

THE BRIDGE



Connecting the Past to the Present where the Rock River meets the Yellowstone Trail

Vol 1 #6

Official Newsletter of Theresa Historical Society

Nov –Dec 2025

Theresa, Wisconsin

**Wir wünschen Ihnen frohe Weihnachten
und ein glückliches neues Jahr**

*Fröhliche Weihnachten
von
Theresa, Wisconsin*



**German Language Christmas Card received
by Ella Dobberpuhl, Zion's Church Rd.,
Town of Theresa in 1916.**

We Wish You A Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year

Our headline is in German, the language of most of the early pioneer settlers in the Theresa and surrounding areas.

This holiday season marks 179th year since the first German speaking settlers came to Theresa Township in 1846. While Solomon Juneau established a trading post in Theresa area in 1833, its highly unlikely that any Christmas celebrations occurred in the area before the arrival of those immigrant settlers.

The celebrations of the Christmas began in Rome when the Catholic Church began celebrating Christmas on Dec. 25 in 336 CE to replace pagan celebrations. The old world customs of giving, receiving & sharing along with holiday gatherings had its roots after the council of Tours Italy in 567 C.E. which established the Advent season in preparation for the Christmas season and New Year. For devout Christians the importance of Christmas was often considered secondary to Epiphany and Easter until later in the 20th Century.

When the pioneer settlers arrived in Wisconsin the Native Americans celebrated Winter Solstice, on Dec 21st adding some similar customs of gift giving, thanks to the traders and Christian missionaries who came across the lands. Gift giving was a strong part of their culture along with honoring the Creator and celebrating life.



THANK YOU!

**It has been a most wonderful year
for the
Theresa Historical Society.**

We have grown with leaps and bound and accomplished so much this year. Our membership has grown and along with it our presence in the community and the surrounding area. All of this because of the support of our wonderful volunteers and the generosity of our supporters. Thank you to all for being friends of Theresa History.

THIS ISSUE:

We will be sharing some of the highlights of the past year and taking look at the Christmas in Theresa gone-bye

New exhibits and the future of the 1902 Old Village Hall Meeting & Library Room.

How to become a THS Volunteer.

More great Old Historical Theresa area photos.



A big thank you to the Folks at Dutch Touch Greenhouse and Landscaping for the fall flowers on the THS Campus. Here's the entry to the Reklau Cabin. Dutch Touch Really made the THS campus look great!



Published by: Theresa Historical Society

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Cindy Bowe: Secretary

Kathy Benter: Treasurer

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Widmer's Milk Truck Stuck In Breitag's Driveway 1958

There will be No THS December meeting

NEXT MEETING

Monday, January 19th, 2026, 4 PM

Theresa Public Library

Welcome New members!

Warren & Bonnie Howe

Donations

Dennis and Peggy Proeber

Warren & Bonnie Howe

Joan Schnitzler

Theresa Roethle

THS appreciates your support

How can You help?

***We always need volunteers and help.
We value your time and talent as well
as your treasure.***

Consider a Memorial Donation

***In memory of a loved one or perhaps
one of your pioneer ancestors.***

**Theresa Historical Society is a
501(c)3 tax exempt charitable
organization**



Nothing happens within THS without the efforts of our dedicated volunteers. We are always seeking new volunteers dedicated to helping bring our local history to life.

We especially are in need of docents. These are folks who assist and guide our visitors, providing information about our exhibits and making them feel at home.

Even if you don't know anything about local history we will provide the necessary training to guide our visitors. It's a great way to give back to your community and meet new friends. There are many areas you can help. Archiving and cataloging our photos and artifacts, help us develop youth and community outreach programs, design exhibits, or just brainstorm with us.

We can always use a helping hand, moving things around, tidying up buildings and grounds, gardening, or maybe you have special skill that can help our cause?

We will always appreciate your interest and support of the Theresa Historical Society.



Volunteering at THS museum is more than just giving time. It is about keeping the stories of the area live for future generations. We have a rich history here in Theresa. We need you to help us preserve and present it.



