



MILLWRIGHT NEWSTE

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2024

FRIENDS BOARD

COREY RINGLE
PRESIDENT

KAREN SMIK
VICE PRESIDENT

DR. RACHEL OPPENHEIMER
SECRETARY

ROB RICHARDSON
TREASURER

BERT DRENNEN

TERRY DUNCAN

CLIVE FETZER

CYNTHIA MCWILLIAMS

SANDY NORRIS

ADVISORS

JOANIE GOTTSCHLING

NANCY KANIK

DEBBIE KAZAR

ROB KAZAR

GARY LAGUARDIA

HEATHER LICCARDI

CHRIS NAIZER

PAT NORRIS

ELIZABETH REBOUDO

LYNN RICHARDSON

BETH SANDERSON

DONNA SPIEGLER

BARBARA STARR

BETTY VANDERMEER

DOUG WISNESKI

IN THIS ISSUE

PARK PARTNER
RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY PG 1

PARK PARTNER
OVIATT HOUSE PG 2

ARCHITECTURE HIKE PG 3

WHY A HISTORIC DISTRICT... PG 4

- KIRBY MILL ... PG 5

BOUNCE... PG 6

RHP ACROSTIC PG 7

PG 1

PARTNERS IN THE PARK HOW THE RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OVIATT HOUSE INC. AND THE FRIENDS OF RHP COLLABORATE

By Karen Smik

THE RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY (RHS) has been instrumental in the Friends efforts since almost the very beginning of their existence. Friends' Historian Lynn Richardson began the relationship with RHS when she started going to their museum to conduct research about the property now known as Richfield Heritage Preserve.

RHS has worked closely with the Friends since 2009 (then known as Friends of Crowell Hilaka or FoCH), when GSNEO initially announced its intention to close Girl Scout Camp Crowell Hilaka – and RHS was first to endorse FoCH's efforts to preserve the property along with its historic structures.

In February 2011, RHS became FoCH's fiscal sponsor – since they didn't have 501c3 nonprofit status yet – and served in that role, helping FoCH secure much needed donations, until February 2015.

In September 2013, RHS endorsed FoCH's early efforts to purchase Camp Crowell Hilaka. When it became apparent that FoCH would not be able to raise the funds necessary

to buy the property – RHS worked with FoCH, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Richfield Village Council and Richfield Township Trustees in early 2014 to promote formation of the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) as well as assisted with the campaign to purchase the former camp and turn it into a public park.

In September 2016, RHS played a crucial role in helping to save RHP's lower lake and the dam by circulating a petition to Richfield Village and Richfield Township residents – explaining how the lower lake is the central historical element in RHP. Well over 400 residents returned their petitions and were overwhelmingly in favor of saving the lower lake. In the face of this very strong support, the RJRD board decided to proceed with repairing the dam – ensuring the continued existence of the lower lake and all the rich history surrounding it.

The Richfield Historical Society has been a true friend and partner for many years – and will continue to support the Friends and their efforts in the years to come.

“Understanding the past teaches us about the present and guides us into the future.”



FRIENDS OF
Richfield Heritage Preserve



PARTNERS IN THE PARK cont.

HOW THE RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OVIATT HOUSE INC. AND THE FRIENDS OF RHP COLLABORATE

By Clive Fetzer

OVIATT HOUSE INC. (OHI) is a non-profit organization founded for the purpose of preserving and restoring the historic home of the Oviatt family, built in 1836. Located in the Richfield Heritage Preserve, the Oviatt House is on the corner of Oviatt Road and Rt 303 in Richfield.

OHI is an all-volunteer organization that, with the help of the Richfield Historical Society, successfully prevented the destruction of this historic building which was once scheduled for demolition. Since receiving a long-term lease on the house and its property from the Richfield Joint Recreation District, volunteers have restored the exterior of the structure back to its 1836 appearance, repainting the original wood siding in its original color, and installing custom made, historically accurate windows and shutters painted in what is believed to closely resemble the color typical for that time period.

