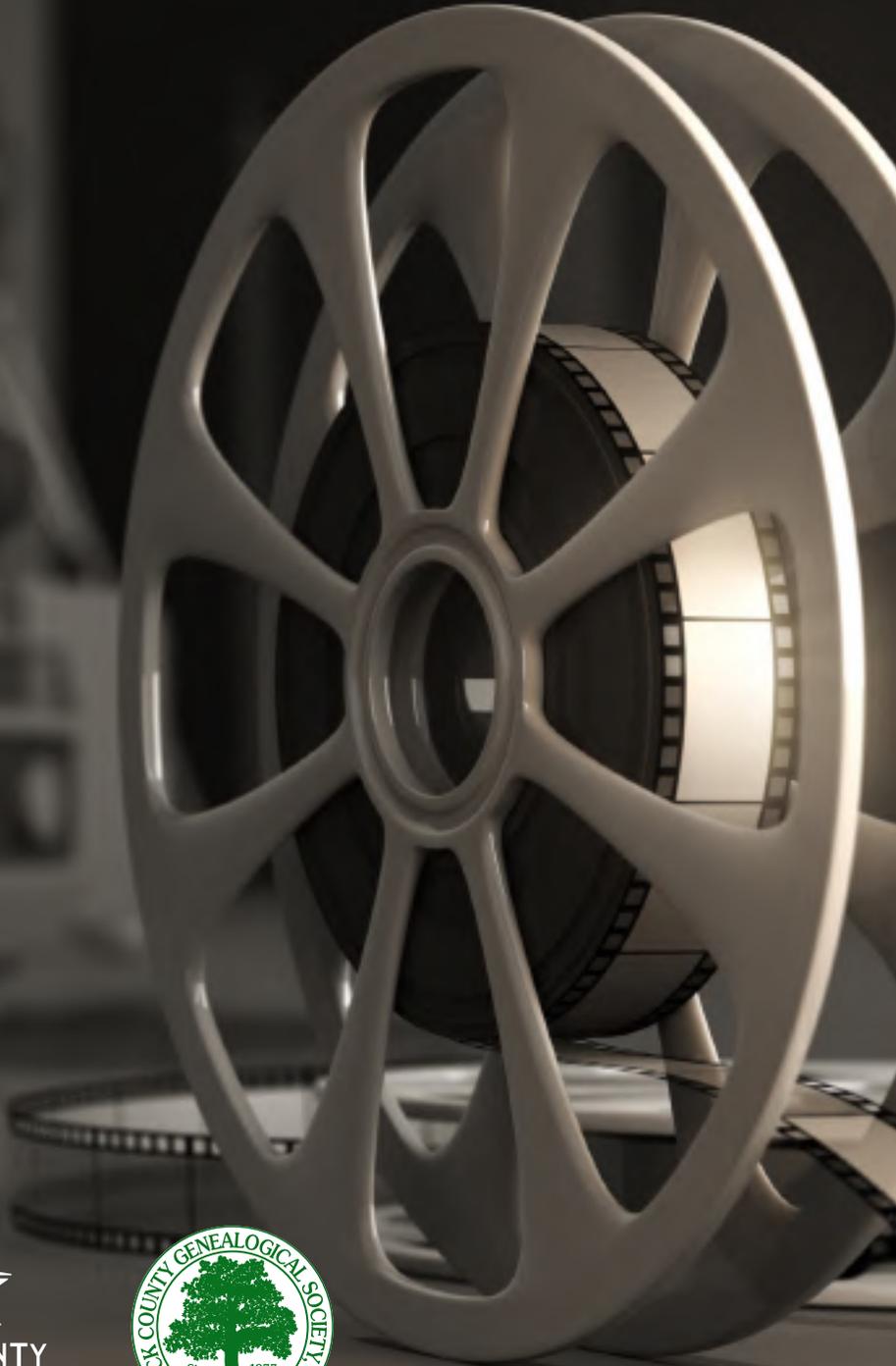


SPRING 2019

FINIAL

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ROCK COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES



ROCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WHERE PAST MEETS PRESENT



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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Tim Maahs

Happy Spring! Along with warmer weather, we welcome another exciting season for the Rock County Historical Society. To prepare for our enhanced spring/summer tour season, we've spruced up the campus. Read on for more about upcoming events, tours, and new exhibits!

If you haven't yet made plans to attend the annual History Makers Gala, now's the time! Set for Saturday, April 27th at the Pontiac

Convention Center here in Janesville, this year's theme is The Golden Age of Hollywood. So get your glam on and be ready for the paparazzi! There's more to this event than dining and dancing, though – including the recognition of five deserving groups and individuals in Rock County. For all the details, including this year's award winners and how to get your tickets, see the article on page 14.



Spring and summer of 2019 marks a time of positive changes at RCHS, as we're offering new group and specialty tours of the Lincoln-Tallman House. From some new surprises in the traditional tour, to a fascinating new tour focusing on the Tallman art collection, these offerings will appeal to folks with a wide variety of interests and to people of all ages. Tour season begins in May. For more information, check our website at rchs.us/tallman-tours.

Several new exhibits at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center will complement the tours: the *Rock County Stories* exhibit; our new *See Rock County* exhibit in the lower gallery; and the *Parker Pen World* exhibit in the main gallery. Stop in to see these captivating displays.

