Mt. Horeb Past Times-

February 2018

A Publication of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

Spotlight on Collections

Door to Door in the Driftless:
The Watkins Merchant

of Mount Horeb

Written By Brian Bigler

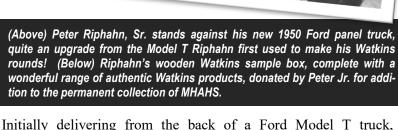
In which a mid-20th century Klevenville businessman adjusts to dramatic world influences quite unfamiliar to us today.

In our era of retail change due to increased on-line shopping and home delivery, a recent donation to the

Society by Peter Jr. and Mary Lou Riphahn documents an earlier retail transformation which played out five miles east of Mount Horeb in unincorporated Klevenville.

Their father, Peter Riphahn, Sr., a successful Watkins dealer from around 1935 until about 1960, provided a plethora of products to local farmers, cheesemakers, villagers and housewives in the years following the Great Depression. For added income his wife, Mary, ran the Klevenville Post Office, first out of their living room, and then later from the front porch her husband enclosed. The couple's jobs provided for a family with three children, Mary Lou, Helen and Peter Jr. Being able to see the Chicago & North Western Railroad depot just across the street played a large role in his success.







Riphahn made his rounds in the townships of Blue Mounds, Primrose, Perry, Cross Plains, Springdale and Vermont. His main customers were farmers who, due to ever-present obligations on the farm, enjoyed the convenience of home delivery.

Joseph Ray (J.R.) Watkins had founded his company in Plainview, Minnesota in 1868 when he began selling his own pain-relieving "counterirritant" liniment door-to-door in the south-eastern part of that state. The company moved operations to Winona in 1885 and added baking materials, including pepper and vanilla extract in 1895. The company eventually offered more spices, extracts, flavorings, cleaning products, household items,

cosmetics, and, important to the Mt/ Horeb area, farm supplies. Today the company still offers 300 products, including the original liniment, containing mostly alcohol and camphor, which its founder

(CONT. ON PAGE 8)

Siblings Mary Lou Riphahn and Peter Riphahn, Jr. pose with a rare wooden "Watkins Products" sign that they recently gifted to MHAHS. It was posted in their childhood home's front yard, promoting the wares of their father, Peter Riphahn, Sr., a successful Watkins dealer for over 25 years.

A Word from the President

A Busy Year for MHAHS

We've had a very busy year. That's a bit of an understatement, actually, with 2017 seeing the grand opening of the Driftless Historium in June, the welcoming of over 7,000 visitors since that time, our volunteer ranks swelling to more than 80 dedicated people, hosting 25 events and programs, and opening our facilities to 22 meetings of community non-profit organizations. That's all occurred within the last six months!

We are set to complete the permanent exhibits in June of this year, and are currently in the process of fine-tuning the many new procedures, committees, and duties associated with the operational aspects of running a greatly expanded facility. Community support has been outstanding, both in terms of financial and volunteer contributions. We look forward to continued support as we start the new year.

Planning for an expanded 2018 calendar of events and educational opportunities is currently underway. Our new facility allows for programs that we simply could not offer in the past, and it's an exciting and rewarding challenge to now have the opportunity to select programs our previous limited facility could not accommodate. It's difficult to remember what a "normal" year for the Historical Society looks like, and we look forward to 2018 finally allowing us to re-define an expanded and exciting "new normal"!



We elected three new board members at our Annual Meeting in October: Emily Togstad, John Kuse, and John Pare. John Kuse and Emily Togstad are first-time board members, while John Pare is a returning board member. John Kuse has a broad background in financial service and management, Emily has both educational and marketing experience, and John Pare has an extensive background in education. Each of them brings needed skills to help with strategic decision making involving planning, marketing and educational programs which are currently being developed.

Thanks to each of our members for your encouragement and support.

Stay tuned and stay involved, there is much more to come!

John Swartz, MHAHS President



Meet Your 2017-2018 Mount Horeb Area Historical Society BOARD of DIRECTORS!

