

Kelley Farm Post

FRIENDS OF THE KELLEY FARM
SPRING 2016



Friends of the Kelley Farm gather in the spring every year to pitch in to help get the place ready for summer visitors.

April Friends Work “Party” by Mac MacK

I always thought the word “party” denoted a great time, a fun time, a swinging time, a time to laugh, joke, talk, exchange ideas, have a good time, and, in general, leave the party feeling good about yourself, others, and what had just transpired. I suppose you could say that the Friends of the Kelley Farm Annual Spring Work Party, its Spring Fling, met all of those criteria and a bit more. Certainly all of the above actually happened and some more as well. Those hands that showed up were most welcome and they were welcome to work, too...and work they did. Raking, planting, cleaning, storing, stowing, tending, window washing and wood splitting, all under bright blue skies that covered 35 degrees across the ground. Cool, yes, but fortunately the wind short breaks from time-to-time and it wasn't too bad. No snow and no snow blanket. Thank goodness.



If you're of a mind to help at the next Spring Fling, keep us in mind and check next winter's newsletter for details and date and time.

Friend Spotlight: Smitty's Workshop by Mac MacK

There are friends of the Kelley Farm and there are Friends of the Kelley Farm. The former, the friends, are anybody who comes out to the farm to visit, takes a stroll around the patch and likes what they see. Sometimes these folks sign up for the Friends of the Kelley Farm, a group of people who actively work towards making the Kelley Farm a better place. These Friends do a variety of tasks around the Farm and elsewhere, all of which serve the interests of the Farm and go a long way towards the goal (as stated above) of making the farm a better place. One such Friend is Aaron Smith of Smitty's Workshop.

Aaron is the gentleman who puts this newsletter to bed, in printshop speak. He takes all the articles and the several pictures, and puts them in place to make up the newsletter you hold in your hands. He does all the layout, artwork, and the many other little things that make this newsletter the high-quality, professional-looking publication that goes out across the country several times a year.

Smitty wasn't always the polished craftsman that he is today. Born in Cold Spring, Minnesota, he grew up in that small central Minnesota town. As a kid, he wanted to be an architect. He used to watch Bob

Villa on This Old House and got the bug to build, to create, to design, and this led him to where he is today, albeit in a roundabout way.

At Saint John's University he majored in Art, Printmaking, and Photography. After college he began to put his design sense to work with another historic Minnesota property The Saint Paul Hotel. Soon he started thinking about starting a design business out on his own.

He was going out elsewhere too, with Anne, the love of his life. Due to some suspect study habits, Aaron ended up spending a 5th year at Saint John's. It was in this fortuitous last year that he met Anne, a student at Saint Ben's. He helped her with a class or two and she helped him realize that she was the best thing that ever happened to him, and that was that. They married, now have three wonderful children and live down near where the Elk and the Mississippi Rivers connect.

Back in 1998 they founded "Smitty's Workshop" (SmittyPages.com) a business formed around creative design, photography and printing. It worked. They started with nothing and built it into a thriving business. Now Smitty's Workshop builds websites,

designs all kinds of things from museum exhibits to lunch boxes, and creates content for businesses across the Midwest and beyond.

But I digress. Smitty is a great friend (and Friend) of the Kelley Farm. He prefers the historical side, especially the house, because it offers a look into the lives of 19th Century life. He is looking forward to all the new facilities because they will greatly enhance the telling of the Kelley Farm story, offer a look into the past – and the future, of all facets of farming in America.

"We help people tell their story," said Smitty, and they do it well. This newsletter is the perfect example. We are deeply indebted to him.



Aaron "Smitty" Smith pitching in at a previous April Work Party.



We're Open!

HOURS:

Summer hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10am-5pm, Sunday noon to 5pm, and closed Monday-Tuesday. We WILL be open July 4th!

The new Visitor Center at the Historic Oliver Kelley Farm is taking shape. Come out and check our progress!

At The Expo

In April the Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual exposition in the gymnasiums at the Elk River High School. Various businesses, organizations, and civic groups gathered



in a four-hour free-for-all of food, fun, and frolic. The Friends of the Kelley Farm had a booth and many people stopped by to say hello and visit about the farm. If we could have bottled the curiosity of all those who asked about the new buildings going up (which are now easily visible from USIO), we could still be selling those bottles next year. The booth was staffed by Bob Quist, five volunteers and two roosters. Bob politicked, the volunteers helped with the dirt-dishing, the roosters strutted, and all hands passed out brochures and pamphlets. Plus - there were activities for the kids who came by to learn and create with seeds that hopefully will grow into something!

The expo was a roaring success in terms of bringing news of the farm to the public. Even more so, those present brought awareness of the farm to all those who stopped by and no doubt, much good will come of it.

Spotlight: ReNee Hanson by Mac MacK

There's a young lady working at the Kelley Farm who is, for the time being anyway, the mainstay of the place. She is ReNee Hanson and she is in the front office most all the time. ReNee (Re-nay) is the general gofer, the go-to, the one person who is in the office while all the others are out on their rounds, doing whatever important things they do that need doing.

ReNee was born in Ames, Iowa, and moved a bit from Iowa town-to-town as her father moved for work. If Iowans had passports, hers would be full of visa stamps from Waterloo, Denison and small towns all over western Iowa. Finally, her parents saw the light and moved to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where they still live.