Hope to see you soon!

Timothy J. Maahs
Executive Director

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RCGS CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The Genealogical Society has been active. This year, the RCGS board has created a Family History Scholarship to be awarded to a deserving high school graduate with an interest in history or library and archival sciences. Generous donors provided the initial funding. We hope to fund future years with an annual summer speakers' program. This year's program is scheduled for July and will include topics such as DNA Testing, Understanding Archaic Medical Terminology, and Google Research Tips & Tricks for Family Researchers. Look for the specifics in the Historical and Genealogical Societies' web calendars of events and Facebook pages. Tax deductible scholarship donations are welcome; contact me at RCGS.WI@gmail.com.



David Bradford

As I mention in each edition, please visit our web site at www.rcgs.com, which hosts hundreds of pages of interest to family historians – links to more than 40 searchable full-text local history books, old postcard images, cemetery and newspaper name indexes, plus "how-to" articles for both beginners and experienced family researchers. Check out the free RCGS program line-up at www.rcgswi.org/events--speakers. As always, I also invite you to review the benefits of membership here: www.rcgswi.org/member-benefits and join the Genealogy Society at www.rcgswi.org/join-rcgs.

This edition of the *Finial* continues to offer genealogy content like *The Importance of Stories* on page 12, information on RCGS events in the calendar, and more. We hope you enjoy the *Finial's* enriched content and become a supporter of local history just like us. And remember, Wisconsin spring weather is here to stay...or is it?

David Bradford

Chairperson, Rock County Genealogy Society




At Lark, our focus is on seasonally driven dishes made with locally sourced ingredients that reflect the wide influences that drive American cuisine.

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We are excited to be a part of the downtown revitalization efforts of ARISENow with the construction of the Legacy Center. It will be a place for families and friends to gather and reflect on their lives at the General Motors plant.

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Lights! Camera! History!

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CINEMA

by Nathan Fuller, Community Engagement Manager



The motion picture – or “movie” – camera first appeared in the 1890s, and took the world by storm in the succeeding decades. This new form of media became a sensation, capturing the hearts and imaginations of actors, filmmakers, and entrepreneurs. The United States in particular fell head over heels for the motion picture in the early 1900s, thus beginning the Golden Age of Cinema. By 1920, it is estimated that the U.S. produced and distributed 82% of all films worldwide, and 800 feature films annually!

Interestingly, Hollywood wasn’t the first home of film studios; that honor goes to Fort Lee, New Jersey. They didn’t stay there long, though, as winter put a dent into production schedules and outdoor shoots. Seeking warmer climates, several studios, including Metro Pictures (later MGM), set up shop in Jacksonville, Florida, where sunshine, exotic plants, and cheap labor abounded. Many traditional Jacksonville residents objected to constant car chases in the streets, simulated bank robberies, riots, and the ever-present movie camera. Enterprising businessmen began moving out west and zeroed in on the orange groves of California. Within a decade, Los Angeles became the epicenter of the movie industry, a mantle it still holds

today. Interestingly, “Hollywood” comes from the name “Hollywoodland,” a segregated, whites-only community near Los Angeles that was being advertised to California motorists. The “land” part was later dropped thanks to the local Chamber of Commerce, which did not want to be associated with a segregated housing development.

Without synchronized sound, all films required title cards to help viewers read and interpret, making the movie experience a much more focused affair. Movie theatres, many times owned by the production studios, would typically employ a pianist to play music along with the show, adding much-needed tone and emotion to scenes. Early silent films weren’t exactly masterpieces by any standard, opting more for epic set dressing, emotive over-acting, and slap-stick comedy. A good example of this is *Janesville’s Hero*, a silent film made in 1926, filmed in Janesville, and starring local actors. Sponsored by *The Janesville Gazette* (which features prominently in the short movie), the film was the brainchild of itinerant filmmaker Don O. Newland, whose pre-written script could be tailor-made for any community. This meant the movie resonated geographically, but was no

different than the other “hero” films that were made all over the Midwest, including in Belvidere, Illinois, which features a slightly different ending. Despite the completely confusing title, the film was a hit and is one of the few surviving examples of these films.

To see this gem of film history, visit the RCHS Archives on campus.

The Golden Age of Hollywood is the theme for this year’s History Makers Gala, set for Saturday, April 27th at the Pontiac Convention Center in Janesville. We’ll honor five local groups and individuals for their achievements while rolling out the red carpet for guests! For tickets and more information, please visit rchs.us/historymakers.



A Community Within A Community: Stories of the Fourth Ward

Diverse in Architecture, Diverse in People

By Teresa Nguyen, RCHS History Teller



The early settlers of the 1840s followed the meandering, wide Rock River north to the "Big Rock" and a little community known as Monterey. As more people arrived, new homes for Monterey quarry miners were built in an adjacent area called Rockport, nestled in the bend of the river between Monterey and downtown Janesville.

From 1870 to 1900, a housing boom in this Fourth Ward of the city brought a variety of architectural styles, including Greek and Gothic Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne. An interesting mix of homes was built, from large and elegant to vernacular cottages for the working class.

A combination of immigration and new industry, including General Motors, caused the population to grow in what became known as the Fourth Ward area, blending blue-collar workers and business owners, weaving a diverse tapestry of neighbors.