1901 Old Theresa Village Hall/Library meeting room, Home to new exhibits in 2026.

Reflecting back on 2025.

It was certainly a most wonderful year for THS. In the 9 years I've been a member things really came to life this year. The enthusiasm and diligence of old and new members was incredible. We opened several new exhibits. We broke attendance records and in the process we met so many wonderful people who are interested in our local history.

We've put the THS campus to bed for the winter, covering our treasures, and diligently working toward bringing more displays on line for the 2026 season.

Our goals are many and at the top is reopening the 1901 Theresa Village Hall meeting room and former Theresa library for exhibits. It's a project that has been talked about for a long time and finally is becoming a reality as we've had several work sessions this fall and progress is being made.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Our first goal for 2026, is establishing an organized storage and work area for our archives and artifacts currently not being showcased, along with adding approximately 600 sq. feet of the old hall for new exhibits. It is truly a labor of love. Thanks to our faithful volunteers we are preserving and telling the stories of Theresa and its history. We hope you will consider becoming a part of our organization in any way you can. Help us make it happen.



Thank You!

Judy Zack Mikki Sue Bonnie



Bob Beck and Rob Bowe contemplate a better way to rip up old carpet tiles...with no success!



Thank You!

Laura Bob Jim Joan



Work is progressing at the Old Theresa Village Hall/Library on the THS museum converting it into an artifact and archival document storage area and museum display hall. THS Volunteers, Wade Beck, Bob Beck, Jim Polster and Kathy Benter (who escaped the photographer's lens) install new shelving for the project. Below Left: Bob Beck and Rob Bowe contemplate if there is an easier to pull up old carpet tiles. Current plans include opening over 600 sq. ft of the hall area for new displays exhibitions and collections in June of 2026. Laura Bruederle Photos



We closed the 2025 THS Museum season on Sept 30th with a visit from the faculty and students of Immanuel Lutheran School -Town Of Theresa. Immanuel Lutheran School is the 2nd oldest school in the Town of Theresa, established 1855. Our community outreach program continues educate students and adults about the Theresa area's rich history. Rob Bowe Photo

THS Has A New Facebook Page!



THS-Theresa Historical Society

PLEASE STOP BY AND VISIT OUR NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

Due to new technology we are migrating to a new Facebook page!
All our photos from the old page and more are following us there!

JUST GO TO FACEBOOK AND ENTER IN SEARCH BOX:

THS -THERESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOLLOW AND LIKE US



Facebook • THS-Theresa Historical Society



Come and Visit THS Museum in 2026!

We will be expanding our museum with many new exhibits
as we open the old Theresa Library/Village Hall meeting room on the THS Campus

2026 Museum Open House Dates

Saturday, June 6 (Yellowstone Trail Day Returns)

Sunday, June 28

Sunday, July 26

Sunday, August 30

Sunday, September 27

Private Tours Available By Appointment

famousrobbo@gmail.com Ph 920-583-0291 or 920-960-4198



Theresa Montage



UP COMING FREE PROGRAM

Rock River Settlement Stories



Featuring Theresa Historical Society Member Rob Bowe

Rob will share unusual stories about the pioneer days in the Rock River Valley of eastern Dodge County. Rob has been telling his tales in The Mayville News and The Dodge County Pionier for many years.

Join us for an entertaining evening

Thursday January 8, 2026

6:00PM

Theresa Public Library

Presented by The Theresa Historical Society



"I painted this scene as I remembered the evening of Christmas Day in 1959. My grandparents and uncle's family lived on the farm just over the hill, east of Immanuel Lutheran Church -River Church on Hwy AY. As we drove home past the church that night, fresh snow fell to the ground, sparkling in the moonlight, and the "Star" was in the east..It was truly a beautiful "Stille Nacht-Silent Night" Rob Bowe

Many of the traditions of Christmas we celebrate in Theresa and the surrounding area originated in northern Europe and were brought here by the German speaking immigrants.

