoln's time. When he was nine, the family crossed the Ohio River and settled in Southern Indiana at the site now preserved as Lincoln's Boyhood Home where he grew to manhood. In 1830, the family pulled up stakes and moved west to settle on a farm on the banks of the Sangamon River, in Macon County, Illinois. It is now known as the Lincoln Trail Homestead. After spending his 21st year helping the family get settled, Lincoln moved on to start his adult life in the iconic New Salem Village, also on the banks of the Sangamon, some 50 miles downstream. Here he was transformed from a raw farm hand to a fledging attorney. The other Lincoln-related open-air-museum is Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site south of Charleston, where his father and step-mother lived during the 1840s.



Abraham Lincoln, *October 1854, holding an anti-slavery newspaper. This is the second earliest known photograph of Lincoln. (Credit: Library of Congress)*

On April 14, 1837, Lincoln left New Salem, moving to Springfield to begin the practice of law, which he pursued for the next 23 years. He handled several thousand cases with a broad range of subject matter, from mundane collection work to 27 murder cases.

The principal trial courts of the state were designated as "Circuit Courts." Each county had a "seat" in which this tribunal was located. These counties were organized into Circuits by the Legislature and one judge presided over each Circuit. The vast bulk of Lincoln's trial work was in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, over which David Davis of Bloomington presided during the last 12 years of Lincoln's practice.

Abraham Lincoln's experiences on the Judicial Circuit helped him hone skills and establish relationships that prepared him to become President of the United States. – Guy C. Fraker

At its largest, from 1847 to 1853, the Eighth Circuit included fourteen counties, encompassing 10,000 square miles, more than twice the size of Connecticut. It was mostly tall grass prairie, dotted by occasional large groves of hardwood trees. The trip around the circuit was 400-500 miles. The court sessions were in the spring and fall, lasting from late March to early June, and late August until November.

The judge travelled from county to county, accompanied by some of the lawyers, for the successive court sessions. Many roads they travelled still exist. Others have been replaced by roads that are in close proximity to the location and character of the originals. The terrain and scenery are the same. The sense of Lincoln's presence can be felt in some of the locations as a visitor passes cemeteries, large oak trees, and even some buildings that Lincoln passed. The roads also pass the sites of some of the taverns where Lincoln and his circuit companions spent the evening crowded around the fireplace and where he entertained with his stories and sometimes ribald jokes.

But the roads are the most exciting exhibit of this "museum." One stretch of curves and sharp changes in elevation has never been paved. The creeks and rivers that Lincoln had to cross remain. In one stretch, there are two fords used by Lincoln, located within two miles of each other. The roads include vistas identical to what he would have seen while travelling through twice a year. On each of the 14 county lines of the Circuit, there are stately, but simple, monuments marking the point where the lawyers crossed the county line. These are known as the "Lincoln Circuit Markers" and they were placed between 1920 and 1922 by an organization named, 'The Lincoln's Circuit Marking Association, Under the Auspices of the Daughters of the American Revolution of the State of Illinois."

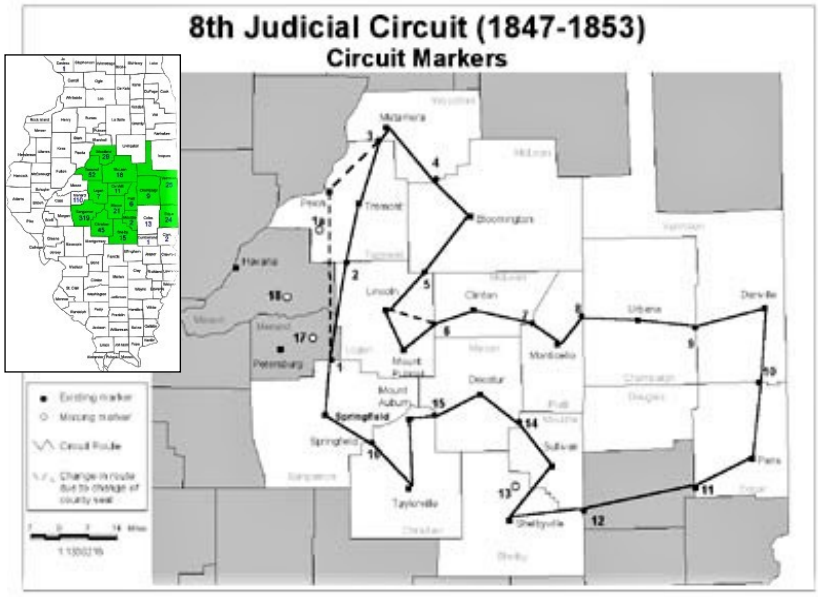


Illustration credit: The author

Lottie Jones, a schoolteacher and D.A.R. member from Danville, Illinois, conceived, created, organized, and promoted this unique tribute to the Lincoln Circuit. A different marker designed by Henry Lober, architect of the Lincoln Monument, is located at each Courthouse Site where Lincoln practiced. These stand at the two Circuit Courthouses in which Lincoln practiced and which still stand in Mount Pulaski and in Metamora, once the Seats of Logan and Woodford Counties.

