



# South Milwaukee Historical Society

## Board of Directors

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Mark Draeger  
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**717 Milwaukee Ave, South Milwaukee, WI**

Meetings are held the second Monday in even numbered months at the Museum. Please join us to learn more about South Milwaukee's history.

The Museum is open on the third Saturday of each month from 10am to 3pm. You may also call 414-520-1285 for questions or to arrange for a private tour.

## *From The President's Pen—January, 2024*

As we start another year with new goals to pursue, we are hoping you find contentment in everything you do.

As you read our Newsletter you will find many of the goals I hope we will meet. Number One on my list is to sign up new members. Our current board is getting old(!) and we will need "new blood" on the board who will take our Society into the coming years. I also hope we can continue to make improvements to our building. Like our board, it is old and needs to be updated... i.e., our yard, our electrical system, etc. We had a great 2023, as you will read in this Newsletter - our Annual Holiday Tea, new displays at the BE museum, new hours, new phone, and much more. Please make one of your New Years Resolutions to visit the Museum. You will be surprised!

The Board of Directors wishes you and yours a year filled with Special Blessings and Treasured Memories.

Happy New Year!

*Richard Thinnas* – President

**Preserving our Proud Past since 1972**

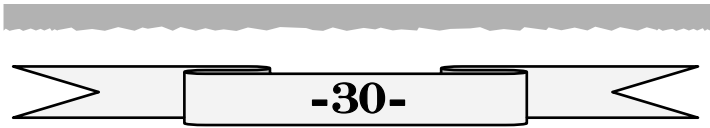
**Founders:** Dennis Rankin, Penny Rankin

**Initial Directors:** George Hook, Mary McCarrier, Bruce Rayeske, Dora Lee Szewczuga, William Domoe, Lilia Dishong, Chester Grobschmidt



The Historical Society now has it's own phone number!! You can call & leave a message or even text and we'll do our best to respond within 48 hours.

**414-520-1285**



In case you were wondering what the -30- in the banner at the end of the Digitization article in the October newsletter meant: In journalism, the number 30 is traditionally used to indicate **the end of the report or story that is being forwarded for editing or typesetting for publication**

It seemed a fitting 'end' to this project.

### *It's a Hair Receiver*



Hair receivers were receptacles, typically ceramic, bronze or crystal, with a finger-wide hole in the top to allow for hair collected from brushes and combs to be fed into the box. This tangled mess of hair could be saved until there was enough to stuff in a tiny pillow for use as a pin cushion or into a hairnet to make a ratt, a ball of hair that could add height or fullness to one's hairdo. While some say that hair saved in receivers was also used for hair jewelry, love tokens, and mourning mementos those items generally required straight, not tangled hair. It's believed that women used cut hair (rather than combed out hair) for those purposes.

While hair collected in this receiver may not have been used for weaving we do have a very elaborate piece on display at the museum along with some smaller pieces



### **What is it???** *(Pen is for size reference only)*



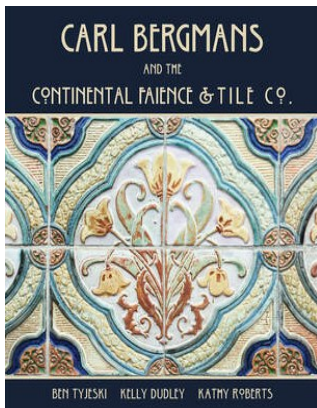
The electronic newsletter is here!! If you gave us your email address you should have gotten a paper copy AND an electronic copy. If you only got the paper copy you may need to add us to your safe sender list (check your junk mail file) Or it means I have a typo in your address! Send an email to [southmilwaukeehistory@gmail.com](mailto:southmilwaukeehistory@gmail.com) That way we'll be sure we have it right. You can also send an email if you haven't signed up for the electronic version yet but want to give it a try. You can always go back to a paper copy if you decide you prefer that.