In the German language Christmas is known *Fröhliche Weihnachten*. The German speaking pioneers brought their European customs of decorating Christmas trees, making Christmas foods such as stollens and cookies, goose, duck and big roasts, giving gifts and the folk lore of St. Nicholas & Santa Claus.

Diane Christian Boehm in her book, ***Farm Life: The Quilt Blocks of Memories*** writes about Christmas on her family's farm in Theresa Township.

"Our Christmas began with Advent, the time of the year between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Weekly Advent church services would be held on Wednesday night and all our family would attend."

Boehm tells her readers that in early December,

the parlor door of the family home would be shut in preparation for the coming holidays, creating a mystery that made the children wonder what was going on behind the door. It would remain a mystery until Christmas eve.

Boehm continues, "The excitement of Christmas Eve was without parallel. Supper was early so milking and farm chores could be completed in time for everyone to get dressed...for the Christmas eve service...The story of Christmas was told through our (school children) recitations. Each of us (Immanuel Lutheran grade school students) was given a passage to memorize (and speak at the service)... We also sang Christmas carols in well-rehearsed three part harmony. The congregation had high expectations for the Christmas programs...At the end of the program we got our reward: A Christmas bag-a bag with a large orange, a shiny red apple, several pieces of chocolate fairy food and other candy, and a big scoop of peanuts and other nuts in their shells.

The final song of the Christmas service...would be in German , with **"Stille Nacht"** (Silent Night), being sung by memory by everyone in German...The short drive after church was filled with anticipation. Dad would come into the house first; the rest of us would rush in to find the parlor door magically opened with bubble lights sparkling on the Christmas tree and gifts arranged around the manger set under the tree."

(Ms. Boehm's nostalgic book, *Farm Life: The Quilt Blocks of Memories* is available through THS store. See page 16 to order)



Nativity sets, decorating Christmas trees and gift giving Christmas trees were old world customs brought to America by European emigrants.

Most Lutheran and Protestant churches held similar special Christmas Eve services, with children singing carols and reciting or re-enacting the Christmas story for their congregations. Area Catholic churches celebrated Christmas Eve with traditional Midnight Mass processional of Mary & Joseph up the church aisle placing the baby Jesus in the empty straw filled manger crib. Needless to say, there wasn't a dry eye in the house in any of these churches when the lights dimmed and the large Christmas tree lights glowed as the those gathered sang "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night) in German.

On Christmas day services and mass were also held. Many area churches conducted their Christmas services in the German language into the late 1930s. Today, the tradition of singing "Stille Nacht" in German still exists in many churches in the Theresa area .



An old German woodcut of a Christmas tree with candles in the 1800s. Artist unknown

Artificial trees were nonexistent until later part of the 1900s. Everyone had a real Christmas tree grown out in the woods. If you lived out on the farm, grandpa went out into the woods and cut down a Christmas tree and



A Christmas tree from grandpa's woods. Arnold & Marilyn Christian's family -1951.

Allen, Nancy & Loren Christian



Santa draws a big crowd near the Rock River House in 1953 . Photo Jim Widmer

In Theresa many gas stations and other business sold trees, not to mention Santa Claus always came to town bringing Christmas cheer, asking the boys and girls, if they were naughty or nice.

Bright Christmas lights decorated homes through out the village, while on Milwaukee Street, store windows and business were decorated in tune with the Holiday season. Over at the Weber Brewery they even brewed a special "Pioneer Holiday" Beer for the Christmas cheer,

Lots of folks in the Theresa area will also remember the Lichtenberg family on Cty AY, at the bridge over Rock River at Mc Arthur Road, selling a lot of Christmas trees in the area, especially the tall ones that were found in many area churches.

Lastly, everyone always wanted a white Christmas celebrating with family and friends from far and near enjoying the holiday season together. The children looked forward to sledding down brewery hill as well ice skating and playing ice hockey on the Rock River.