Residents recall a strong sense of community in this area. What follows is a series of perspectives on the Fourth Ward from eight individuals with connections to this distinct neighborhood.





Tom Jeffris, President of the Jeffris Family Foundation

My great grandparents settled in the Fourth Ward area of Janesville in 1846. David Jeffris had married a woman from Scotland of the Mouat family, which is my middle name. David founded the Merchants and Savings Bank downtown and built 400 homes and numerous landmarks, like the First Congregational Church.

The Jeffris family owned two homes, one on Cherry Street and one on South Jackson. According to my aunt, the house on Jackson had a ballroom on the upper floor.

I'm a strong believer in preservation ordinances. While on the Janesville Historic Commission, we did a study on Rock County. It worked beautifully for Courthouse Hill, which was listed on the National Register in 1986 and became locally designated in 1990.

The stronger the preservation ordinance, the higher the property values, creating a better quality of life. I would love to see the Fourth Ward return to what it was like in the late 19th century!

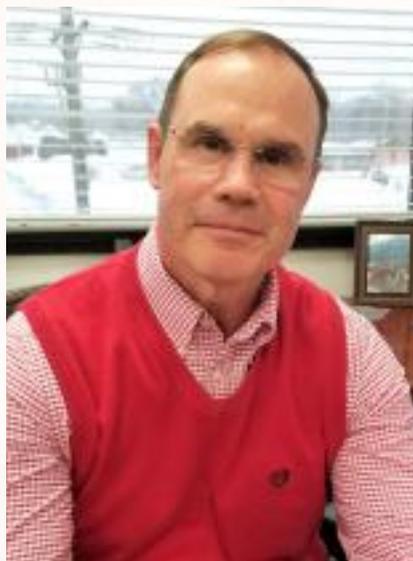


Mitch Benson, Senior Vice President of Manufacturing Services at Prent Corporation

I learned a lot being the oldest of 6 kids. I had to help manage things when both of our parents worked, and I learned how to "play in the sand box." If you weren't acting right, there was someone there to realign your thinking.

Both sides of the street considered each other family. It was a community within a community. Everyone I knew was from a good family.

Growing up in the Fourth Ward gave you a badge of courage. We were different from kids on the east side of Janesville or the nicer part of the west side. We were humbled by our upbringing and the way we were raised. We weren't shy about things. And if I had a choice, I would do it all over again.



"Both sides of the street considered each other family. It was a community within a community. Everyone I knew was from a good family."

**MITCH BENSON
RCHS BOARD PRESIDENT**

A combination of immigration and new industry, including General Motors, caused the population to grow in what became known as the Fourth Ward area, blending blue-collar workers and business owners, weaving a diverse tapestry of neighbors.



Lucy Beckord, BHCCU Branch Manager & Public Relations Coordinator

We three siblings shared a bedroom. We'd be tucked in bed, hear the bells of the ice cream truck and perk right up! Our parents would give us a quarter and we'd run out with bare feet for an ice cream cone. That was a huge treat!

In high school, I worked full time at McDonald's. I left home at age 18. I didn't know I could go to college. It wasn't until later in life that I realized I could do anything! I could open a coffee shop, or work for BHCCU, which does so much for the community.

The values I learned in the Fourth Ward have helped me through life. I'm proud, tenacious, determined and resilient and want to give back. Had I not grown up there, I wouldn't be who I am today. I'm proud to say, "I lived in the Fourth Ward."

Today, I see the area growing and continuing in a positive direction!



Greg Hughes, Senior Vice President, Communications, NBC Sports Group

In 1961, my parents, Jack and Jenny Hughes, bought a house on South Jackson Street that was built in 1904. They lived there for 25 years. We had one shower for 4 boys: John, Dave, Kevin, and me. I'm the youngest.

Our friends had dads who worked at GM. I delivered papers on Jackson, Franklin and River Streets. The Benson family was on River and their mother, Virginia Benson, was my godmother.

Our tight-knit group of friends played ball at Monterey and Fourth Ward Parks, which started my love of sports. At Craig, teachers and coaches knew us as "the Fourth Ward boys." We were a little different from the kids who grew up on the east side – physically tough, able-bodied, athletic and competitive.

We're still close friends today, and if any of us ever make a promise, you can bet we'll follow through.

Kevin Hughes, DDS, Las Vegas, NV

Our corner at Jackson and Racine was a kind of throughway for GM workers, a very busy intersection. People always



wanted to put up political signs in our yard. My father finally put a stop to that.

Some of my best memories are of playing football in Fourth Ward Park with Mr. Coulter, sneaking into Marling Lumber for wood to make a fort, and walking down to Woolworth's along the Rock River. We often went fishing off the Racine Street bridge or down at the dam.

Growing up there, we learned to be open-minded. We could get along with anyone and relate to them. We learned to treat people with equal respect, regardless of their background.

I have friends and family to see in the area when I'm back home. My brother Greg and I try to meet up at one of his bars when he comes into town. I still enjoy driving through the old neighborhood to see what's going on.

Chris and Ron Sutterlin, Co-Owners/Operators of Sutterlin Restorations

Our location at 608 W. Court Street, in the old Tallman and Collins Perfume Company building, has a fantastic history. While working on it, we found dried tobacco leaves on ledges above the acoustic ceiling, and original perfume bottles from William Tallman's business. On one of the columns was written "I like Abe". We left that intact.



