

# Beckman Mill celebrating 150th anniversary

Submitted by Sheri Disrud

The year was 1868. In Newark Township west of Beloit, Wis., a man by the name of William How built a new grist mill along Raccoon Creek. It was later mortgaged to Louis Hyde and, in turn, sold to William T. Kelley.

In 1882 Catherine Beckmann bought the property, and her husband August became the miller. August operated the mill until his death in 1908, at which point his sons, Henry and Charles (Charlie), took over. The Beckman Mill was known for its buckwheat flour.

Henry died in 1939; his brother Charlie ceased milling operations in

1954. Charlie died in 1966, but his wife Bessie continued to live in the house until 1978.

Rock County purchased the Beckman property for use as a park, with the intention of restoring the mill. However, no work was done so the buildings deteriorated.

In 1990, a group of concerned residents along with the Beckman family formed the Friends of Beckman Mill and began extensive renovations. After the mill was restored, it was necessary to get the breached dam rebuilt in order to operate the original mill stones as they had in 1868. The dam was built along with

a fish ladder.

The house was renovated to serve as a museum and a barn was built. A building that replicated the creamery that once stood on the property was built to house a gift shop, meeting room, blacksmith shop and rest rooms. The county constructed a shelter which is available for rent by calling 608-757-5450. This project has been done in cooperation with Rock County Parks. The group continues its preservation efforts which have been accomplished by volunteers and their expertise in building, construction and engineering. The site is listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Opening day this year for the historic mill, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2018, was May 5. There is a special offer this year for membership into the Friends of Beckman Mill. With a \$100 or more membership, you will receive a limited edition wooden plaque of the mill (a \$25 value).

Summer and fall special events set for the park include an Ice Cream Social and Artists in the Park on July 15 and "Heritage Sunday" on Sept. 9.

The Ice Cream Social runs from noon to 4 p.m. Ice cream, root beer floats and cake are served for donations. Artists will be available for questions while they are painting throughout the park. Some of their art work will be available for sale. Special artistic activities for the kids will add to the excitement for the day. As with all of the events, the mill, museum and gift shop will be open for tours.

Heritage Sunday runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is Beckman Mill's largest event. It includes historic trade demonstrations such as basket weaving, wood carvers and broom making. Soldiers representing several different wars that the United States have been involved in will be there, including a Civil War doctor performing surgery.

This year Mr. John Deere, portrayed by Ed



Beckman Mill, before and after an elaborate restoration project completed by the Friends of Beckman Mill group. (Submitted photos)



## Kids love Janesville's Kiwanis Pond

By Jeff Brown  
From past Lakes Edition

Formerly known as the Atlas Pit, Kiwanis Pond is located in the city of Janesville. The pond is a perennial hit with kids because it offers easy shore fishing, including a pier, and an abundance of scrappy panfish, including crappies and perch.

Use nightcrawlers to catch panfish. Dry flies are also effective.

During the day small bass can be found hanging in the weeds close to shore. After the sun goes down the larger bass come out to feed; cast surface plugs beginning

at dusk. Boyd Richter, a conservation warden with the state Department of Natural Resources, said he saw a man catch a seven-pound bass from the shore last summer.

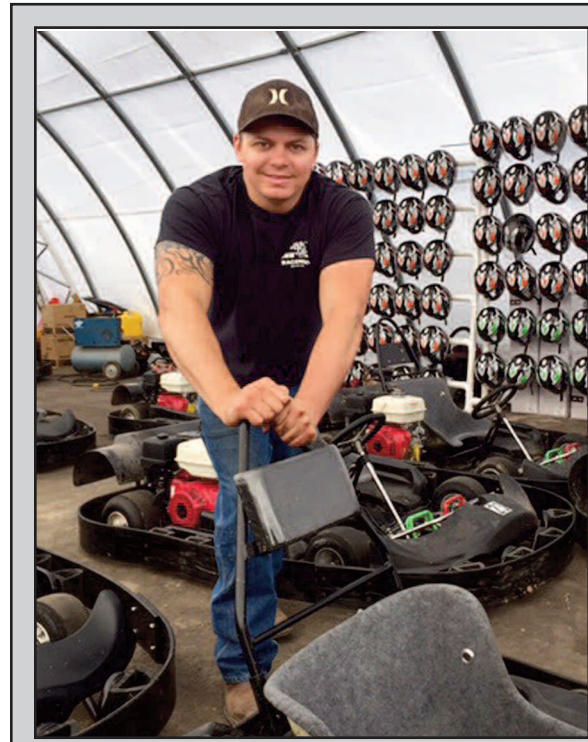
You might also hook one of the 10-inch trout that the state DNR stocked. They'll be down deep where the cold water is; Kiwanis Pond has a maximum depth of 37 feet. Use deep diving lures and jigs to reach them. Last year, someone caught a 22-inch rainbow trout in the pond.

Hog-sized catfish are rumored to trouble the bottom of the pond. To

catch one you'll need a stout pole strung with at least 20-lb test, 2-oz egg sinkers, large treble hooks, and a fistful of stinkbait. Bring a heap of patience, too.

**DIRECTIONS:** Go south on I-90 and take the East Racine Street/Highway 14 exit. Go west on East Racine Street/Highway 14 toward Janesville. Turn left on Palmer Drive and head southwest. After you cross Sharon Road you will see the pond on your right. Turn to your right and pull into Lions Park.

**NOTE:** Electric trolling motor only; gas-powered motors are not allowed. No restrooms.



## Take a spin at MRM

Matt McGuire, owner-operator of the MRM Raceway in the Town of Milton, guides a go-kart into place among his inventory of 22 go-karts. The track - which was voted "Best Entertainment" and "Best Tourism Activity" in the 2018 Best of Kosh awards contest - is located on Highway 59 and Vincent Road. (File photo)



Join us for these great events in 2018

**Friends of Beckman Mill offers guided tours of the mill and museum on Saturdays and Sundays from May through October. Demonstrations of corn being ground on the mill's original stones are held on the first Saturday of each month.**

Tour times are 1 to 4 pm. In addition to the weekend tours, there are a number of special events as described below.

Group tours by appointment, please call 608-751-1551.

Prices: Donations of \$3 on Sat. & Sun. - School Tours \$3 per student

### Ice Cream Social & Artist in the Park Sun., July 15 Noon - 4 pm

Enjoy delicious ice cream, cake and beverages in the picnic shelter. Local artists will be at work in the park along with displays of their art. The mill, cooperage, visitor center & gift shop will be open as well. And, be sure to take a leisurely stroll through the nearby oak savanna to enjoy its native plants and wild flowers.

### Heritage Sunday Sun., Sept. 9 11 am - 4 pm

Visit the past at Friends of Beckman Mill's Heritage Sunday. There'll be guided tours of the mill and the Cooperage/Beckman Home Museum as well as historic trade demonstrations of vintage crafts. Other attractions include antique cars, tractors, machinery, horse drawn wagon rides, live music, great food and more. To honor all our veterans there will be a military timeline display. Before departing, be sure to stop by the Visitor Center to see the creamery and blacksmith shop displays and to purchase neat gifts.



## Beckman Mill County Park

11600 South County Road H, Beloit - 6 miles west of Beloit, South off of HWY 81  
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