When we look back on those memories today, it really was and still is the most wonderful time of the year.

**For Christmas Cheer
don't forget
Pioneer
Holiday Special**

A quality all-grain beer you will enjoy

Now on sale at all Taverns and Beer Depots.

**G. WEBER
BREWING CO.**

Phone: 41. Theresa, Wisconsin

Merry Christmas Past



Downtown Theresa Looking North. Christmas week of 1926



Reinhold & Ella Christan grandchildren celebrate Christmas-1950, on Allen Rd farm. L-R Rob Bowe, Al Christian, Loren Christian, Phyliss Grulke, Fritz Grulke, Carolyn Grulke.



Sledding on Weber Brewery Hill 1920



Santa Claus Comes to Theresa. Dec. 1951, Crowd gathered in front of Krueger's Hotel, downtown Theresa.



**Downtown Theresa Christmas Eve 1970
Jim Widmer Photo**



A team of horses pulling a bobsled takes this family in Theresa township to church during Christmas season 1922.

Settlement Stories

By Rob Bowe

To:



Santa Claus
North Pole

Remember when you used to sit down and write a letter to Santa? I vaguely remember one of my Santa letters in about 2nd grade. It went something like this:

"Dear Santa:

Please bring me an electric train and a truck and a tractor with a plow. Also, when you get to my house use the back door, our chimney is too small and you'll get stuck in the furnace as we don't have a fireplace... I have been a really good boy since I was taken out of church last summer for being naughty. God bless my little sister and bring her a doll and bring me a baby brother. And bring mom and dad a new Chevy. Our old Plymouth" is a gray ugly clunker. I don't like it. Enjoy the milk and peanut butter cookies...my mom made them just for you and God Bless you and Mrs. Claus and the elves and the rest of the reindeer.

Sincerely

Bobby Bowe"

After that you'd put your Santa letter in an envelope, lick and seal it, address it to Santa Claus, c/o North Pole, next lick a 3-cent stamp, stick it on the envelope and walk to post office where you dropped it in the mailbox. So where did it go? It ended up being sent to Santa at the North Pole! Right? Or maybe... it went to Santa Claus at Theresa station?

Jim Polster, Curator of the Theresa Historical Society, shared on Facebook an anecdotal story about how local officials once tried to rename the small Theresa Township village of Marshville—now called Theresa Station—to North Pole, Wisconsin back in 1940.

Polster writes, "Back then they wanted to call Theresa Station "North Pole" because of the large amount of Santa Claus mail (they thought) it would receive... local officials lobbied the Postmaster General to rename the town "North Pole". They even had a toy factory that would relocate itself there. As a result, all mail would have been have been postmarked from the town under its new name, North Pole, Wisconsin. Unfortunately, it was rejected, they said it wasn't far enough north."



"But we still have North Pole road on the outskirts of Theresa Station!" Polster Concluded.



The North Pole story made a big splash in some of the area newspapers.

It all started when Marshville AKA Theresa Station Postmaster A. H. Scheibe petitioned the US Postmaster General Farley in Washington D.C. in 1939 to change the name of Marshville-Thersa Station Post Office to North Pole, Wisconsin Accordingly temporary approval for the name change was granted to go into effect on July 1, 1940, pending congressional approval. Local officials were excited as the towns 50 inhabitants prepared to become North Pole, Wisconsin. Sadly on March 15, 1940, Congress failed to officially approve the name change, because of the town's small size and southeastern Wisconsin location. A year later in 1941 the United States Postal Service closed the Theresa Station post office which had ben established back in 1897. BAH HUMBUG!



YOU CAN HELP US PRESERVE OUR RICH HISTORY

Community support makes it possible for the Theresa Historical Society to achieve its mission.

We are so thankful to our volunteers and to those friends of Theresa area history who have recently contributed to the support of THS whether it be time, talent or treasure.

As we are in the process of renovating the 1901 Old Village Hall/Library, and getting bids on renovating & upgrading the Koll Wagon Pavilion, we continue to seek community financial support to preserve our historical buildings.

