

MILLWRIGHT NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

ANNUAL MEETING PG 1

"ASK ME ABOUT THE MILL" PG 2

HOW TO REDISCOVER ... PG 3

...MOST SCENIC TRAIL PG 4

WILDFLOWER HIKE PG 5

COOK'S CABIN... PG 6

COMING UP AT RHP PG 7

PG 1

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING KICKS OFF TWO ANNIVERSARIES

The Annual Membership Meeting on Wednesday, April 17, will kick off a year of celebrating the Friends' double-anniversary – 10 years of partnership with the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) and 15 years since their founding.

A tour of the newly restored Amity House – brought back almost fully to its former glory – is planned for members arriving early. The restoration of this 1936 brick and stone home – built in the French Normandy style by the Friends' Historic Home Task Force – is the latest example of our partnership with the RJRD.

The Friends will introduce the 10/15 Matching Funds Campaign. Thanks to a generous donor, every dollar raised will be matched with a \$1.50 contribution, up to \$3,000. Donations will fund Friends' restoration projects at RHP – including Kirby's Mill and Kirby House, a project under the RHP champion program.

Board member and officer elections will take place and the Friends' Annual Report to the Community, highlights of planned 2024 events – including three more general member meetings – will be presented.

The Annual Meeting will be held

at The Lodge (formerly Gund Hall, for past campers) starting at 7 p.m. Members who would like to tour Amity House should arrive no later than 6:15 p.m. The entrance to the park (and driveway to The Lodge) is located at 4374 Broadview Road, Richfield.



10|15
ANNIVERSARY

FRIENDS OF RHP

FOR EVERY \$1 YOU GIVE TO THE FRIENDS, IT IS MATCHED WITH AN ADDITIONAL \$1.50 DURING OUR MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN

FRIENDS OF
Richfield Heritage Preserve
FRIENDSOFRHP.ORG/DONATE

"ASK ME ABOUT THE MILL"

By Bert Drennen

If you visit Richfield Heritage Preserve on any given Sunday from May to October, you may notice a sign near Kirby's Mill: "Ask Me About the Mill." You will find a Friends' member stationed nearby, trained as a docent to answer questions that hikers and park visitors may have about the mill or the park in general.

The docents are knowledgeable about the park, having participated in hikes led by archaeologists, historians, architects, and naturalists. Most of them have also worked on historic home stabilization projects, attended open house tours of Oviatt House, or volunteered during Kirby Day. They all attend a special training session every spring to keep up on the latest developments at the mill and to refresh their knowledge of relevant facts. They can usually answer most questions about the mill or the 336-acre preserve. They will offer to provide additional follow-up information and will sign you up for an emailed *Mill-Write*, the Friends' bimonthly electronic newsletter.

Personally, I enjoy being a docent because of the people I meet. Some have a specific question like, "when was the mill built?" (1922). Others ask you to tell them a little bit about the mill and are usually surprised that the mill was designed by James Kirby to generate electricity – not to saw lumber or grind grain.

Everyone who stops by seems to appreciate there is someone to answer questions about the mill or the park. I always offer to take their picture in front of the mill wheel – using their camera or smartphone – so they don't have to limit their view with selfies.

I was there when millwright Ben Hassett dismantled the old water wheel and when he assembled the restored pieces for the new wheel. Participating in projects like greasing the ball bearings in the wheel hub has given me an appreciation of what it takes to maintain this historic structure.

I enjoy the personal interactions of being a docent. One of my favorite Sundays was Father's Day last year. June 18th was a beautiful



day at RHP. Fathers brought their kids for a spring hike and adult sisters met to take their father for a walk in the woods – I was able to speak with many of them.

The mill docent program is a great example of benefits provided to the RHP by this active group of volunteer Friends.

Bert is not only a Mill Docent, but also a Board Advisory Member for the Friends.

JOIN THE MILL DOCENT TEAM

Every Sunday, May through October, mill docents are stationed at Kirby's Mill, from 2 to 5 p.m., to greet visitors and answer their questions. As ambassadors for the Friends and Richfield Heritage Preserve, the friendly face of the docent is often a visitor's first connection with the Friends of RHP.

If you are interested in joining the Kirby's Mill docent team, contact Lynn Richardson at lynndragonwing@gmail.com. Training will be held Sunday, April 28, starting at 2 p.m. It will include an introductory tour of the mill. Lynn will also schedule trainings by appointment.