The lawyers that practiced and rode the circuit with Lincoln, were instrumental in his growth and development. Led by David Davis, these lawyers from the various counties of the Circuit went to the Republican National Convention in Chicago in May of 1860 and captured the Republican nomination for Lincoln. Because the Democratic Party was divided over slavery, the election of the Republican nominee was relatively well assured in November. Thus, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States.

Lincoln had essentially retired from politics when Stephen A. Douglas forced the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act through Congress opening the door to the expansion of slavery beyond the original slave states. This ignited the flames between the Democrats favoring slavery and those Whigs who did not, ultimately resulting in the Republican Party.

Lincoln's Circuit travels along these roads allowed him to "double down," practicing law during the day and delivering political speeches in the evenings, often in the same courtroom where he practiced law. Notable events in his rise to the Presidency took place in the important county seats of the Circuit. The Eighth Judicial Circuit and its impact on the development and elevation of Lincoln can claim significant credit for the historic outcome. These roads can be appropriately characterized as an "open-air-museum."

The author wishes to thank Jim Patton, longtime blacksmith at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site and member of this organization for introducing him to MOMCC. ❑

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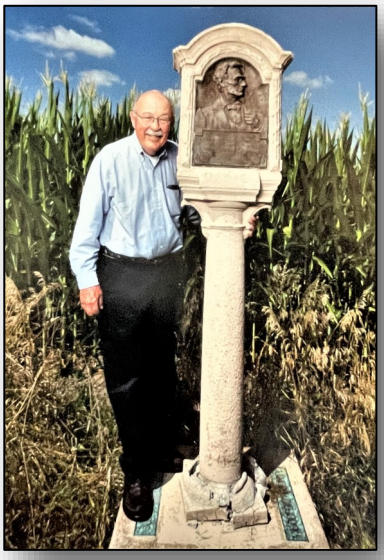

***The author** at the Lincoln marker located at the border of McLean and Woodford Counties in Illinois. (Photo by Daniel Overturf, SIU,C)*

About the Author: Guy Fraker graduated from the University of Illinois, College of Law, in 1962. Afterwards, he practiced law in Bloomington, Illinois for 52 years. A lifelong student of Lincoln, he has spoken widely across the country. In addition to the writings cited as sources here, he has written numerous articles about Lincoln. He served as the first Chairman of the Board of Looking for Lincoln, the action arm of Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, covering forty-two counties in downstate Illinois, and established by an Act of Congress in May 2008. He was a consultant on the award-winning PBS documentary, "Lincoln, Prelude to the Presidency," and he co-curated "Prelude to the Presidency: Abraham Lincoln on the Illinois Eighth Judicial Circuit," a permanent exhibit on display at the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site in Bloomington, Illinois. He served as an advisor to the National Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and currently serves on the Board of the Abraham Lincoln Association.

Is This an Early Leatherworking Tool?

By Norman Walzer

SHOEMAKING, harness making, bookbinding, and general leatherworking were among the largest industries in the early 19th Century and many tools have survived. So, it is relatively common at auctions or antique stores (or on E-Bay), to find tools that look like they were used with leather. They often have hardwood handles (ebony, rosewood or walnut) and the early tools were made of hard steel and not prone to rust and pitting. Like woodworking tools, they were constructed to high standards and are prized by collectors, so still command a hefty price at auctions or other venues depending on rarity and condition.

This article identifies some commonly used leather tools with examples likely to be found in antique stores or auctions. Due to function or use, shoemaking tools differ substantially from those used in harness or saddle making, although early manufacturers (known as cutlers) made both types of tools. The shapes of tools have not changed much which can make it difficult to date tools without knowing the maker's name.

Fortunately, tool collectors and trade associations have assembled much information about the history and use of the tools. The following discussions include types of tools used especially in harness making, saddlery, and general leatherwork along with their purposes, and major makers in the early to mid-19th Century. Some of these businesses continued past the Civil War. Excellent publications describing leatherworking tools and their makers are readily available (Salaman 1986; Roberts 1976; Diderot 1959) for additional information.