## Continental Faience & Tile Company

Many people know about the Lawson Airline Company that was located on 9th Avenue but the airline disaster that put them out of business wasn't the end of the story for that building.

A number of years ago Ben Tyjeski, a local artist & historian, reached out to us for information on Continental Tile. He and his co-authors, Kelly Dudley and (SM graduate) Kathy Roberts were working on a book about Carl Bergmans, the driving force behind the Continental Faience and Tile Co. We were more than happy to provide whatever we could.

In December the book was published and a launch party was held at the Bucyrus Club. Ben asked if the Society would be willing to do a display case featuring Continental Tile's work. Of course we would!!! The display, located in the Founders Room at the Club, showcases pieces from our collection along with some additional pieces provided by Ben. Turns out there was more to that company than we knew and we are very thankful to Ben for sharing his knowledge with us. To get a really good look at the display visit the BE Museum and while you're there enjoy some great food from Skyline Deli.



A limited supply of Ben's book *CARL BERGMANS AND THE CONTINENTAL FAIENCE & TILE CO.* is available at the Historical Society (\$60) along with postcards featuring photos from the book (\$10 for a set of 8)



## The 14th Annual Holiday Tea,

sponsored jointly by the Historical Society and Friends of the Mill Pond was held at the Grant Park Clubhouse on Saturday 12/9. Volunteers spent days getting everything ready; decorating the clubhouse, putting together raffle prizes, washing dishes & polishing the silver, setting the tables as well

as baking cookies for the tea. The weather was beautiful that day and the golf course was open which helped with sales at the bake sale! It was a LOT of work but the 79 people who attended had a wonderful time! But we desperately need some younger volunteers to help us keep this event, that has become a much loved tradition, going.



***A HUGE THANK YOU to the volunteers who worked so hard!***

Starting in 2024 our 'monthly' meetings will become 'bi-monthly', held on the second Monday of even numbered months (see below). We encourage members who are interested to join us. We have openings available on the board! Here are a few of the highlights from the last meetings in 2023.

### November, 11, 2023—6pm at the Museum

We hired JW Kolb to trim the trees on the east and west side of the museum. They're coming on 12/6.

We're still trying to figure out why the wireless signal from the doorbells is being blocked. Open to ideas why they won't work.

Discussed creating 'welcome packets' for new members.

Discussed creating a new set of color postcards.

Mark's brother donated a bunch of trolley related information.

We need to go thru it, save what's relevant to SM and find more appropriate homes for the rest.

Mark brought the Sally's Candy Cupboard box for the display.

### December 12, 2023—6pm at the Museum

Holiday Tea on 12/9 was sold out.

The trees got trimmed on 12/6. Looks great!

Decision was made to hold our meetings in the even numbered months: February, April, June, August, October and December.

A budget was set for the proposed Welcome Packs.

The South Milwaukee School District wants us to look at some things they have in their warehouse from the old Junior High. Richard & Judy will go on Thursday to see what they have.

Mark suggested putting our QR code on the front door.



*Due to low attendance and a shortage of docents we have decided to discontinue the open house on the 1st Thursday of the month. We're looking into only having them during the summer months and gearing them toward youngsters with the hope of developing a love of history in the next generation. If you have any ideas to share or would be interested in helping out with them please contact us. We have a new phone now!!*

Here's a closer look at the job JW Kolb did on the tree trimming



The new look lets in a lot more sunlight. The squirrels weren't very happy about it but they'll get over it!

### Reminder to New Members...

Your membership comes with one hour of free genealogy research. Contact Steve Schreiter at 414-762-5214 for details.

### Tours

The Museum is available for tours to Scout Groups, Civic Organizations and School Groups. It is also available to individuals for research or tours. For more information or to arrange a tour, please call 414-520-1285

**Come on in...  
we're open!**

Upcoming Saturdays  
10am—3pm

February 17

March 16

April 20

(weather permitting!)