THS is a qualified IRC Section 501(c) 3 non-profit organization and as such all financial donations are tax deductible.

We would like to take this opportunity to bring you some information about what some of those financial donations options are. The most common donation is cash. We are certainly grateful to those who have contributed with donations when visiting the THS Museum campus and those who have sent THS private donations this year. Thank You. With the end of the year approaching you might consider a memorial donation in memory of a family member or a Theresa area pioneer in your family.

See page 16 for donation information.

Donate NOW!

There are other options that might provide valuable tax benefits such as a donation of property, securities or marketable securities to our cause. We suggest you contact your tax advisor or financial advisor for details and clarifications specific to your tax situation when considering that sort of major gift giving. If you are interested in making one of these types of donations please contact us and we will put you in touch with our THS Treasurer Kathy Benter (kjlbenter83@gmail.com).

Have Theresa Area Items?

We are always looking historical items and stories from Theresa and the surrounding area. Everything from artifacts, postcards, advertising items, documents, old letters, family history, signs, old photos, school items etc. will be considered.

Contact Us: famousrobbo@gmail.com 920-583-0291

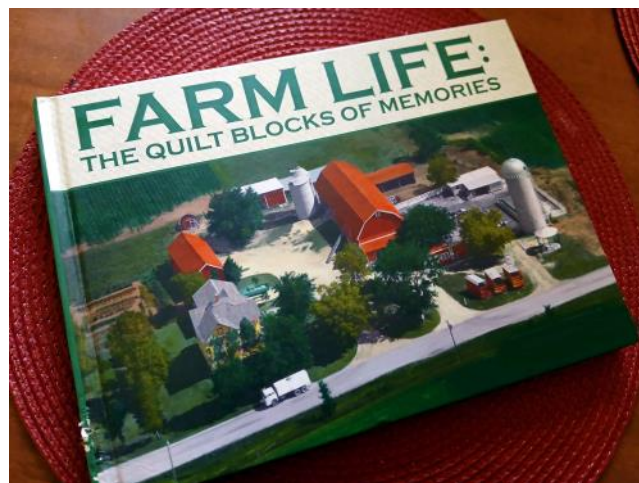
Limited Edition ORDER NOW!

FARM LIFE: THE Quilt Blocks of Memories

By Diane Christian Boehm

A wonderful collection of memories about growing up on a dairy farm in Theresa Township, Dodge County, Wisconsin in the 1940s, 50s & 60s. High quality hard-cover book, printed on superior quality paper. Filled with wonderful memories and stories. Lots of Color and Black & White photos. 106 pages

GREAT XMAS GIFT IDEA!



Please send ____copy/copies of FARM LIFE: THE Quilt Blocks of Memories.

I enclose \$32 per copy with free shipping & handling .

Make your check payable and mail to Theresa Historical Society, 105 Schnitzler Dr., Theresa WI. 53091.

Ship my order to : Name_____Phone_____

Address _____City_____State_____ Zip_____

Email:_____

Theresa Historical Society is 501(c)3 tax exempt charitable organization

The Theresa Historical Society needs your Help

Your can help to continue & preserve the history of our area. Here's how .

1. Become a Member 2025 THS Historical Society memberships:

\$ 15 Individual_____ \$25 Family_____

\$50 Business Sponsor membership _____

2. Donations to THS Historical Society \$100_____ \$50_____ \$25_____ Other_____

3. I would to volunteer time or others talents to help the society._____

4 . I have artifacts to donate. Please contact me _____

Please check the appropriate lines in number 1-4 above

Total Enclosed _____ Total Enclosed _____

Name _____

Address _____City_____State_____ Zip_____

Phome _____Email _____

Make Payment& Check payable to Theresa Historical Society

Mailing address R. Bowe, THS 105 Schnitzler Dr., Theresa, Wi . 53091

THANK YOU! For Supporting The Theresa Historical Society