Front Row (L to R)
John Kuse, Vice Pres
Shirley Martin
John Swartz, Pres

Back Row (L to R)
Bill Thousand, Treas
Doug Nesheim
Karla Ott, Sec
Lee Underwood
John Pare
Pete Riphahn
Emily Togstad

Please note that we will elect three expired-term
Director positions at the October 2018
MHAHS Annual Meeting.

To better inform our Membership, candidate biographies will be published in the September 2018 issue of the Past Times.

If you or someone you know is interested in serving in such a role, please call 608-437-6486 or email mthorebhistory@mhtc.net.

Past Times - February 2018

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Meet Scott Winner!

Write your own "job description" of what you do here at the Society.

In my current role, I watch the front desk and serve as an educator to visitors. I show them the artifacts—many of which come from Little Norway—and share the history that I know, based on my local knowledge. But I also participated in the Historium construction process, working for Premier Building Solutions using skills I picked up rebuilding things at Little Norway. I remember my first attempts at woodworking—when I got finished, it would look like an immigrant of 150 years ago made it, with the crudest tools possible.

How long have you volunteered for the Society?

I started at the Historium in June 2017, helping kick things off at the Grand Opening.

I have been acquainted with the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society far longer. I met Brian [Bigler], co-founder of the Society, in 1981 when he asked me to donate the sign of the first business in town, Paul Sletto's Shoe Shop. And I've kept up with MHAHS since then.

What is your favorite part of volunteering?

I enjoy being around the Little Norway artifacts, and sharing my knowledge about them. I also like to show off the three-dimensional kiosk of the Norway Building, which resided, literally, in my back yard at Little Norway for over 80 years (1935-2015). [Scott helped facilitate the structure's digital capture, allowing the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery to scan it, days before its dis-assembly in preparation for its trip "back home" to Orkdal, Norway.]

Who or what got you interested?

I played a role in the transfer of over 400 artifacts from Little Norway to the Historical Society, and felt compelled to follow these important pieces on their journey here in their new home.

Tell us about your family.

I have a wife and two kids. My daughter Haley works in Winona, MN with mentally challenged women. My son Asher spends summers working on the Appalachian Trail in Maine and winters as a ski instructor in Idaho. My wife, Jennifer, works for Building Brave, an online community of women that works to empower them via life training exercises.

My family came to America in 1845 and settled in Daleyville. In fact, the town was named after my relative, Onun Dahle. My great-uncle Isak Dahle opened Little Norway in 1937. I took over as manager in 1981 and presided over the property for 30+ years.

Tell us about your education and vocational background.

I graduated from James Madison Memorial High School in Madison, and have a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing and Tourism from Madison Area Technical College. I originally planned on working ONE summer at Little Norway—a summer that turned into 31 years.

Why is the Mount Horeb area the best place on earth? Because of the people!



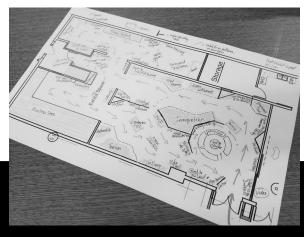


(Top) Historium selfie! MHAHS Volunteer and Little Norway owner Scott Winner and Director Destinee Udelhoven. (Center) Scott works in the under-renovation Gilbertson Hardware Store (former Mount Horeb Area Museum, now part of Historium complex), Oct 2016. (Bottom) Scott in his Norwegian garb, posing in 2015 with wife Jennifer in front of the Norway Building on the Little Norway site —which also happens to be Scott's back yard!

Driftless Historium Permanent Exhibit: The Story of Southwestern Dane County

MEETtheTEAM

The Driftless Historium is open for business, and we hope you'll stop by to see us soon and often. But the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society's museum and research center (made possible by friends like you!) is still a work in progress.



The permanent exhibit, the heart of the Historium, is slated to open in June 2018 —with a qualified and committed crew working behind the scenes, probably as you read this, to ensure it is something we can be proud of.

This 2,000-square-foot exhibit will tell the story of southwestern Dane County, the edge of the globally unique Driftless Area that has attracted waves of mankind for millennia, from the Ice Age to today. We at MHAHS believe that the core of our history is the relationship between people and the land, and the permanent exhibit is being researched, written and executed with this central concept in mind.