Work is continuing in the house interior – rebuilding rooms, walls, and doorways to match the home’s original 1836 footprint, using original materials and trim as much as possible.

OHI is a member of the American Association of State and Local History and is listed on the National Park Service Network to Freedom due to its ties to the Underground Railroad. In addition, the organization has received two grants from the National Park Service Network to Freedom in collaboration with The Association for the Study of African American Life and History. One grant was given to restore the windows and window shutters, and the other to compile research with the help of a University of Akron student enrolled in the Museum and Archives Certificate Program - the Reference Library created from this research will be used to develop museum exhibits.

(PARTNERS IN THE PARK will feature one or more of the volunteer organizations that partner with the Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve in upcoming issues of the MillWrite News.)

As a young, all volunteer non-profit organization, OHI continues to seek support and partnership from individuals and other organizations. The Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve and Oviatt House Inc. are actively involved in assisting one another in the protection, promotion, and enhancement of the natural beauty, historic heritage, and educational opportunities for visitors and for future generations at the Richfield Heritage Preserve.

These volunteers help at one another’s activities, share technical skills and equipment, and work together on fundraising events. Volunteers from the Friends frequently volunteer at Oviatt House in support of Oviatt House Inc., and Oviatt House volunteers have very generously assisted the Friends on restoration projects in the historic structures of Kirby House, Amity House, North House, and Kirby’s Mill. The Friends’ goal to create an educational experience at the historic hydro-electric mill of inventor James Kirby, and OHI’s mission to eventually open a museum dedicated to the Oviatt house, its occupants, and their connection to the Underground Railroad combine to create a bright future for RHP through their continuing collaboration.



HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE HIKE RETURNS TO RHP JULY 14

CONNECTING THE HISTORY AND HOMES AT RHP



By Karen Smik

The Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve (Friends) will offer a “Connecting the History and Homes at Richfield Heritage Preserve” hike on Sunday, July 14, 2-4 p.m. at Richfield Heritage Preserve (4374 Broadview Road).

Corey Ringle, registered architect with RDL Architects as well as the Friends president and head of its Historic Home and Stabilization Task Force, will lead the hike and will share how while working on Amity, Garfield, North and Kirby Houses – the historic home stabilization team has learned more about the original architecture hidden behind the renovations than was previously known. Thanks to reviewing the drawings and photos, researching time appropriate construction methods, and selective demolition – they have learned additional information about the historic homes and how they evolved over the years.

Join the Friends on July 14 as they share drawings, details, and discoveries!

The hike will be held rain or shine so dress for the weather. Suitable hiking footwear, insect repellent, and a reusable water bottle are recommended. Attendees will meet by The Lodge.

While the event is free and open to the public, attendees are asked to RSVP via Eventbrite at <https://ConnectingHistoryandHomesRHP2024.eventbrite.com>. Walk-ins, however, are always welcome. Visit friendsofrhp.org for event updates.

WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND

our new features about this special place informative and maybe even inspiring. We value your input: do you have a special experience, memory or activity at RHP you would



10/15
ANNIVERSARY

MATCHING MONDAY FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

THANK YOU!

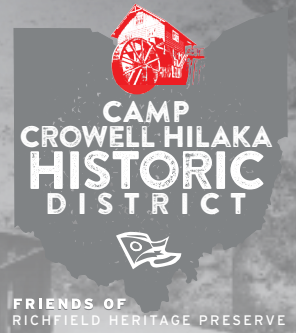
Our first match will help to complete Kirby's Mill. Thanks to another generous Friend, we are on our way to another summer matching fund campaign.

Your contribution will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$3,000. We are again asking for donations toward the completion of Kirby's Mill, but your gift can also be earmarked for our general fund so that we can meet our commitment to the RJD to stabilize and restore Garfield Hall - the choice is up to you. We hope to inspire you to give – or, if able, to create your own challenge donation and celebrate generosity. The Friends' goal is to do good for our community by preserving our park and the special places it holds. We can only do it with the support of people like you.