Types and Uses of Tools

Typically, harness makers' and saddler's tools are more highly prized because of their polished wood handles and brass ferrules, plus they are not found as often as shoemakers' or cobblers' tools. Harness and saddlers' tools can be categorized into several major uses: cutting, creasing, edging, and sewing. These are sometimes labeled as assembly tools to differentiate them from yet another set of tools used for carving, stamping, and embossing leather. Examples of each type in the author's collection are briefly discussed next with information about additional sources of information.

Depending on what was being made and its size, the maker probably cut pieces from a side of leather. When making standard pieces such as used on a saddle, harness, or footwear, it was sometimes possible to purchase a pre-cut piece from a shoe finding company. Some larger shops may have had a clicker (a press) to stamp or pre-cut these pieces but small shops in rural areas more likely used an assortment of knives and cutting tools.

Four Shoemakers, 1840-1860, *holding shoes and leatherworking tools. From the Library of Congress Daguerreotype Collection, Occupational Portraits.*

Awls were probably the most often used leather tools because of hand stitching (prior to sewing machines in the 1850s) and they were made in a variety of shapes, sizes, and handles. A diamond shaped end makes a slot that lines stitches neatly in a row, but round awls are less likely to cut through an existing thread when sewing with two needles. Curved awls cut half-way through the leather to make a round seam. Pegging awls, used in shoemaking, had a round shaft with a chiseled edge that makes a squared hole, so the wood peg stayed tight when the wet leather dried. Collar awls were used to insert laces in making horse collars and saddles.

Head knives or round knives were widely used by harness and saddle-makers and are sometimes confused with food choppers. These knives are found in various sizes and shapes – usually a round blade, but half-round and angled blade knives were also used. An elongated and curved bridle knife is a variation of this tool but has many of the same uses. Because of their size, durability, special use, and cost, many can be found in excellent condition.

They will cut a piece of leather along a steel ruler or

Head Knives or Round Knives

Draw Gages

Creasing Tools

straight edge, round the end of a strap, cut out a pattern, or skive leather to make it thinner, such as to pass under a buckle. By and large, this tool was among the most used by experienced makers although it took a while to master and was more expensive than a common straight knife. These tools are readily available today.

Draw gauges or draw knives cut straps from a side of leather and were probably used more by harness makers than saddlers because of the work involved. These knives had a pistol grip with a sliding horizontal bar numbered in inches and a cutting blade on the end. They were made in both right and left-hand versions. Early tools had hardwood handles mounted in brass frames and had hand lettering on the bar. Later versions had a trigger to help balance the drawknife in pulling it through heavy leather. Their durability means draw gauges are often found in excellent condition, with or without the blade.

Creasing tools were used to decorate straps and other leather items. The Randall Machine Company (1860s) made rollers that pressed lines and/or designs on leather straps. These tools came in various widths. Other leather items were decorated by hand tools that made single or double creases along the border of a strap. Ticklers make a single crease and are used in making irregular shapes and/or drawing lines free hand. Single creasers (one line) with hardwood handles are often found in many widths in antique stores and other places.

Beeders make two narrow parallel lines and were often used on lighter articles such as men's pocketbooks or book covers. They can be used free hand or against a straight edge often on wet leather. Beeders are less common than single creasers

Edgers, sometimes called ***bevelers***, round or flatten the edges on a leather item to make it more attractive or easier to hold as with reins or a belt where the edges are finished or polished. These tools came in several widths and shapes. Round edgers bevel the edge of a strap while regular edgers shave off the square corner, slightly flattening the edge. French edgers have a long, curved stem, shaped to allow easier access to the edge being trimmed.

Gouges or ***channelers*** cut a slot in leather allowing a stitch to be below the surface of the leather to minimize wear from use. They also are used on the flesh side to facilitate bending and minimize bulk such as on a fold. Gouges came in various widths and depths for different thickness of the leather. Some are V-shaped while others have a U-shape or even a box end.

Slant edgers cut a slot along an edge to hide a stitch or prevent wear in regular usage and have many sizes and styles that can be adjusted in width and depth of cut. Many have hardwood handles with brass trimming so are prized by collectors. Since the same basic tool was used in shoemaking and saddle-making, many have survived.

Edgers

Slant edgers

Pricking wheels

Pricking wheels mark where the awl is inserted in hand-stitching and were made in sizes from four stitches to the inch to more than 20. ***Overstitch wheels*** helped set the completed stitches and make them fit better into the holes. It was common to use a creaser to mark the line, then the pricking wheel, and finally the same size overstitch wheel. These wheels have individual numbers indicating stitches per inch and sometimes places to store multiple wheels in the handle. This type was less costly for low volume shops with less need for specialized stitching. Numbers five, six, and seven were used most often in sewing large projects, so have survived in larger numbers.