We would like to introduce you to the team responsible for this enduring exhibit—a diverse and dedicated group who bring to the table a variety of skill sets, training, education and experiences that are sure to enhance the final product.



Destinee Udelhoven MHAHS Director, Project Supervisor

M.A. in American History and Museum Studies, 12 years experience in public history. Destinee developed and monitors the project budget, and manages related contracts and contractor fees. She coordinates communications between the Exhibit Team, the MHAHS Board of Directors and outside consultants, including timeline and resource needs. Destinee also provides limited content and editing feedback.

Johnna Buysse MHAHS Curator, Project Manager

MSc in Environmental Archaeology and Paleoeconomy, 20 years experience in cultural resource management. Johnna's position as Curator of Collections & Education includes the oversight of all exhibitions. In this role, she leads research and development, including management of text content (based on a first draft painstakingly prepared by Johnna herself, relying on a baseline document compiled by Brian Bigler), local history themes and anecdotes, and image and artifact selection. Johnna maintains the master exhibit plan and manuscript, which is constantly evolving due to research discoveries, collections issues and time and space constraints. She initiates and leads Exhibit Team meetings.



Brian Bigler, Exhibit Designer



B.S. in History; Museum, Research and Historic Interpretation Consultant with 30 years experience; Co-founder and Past President of MHAHS. Brian serves as the primary exhibit designer, providing overall artistic direction as it relates to object and storyline presentation. His extensive knowledge of Southwestern Dane County's history and intimate familiarity with the MHAHS collection are invaluable to the exhibit process, as are his connections within Wisconsin's "local history scene." Brian capably coordinates the efforts of researchers, carpenters, and other volunteers to execute intricate and historically accurate vignettes and displays that engage audiences and bring the past to life.



Nadia Niggli, Graphic Design / Art Direction

B.A. in Architecture, Graduate of Chicago School of Violin Making Exhibit Designer/Graphic Designer at Madison Children's Museum

Drawing inspiration from photographs and artifacts selected for the exhibit, along with input from the rest of the Exhibit Team, Nadia will create a cohesive "look" for gallery. She will work with Bigler to lay out text blocks, images and supporting elements, and is responsible for the production of all printed elements.







Nancy Nye Hunt Arlo Paust Ken Scott

Research Writing Editing

Nancy Nye Hunt, author of *Aldo Leopold's Shack: Nina's Story*, is a children's literature specialist and former substitute teacher who lives on a farm near Ridgeway, Wisconsin. Besides editing experience, she adds expertise on the Driftless area's geology and environment—sometimes calling upon her husband, Tom, a retired professor of restoration ecology. Arlo Paust is an amateur historian and writer with a strong knowledge of local history and, specifically, the MHAHS collection and archive via previous volunteering. Arlo's home base is a farmstead near Blanchardville, but he has a penchant for travel. Ken Scott is a resident of Mount Horeb with a long association with the Society—sometimes under protest, we suspect—via partner Brian Bigler. Ken has a journalism background and has edited research publications at universities in Wisconsin and Europe.

Nancy, Arlo and Ken have provided invaluable assistance in the crafting of the exhibit's historic narrative, from tracking down primary sources and corroborating evidence, to summarizing local happenings and placing them in the context of larger national and world patterns, to editing text.

(Oh, the Exhibit Team is so much bigger!...keep reading to meet the others! CONT. ON PAGE 6)



BECOME ONE OF 33! MHAHS Seeks Exhibit Sponsors

The Driftless Historium permanent exhibit, slated to open in June 2018, will be the centerpiece and interpretive focus of this three-building, 12,00-square-foot facility. Through carefully researched history and via locally-sourced artifacts, the story of southwestern Dane County's unique driftless landscape, people and histories will engage visitors for years to come.

Exhibit sponsors are being sought to offset the expenses associated with this undertaking. Differing levels of financial support are encouraged and appreciated, with naming opportunities still available. All exhibit sponsors

who participate in the "33 Ways to Help" campaign will be permanently recognized via a plaque prominently located at the exhibit entrance. Call the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society at 608-437-6486 or email mthorebhistory@mhtc.net to learn more about how you can be "one of 33," or visit www.mthorebhistory.org/33-ways-to-help.html.