Visit friendsofrhp.org/donate today.

like to share in a short (300 words or less) article? Is there a photograph, painting or poem that the park, or the former camp, has inspired? Please use the CONTACT US page on our website for any submissions.

WHY A HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION IS IMPORTANT



By Deb Kazar

In 2020, Richfield Heritage Preserve was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the “Camp Crowell Hilaka Historic District” with the National Park Service. This designation acknowledges the significance of the 336-acre land as a historical resource and celebrates its heritage. The importance of history lies in how it helps us understand the evolution of humanity. By preserving structures and land, we can experience our story and continue to learn and grow from it.

According to Webster’s Dictionary, heritage is something that is transmitted from or acquired from a predecessor - such as legacy, inheritance, or history. The designation as a historic district acknowledges the significance of Richfield Heritage Preserve as a historical resource to celebrate and honor our past, continue to learn from and grow beyond. Each visitor to RHP experiences this heritage from unique perspectives.

History provides insight into our present and

explains how we got here. Humanity is the sum of the experiences of its ancestors. The stories of RHP provide a glimpse into some of the building blocks of our regional culture, ecology, industry, and creativity.

To truly understand the past, experiencing actual structures and activities reflected in the stories can enhance the telling of these stories. Seeing and touching what once was draws us closer to it, and it may inspire greater appreciation for our evolution, spurring creativity as we move forward in new ways of thinking, doing, and being. The Friends are dedicated to maintaining and restoring the structures that can provide these experiences for visitors.

The designation as a historic district acknowledges the historical significance of Richfield Heritage Preserve. This encourages use of RHP that embraces a balanced respect for past, present, and future. This series will explore various aspects of the historic district and its present significance as we imagine the future.

CULTURAL



Prehistory

Regional Indian tribes lived along the southern edge of Lake Erie and presumably on the property. Local archaeologists have researched and excavated the park.

2021

The Richfield Joint Recreation District and the National Park Service authorized placement of RHP on the National Register of Historic Places as the Camp Crowell Hilaka Historic District with hopes of garnering historic preservation grants. To learn more, visit [nps.gov/places/camp-crowell-hilaka-historic-district.htm](https://www.nps.gov/places/camp-crowell-hilaka-historic-district.htm) or visit the history page of the Friends’ website at <https://www.friendsofrhp.org/history.html>

INDUSTRIOUS



1831 Mason Oviatt married Fanny Carter, who had also moved with her family from Connecticut to Ohio.

1836 Mason completed the house he built for his wife (at the corner of West Streetsboro Road and Oviatt Road) on the property he purchased from his parents. He and his brother also had a farm and sawmill on the property.

ECOLOGICAL



1919

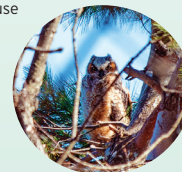
The Camp Crowell Hilaka property includes 243 acres purchased from the Oviatt family by James B. Kirby, who amassed over 160 patents and is best known for his design of washing machines and vacuum cleaners created to help eliminate the drudgery of housework for women.

1920

Lake Jinelle (lower lake) is patented with design to minimize silt.

1920

Construction on Lake Jinelle dams & Kirby House begins



CREATIVITY



1937

The Cleveland Girl Scout Council purchased the Kirby estate where it established Camp Julia Crowell.

1957

93 adjoining acres to the north were sold by the Neal family to the Cleveland Girl Scout Council and became Camp Hilaka. Camp Crowell Hilaka provided countless girls and young women the opportunity to experience the outdoors in an atmosphere of inclusion and positivity.

WHY A HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION IS IMPORTANT cont. WHY KIRBY'S MILL RESTORATION IS KEY

By Deb Kazar

“New ideas need old buildings” is a quote by urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs. Kirby’s Mill is one of the several ‘old’ buildings at Richfield Heritage Preserve anticipating new ideas. The Mill, built by James Kirby in 1922, is being restored by Friends of RHP. Once complete, it will inspire new ideas through STEM programming.