Photo By Robert Kazar Photography

HOW TO REDISCOVER ONESELF AT RICHFIELD HERITAGE PRESERVE

By Debbie Drockton-Kazar

As a lover of nature and the spouse of a photographer, I searched for regional hiking locations we had yet to visit. Richfield Heritage Preserve had been on the list for a while.

My initial rediscovery experience occurred while volunteering during the 2019 Kirby Day event. While posted at the Adirondacks as docent 'Marblette', I reminisced on fall and winter weekend camping as a Girl Scout. I remembered the cooperation, responsibilities, learning, fun, and laughter. Primarily, I recalled the joy and freedom experienced while spending time in nature as a young person.

Since then, I have spent many days hiking throughout and rediscovering the wonders of RHP. I shared the memories and stories of my younger days with my husband, Rob as he experienced the magic of the Heritage Preserve for the first time, as only he could – through the lenses of his cameras.

We rediscovered joy and freedom from time as it would collapse and expand on our visits. Hours seemed like days at times, and only moments at other times. We felt the awe of nature, its cycles, and the

interconnectedness. We learned more about the history of the land through presentations hosted by the Friends. We listened to other visitors' dreams for potential uses of the Heritage Preserve and its assets.

Showing up, observing what is, allowing the varied perspectives of others, and letting go of my own perspective of the Heritage Preserve facilitated the rediscovery of myself. I gratefully remember that I am part of and connected to all that is, was, and will be. I experience RHP as a slice of heaven on earth, a place where peace prevails. Though my mind may not agree with some choices made in the evolution of the Heritage Preserve, my heart knows it will all turn out better than any can imagine as peace permeates.

I see the Heritage Preserve as a microcosm of Earth. We are gifted a paradise that sustains us. Living in harmony with the gift frees us to return to our true nature of loving beings. The multidimensionality of the partners of RHP is needed to foster its regenerative nature. We coexist, listening to understand other perspectives and support the natural evolution of RHP and ourselves to our next best versions.

“I gratefully remember that I am part of and connected to all that is, was, and will be.”

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

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.

WANDER DOWN THE MOST SCENIC TRAIL

By Beth Sanderson



and the week, you will find ramps, spring beauties, different species of trillium, marsh marigold, rue anemone, foamflower and cutleaf toothwort, to name a few.

You may spot sassafras and early blooming spice bush. American chestnut saplings still sprout from the roots of trees lost generations ago to disease. I saunter down the trail and indulge in taking too many pictures to try and capture the beauty around every curve and switchback.

This will be my 16th year volunteering with the Friends. In 2016, I worked with the Buckeye Trail builders to help add this scenic spur that runs through a high quality natural area of RHP. The BT trailblazers - many longtime trail builders - know their craft. The Buckeye Trail Association was one of the first park partners to believe in the value of RHP and to invest both time and treasure. I learned to use tools like a fire rake and how to build a dry bridge.

Bird enthusiasts also enjoy the trail: the songs of migratory warblers, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhees and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers - along with year-round resident Chickadees, Northern Cardinals and many types of woodpeckers - fill the spring with sound. From the fallen logs resting on rock outcroppings to standing tree snags, you will see signs of wildlife and insects supported by a healthy habitat.

As spring matures, the sight of ravines full of skunk cabbage unfurling large, glorious chartreuse leaves is divine - a sure sign of a healthy wetland ecosystem. The geology of these ravines supports northern hemlocks among the mostly oak, hickory, beech and maple forest. Rock formations stained with the red rust of iron deposits - I call one of them Plymouth Rock - add drama to the scene. The soft drooping bows of the hemlock forest frame Cook's Cabin, a small building along the trail that looks like it's out of a fairy tale.

This scene, nestled in an oxbow of the murmuring stream, is the kind of vision appearing in dreams: it will make your soul smile and your heart warm when you take the time to explore Ohio's Hidden Treasure™ Richfield Heritage Preserve.



Patches of bright green moss glow when warmed by beams of sunlight through tree branches. Woodland ferns, from the evergreen Christmas fern to the cinnamon-like stalks of dormant sensitive ferns, add interest to the late winter forest floor. As the days warm, lady and wood ferns send out their first green leaves. Cone-shaped clusters of skunk cabbage pop up through damp soil near a meandering creek.

Welcome to the 1.5 miles of the Buckeye Trail that run through the Richfield Heritage Preserve.