MEETtheTEAM

(Cont. from page 5)

Donna Read, Research Assistant

Donna has extensive experience in collections care and historic research. She spent several years working at Colorado's Mesa Verde Research Center, where she cataloged archaeological objects and assisted with exhibitions; including a special project that culminated with the long overdue repatriation and reburial of Pueblo tribal remains. Here in Mount Horeb, she is an Exhibit Jack-of-All-Trades, responding to calls for artifact and archival research, records searches and database corrections, and a variety of other usually emergency-level requests with patience and enthusiasm.



H M M H

Nancy Thousand, Photograph Curator

For the past few years, Nancy has served as Volunteer Photograph Curator, helping MHAHS gain intellectual control of the 25,000+ images held within the permanent Collection, and assisting with related research requests from the public. Using her hard-won familiarity with the collection, Nancy has proven to be an critical asset to the exhibit-building process. She locates specific photos and gathers suggested image groupings for the consideration of the Team based on exhibit themes and historical topics.

Dana Duppler, Master Carpenter

Dana has extensive experience with historically-sensitive restoration and construction projects. He has contributed

his talents to a variety of preservation projects, and was a driving force in the founding of the Wisconsin Lead Region Historic Trust. Dana's contributions to this project ensure

that the architectural details of exhibit elements will be accurate and the craftsmanship flawless.



David Ewing, Muralist & Historic Reproductions Specialist

David was enlisted for the Historium's permanent exhibit
by Designer Bigler, who has worked with Ewing on other
MHAHS projects in the past. From a era-evoking livery sign,
to a painted scene of rural Daleyville, several of David's historically-inspired props and

to a painted scene of rural Daleyville, several of David's historically-inspired props and works of art will add "that extra something" to this key endeavor.



Gerald Stamn, Doug Nesheim, David Schmidt, Wayne Hefty Exhibit Aides (Logistics, Aesthetics, Carpentry)









How did we get so lucky?? Gerald, Doug, David and Wayne are the All-Volunteer, Save-the-Day-Just-About-Every-Day-in-Some-Way Crew that we can't do without! Their wide range of skill sets, positive attitudes, constant accommodation and countless hours of free labor have been of literally incalculable benefit to both the exhibit leaders and exhibit budget. And, true to humble form, all four will hate being featured here!

2017 Dues-Paying Members

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& Chuck Beckwith
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Richard & Matthew
Jonathan Gray Rooney
David & Lois Schmidt
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Sandra Stanfield Lloyd Stapelmann Mary Sutter Sylvester Sutter Dennis Sutter Donna Thomas Larry & Patricia Ziemer The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society Board of Directors and staff send a heartfelt thank you to our Members for their support-be it a new connection or an enduring relationship.

Our Membership has been and will continue to be a foundation for sustainable success and healthy growth.

Annual Dues help us fund operating expenses, preserve documents and artifacts and provide research and educational opportunities for children and adults.

In this way, our Member keep these vital services accessible to and affordable for the Mount Horeb area and beyond.

Already a Member? THANK YOU again! Not a Member? What are you waiting for?

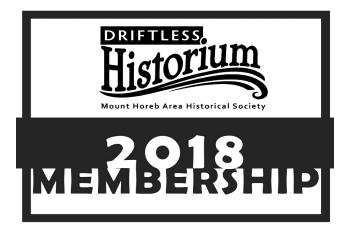


* Please note that a 2017 Summary of Giving (including listings of General Monetary Contributions, Memorials and Artifact/Archival Donors) will be included in the May 2018 edition of *Past Times*.

INDIVIDUAL

Eleanor Arneson Delma Baker Nina Cheney Florian Chollet Alan Colvin Beverly Eckel Susan Eisele Elizabeth Field Linda Gerke James & Danyce
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Hazel Rue Maloney
Lola Moore
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Help Us Meet Our 2018 Goal of 100 New Members! Point friends and family our way, and consider gifting a Membership. Our Supporters deserve to be recognized-and recognized accurately! Please inform us promptly of any omissions or corrections.
Call 608-437-6486 or email mthorebhistory@mhtc.net.