The neighborhood is always pleasant. There's a sense of community. People walk everywhere, so it has an old-fashioned feel. Everyone is friendly and says 'hi' on the streets.

There's beautiful architecture in the Fourth Ward. Many neighborhoods with large, historic homes don't also have the quaint, interesting, smaller homes. But,

Fourth Ward wasn't just for wealthy business owners. Factory workers had homes there, too. They are quite old with attractive detail inside and out, and are structurally sound. They could last another hundred years with basic maintenance!

I've seen more people moving there, buying houses and fixing them up. We also bought two old homes on Cherry Street as rental properties. We like the area so much we're continuing to invest!

John and Brittney Mansur, Davemansur.com Real Estate and Neighborhood Photography



We're new to the neighborhood and bought a couple of homes there. One is an Italianate-style house built in 1861 for H.E. Pattison, an agent for the Chicago and Northwestern railroad.

We thought it would benefit our children to live in a diverse area, to interact with people who don't look like them or talk like them.

We enjoy being on the Neighborhood Action Team, which creates family-friendly events like the Fourth of July neighborhood parade, the Peace Walk, and Trunk or Treat in October. Every two years we have a Large Item Pickup, where a dozen volunteers with trucks help collect large items on the curbs. We have a quarterly newsletter with ways to be involved, and the group extends a hand, help and hope to the people who need it.

Our goal is to be a good neighbor and landlord to the people of the Fourth Ward. We'd like to help change the perception of the area.

Public Invited to Free Flag-Lowering Reenactment by Company K

By Keighton Klos, Historic Resources Manager

For the second year, the summer tour season of the Lincoln-Tallman House will feature a historic flag-lowering demonstration. On Friday, June 7th from 6 - 7 p.m., the public is invited to the RCHS campus for a reenactment of an authentic Civil War flag-lowering ceremony. Company K, Second Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, will perform the reenactment, which would have taken place at a garrison or fort.

The soldiers will march from the Lincoln-Tallman House front porch to the flag pole, perform the ceremony, then stack arms back at the mansion. One member of the crowd will be randomly selected to receive the period-appropriate flag as a souvenir. After the ceremony, the soldiers of Company K will be available to interact with guests, answer questions and discuss life as a Civil War soldier. Light refreshments will be served. Guests may also walk through the Lincoln-Tallman house main floor for a sneak peek at some exciting changes made in the house in recent months.

This event is free to the public.



Bliss Communications Donates Book Proceeds to RCHS

By Terri Holznecht, *Finial* Editor

Anyone with an interest in history, or for that matter, anyone who lives in Rock County, will likely find a fascinating read in *Rock County Roots: A History of Local Businesses*. Published by Bliss Communications in 2018, the 128-page, hardcover publication features stories and photos of more than 70 local businesses, shared by the companies themselves.

Rock County Roots gives an inside look at how local businesses were started, and how they grew over time. From family businesses that span generations, to

a 'spin off' company created to supply equipment for an existing business, the book provides insights that only insiders might know.

Thumb to the back of the book to read about some of Rock County's oldest businesses still in operation. *The Janesville Gazette*, started in 1845, is the first of 32 businesses listed through 1939. The Cooksville Country Store and Hughes Farms come in as second and third, respectively.

Interestingly, the book also includes a list of 54 sampling Rock County milestones, beginning with July, 1835, the date that William Holmes and John Inman explored what would become Rock County. Another mentions that the County Agricultural Society staged the first fair in October 1851, an event that evolved into today's Rock County 4-H Fair. In April of 1919, local women voters cast their first election ballots, due to Wisconsin allowing women to vote a year in advance of universal suffrage. The list goes on, ending in 2018 with this milestone: NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes, Beloit, receives FDA approval for its radioisotopes system.

The publication was a partnership between Bliss Communications, Inc., and the Rock County Historical Society (RCHS) – two organizations that have been actively involved in the community for generations. RCHS is the grateful recipient of all profits from this book.

***Rock County Roots* is available for \$35 at *The Janesville Gazette*, the Rock County Historical Society Gift Shop, and online at rchs.us/campus-store/.**



From Lincoln's Boots to a Celebration of Life: Finding Meaning through RCHS

By Olivia Moore, Guest Writer and former RCHS Docent

Like many Janesville Natives, my relationship with the Rock County Historical Society began when my 4th-grade class took a tour of the Tallman House. I still remember being a giddy, wide-eyed 10-year-old thinking, "that's the

ACTUAL bed Lincoln slept in!?" (while simultaneously restraining myself from reaching out and touching it).

I was fortunate enough to reconnect with RCHS when I became a docent in high school. I can still recite most of my tour from memory. The story about Lincoln's boots was always my favorite to share. During my years as a docent, no tour was ever the same. I provided tours for both young and old, lifetime Janesville residents and the "just passing throughs," history buffs and novices alike. Although most came in as strangers, we always left as friends - bonding over the stories of the past, beautiful architecture and of course, those boots. I left those summer days, voice hoarse from sometimes six back-to-back tours, with a full heart and mind buzzing from the stories people graciously chose to share with me while on the tours.

