



# South Milwaukee Historical Society

## Board of Directors

Richard Thennes, President  
Janet Rodman, Vice President  
Judy Balestrieri, Treasurer  
Sue Ziarek, Secretary  
Don Bulley  
Mark Draeger  
June Acheson  
Karen Lyon



## 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 2026*

Greetings!

We at the South Milwaukee Historical Society wish you all a very happy and productive New Year!

When I was preparing this New Years letter to you, I thought back to the past year. We had so many positive things happen at the Society. We made great strides to improving your museum ~ its grounds and the building! We could not have made all that progress without you, our members, friends, and supporters!

However, we are entering an exciting new year and starting today we need to look forward to what is coming next. There is always a need to improve, and that is our goal for 2026. Your board of directors has dreams ~ big dreams ~ and we need your input and support to succeed so that your Historical Society is the best it can be. With your help and involvement, we look to 2026 as our best year yet! Our Historical Society is our most valuable resource! We cannot and will not let it be forgotten! Happy New Year!

*Richard Thennes* – 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

# Museum Updates

**Henry Home and Yard** came in with a load of dirt and grass seed to level out the lawn. It was getting rather bumpy thanks to the neighborhood squirrels. That work did put a hold on our plans for a memorial garden area honoring founding member Chet Grobschmidt. Joan and Karen will be working on some clean - up in that area so we'll be good to go in Spring.



Home of the future  
Chet Grobschmidt  
memorial garden

**HUGE** shout out to John Kolp. In December he and his crew took down some nuisance black walnut trees along the garage at no charge to the Society. They did a fantastic job and were great to work with. We can't thank John enough and recommend them to anyone who needs trees trimmed or taken down,





### *Slide down my cellar door...*

The cellar door (also known as a Bilco door) at the museum was getting quite old and difficult to open and close - especially for these aging board members! In November Josh Backhaus from **BTek Group LLC**, one of the few people who will still install these doors, replaced it with a brand new hydraulic-assist door. It is so much easier to use. He also put in a new weathertight - and mouse proof - security access door to the basement. Josh is a very talented carpenter and we would highly recommend him!



Continuing in the basement, our favorite handyman, Brian Boll, took down an unused clothes chute receptacle and put together a section of shelves using the left-over wood from the office remodel. It's amazing how much more open that area of the basement feels now!

## December Open House



We had a lot of fun with the visitors at the December open house. Always popular is President Richard Thennes's demonstration of old time entertainment centers, ie: Cylinder & crank Victrola. One of our visitors, Dan Isaacs, treated us to an impromptu concert on our pump organ! If you'd like to hear him playing, the video is on our website. He also offered to come back and play at a future open house. Watch our Facebook page for info on that. Daughter Frankie also played the pump organ!

Janet, Judy & Sue put together a new display at the Bucyrus Club. Stop by and check it out and be sure to enjoy lunch at Skyline Deli while you're there



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

Upcoming Saturdays  
10am—3pm

February 21

March 21

April 18

(weather permitting)

Visitors to the museum receive a coupon for \$5 admission to the Bucyrus Museum  
**Hope to see you there!**



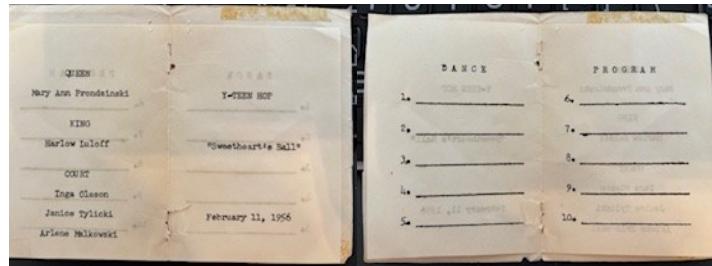
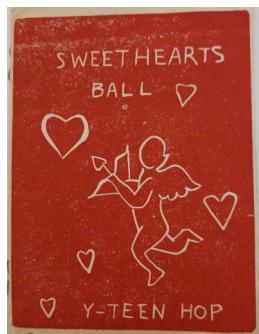
We have a new display at the museum showcasing shoe stores and shoe repair shops. Stay tuned for an exciting new addition to that display in Spring



We're also working on a display of items from local banks.

## Remember When....

Y-Teens was a South Milwaukee high school activity in the 1950's & 1960's. They held suppers, dances, parties, and bake sales within the group. According to the Bay Mist, the goals of the group are to promote friendship and do away with prejudice. One of the biggest social events of the year was the hop held in February. Pictured at the right is a Dance Program from the Sweethearts Ball held on February 11, 1956. Also pictured are the Queen and King of that ball - Mary Ann Prondzinski and Harlow Luloff. Besides the dance the girls gave a Mother's Tea and promoted world peace by attending the World Fellowship Breakfast held at the YWCA.



# TIDS & BITS

## ***Don't let this be your last newsletter!!***

**There's still time to renew your membership for 2026 but if we don't receive your payment by the Spring newsletter we'll have to remove you from our mailing list. Fill out the form below and mail it in today!**



### **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!**

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."

#### **Reminder to New Members...**

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

#### **SENIORS CAN AVOID TAXES ON RMDs BY DONATING THEM TO QUALIFIED NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS.**

DONATIONS ARE 100% DEDUCTABLE UP TO \$100,000 (\$200,000 FILING JOINTLY).  
(**IRA custodians must arrange for transfer of funds.**)

For detailed information, google: "IRS RMD QCD"

The South Milwaukee Historical Society is an all-volunteer 501 C(3) Corporation.  
PROUD PAST, PROMISING FUTURE

#### **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

**Thank you** to everyone who signed up for the electronic newsletter. So far it's a big success! If you'd like to give it a try let us know. You can call or text 414-520-1285 or email us at [Southmilwaukeehistory@gmail.com](mailto:Southmilwaukeehistory@gmail.com) You can always go back to a paper copy if you decide you prefer that.



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