The tools described above are among the more common types of tools likely to be seen and the brief descriptions can help determine their use, history, and possible value or price in a collection. Many other types of tools were used in leatherworking, and some were custom made locally.

Early Toolmakers

Because the leather industries employed so many workers in the early 19th century, many companies made and sold these tools, sometimes for relatively short periods of time. The *Dictionary of Toolmakers Before 1900 in the U.*S., published by the Early American Industries Association in 1999, is an invaluable source of information for those interested in identifying ages of tools (Nelson 1999). Hammer heads, cutting tools, pliers, and other tools for specialized uses were made by blacksmiths and it was possible to buy tools from companies operating in England and France.

In the U.S., Newark, NJ, and Philadelphia, PA had many makers of harness maker's and saddler's tools and they have been researched extensively (Farnham 1984; Farnham 1992; Stapleton 1977). Early toolmakers worked in Boston, Mass., Albany, N.Y., and other early settled regions as well but several companies stand out as among the largest producers of tools likely to be found today so are briefly described here. This list of early companies is not meant to be exhaustive or imply they made the highest quality tools.

Wm. Rose (West Philadelphia, Pa.) started in 1798 as a blacksmith shop making sabers and other cutting tools, including head knives. He continued until the early 1850s when attention turned to masonry tools, although they made head knives well past the Civil War. Many are available today.

Joseph English made an extensive line of both shoemaking and leather assembly tools as early as 1819 in Philadelphia and is listed as a cutler in 1826. Daniel English (DS) also made tools in the same general period. In 1831-32, Joseph English joined H. and F.A. Huber, makers of saddles, and produced leatherworking tools at the Sheffield Works in Philadelphia (Stapleton 1977). These tools often

Leather worker's work bench with period tools.

have a "Sheffield Works" imprint, not to be mistaken for Sheffield, England. The Hubers are known for early development of the Bowie Knife. The English-Huber business venture ended in 1837 for financial reasons. English then produced tools in Newark, NJ until 1854 when Wm. Dodd took over the business.

Wm. Dodd joined his brother-in-law Charles S. Osborne in 1856 in Newark producing a broad range of leatherworking tools that continues today as C.S. Osborne and Company.[1] In 1907, the company moved from Newark to Harrison, NJ, but later tools may have continued the Newark name. The Osborne Company began as a family business but, in 1877, H. F. Osborne started a separate company to manufacture a similar line of tools and continued until 1904 when it merged with C.S. Osborne & Co. The Osborne Company dates its origin to 1826 with Joseph English but a tool with a C.S. Osborne imprint probably dates to the 1850s at the earliest.

Henry Gomph started producing a line of high-quality leatherworking tools in Albany, N.Y. in 1866 and continued until the early 1920s. These tools are more collectable and typically command a higher price partly because the company operated fewer years than Osborne so fewer tools are available.

Space limitations prevent many other companies such as A.B. Seymour (1834-1837), W. Chase (1820s), A. Crawford (1838 and later), and H. Sauerbrier (1848-1876) from being included but more information on these is available in Nelson (1999). Likewise, Blanchard (France) and Dixon (England) made tools for long periods and are often found in antique outlets. The intent here is to simply help readers identify and date tools. Some tools do not have a maker's name but can be identified by each maker's unique pattern of lines on the handles. Many early handles are light colored wood rather than rosewood, which was later replaced with walnut. Thus, the handle, if original, can sometimes help date a tool.

Summary

Harness and saddle making tools are high quality, well made, and often useful in many applications. Thus, they are collectable for both use and display. The shapes of the tools have not changed materially since the early 19th Century, and many made after the Civil War are available at affordable costs. While collecting leather tools is less popular than collecting woodworking tools, the information in this article can help readers who happen across these tools evaluate when they were made and their possible use. ❑

1. These specific dates and sequence of events are disputed and discussed in more detail in Farnham, 1984.

"Man is a tool-using animal. Without tools he is nothing, with tools he is all."

