

Traveler

The good old days of Wisconsin come to life.

Story and photos by Sylvia Lim

Imagine if you could travel back in time to visit people who lived in the 19th century. What might life look like? Old World Wisconsin offers a time travel experience to satisfy your curiosity. You can enjoy a live demonstration of traditional farming, visit the historic site of an early church, watch wool processing and see a Wisconsin blacksmith demonstrating iron-crafting skills. It's a great way to explore Wisconsin's good old days.

Today, Old World Wisconsin's historic farm and village buildings comprise the world's largest museum dedicated to the history of rural life. Old World Wisconsin was opened in 1976 and the museum's more than 60 historic structures range from ethnic farmsteads with furnished houses and rural outbuildings, to a crossroads village with its traditional small-town institutions. The site brings to life the experiences of the Germans, Finns, Danes, Norwegians, African-Americans and Poles who settled in Wisconsin in the 1870s. Costumed histori-

cal interpreters demonstrate and explain artisan crafts and old-time activities for visitors.

Crossroads Village

A variety of trades and professions are represented in Old World Wisconsin's rural village. These include farmers, shoemakers, wagon makers, shopkeepers, innkeepers, blacksmiths and laundresses. Visitors can chat with interpreters of these different trades and professions and get a taste of the working life of the 1870s.

One of the most important professions in the village was the blacksmith. The local blacksmith would create gates, grilles, railings, light fixtures, furniture, sculptures, cooking utensils, weapons and all sorts of other useful items by forging the metal and using tools to hammer, bend or cut. Blacksmiths worked in dim light because they had to be able to see the bright color of the hot metal. Direct sunlight would obscure the glow.

Learning about blacksmithing is fun. After an interpreter demonstrates the basics, visitors are encouraged to try their hand at creating a simple object out of metal.

Discover the soul of early Wisconsin by visiting St. Peter's

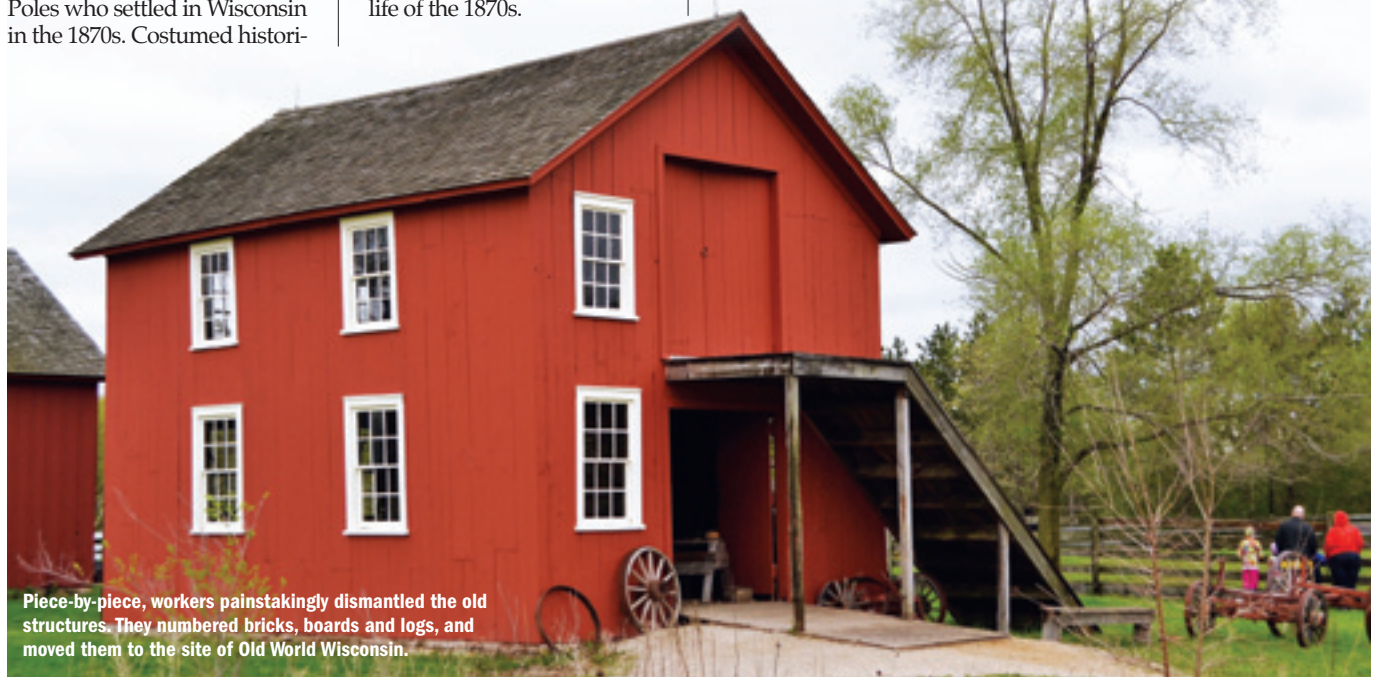
Church. Here you will learn what church services were like for the early European immigrants. The church itself was built by German pilgrims. The ornaments inside the church are the original ones and give a tangible sense of how the immigrants expressed their spiritual beliefs.