James Kirby built the Mill to power his workshop and home. He also used it as a fishing platform. When the Girl Scouts purchased the estate, they utilized the Mill as a craft studio, history museum, and hiking destination. In 1979, Kirby’s Mill was added to the National Register of Historic Places - engineering and invention were listed as areas of significance. With the support of donors, grants, and volunteers - the Friends have completed the following: roof replacement, windows restored, concrete for water wheel and pit supports repaired, water wheel reconstructed, and safety screening around the water wheel installed.

On Sunday afternoons through October, you

may visit and speak with a volunteer docent at the Mill. Feel free to share any inspiration with our docents; they will pass the information on to the team.

Why is the restoration of Kirby’s Mill important? The innovation required for its original construction and use can inspire future generations. What new ideas may be born from honoring history and imagining the future? STEM programs will be a catalyst – a jumping-off point for new ideas from and for this ‘old’ building. Let new ideas flow!

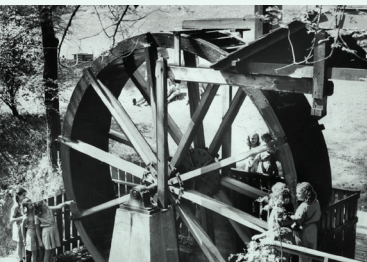
The Friends continue to fundraise and apply for grants to complete the restoration. The ongoing projects include mill house structural repairs, exterior stairway and swinging bridge replacement, restoration of the flume, and finishing touches. A team is also working through the logistics of restoring the hydro-electric generating equipment. To learn more about the Mill’s history and progress, I invite you to visit <https://www.friendsofrhp.org/kirbys-mill-restoration.html>.

1922



The Mill
Built by Jim Kirby in 1922.

1937



Girl Scouts by the mill.

1979



Kirby's Mill was added to the National Register of Historic Places - engineering and invention were listed as areas of significance.

2024



Friends provide docents on Sundays to answer visitors' questions about the Mill as well as to hear park guests' memories about the property.

MYSTERY BEHIND THE "BOUNCE" SOLVED WHEN HHSTF STARTS WORK ON GARFIELD HALL

By Terry Duncan

Getting the old steel spring in hand was a defining moment for the crew starting restoration of Garfield Hall.

Clive Fetzer, emulating the excitement of archaeologist Josh Gates witnessing a never-before-seen discovery, was able to grab one of the bouncing floor's 'secrets' from beneath the old dance and dining hall.

The Friends' Historic Home Stabilization Task Force (HHSTF) was given the green light by the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) to begin work on Jim Kirby's 1923 dance hall, now known as Garfield Hall. Phase 1 tasks of the Friends' champion application for the building include repair and restoration of currently existing components and aesthetic improvements to the back wall where the kitchen - added in 1937 - was removed due to structural issues.

The team successfully completed restoration of Amity House, which will be ready for the park to rent as soon as building and occupancy permit paperwork is satisfied. Most of the next phase of Kirby's Mill restoration must be undertaken by professional crews and is scheduled to begin in August. Initial work needed to evaluate Kirby House restoration is underway, but Garfield Hall needs immediate attention that the skilled HHSTF crew is ready to take on.

"This will preserve the structure and function of Garfield for future use," said Corey Ringle, Friends' president and registered architect as well as project manager for rehabbing the former Kirby dance hall which became the Girl Scout camp's first dining hall.

"Eventually, we would like to work with RJRD on plans for Phase II - improvements that will make the building rentable," said Lynn Richardson, Friends historian and grant writer. "This would include installing restrooms and improving access to the hall, but the RJRD is the final arbiter on how the hall will be used in the future."

Richardson said restoration will make Garfield Hall functional for both educational and memorable recreational opportunities. It will also contribute to RJRD's compliance with the expectations of the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO).