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

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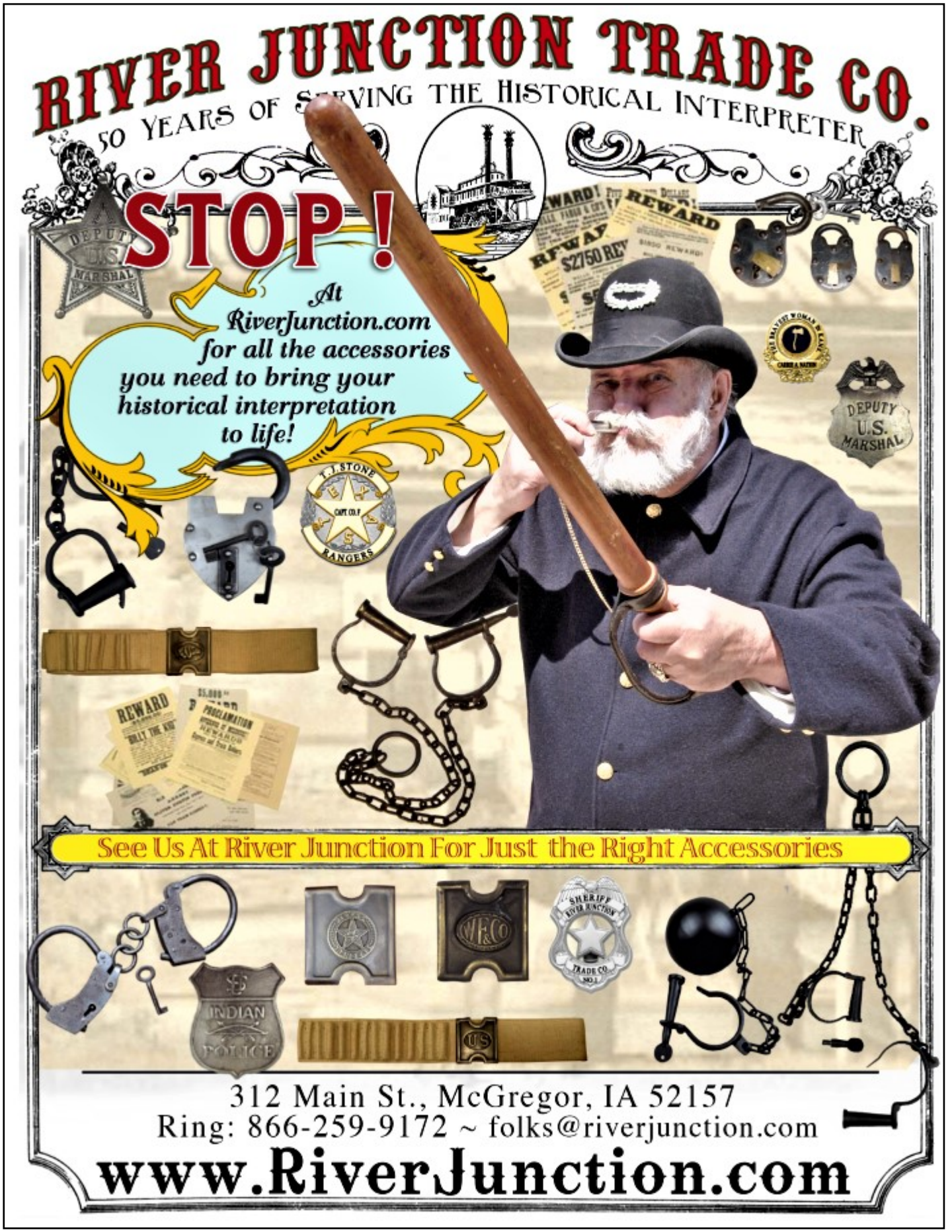
About the Author – Norman Walzer, Ph.D. grew up on a family farm showing horses and ponies as hitches in parades and other events. His interest in working with leather started in grade school by mending harness and saddles and, as a teenager, he opened a leather repair shop on the farm. The avid interest in leather tools and techniques continued for more than 65-years and he has collected many leather tools/machines, some dating to the early 1800s. He belongs to the Early American Industry Association; the Honorable Cordwainers Company; and the Midwest Tool Collectors Association, among others and interprets the pre-Civil War period demonstrating boot and shoemaking at historic sites in Illinois and elsewhere.

The Author working on a shoe.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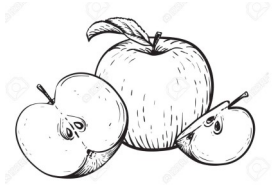
CROSSING A RIVER BY A ROPE FERRY

American Agriculturist, August 1873

CROSSING A RIVER BY A ROPE FERRY.—*Drawn and Engraved for the American Agriculturist.*