**Hope to see you there!**

Visitors to the museum get a coupon for \$5 admission to the Bucyrus Museum good thru 3-31-24

### Neighbor helping Neighbor

The Cudahy Historical Society is raising funds to replace the roof on their historic 1892 railway depot. The challenge is to match & exceed a \$15,000 grant from an anonymous donor.

Go to their website if you're interested in donating. [Cudahyhistoricalsociety.org](http://Cudahyhistoricalsociety.org)  
And watch for their "Buy a Shingle" roof fundraiser coming soon.

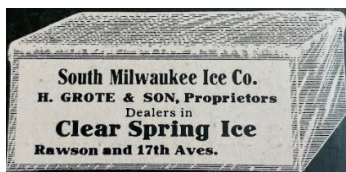


## Harvesting Ice on the Mill Pond



Ever wonder why some 'old folks' refer to the refrigerator as an icebox? Before refrigeration became a common household convenience, food was kept cold in an icebox. Basically an insulated cube with a block of ice in the top. Bit messy as it melted but it did the trick. Every housewife had to remember to empty the pan under the icebox every morning. Of course you needed to replace the ice on a regular basis. During the cold winter months, companies like the South Milwaukee Ice Company located around 17th & Rawson Aves harvested huge blocks of ice from the mill pond. Those blocks of ice were then stored in an ice house, insulated with sawdust.

The ice man, a big hefty guy who could wrestle a 100lb block of ice (approx. 3 cu.ft.) off his horse drawn wagon, rode thru the streets looking for the "ICE" sign in windows. Using his ice pick, he would chop off the size you asked for then lift it out of the wagon with his tongs and carry it into the house. He wore a rubber pad over his shoulder to keep the melting ice from running down his back as he wrestled it into your ice box. Children would follow the wagon, hoping to snag small ice chips that fell to the ground.



In fall, the South Milwaukee Ice Co. had a crew of men who were tasked with cleaning obstructions and rubbish out of the mill pond so as to have everything clear for the winters ice crop. They began harvesting ice on the mill pond once it was at least a foot thick. Sadly Herman Grote, president of the SMIC was found drowned under the ice of the mill pond in December 1935.

Full disclosure: Some sentences in this article were shamelessly copied directly out of articles in the old South Milwaukee newspapers. If you'd like to read more about this sort of thing check out the digitized newspapers available thru the South Milwaukee Library's website. [smlibrary.org/localhistory](http://smlibrary.org/localhistory)

### Do you dream about gardening in winter?

The gardens around our museum could use a make over. Specifically the two in front on either side of the porch continuing along the east and west sides. We're looking for members to create a plan for us. No physical labor involved! Just your imagination. Our main requirement is that it be low maintenance. If you'd like to try your hand at it reach out to us. Anyone who submits a plan will get a small 'thank you' bag with Society items.

The South Milwaukee Historical Society is a 501.c.3 organization whose mission is "to preserve, honor and promote South Milwaukee's rich history for generations to come."

## Have you renewed your membership yet?

Beginning in 2024 membership fees went up. We didn't want to do it but the cost of everything has gone up significantly since we last set our dues. These increases apply to new and renewing members in the individual, family and business classes and NEW individual life members. Current life members are members for life!! You do not need to "renew" your life membership at the new rate (although we always appreciate additional donations.)

Life members will notice we changed the mailing labels. The (L) indicating a life membership is gone. If your name is darker (bold type) than your address it indicates you are a life member.

Beginning with this issue we've also started emailing the newsletter. Be sure to include your email address and check the box if you're willing to go paperless.

If you don't renew by the spring newsletter we'll have to take you off our mailing list.



## South Milwaukee Historical Society

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I would be willing to receive the newsletter electronically.

Individual:  \$15.00 - Annual

Family:  \$20.00 - Annual

Business:  \$25.00 - Annual

Individual Lifetime:  \$125.00

Additional Donation:  \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send completed form and check to:*

**South Milwaukee Historical Society**

**717 Milwaukee Avenue**

**South Milwaukee WI 53172**

**Thank you for supporting your local Historical Society!**



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