I haven't been a Janesville resident since 2011, although those who frequent RCHS events may be surprised by this. This organization has a way of pulling people back to their roots. While attending college at UW-Madison, most of my peers were relishing in their newfound freedom. However, I was probably the only student who eagerly took the two-hour round-trip bus ride home, just to continue working at their local historical society.

As I have grown, my relationship with RCHS has also evolved. Whether it's a 5k dressed as Abraham Lincoln, ringing in the summer solstice wearing all white, sipping wine in the Carriage House before taking a haunted tour, or being the very coveted "Pie Princess" at the Tallman Arts Festival pie auction, the harmonious culture that is so integral to RCHS remains constant.

When my grandma passed away in 2015, my immediate and extended family gathered in Janesville for her funeral. During our precious time together, we chose to take a tour of the Tallman House, where we both mourned and celebrated a woman who was now also an iconic part of Janesville history. I still look back on that day with a warm heart. RCHS fostered an environment of solace and comfort as a grieving family spent a memorable day together.

Many people believe that the Rock County Historical Society is about history – the past. This is a misunderstanding. RCHS is about the future and, perhaps most importantly, the present. Being present and engaged with loved ones, in the presence of beautiful buildings that were a result of dreams held by those who came before us, is an experience that cannot be replicated.

I encourage everyone to find meaning, whether through volunteering or attending RCHS events – because deep down we all have an inner 10-year-old who is just doing their best to keep themselves from touching Lincoln's bed.

Many people believe that the Rock County Historical Society is about history – the past. This is a misunderstanding. RCHS is about the future and, perhaps most importantly, the present.





RCHS Annual Kick-off to Unveil New Exhibits, Event Calendar

What's new in 2019 at the Rock County Historical Society? Lots! Get a sneak peek of all the events, tours, exhibits and programs RCHS will be offering this year at the annual Kick-off! Join friends and community members on Wednesday, April 24th at 5:30 p.m. at the RCHS Museum Center for the unveiling of the 2019 season.

Visit two *new* exhibits, including *Parker Pen World*, where you'll see not only some of the most popular Parker pens in history, but a collection of old ads and other memorabilia. See how the "Penette Girls" of the 1940s greeted guests at Parker Pen, and hear some fascinating behind-the-scenes stories.

Next, journey over to the new *See Rock County!* exhibit, to experience Rock County as a tourist in the early 1900s. Grab a seat in the 1923 Chevrolet Superior



Series B Phaeton convertible, or don a top hat for a selfie in the carriage. This lower gallery exhibit promotes taking photos and having fun!



In recent months, we've made the Museum Center more visitor-friendly. See the remodel, including the new Story Wall filled with *your* stories, and the Pickard China exhibit.

Mark your calendar for April 24th, and join us as we kick off the 2019 season. There is no charge for this event – we thank you for supporting RCHS!

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FAMILY

The Importance of Family Stories

“Everyone loves a good story; every culture bathes its children in stories.”

Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Righteous Mind*.

By David Bradford, Chairperson, Rock County Genealogical Society

Many genealogists are daily readers of stories and articles on topics from archaeology to xenophobia. Two recent articles reinforce the importance of family storytelling.

In an article from *Scientific American* titled *It Is in Our Nature to Need Stories*, author Jag Bhalla points out that humans are born “biologically prepared” for stories, and later to think and feel in story-logic. Much like the instinct for language, Bhalla writes that humans share a *story drive* – an inborn hunger to hear and make stories. Every culture immerses its youngsters in stories to explain how the world works, and to educate emotions. Stories free children from the limits of direct experience, delivering feelings for which participants don’t yet pay real-world consequences. The world over, stories are almost always about *people* and their problems. Story patterns transmit social rules and norms, while imparting lasting moral lessons.

Another article, titled *Stories That Bind Us*, lists many real benefits of knowing your family narrative. Written by Bruce Feiler and printed in *The New York Times*, the article states “... research from The Family Narratives Lab [shows] that children and adolescents who know more of their family stories show higher well-being on multiple measures, including higher self-esteem, higher academic competence, higher social competence, and fewer behavior problems.”

For this study, the authors developed the “Do You Know...?” scale, comprising 20 Questions. Think of the list as a test: the more that children said “yes” to these simple questions, the better adjusted

the children are. The authors recommend using these questions as a way to begin the story-telling tradition. Examples include:

Do you know where your father grew up?

Do you know where some of your grandparents met?

Do you know the source of your name?

But, the article warns, correlation is not cause. “It is not knowledge of these specific facts that is important – instead it is *the process of sharing stories* about families” that is crucial. A family that spends time sharing stories and lessons from the past is more invested in its children, leading to overall healthier and better-integrated offspring.

Resources for Collecting and Telling Family Stories

Many traditional family history resources also offer great tools for building a library of family stories:

Family Interviews - Always start with the oldest family members while memories remain clear. Sources for interview questions: StoryArts.org and RCGS’s interview tutorial at www.rcgswi.org/tutorials.

Personal Recollections - FamilySearch.org recommends four stories to include: *The Love Story*; *The Holiday Tradition*; *The Family Adventure Story*; and *Stories Behind Treasured Possessions*.