Always a favorite hiking destination throughout the year, this narrow trail - that winds from Lower Lake Jinelle to Upper Lake Linnea - follows a stream that is part of the Rocky River watershed headwaters. The path is particularly engaging when ephemeral wildflowers are in bloom from April through May, before the forest is in full leaf. Depending on the weather





DIY GUIDE

TWO WILDFLOWER HIKES OFFERED TO FIT YOUR SCHEDULE

By Karen Smik

Spring wildflowers are in bloom throughout RHP and to help people enjoy them, the Friends of RHP (Friends) are sponsoring a guided hike on Saturday, May 11, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the park.

Led by plant ecologist Jennifer Windus, president of the Ohio Invasive Plants Council and advisor to the Friends' Invasive Species Management Team, the woodland walk will feature her insights on protecting our park's native species and the importance of their role in the natural life of RHP. The loop trail hike will travel through one of the most scenic sections of the park.

Participants will use the 3771 Oviatt Road park entrance (by the Oviatt House off St. Rt. 303). Plan to meet shortly before 1:00 p.m. at the kiosk located near Kirby's Mill and to dress for the weather. Suitable hiking footwear, insect repellent and a reusable water bottle are recommended. While the event is free and open to the public attendees are asked to RSVP via Eventbrite at <https://2024WildflowerHike.eventbrite.com>. For additional information and event updates, visit friendsofrhp.org.

If you are unable to join us May 11, the Friends also have a **Do It Yourself Wildflower Hike** to download on your smartphone at friendsofrhp.org. Since the wildflower 'show' changes from April through May, you can take your own hike with an informative virtual guide to help identify plants that may be unfamiliar.



RJRD CHAMPION PROGRAM OFFERS A LIFELINE TO HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Every organization has a budget – Richfield Heritage Preserve is no exception. The RJRD established the champion program to bring at least some of the park's structures back online to produce income and expand program opportunities without increasing taxes.

The RJRD approved Friends' letter of intent to restore Kirby House. But there are many other buildings in need of a champion. Unfortunately, the window to submit applications under the program is closing fast: the deadline is June 1 – unless RJRD extends the program. Applications to champion buildings at RHP can be found at <https://www.richfieldheritagepreserve.com/rhp-structure-champion-program.html>



PG 5

SPRING ARRIVED EARLY FOR PHOTO HIKE

Jim McClintock gave participants lots of tips for getting that memorable photograph while on some of his favorite trails at Richfield Heritage Preserve on March 16.

Over 20 hikers joined the occasionally muddy search for "what's hiding in plain sight" on a warm, sunny day.

Many thanks to Mr. McClintock for sharing his knowledge and passion, and to the generous sponsors of this hike: Photo Curator (\$250-up): Edgar Williamson; Artist (\$100-\$249): Rob Kazar Photography; and Hobbyists (\$25-\$99): Crave Nature Cleveland, Bob Lucas and White Horse Farm Kennels. Our request for hike sponsors is new this year. If you would like to sponsor a hike, contactus@friendsofrhp.org.



Opportunities to sponsor the Architecture Hike in July and History Hike in November are still available, along with our events – September's Kirby Day and December's Winter Wonders.

COOK'S CABIN: IDYLIC SCENE FROZEN IN TIME

By Terry Duncan

The small cabin sits alone in the oxbow of a small stream, shaded by the surrounding forest. Not much larger than Henry David Thoreau's 10'x15' cabin on Walden Pond, the simple abode calls to the passerby to stop a moment and enjoy a scene of quiet beauty.

The casual hiker probably wonders about the cabin's story. Was it really the backdrop of a movie? How many aspiring writers and artists have found inspiration within its walls? Why is this idyllic scene now apparently abandoned?

The history of Cook's Cabin is as intriguing and mysterious as the images it conjures.

Built shortly after the Girl Scouts purchased what became Camp Julia Crowell in 1937, the frugality necessitated by the Great Depression resulted in a simple structure on cinder block, sided with rough-sawn live edge wooden planks – probably sourced on site. Constructed close to the former dance hall that was destined to become the camp dining hall (named after Eleanor Garfield), it was designed to house the camp cook for the summer – and Cook's Cabin was born.

We have no record of the cabin's early residents – or how they viewed their summer home – but when a new dining hall was built well north of the site in 1967, the cabin no longer housed the cook. Its purpose changed over the years – depending on the needs of the camp.

In the mid-1990s, we know two of the camp staff (young men) resided in the cabin to be closer to the riding stables and attend to the horses.

"One summer, the cabin was known as the "bachelor pad," said Bridget Biliunas, now a dance instructor with Cleveland City Ballet and Interpretations Dance Academy. "There was a legend they had a pet tarantula. I can't fact check that, but the story cut down on unauthorized visits."

