

## Museum Notes

for the week of April 21 – 27, 2024

by Kristen Parrott, curator

April is National Volunteer Month, and an opportunity for us to recognize the many volunteers who help the Vernon County Historical Society to flourish. Volunteers do a wide variety of tasks here, including running the reception desk, filing, researching, writing grants, serving on committees, cleaning, doing yardwork, grilling bratwurst, and so much more. Thank you to all of our volunteers! And if you would like to join this hardworking crew, contact us at 608-637-7396.

Remember that the Ridges and Rivers Book Festival is this weekend, Friday, April 26, and Saturday, April 27. There will be a full day of author presentations here at the Vernon County History Center on Saturday, from 9 to 4:30. We will also have a table at the book fair, which will be held at Western Technical College next to Viroqua's public library. The book fair, where you can buy books directly from authors and small presses, runs from 9 to 4:30 on Saturday, April 27.

Our next free public history program will be on the topic of "The Ku Klux Klan in Vernon County and Western Wisconsin in the 1920s". This is the program originally scheduled for early April but postponed due to the snowstorm. It will now be held on Wednesday, May 1, at 7PM, at the Vernon County Museum and History Center. The speaker for the evening will be Dr. Michael Jacobs, a Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Baraboo campus.

Dr. Jacobs earned his PhD in U.S. history at Marquette University in 2001, with a dissertation on the Catholic response to the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest, 1920-1928. He researches and writes primarily on intolerance movements in the American Midwest. He served as a consultant on the PBS television series, "History Detectives," and advises the Wisconsin Historical Society on Klan-related artifacts, papers, and photographs.

Dr. Jacobs describes his talk as follows: "The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s was not necessarily comprised of like-minded racial bigots. The organization differed from the more familiar domestic terrorists of the post Civil War and Civil Rights eras. Jazz Age Klansmen made greater efforts to resemble mainstream fraternal orders. While African Americans remained an object of derision, western Wisconsin's Klan paid greater attention to Catholics, immigrants, and Prohibition violators. The Klan was active in Vernon County and included some of its most prominent citizens." Join us on May 1 to learn more about this difficult history.