CORRECTION: Jon & Nancy Wolfgram were inadvertently left off the list of Associate level "Driftless Historium Project Donors" in the Past Times Oct 2017 issue. We apologize for this oversight.

("Watkins Merchant" CONT. FROM COVER)

had concocted. Its website directs customers to dozens of retail store chains across

the U.S. and Canada—or invites them to order on-line.

(Above) Copy of a Watkins promotional booklet used by Watkins Dealer Peter Riphahn, Sr., extolling the many virtues of the allpurpose Watkins Liniment apparently effective as a remedy for a miraculous variety of ailments plaquing man and beast, from dandruff and "annual colds," to mule colic and baby chick diarrhea), via customer testimonials like the one shown below about a Mr. Leo Minges and his turkey

flock. Courtesy Peter Riphahn, Jr.

Beyond their more famous household spices and products, J.R. Watkins also carried sweet-smelling reddish-brown mineral supplement to mix with cattle feed, packaged in brown paper sacks emblazoned with a red printed logo, and five-gallon drums of fly spray for treating buildings and cattle along with the red and yellow pumpsprayers for application. For several years Riphahn was "the area's top salesman of fly spray and mineral," his son recalls.

The railroad regularly left a boxcar on a side-track at the Klevenville Depot across the street from the Riphahn home. When customers arrived with wagons, trucks and trailers to pick up larger orders, Riphahn arranged for himself or others to unload and keep track of the pre-ordered supplies. Peter Jr. noted that the Watkins business model had his father purchasing all products himself before reselling them.

Riphahn loaded up his own vehicle for home delivery along regular routes. Often one of the children, who were always told to be on their best behavior, accompanied their father in his panel truck loaded with Watkins products—smaller containers in a cabi-





Minges, Ohio and Part of His Turkey Flock

"I never had any luck raising turkeys until I started using Watkins Liniment in their drinking water. It keeps them healthy and free from disease."—Leo Minges, Ohio*.

net in back, and samples in a wooden case carried to the prospective customer's door.

Further, Riphahn kept orderly shelves of merchandise in an upstairs room of their home. A sign in the front yard advertising "Watkins Products Sold Here" facilitated sales to people passing through. The children were often charged with their retrieval. Neighbors would stop at the Riphahn home as part of their daily routines to pick up mail. Pete Jr. remembered the Basthemer family stopping for a bottle of vanilla extract on the way to an evening dance.

(CONT. ON PAGE 9)

Riphahn (pictured at right, front row, center) often traveled to the J.R. Watkins headquarters in Winona, MN to directly pick up inventory or participate in training seminars. Sometimes his family or an in-training Watkins mentee tagged along for the ride.



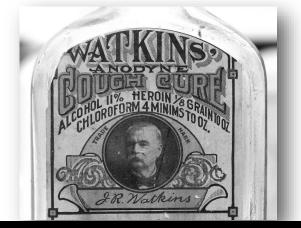
("Watkins Merchant" CONT. FROM PAGE 8)

The company also supplied its customers with hair tonic, razors, toothbrushes, pie fillings, sewing machine oil, and combination almanacs, cookbooks, and "home doctor" guides on which farmers, mainly farm wives, relied. Local Lena Bigler's "secret recipe" stood for years until the grandchildren caught her mixing Watkins concentrated orange juice with Kool Aid. Many of Riphahn's customers received Watkins cookbooks as wedding gifts.

During the rationing years of World War II, Madison's War Price and Rationing Board allowed Riphahn special privileges because he literally made his living driving door-to-door as a salesman. His Mileage Ration Identification folder, assigned to his vehicle, made him eligible for additional ration coupons. Gasoline, tires, and many other commodities were in short supply during these years and were federally monitored. The law required that he keep a log of miles driven.

Among wartime shortages was a scarcity of vanilla extract, which came from islands occupied by Japan. Reliance on Watkins for vanilla extract still echoed years later, with anecdotal accounts of local cooks concerned about obtaining it as Watkins home delivery waned in the 1960s.