Biliunas spent several summers at the camp, first as a camper and later as assistant camp director. She recalled that when not in use as a staff residence,

Cook's Cabin served as a quiet place for individual troop "Scout's Own" ceremonies of reflection prior to the following evening's closing campfire.

Her experiences at camp influenced her to write a fictional novel where a character – who resides in a cabin based on Cook's Cabin – plays a central role. Biliunas uses the setting to offer a visual allegory of calm when life is challenging.

Cleveland filmmaker Dustin Lee used Cook's Cabin midway through his short film series *Evenfall*, a Maple Films production. In December 2023, during "*The Making of Evenfall*," Lee said, "I was very deeply influenced by the films of Hayao Miyazaki. What really stuck out to me from Miyazaki's work was our relationship with nature and how technology can sometimes improve that

relationship and how often it can sometimes damage that relationship."

In *Evenfall*, the cabin location offers respite for the main characters and a reset of their relationship as seasons change from winter into spring. The setting revitalizes the pursuit of their goal, much as the cabin has served others over the years – whether in fact or in fiction.

The future of Cook's Cabin is in jeopardy. In its original master plan, the park administration determined it should be razed. The Friends' board would like an organization to step forward and offer a viable champion plan that would complement the heritage of the park's Camp Crowell-Hilaka National Historic District footprint.

For the moment, Cook's Cabin still stands – a testament to the endurance of special places in our lives.

/// The setting revitalizes the pursuit of their goal, much as the cabin has served others...whether in fact or in fiction. ///



COMING UP AT RHP ENJOY BIRDWATCHING MAY 4

By Karen Smik



The Friends of RHP (Friends) will offer two migratory bird hikes on Saturday, May 4, 7:30-9:00 a.m. and 9:30-10:30 a.m., at Richfield Heritage Preserve.

Professional birder Fred Dinkelbach will review some basic birding skills and then lead attendees on a 1-1/2 mile hike, along woodland trails and gravel roads,

through the different park habitats - listening and looking for our feathered friends in the height of their spring migration. Last year, over 40 species of warblers and other birds -- both migratory and resident - were spotted.

Fred Dinkelbach has been birding for over 36 years. He is a 31-year member, and past president, of the Kirtland Bird Club of Northeast Ohio. Mr. Dinkelbach has surveyed Richfield Heritage Preserve, as part of the Greater Akron Audubon Society's summer breeding bird census and has witnessed 71 species there. For the past 34 years, he has participated in the greater Cleveland area spring bird walks (held on six separate weekends) as well as bird walks at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Attendees will meet by the Summer Barn (4225 Oviatt Road). The hikes will be held rain or shine so dress for the weather. Suitable hiking footwear, insect repellent, binoculars, and a reusable water bottle are recommended.

The event is free and open to the public. While attendees are encouraged to RSVP through <https://2024BirdHike.eventbrite.com>, everyone is welcome to attend. Visit friendsofrhp.org for event updates.

THE FRIENDS HOPE TO SEE YOU LATER THAT SAME DAY AT RHP'S 2ND ANNUAL GOAT DERBY & CRAFT FAIR - BEING HELD FROM 11:00 A.M. TO 3:30 P.M. ON AMITY LAWN. richfieldheritagepreserve.com

FRIENDS 2024 EVENTS & PROGRAMS SAVE THE DATES

WED

APR
17

FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING

Your membership supports the Friends' mission to protect, preserve, enhance and promote RHP. The Lodge, 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

friendsofrhp.org/events

SAT

MAY
4

MIGRATORY BIRD HIKES

Experienced birder Fred Dinkelbach will help us identify resident and migratory birds in northeast Ohio woodlands during two hikes, 7:30 to 9 a.m. and 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

friendsofrhp.org/hikes

SAT

MAY
11

WILDFLOWER HIKE

Plant ecologist Jennifer Windus will take us on a loop trail hike through the park's high-quality area during peak spring bloom, 1 to 3:30 p.m. PLUS: DIY Wildflower Guide

friendsofrhp.org/hike

friendsofrhp.org/maps-DIY

SAT

JUN
1

RICHFIELD COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE

(Friends will have a table) 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - over 125 sales located at individual homes and behind Richfield Town Hall.

richfieldcivicorganization.org

WED

JUN
19

NATURE AS THERAPY | DARK SKIES

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

friendsofrhp.org/events



JOIN | DONATE | VOLUNTEER

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