She had big ambitions as a kid, deciding in the 7th grade, after getting braces, that she wanted to be a dentist. This goal stood her in good stead all the way into college at the University of Minnesota, but came to a screeching halt when she didn't do as well as she might have in chemistry. Those darned academics wanted a passing grade in chemistry and ReNee came just short of the mark, cutting short her dreams of crawling around inside peoples' teeth. Instead she opted for dental

hygienist school so she crawl around peoples' teeth.

The road to certification was a long one and involved a good many detours along the way. Reckoning that 'you do what you have to do' to make ends meet and to get to where you want to be, ReNee has had quite a bit of work experience. She began her work career at Arnold's, a Minneapolis restaurant, where she met her husband, Marc (22 years ago). She has worked in the grocery business, various retail stores, and even as a pothole filler for the Eau Claire street department in her younger days. Of course she continued as a dental hygienist and still does so, part-time, to the present day.

ReNee has been at the Kelley Farm since 2004, recruited by Nancy Benz to the Friends of the Kelley Farm as they struggled to keep the farm open. Their efforts worked and she has been with the Farm ever since. She likes the Farm, the people at the Farm, and darn near everything else about it. While she prefers outside to inside work, right now she helps in the office. She's good with paperwork, right enough, but she does all the costuming as well, including making buttonholes, a trick unto itself.



ReNee, our costumer at *The Farm*, knows the secret to buttonholes done right.

"There are smart people out there," she said. "This is my passion," adding that she loves to see kids out there especially, because she likes to see the kids learn about the farm, about its history, and about history in general. "It's different every day," saying that they can learn about the whole process of the farm and its life cycle in one weekend.

Her favorite activity? Watching the House Ladies making sorghum. She would like to see wind-powered irrigation at the Farm but that won't be happening anytime soon.

She's not strictly an office girl, however. She has been known to watch a bit of TV (Big Bang Theory and Downton Abbey are her favorite shows) and she reads quite a bit. (Little Women is her favorite book.) She's a quilter and a gardener but both activities have been curtailed somewhat but her working weekends at the Farm.

Quite the busy girl, our ReNee. Quite the driver, too, except when it comes to grocery carts. You might ask her about that the next time you see her.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

We're looking forward to all types of wonderful events coming this season. You can currently see baby animals, the early plantings, the last of the roots from the root cellar, and a growing crop of new Visitor Center facilities which we hope to begin harvesting later this year.



FARM ANIMAL WEEKEND

June 4th and 5th

FATHER'S DAY

Fathers get in FREE,
if accompanied by a child.



Get the latest and share your photos on our Facebook page.



FRIENDS OF THE KELLEY FARM

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Become a Friend of the Kelley Farm!

Inquire at the check-in desk when you
come out to visit!

Oliver Kelley and the Grange by John Kuester

In October
of 2006
Oliver
Hudson
Kelley was
inducted
into the



Agricultural Hall of Fame in
Bonner Springs, Kansas. The
Hall honors individuals who
have made outstanding con-
tributions to the furthering of
agriculture. Their honor roll
includes past Presidents
Washington, Jefferson, and
Lincoln; inventors John
Deere, Cyrus McCormick, and
Eli Whitney; scientists George
Washington Carver, Norman
Borlaug, and Luther Burbank;
and a range of others including
entertainer Willie Nelson and
Andrew Volstead, past Con-
gressman from Minnesota.

The primary reason for
Kelley's induction was his
co-founding, in 1867, of the
National Grange and Order of
the Patrons of Husbandry. The
Grange educated farmers and
their families and created a so-
cial fraternity that united farm-
ers nationwide. Kelley was also
an innovator. He used his farm
in Elk River to experiment in
seed selection, irrigation tech-
nology, animal feeding & care,
and treatment of soil.

The Kelley Family owned the
farm from 1849 until 1901
when it passed to other own-
ership. Kelley, himself, had
limited involvement, on the
farm, once the establishment
of the National Grange took off
in the late 1860's. In 1934 The
State Grange of Minnesota en-
couraged the National Grange
to purchase the property with

the intent "...of acquiring and
maintaining the farmstead
of Oliver Hudson Kelley as a
memorial for posterity." The
National Grange purchased the
property and held it until 1960
when they donated it to the
Minnesota Historical Society.
In 1964 the Kelley Farm was
designated a National Historic
Monument by the US Depart-
ment of Interior.

Kelley was a pioneer farmer
who is recognized for his work
as an early practitioner of food
production sciences—and as
an organizer. The National
Grange and the State Grange
of Minnesota are still active to
this day. His scientific approach
helped set the foundation for
the emergence of modern ag-
riculture—in Minnesota, in the
United States, and throughout
the world.

In modern society where the
average citizen is at least two or
three generations away from
life on a working farm, inter-
est abounds in where our food
comes from and how to guar-
antee a safe and healthy food
supply for future generations.



New construction rises from
the ground at the Kelley Farm,
and new programming tells
both Oliver Kelley's story and
the complexities of modern
agriculture. We marvel that this
all began 150 years ago when
a local farmer dreamed and
worked his farm on the banks
of the Mississippi River.