The most substantial wartime challenge to Riphahn's business, however, was the Chicago & North Western Railroad's decision to dismantle its depot and critical loading platform in Klevenville to reuse the scarce materials for construction of a depot in Fennimore. He publicly testified against the closure. Nevertheless, the Railroad consolidated freight service in Mt. Horeb, which could not safely accommodate leaving an unattended boxcar on a sidetrack. He could not remain on site to make supply pickup convenient for farmers. As

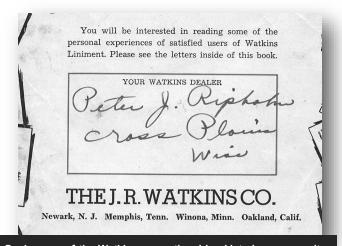


Vintage Watkin's bottle label. I can't vouch for its cough curing abilities—but with alcohol, heroin and chloroform listed as active ingredients, I'd think you're guaranteed a good time. :)

farm supply orders decreased, he was more frequently "LCL" — Less than a (train) Car Load — and had to rely on other means to transport.

He was unable to join other local businesses in picking up deliveries by the "yellow bus" which served Mt. Horeb, so he increased his supply runs directly to the Watkins headquarters in Winona.

Throughout his career Riphahn drove periodically to Winona, often taking his children when school was out to pick up his products at the company's factory and warehouses. One time an unexpected detour stranded them in a remote area, where they slept overnight in the truck. Such travel exposed Peter, Jr. to a wider world. "I never saw a bottling operation before," he recalled.



Back cover of the Watkins promotional booklet shown opposite page, bearing the signature of "Your Watkins Dealer: Peter J. Riphahn, Cross Plains, Wlsc."

He also remembered vividly a boyhood visit to one of the experimental farms where the company tested products on livestock. "The buildings were tiled and so clean you could eat off the floors," he said. During his high school years he helped his father drive on these buying trips.

Riphahn coaxed other individuals to sell the company's products in additional areas and occasionally brought them on his excursions to Minnesota. Buying in greater quantity increased a trip's productivity and cost efficiency. Among younger salesmen Riphahn mentored was Don Thorhaug. Though Thorhaug did sell Watkins products, with the changing retail market he did not build it into a lifelong, family sustaining-operation.

In later years Riphahn was able to keep up his daily routes by adding newspapers and seed corn to his rural deliveries. He continued to sell Watkins products until shortly before his death in 1961 at age 62.



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Mount Horeb Area Historical Society



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Driftless Historium Museum & Research Center

100 South Second Street P.O. Box 238 Mount Horeb, WI 53572 (608) 437-6486

UPCOMING EVENTS

All take place at Driftless Historium and are FREE, unless otherwise noted. See Facebook or website for further information, or call (608) 437-6486.

FEBRUARY

Scandihoovian Winter Festival 2 (10:00a.m.-8:00p.m.) Extended Hours & Cider Stop

3 (10:00a.m.-6:00pm.) Extended Hours & Cider Stop (11:00a.m.) Two Troll Tales Illustrator Talk (11:30-3:00p.m.) Two Troll Tales Book Signing

(3:00-4:00pm)
Cupcake Walk, \$2 Sugg. Donation

10 (4:00-6:00p.m.) Members Only Open House

<u>MARCH</u>

3 (9:00a.m.-12:00p.m.) Kids Yarn-making Workshop \$40/each, Reservations Required.

10 & 11 (9:00a.m.-5:00p.m. daily) Native American Flute-making Workshop \$150, Max 12 Registrants Accepted 19 (6:00p.m.-8:00p.m.)
"Flavor of the Year: Ice Cream Tasting
UW-Platteville Partner Program
\$2 each/\$5 Family Sugg. Donation

APRIL

10 (4:30-6:30p.m.) 11 (9:00-11:00a.m.) Volunteer Recruitment Open House

27 (3:00-7:00p.m.) 28 (10:00a.m.-4:00p.m.) "Collectors & Collections" Meet'n'Greet



The Driftless Historium was proud to host the 2017 Mount Horeb High School Art Show from Nov 7 to Dec 16. Here, students set up the exhibition, which featured a impressive range of art forms and mediums-from sculpture, to collage, to pencil sketches, colored pencil drawings and watercolor portraits, to photography.