Letters - Cards between sweethearts, letters from “the front,” or holiday family reports are all useful, interesting resources. If the authors or recipients of these writings are alive, prompt them to relate the stories in greater detail.



Photos - Reunions, holidays or other group photos can generate clear and detailed family stories that might otherwise never be told.

Newspapers - The RCHS Archives has indexed clippings scrapbooks detailing day-to-day life. Local libraries often hold indexed microfilms. The Library of Congress also has thousands of searchable online newspapers.

Biographies - are found in atlases and local history books at the Historical Society Archives and in 40+ searchable online books at the Genealogical Society website.

Social Media - One exceptional tool is *All the Stories* App. All that's needed is a free Family Tree at the FamilySearch website. Then, use the *All the Stories* App to discover other researchers' stories for shared ancestors.

A Histogram or historical timeline - One's ancestors lived in a specific historical context, and were well aware of, and affected by, important events. Even without specific records, ancestor's experiences may still unfold in general newspapers and letters. Other's stories of migration, military service or pioneer life can coincide with an ancestor who may have otherwise tread lightly. Many websites offer tools to create a historical timeline of an ancestor's life. For ancestors born after 1900, try *Atlantic Magazine's* timeline builder. For older ancestors, sign-up (free) for the impressive graphical timeline builder from HistoryLines.

This information will help prepare us all to become story-collectors and storytellers!

WEB RESOURCES

Scientific American Article #1:

blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/it-is-in-our-nature-to-need-stories/

NY Times Article #2:

www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html

20 Questions Test:

www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-stories-our-lives/201611/the-do-you-know-20-questions-about-family-stories

4 Stories to Include:

www.familysearch.org/blog/en/4-family-stories-save-children

Historical Society Archive:

www.rchs.us/archives

Genealogical Society Website:

www.rcgswi.org

All The Stories App:

<https://partners.familysearch.org/solutionsgallery/s/>

Library of Congress digitized newspaper:

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

Atlantic Magazine's Timeline Builder:

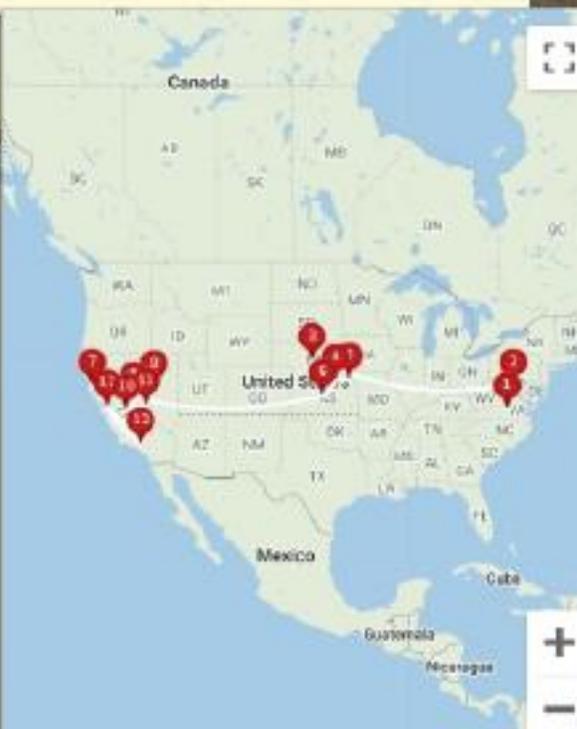
<http://www.theAtlantic.com/timeline/>

HistoryLines Timeline Maker:

<https://historylines.com/>

Richard "R. R." Reynolds FOUKE

1845 - 1940



COMING ATTRACTION!



HISTORY MAKERS
Gala

2019

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DESIRE!

HOLLYWOOD-THEMED
GALA TO HONOR
"STARS" OF
ROCK COUNTY

Every year, people in Rock County make history by making a difference in our community. And each year, the Rock County Historical Society honors a few of them at the History Makers Gala. From recognizing someone who has spent a lifetime improving the quality of life in Rock County, to presenting an individual or community organization the “good neighbor” award, an array of local achievers is acknowledged at the History Makers Gala.

This party is much more than an award presentation! It’s a night filled with glitz and glam, as this year’s theme is The Golden Age of Hollywood. Guests will be immersed into old-style Hollywood as they step into the Pontiac Convention Center – feeling like it’s Oscars night! Enjoy dinner, dancing, a live auction, plus some Hollywood-style surprises at this dazzling gala.

SHOWTIME:
SATURDAY, APRIL 27TH
6 - 10:30 p.m.

PONTIAC CONVENTION CENTER
2809 N. PONTIAC DRIVE, JANESVILLE

TICKETS:
\$75 PER PERSON, \$500 FOR A TABLE OF 8, OR
\$750 FOR A HIGH-THEMED SPECIALTY TABLE FOR 8

FOR DETAILS AND TO ORDER TICKETS, VISIT
RCHS.US/HISTORYMAKERS

AND THE WINNERS ARE



GENERATIONS AWARD

MR. PAUL RYAN,
 for representing the people of Janesville in Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District from 1999 - 2019, and for serving the nation as the 54th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. By consistently sharing his pride for his hometown throughout his career, Mr. Ryan effectively “put Janesville on the map.”



GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD

RON AND MARGARET DELANEY,
 for their work with Janesville’s Look West neighborhood group, serving as a dedicated team to make positive changes in their community. The Delaneys have been the epitome of a “good neighbor” to the Rock County Historical Society, supporting the organization in numerous ways for nearly 40 years.



THE PHOENIX AWARD

JOE AND TINA PREGONT,
 for their work, vision and support in significantly renovating the Tallman Carriage House on the grounds of the Rock County Historical Society. Their involvement in every step of this project was essential in creating this beautiful facility; their goal beyond the restoration was to create a platform that would contribute to the sustainability of RCHS.



COMMUNITY PRIDE AWARD

ARISE Now,
 the public-private partnership that works to transform downtown Janesville. Accepting the award will be Jolynn Burden, Director of Development & Community Engagement.



THE SCHOLAR AWARD

ANNA MARIE LUX,
 for her work as a reporter, telling the unique stories of people in our community. Her storytelling has helped the people of this community learn more about their neighbors, and instills a sense of pride in greater Rock County.



Theaters Enriched Downtown Janesville Throughout History

By Kristin Arnold, Archives and Research Center Manager

At the turn of the century, Janesville residents enjoyed a variety of entertainments such as sports, circuses, and vaudeville. Once the technological thrill of motion pictures came to the city, however, movie theaters quickly dominated downtown. The storefront nickelodeons soon gave way to the ornate movie palaces, which featured plush seating and perhaps even air conditioning! Janesville's first motion picture house, The Electric Theatre, opened June 14, 1906 at 33 South Main Street. At five cents for admission, movie-goers viewed one-reel films that often consisted of scenery shot from the rear platforms of trains. It was not long before other theaters opened in Janesville, such as the Lyric, Royal, Majestic, Colonial, Nickelodeon, and Riverside. However, the venues that made the biggest impression on downtown Janesville were the Myers, Apollo, Beverly, and Jeffris theaters.

Myers Theater (1870-1977)

Long before the Myers showed films, the theater hosted live entertainment – including an appearance from Mark Twain in 1885. Seating 750 people, the Myers Opera House opened in 1870 at 118 East Milwaukee Street. Destroyed by a fire in 1889, the venue reopened in 1891 as the Myers Grand Opera House, seating nearly 1,200. In keeping with the times, the Myers began to show movies during World War I, and underwent renovations in 1929 and 1957. More than a

century after the first Myers was built, the theater was demolished in 1977.

The Apollo (1913-1949)

The Apollo opened on January 27, 1913, as a vaudeville theater at 306 East Milwaukee Street. With seating for 700, the venue's top floor included a ballroom. Not originally built as a movie theater, the balcony was situated in such a way that late-comers would often walk in front of the projection booth, casting a shadow on the film and causing a loud, but short-lived cry from the punctual viewers! Like many of the other downtown theaters, the Apollo underwent renovations over the years, and was even renamed the Hitching Post near the end of 1946. *The Janesville Gazette* shows that the Apollo closed for the summer in 1949, but there was no evidence that it ever reopened. In 1955, the building was sold to Cullen Realty Company and renamed the Cullen building.

The Beverly (1916-1956)

When the Beverly opened at 17-19 South Main Street on April 25, 1916, *The Janesville Gazette* reported that it was the “most modern, safest, and most beautiful theater in the state.” It was probably labeled “safe” because of its state-of-the-art projector, which would less likely start a fire! Additionally, the theater had a Wurlitzer pipe organ and two projector machines to avoid pauses between reel changes. It is believed that the Beverly closed permanently in 1956. The Rock

County National Bank purchased the building in 1958.

Jeffris Theater (1924-1980s)

One of Janesville's most popular theaters, the Jeffris, opened in 1924 at 319 West Milwaukee Street. Like the Beverly, it had an organ, but around 1930, the Jeffris (along with the Apollo and Beverly) was remodeled to accommodate films with sound. Its big renovation in 1937 included “Airflow” seats, listening equipment for the hard of hearing, and a triangular marquee. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed much of the Jeffris in 1983. It reopened as Park Place Cinema for a short time, but closed in 1989. The building was demolished in 2007.

Janesville's downtown theaters were consistently remodeled to accommodate new technologies, but they were unable to keep up with new consumer habits. These theaters suffered as drive-in theaters and TV became more popular. Then, the construction of the interstate pulled commerce out to Highways 14 and 26, including the Janesville Mall, which opened in 1973. The mall housed the UA Cinema, a multiscreen theater.

Today, downtown revitalization efforts are underway, working toward making Janesville's downtown its entertainment center once again!

Source: Schaar, Ted H. *Impermanence: The Beverly*, other Janesville, Wisconsin Theaters, Kerwin Mathews, *Sprawl*, and the Automobile. 2017. Print.





Frances Willard School Volunteers Make Learning Fun!

The Frances Willard School will soon be open and class will be in session again. Our dedicated school teacher volunteers – always eager to help students learn the Victorian way – will be here to greet the children. This small, devoted group of volunteers sees more than 700 students each year, putting in more than 70 hours of combined volunteer work during six action-packed weeks! Much like school teachers of the 19th century, our volunteers wear 1800s-style garb and brave the wind, rain, cold, and heat to teach a diverse group of students from all over Rock County: not always an easy task in a one-room school! Thankfully, these volunteers are always cheery, allowing the students to have fun while learning in the 166-year-old building.