Kirby built his dance hall using chestnut tree siding and industrial strength steel springs. It was first used

for the Vacuette Company picnic with a large dining tent set up in the flat area behind the hall: The Fall 1923 issue of the Vacuette Broadcaster newsletter described the scene:

"On high ground at the head of the lake was built a spacious bungalow, put up especially for the convention, with its deep open fireplace, and polished hardwood floor, where dancing was so easy, to the excellent music of one of Cleveland's best dance orchestras. Adjacent to the bungalow, the big top tent was set and there at one o'clock, luncheon was served hot from the outdoor stoves in charge of an excellent caterer from Cleveland."

Girl Scouts acquired the property in 1937, and they repurposed the building as a dining hall - although it was also used for dances and rainy day programs. The Scouts attached a kitchen and storage area to the back and added the screened in porches to the south and east sides.

The hall was named for Eleanor Garfield, a past commissioner of the Cleveland Girl Scout Council and member of the President James A. Garfield family, who helped the Girl Scouts raise funds to purchase the land for the camp. In the early 1950s a major camp expansion was planned. Architect George Voinovich, Sr., was hired to plan enlarging Garfield Hall; his blueprints - now in the RJRD archive - were not used for lack of funding.

When a new camp dining hall was built, the Scouts continued to use Garfield Hall for programming - and it became a favorite memory for hundreds of girls who recall dancing on the 'bouncing' floor.

Now, thanks to the Friends' work, we see the magic behind the movement

(For more on the history of Garfield Hall and its restoration, visit Garfield Hall - Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve (friendsofrhpo.org).

**|| This will preserve
the structure and function
of Garfield Hall for
future use. ||**



RHP ACROSTIC

/əkrôstik/

By Bert Drennen

R is for Richfield, the town just up the hill
I is for invasives, which we all pledge to kill
C for Crowell/Hilaka, a name we used to use
H is for the history, which we will not abuse
F is for the Friends group, a bunch of hardy souls
I is for integrity, among our stated goals
E is for enrichment, the tales we like to tell
L is for the man-made lakes, Linnea and Jinelle
D is for demolish, which we never want to do
H is for the houses that we want to save for you
E for each home, Kirby, Amity, Coach or North
R for restoration, the effort we put forth
I for irreplaceable, think of Kirby's Mill
T is for the turning wheel, never to be still
A is for agreement, which we're seeking from the Board
G for Garfield Hall, where we hope to find accord
E is for the estimate, to see how much it cost
P for preservation, we hope it won't be lost
R JRD, they're our partners in the park
E is for engagement, we hope we hit the mark
S is for scouting, where so many got their start
E is for emotions, coming from the heart
R is for returning, we come back every year
V is for variety, of assets we have here
E is for eternity, for the things that we hold dear

LOOKING FORWARD

FRIENDS 2024 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

SAVE THE DATES



WED

JUN
19

FRIENDS NATURE AS THERAPY | DARK SKIES

Will be presented by Dr. Joe Blanda – following a short Friends of RHP membership meeting – The Lodge, 7 to 9 p.m.

SUN

JUL
14

FRIENDS HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF RHP

Registered architect and Friends' president Corey Ringle highlights the architectural features of the park's historic buildings during this hike, 2 to 4 p.m. – meet by The Lodge.

WED

AUG
21

FRIENDS MEMBER & PARTNERS MEETING

Featuring Partner Group Presentations and Membership Potluck. The Lodge, 6 to 9:30 p.m.

SAT

SEP
7

FRIENDS KIRBY DAY COMMUNITY EVENT

Free, family-friendly community event – featuring activities for all ages – to be held at the park's south end on the former Kirby Estate. 12 to 4 p.m.

SAT

SEP
28

MEMBERS SING-ALONG

Summer Barn, 2 to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit friendsofrhp.org/events



JOIN | DONATE | VOLUNTEER

Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve is a tax-exempt charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit (EIN #27-0780916) All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of charitable giving law. friendsofrhp.org



FRIENDS OF
Richfield Heritage Preserve
FRIENDS OF RHP.ORG