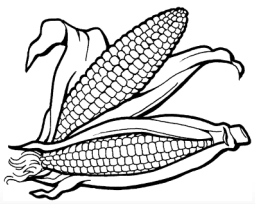
A Rope Ferry. – Did you ever see one? They are not common and probably only those boys who live in the newer parts of the country can say "yes!" In many parts of the South and West, where travel is not sufficient to afford a bridge, the streams are often crossed by means of a ferry like that shown in the engraving. A strong rope is stretched from one shore to the other, and usually fastened at each end to a well-rooted tree. The ferry-boat is usually a scow or flat-boat, with a deck level with its sides, and so arranged that horses and cattle and wagons can be taken aboard. Upon the rope stretched across the river there is a large pulley, and to this pulley is attached a rope which is made fast to the boat. Now let us suppose that a boat of this kind is loaded and ready to start. The ropes that fastened it to the shore are let go; the force of the current tends to carry the boat down stream; the attachment to the rope across the river tends to hold it still. As a sort of compromise between these two forces, the boat is carried across the river. By a skillful management of the rope that attaches the boat to the pulley and the rudder, the ferryman readily conveys his cargo from one side of the river to the other. If the big rope should happen to break, probably the passengers would find themselves at a different landing from the one they intended to reach. Some of the rivers of the far West like the Colorado, are too wide for a rope-ferry and these are crossed by large boats which are towed up stream by means of ropes and then left to the current which carries them down rapidly, while those on the boat by means of oars and rudder do the best then can to direct it to the opposite side. Sometimes a favorable landing is made, but often the current carries the boat far below its destination, and it has to be hauled back to the landing by means of ropes. The current is not very violent near the shore where the water is shallow and the boat can be pulled along, though it is hard work. ❑

American Agriculturist, Aug 1873, 308.



Autumn Frolics

Apple-Bees and Corn-Husking-Bees



By Tom Vance

FRONTIER societies, consisting mainly of rural farm families, faced inordinate amounts of daily work to put food on the table and make a living. The burdens were often shared by families coming together to help one another accomplish work while also sharing social interactions and having fun. The quilting- and corn-husking-bees are two of the best known, but work could be shared for any number of objectives from house and barn raisings to peeling apples. Name any 19th century work – or leisure – activity and there was probably a frolic associated with it at one time or another.

Paul Fountain, in *The Great Northwest*, speaks to the willingness of everyone to come to the aid of their neighbors.

> "There is very little work about an American homestead that the neighbours will not willingly assemble to perform at the shortest notice for the settler who is short-handed or otherwise pressed for labour."[1]

Fall Games – the Apple-Bee, *1859, illustration by Winslow Homer (1836-1910), published in* Harper's Weekly*, November 26, 1859.*

Commonly called bees or frolics, the work at hand was often made into a contest and incentives were offered. The crimson ear during the corn husking entitled the finder to kiss or be kissed by the person of choice and a jug of hard cider or corn liquor could be waiting at the bottom of the pile for the first to reach it.

Activities often involved singing and storytelling and a meal usually awaited when the work was done. If there was a fiddler in the group, a dance could cap off the evening. These gatherings also served as a place for romance to spark and bloom. At many bees, much of the work was accomplished by the young, unmarried participants, giving them opportunities to interact and become acquainted. It was not unusual for a wedding to follow a frolic.

The illustration to the upper-right, entitled "Fall Games – the Apple-Bee," by Winslow Homer, 1859, shows two young couples to the right making out. All ages are present. The four women in the center are fashionably dressed and at least one and probably all four are unmarried. The four older folks on the left, including the two ladies in day caps, seem to be watching rather than participating in the activities. The woman in the upper left seems to be preparing a meal and the gentleman in the upper right is imbibing from the cider (probably hard cider) barrel. Two children are playing in the lower left.

The apple-bee or apple-paring-frolic

While peeling apples is not commonly associated with bees and frolics today (how many people know where the restaurant name came from?), apple-bees were as common as quilting- or corn-husking-bees. The purpose was to peel or pare and core the apples for drying. The apples were cut into fourths or sixths depending on the size of the apple, and then strung and hung or laid out to dry. They were then available for cooking and baking during the following year. Fountain describes apple-paring bees:

> "The apple-paring is as important an event as the corn-husking...The apples intended for storing are skinned, cored, strung upon strings, and hung up to dry. Invitations are issued to the apple-paring-bee, as to the corn-husking; and there is more real work done here than at any other kind of frolic...at most of the other bees, there is more fun and play than work."[2]

In the 1859 illustration above, the men and women are peeling apples. The gentleman sitting to the left is using a patented apple parer. Long strings of apples hang from the ceiling to dry. The lady standing in the middle has just thrown an apple peel over her shoulder. The letter of the alphabet that the peel most resembles after it hits the floor was thought to be the first letter of the name of the man she would marry according to information accompanying

the 1859 illustration in *Harper's Weekly*.