The Rock County Historical Society would like to thank volunteers Jim Dumke, Jo Richgels, Marlene Roessler, Kris Mathesius, Kathy Boguszewski, and Teresa Nguyen for their devotion to this interactive and informative program!

If you'd like to join this enthusiastic corps of school house teachers, please contact Nate Fuller, Community Engagement Manager, at nfuller@rchs.us or 608-756-4509 ext. 304.

RCGS Programs and Speakers

The Rock County Genealogical Society (RCGS) offers family and general history program speakers on the third Tuesday of the month from September-May at 6:30 pm in the Carriage House, 450 N Jackson Street, Janesville, WI (behind the Tallman House and the Museum Center). **Meetings are free and open to the public.** For a list of upcoming programs, see the *Finial* calendar and read more at our website at www.rcgswi.org/events--speakers. The building is handicapped accessible with handicapped parking at the door and at the nearby Charles Tallman Archives building, with additional parking at the Mercy parking ramp and behind the Museum Center on Franklin Street.

The Charles Tallman Archives and Research Center

430 N. Jackson St., Janesville

Admission fee: \$10, free for RCGS and RCHS members

Free advice and self-guided research • Fee-based research assistance also available

Email address: RCGS.Library@gmail.com or archivesmgr@rchs.us

Website: www.rcgswi.org/research-help or www.rchs.us/archives

Hours: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Thursdays 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Phone: (608) 756-4509 Ext. 312 or (608) 752-5891





RCHS • RCGS EVENT CALENDAR

RCHS EVENTS

APRIL 20TH

Annual Easter Egg Hunt

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
RCHS grounds
426 N. Jackson Street, Janesville
FREE
rchs.us/events

APRIL 24TH

Annual Kick-off Event

5:30 p.m.
Rock County Historical Society
426 N. Jackson Street, Janesville
Free
Call 608-756-4509 Ext. 302 for more information

APRIL 27TH

History Makers Gala

6 – 10:30 p.m.
Pontiac Convention Center
2809 N. Pontiac Drive, Janesville
\$75 per ticket; \$500 for table of eight; \$750 for high-themed specialty table of eight
rchs.us/historymakers

JUNE 7TH

Flag-Lowering Ceremony

6 – 7 p.m.
Lincoln-Tallman House grounds
440 N. Jackson Street, Janesville
FREE
rchs.us/events

JUNE 28TH

Murder and Mayhem Pub Crawl

6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Meet at 199 W. Milwaukee St., Janesville
\$20
rchs.us/events

JULY 26TH

Murder and Mayhem Pub Crawl

6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Meet at 199 W. Milwaukee St., Janesville
\$20
rchs.us/events

Become a Member of the Rock County Historical Society

Enjoy many benefits while supporting RCCHS:

- Free tours of the Lincoln-Tallman House
- A subscription to the *Finial* magazine.
- Discounts in the RCCHS Archives, with hundreds of photos, records, maps and more.
- Discounts in the RCCHS gift shop.
- Advanced ticket sales to many RCCHS events that sell out fast.

For more information or to join, VISIT www.rchs.us/membership, CALL 608-756-4509 Ext. 300, or EMAIL membership@rchs.us.



Join the Rock County Genealogical Society Standard Membership:

- \$22 per year includes newsletter via email (add \$3 for postal delivery)
- Join online at: www.rcgswi.org/join-rcgs

Membership Benefits:

- *Finial* magazine – minimum 16 pages plus extra RCGS digital content
- *Members-Only Content* – an exclusive web area for unique local records
- *Free admission* to the Charles Tallman Archives & Research Center
- *50% discount on photocopies* at the Research Center
- *10% discount on Society Publications*
- *Priority Research Response* - requests go to the top of the stack!
- *Genealogy JumpStart* – one free annual search of occurrences of a single Rock County surname in the card files and major indexes of the Research Center.

RCGS EVENTS

APRIL 16TH

RCGS Presentation: Lost 109 Years Before 3 Miracles by Tom Carlson

6:30p.m.
Rock County Historical Society Carriage House (ground level)
450 N. Jackson Street, Janesville
Free and open to the public
<https://www.rcgswi.org/events--speakers.html>

MAY 21ST

RCGS Annual Meeting and "Show Your Genealogy Treasures"

6:30 p.m.
Rock County Historical Society Carriage House (ground level)
450 N. Jackson Street, Janesville
Free and open to the public
<https://www.rcgswi.org/events--speakers.html>



Rock County Historical Society

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Welcome to a
New Season of
Events and Exhibits
at RCHS!



CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

**Show Your Wares at the
62nd Annual Tallman Arts Festival!
Sunday, August 4th • 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

Rock County Historical Society campus,
440 N. Jackson St., Janesville, WI

- Reach thousands of visitors
- Canvas, metal sculpture, fine art and more for sale at this popular festival

Apply today! Visit Rchs.us/tallman-arts-festival for information and to register.



SAVE THE DATE

for Sunday Dinner: A Farm to Table Feast!

Break bread with friends. Feast on fresh food donated by local growers and prepared by professional chefs. Help us honor Rock County's agricultural community!

September, 2019

Outdoors on the RCHS Campus

More information coming soon!

www.rchs.us