Housework

Old World Wisconsin also shows how daily life in the past could be simple and complicated at the same time. It was simple because our ancestors lived without modern conveniences and electronic devices. There was no television or internet to advertise products and influence decision-making. People



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Piece-by-piece, workers painstakingly dismantled the old structures. They numbered bricks, boards and logs, and moved them to the site of Old World Wisconsin.



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traveled by horse rather than car.

But it was also complicated because it took a long time to do basic tasks such as cooking. Unlike modern times, when an electric or gas stove can be turned on just by turning a knob or flipping a switch, a coal- or wood-burning stove was difficult to use. Since there was no thermostat to show the temperature, a housewife would need to keep an eye on the stove at all times. Whenever the fire began to die down, she would have to add more fuel to adjust the heat.


Another long, complicated process was wool-refining. Wool processing was really important because warm clothing was needed by the early settlers to survive winter. A housewife used a manual spinning wheel to convert the wool into yarn. She used her left hand to hold the fiber and her feet to turn the wheel to spin it. The whole process could take several hours.

Traditional farming

In the 19th century, farm animals played a significant role in economic life. At Old World Wisconsin there are several different individual farms representing different immigrant nationalities and eras: Finnish farms from 1897 and 1915, a Danish farm from 1890, German farms from 1860 to 1880 and a Norwegian farm.

As you walk past the farms, you can enjoy the view of green meadows full of animals and small cottages dotting the landscape. Animals kept on the farms include cows, horses, chickens and pigs. Chickens, visitors learn, were particularly valuable because they provided meat and eggs, the most important sources of protein. Dairy cows provided another

nutritious protein source. A lot of attention was also paid to pigs. According to publications on immigration during the 19th century, many German immigrants became pork butchers.

So next time modern life, with all its noise and distractions, makes you want to skip town, why not head to Old World Wisconsin for fresh air, serene meadows and a taste of farm life? You can slow down and enjoy the simplicity of the old ways that sustained the state's immigrants when they first came to this country. It's like walking into a Wisconsin wonderland. 

Sylvia Lim was an editorial intern with Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine while studying journalism in Wisconsin. She lives in Indonesia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Old World Wisconsin, including special events, visit oldworldwisconsin.wisconsinhistory.org. Old World Wisconsin is certified as a Travel Green Wisconsin site.

LOCATION: Old World Wisconsin is located 1.5 miles south of Eagle in Waukesha County. The main entrance is about one mile north of the postal address on Highway 67 (W372 S9727 Highway 67, PO Box 69, Eagle, WI 53119).

PHONE: 262-594-6301

HOURS: Summer hours run through Sept. 7 (open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Fall hours run Sept. 10 through Oct. 31. (open Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

ADMISSION:
 Adults (ages 13-64) - \$19
 Children (ages 4-12) - \$10
 Seniors (65 and older) - \$16
 Family pass (Up to 2 adults and all children up to age 17) - \$50
 Active military - free

What's cooking?

CELEBRATE A TASTY CAMPFIRE FAVORITE

Sticky and gooey is just the way we like it. The National Confectioners Association sponsors National S'mores Day on Aug. 10 to pay homage to the tasty snack consisting of layers of roasted marshmallow and chocolate bar sandwiched between two pieces of graham cracker.

According to nationaldaycalendar.com, the origin of the S'more is credited to entrepreneur Alex Barnum, however the first recorded version of the recipe can be found in the 1927 publication of "Tramping and Trailing with the Girl Scouts." Earlier recipes referred to the name "Some Mores" but it was eventually shortened to "S'mores." Today there are many variations of the simple campfire recipe.

Tasteofhome.com offers the S'more Bars Recipe that you can make at home.

Ingredients:

½ cup butter, softened

¾ cup sugar

1 egg

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1½ cups all-purpose flour

¾ cup graham cracker crumbs

1 teaspoon baking powder

⅛ teaspoon salt

5 milk chocolate candy bars (1.55 ounces each)

1 cup marshmallow crème

Directions:

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Combine the flour, cracker crumbs, baking powder and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture. Set aside ½ cup for topping.

Press remaining mixture into a greased 9-inch square baking pan. Place candy bars over the crust; spread with marshmallow crème. Crumble remaining graham cracker mixture over top.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. Store in an airtight container. Yields about 1½ dozen bars.