" The old superstition that an apple-paring thrown over the shoulder by a pretty girl would assume, on the ground, the form of the initial of the name of her lover or future husband, is still firmly believed in many country places."[3]

The illustration to the right was published in *Godey's Ladies Book* in 1850 and shows an apple-paring bee in Ohio. Six young couples, except the fellow standing by the fireplace, are paring apples. An older woman in her day cap is standing in the doorway watching. This sketch illustrates the concept of the bee being a social interaction between young participants.

Sketch from life of a western prairie bee, *by F.A. Burr, of Worthington, Ohio. Published in* Godey's Ladies Book*, January, 1850.*

The sketch documents other aspects of 1850s life including a study in everyday clothing of the period. The young ladies are wearing less-formal dresses than those in the 1859 illustration. The young men are wearing tailcoats and the one by the fire sports a nice cap. There is a set of at least seven matching ladder-back chairs and a "stuffed" chair of some type on the right. Here's a perfect blueprint for an apple-pairing-bee at one of our Midwest sites.[4]

According to *Penny Magazine* in 1837, apple-parings on the east coast had mostly become a thing of the past. The article describes two methods of drying apples – one by the sun and the other by stringing and hanging them from the ceiling, the former being preferred, but the latter being adequate for home use. According to the article,

"It is during the following spring and summer, when apples in their natural state become scarce, that the dried ones are much sought after; and although they are generally considered rather inferior to sound fresh apples, yet, for pies and puddings, they are an excellent substitute, after having undergone a good washing and soaking."[5]

The article goes on to describe an apple-paring bee in some detail.

"It is in preparing…[for] this system of drying that "The Apple Paring" takes place; when all the neighbors have been duly "notified." It is what the Americans call an "after-supper frolic." Probably before seven o'clock the "parers" will have assembled, and without further ceremony to form themselves into small parties, each party surrounding a large basket for the reception of the "cuttings;"...While fingers and knives are busily employed, the evening is occasionally enlived with songs and cider, and not unfrequently with something of a more potent and exciting character. Although...they are after-supper frolics, yet five or six hours of diligent apple-paring restores lost appetites; so that about midnight, tea and coffee, with their manifold accompaniments of Johnny-cakes, buck-wheat cakes, dough-nuts, Yankee biscuit, pumpkin-pie, apple-sauce, &c. &c., are spread out in their usual profusion. After the parers have been replenished with this second supper, many of the younger people brandish their knives anew; while the more sedate portion of the performers betake themselves off to their respective homes."[6]

Besides the 1859 Homer illustration, the use of a patent apple parer is also documented in an account of an apple-paring-bee in the *American Agriculturist* in 1849.

"As the apples are pared, they are put into baskets or pans. When enough are done, two or three of the more elderly boys begin to cut and core them; and, with a fair start, one expert hand can keep half a dozen busy paring for him, unless they employ the " patent apple parer," which reverses the matter in fine style, and takes the skins off as fast as

half a dozen pair of hands can cut and core. I do not think I quite like this labor-saving machine at an apple paring; it does the work too soon; but it is a useful little thing that should find a place in every kitchen."[7]

Corn-Husking-Bees

Corn-husking-bees had a similar format with neighbors gathering to accomplish the work at hand while enjoying the social interaction and a meal afterwards. The crimson ear was a common denominator of all the corn-husking events. As far as the number red ears in a field, when I was at Lincoln Log Cabin, we grew about three acres of White Hickory King open-pollinated corn. Out of that field, we would get about a dozen or so red ears and also about as many ears of old flint corn, both genetic throwbacks.

Frolics may have passed their importance in the eastern states by the mid-19th century, but they remained an important part of life in the western states. The *Fredrick* [Md.] *Town Herald* ran an article titled "The Husking Party," in April 1831. The article laments husking-bees as a thing of the past but goes on, however, to describe a husking bee.

> "A group of happy and kindhearted beings, of all ages and sexes, from the fair young girl to the grey haired old man, are assembled around the fruits of their neighbor's industry, the long and heavy pile of Indian corn, gathered from the field with its covering of husks.—The whole length of the ample barn floor is lined with huskers, who, after a few preliminary jokes, betake themselves zealously to their task.
>
> "Ah—there are mirth, life and jollity in your genuine husking party. The huskers ply their tongues as busily as their hands, while engaged in their pleasant task. Stories are related—song are sung—jokes are passed—and soft words spoken. During the process of husking if a red ear is found by any one of the ladies, she is liable to receive a kiss from some of the company. She, of course hands the ear to her favorite beau, who readily understands the signal and acts accordingly. The red cheek is sure to be redder before he leaves.
>
> "After the task is finished, the company adjourns to the house—a supper is provided—and after partaking of it, the parties separate for their respective homes—the girls being all provided with a "fellow" to accompany them. E.S."[8]

The *Huron Reflector*, published in Norwalk, Ohio, gives an account of an Ohio corn husking in 1833 as described in *Ferral's Rambles Through America*.

> "When a Farmer wishes to have his corn husked, he rides round to his neighbors and informs them of his intention. An invitation of this kind was once given in my presence. The farmer entered the house, sat down, and after the customary compliments were passed, in the usual laconic style, the following dialogue took place. 'I guess I'll husk my corn tomorrow afternoon'- 'You've a mighty heap this year'- 'Considerable of corn.' The host at length said, 'Well I guess we'll be along'—and the matter was arranged. All these gatherings they denominate 'frolics'—such as 'cornhusking frolic,' 'apple-cutting frolic,' 'quilting frolic,' &c. &c. Being somewhat curious in respect to national amusements, I attended a 'corn-husking frolic' in the neighborhood of Cincinnati. The corn was heaped into a sort of hillock close by the granary, on which the young 'Ohioans' and 'buck-eyes'—the lasses of Ohio are called 'buck-eyes'—seated themselves in pairs; while the old farmers and wives were posted round, doing little, but talking much. Now the laws of 'corn husking frolics' ordain that for each red ear that a youth finds, he is entitled to exact a kiss from his partner. There were two or three young Irishmen in the group, and I could observe the rogues kissing half-a-dozen times on the same red ears. Each of them laid a red ear close by him and after every two or three ears he'd husk, up he'd hold the redoubtable red ear to the astonished eyes of the giggling lass who sat beside him, and most unrestingly inflict the penalty. The 'gude wives' marveled much at the unprecedented number of red ears which that lot of corn contained—by and by, they thought it "kind of curious" that the Irishmen should find so many of them—at length, the cheat was discovered, admidst roars of laughter. All agreed that there was more laughing and kissing done at that, than had been known at any corn-husking frolic since 'the Declaration.'—*Ferral's Rambles Through America."*[9]

William Oliver in *Eight Months in Illinois*, published in 1843, describes an Illinois corn-husking.

> "In a short time we proceeded to the corn cribs, one of which had been unroofed, the more readily to receive the husked corn, whilst the walls of that in which the corn was lying, had been almost entirely removed...All things being prepared, a noisy consultation was held, when it was resolved and carried that the heap should be divided into two equal parts. On this being done, two men were being pitched upon as captains of the heaps, who having called sides, the battle commenced.
>
> "No match at football or shinty was ever engaged in with more uproarious animation. The yells of defiance, mingled with whoops and yells in Indian style, arose in one continued medley, and reverberated far through the woods, whilst an unceasing shower of corn streamed through the air towards the roofless crib, many of the ears flying wide of the mark, and one now and then making a dubiously tangential movement, which brought it into contact with the body of some unlucky wight.
>
> "As the proprietor of the corn was a temperance man, there was not whisky allowed. On similar occasions, however, where the master of the ceremonies is less

strict, there is a plentiful libation of that most execrable of spirits, corn whisky, or of peach brandy. A red ear, which is now and then met with among the white flint corn, is always a signal for a round of the bottle.

"After the husking was over, as many of the company as could gain admittance at one time, entered the house to partake of the multitude of viands which covered the table...There was Johnny cake and hoe cake, pone bread and dodger, salt bread and milk bread, pumpkin and other pies, with a number of fantastic freaks in pastry, that belong to no kindred or nation; suffice it to say, there was abundance of really good and substantial fare, accompanied by the never-failing coffee. After all had partaken of the good things, and had lounged about the door for some time, to talk over the news of the day, the company dropt away, each taking the route for home.

"Sometimes on similar occasions, a number of the ladies of the neighborhood assemble, and the affair finishes off with amusements, and if a fiddler can be procured, with a dance."[10]

I hear the laugh when the ear is red – *19th century illustration, source undetermined; probably Winslow Homer in* Harpers Weekly, *ca.1858.*

The apple-bee, husking-bee, and other types of frolics provide a broad range of opportunities for special events at our sites. The importance of communal work, from house and barn raisings in frontier communities, to threshing rings in the early 20th century, could and should be part of the history we share with our visitors. By their nature, these events can involve the public in hands-on learning experiences in any season of the interpretive year. ❑

End Notes

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Catching Rabbits, *1839,William Sidney Mount (1807-1868), oil on canvas, 18 1/4" x 21 1/4," Public Domain, Long Island Museum of Art, History, and Carriages, Stony Brook, New York.*