Spring-Summer 2026



The Ruthmere Record

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Wheelbarrow on display in the new Beardsley Discovery Center, once used in a 1872 bet between Douglas Beardsley and Ed Faber on the outcome of the presidential election.

The Big Day Has Arrived...

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

It's finally HERE! No more talk of unexpected discoveries causing delays and increased expenses (yes, there were both). From this day forward the only "discoveries" we plan to associate with our new facility will be great ones! The Beardsley Discovery Center opens quietly to the general public on our traditional annual Opening Day, April 1. One short month later on May 1, we will have our Grand Opening event with all the fanfare one would expect—ribbon cutting, speeches from dignitaries, site tours, and a BIG REVEAL announcement!

The BDC Grand Opening is a Ruthmere members and project donors only event. Watch for your e-vite coming soon and join us on May 1 for a celebration worth the wait!

Below: The BDC before and after renovation







Dorothy Tobe, Ruthmere's new Museum Store Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, sits at her desk in the Museum Store



Ruthmere's February Book Club meeting at the BDC



The Robert Grafton Mural, which has been moved from its former place in Ruthmere's Garage

Major Milestones of History

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Anniversaries: they serve as reminders of the past as well as reflections of the profound changes we all experience in life. Our anniversaries - whether they're for birthdays, weddings, highlights, or loss—can be bittersweet affairs. We celebrate what we have and how far we've come. At the same time, we might lament what has changed or been left behind. In all cases, it's a time we find ourselves pausing to contemplate where we've been, where we are, and where we will go from here.

The anniversaries of history are quite similar.

As we approach the 250th Anniversary of the United States (July 4, 2026), many of us are pausing for contemplation. 50 years ago, when we (or *you*, I should say, as this was before my time) celebrated the bicentennial, things were quite different. The attitudes, norms, current events, and available technology made for a much different commemoration of our country's anniversary. It *was* a celebration for many, with painted fire hydrants, parades, commemorative coins, and freedom trains crossing the landscape. The vast majority of American history was deemed a success for all and a triumphant expression of freedom.

Today, museums and other educational institutions like ours are looking for the best way to commemorate such an anniversary, trying to find a means to navigate this commemoration for the inclusion and consideration of all Americans. Every person in America is part of our history, regardless of who they are or when they arrived here. Every American deserves to have their part of the story heard, and their reflections on the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence are equally important. So, instead of planning parades, parties, and fireworks, we are commemorating this country by inviting all members of our community to put their valuable history into words.

The Elkhart County 250 Committee, led by Julie Parke (Director of the Elkhart County Historical Museum), is organizing a county-wide oral history project, free and open for anyone to participate. We invite you to share your reflections on this anniversary and add to our historical record for future generations to reference.

Here are some possible prompts:

- Tell us the story of how your family came to America, whether you arrived yesterday or your family has been here for thousands of years.
- What is a significant event in American history that you remember? How did it affect you, your family, and/or your community?
- As the country marks its 250th anniversary, what does living in America mean to you today?
- What hopes do you have for the future of the United States over the next 25–50 years?

We will accept phone audio recordings, which are to be emailed to the committee (with the name, date, and contact info of the person recording) at elkhartcounty250@elkhartcountyhistory.org. If you would prefer to make your recording in person with the help of museum staff, there will be four open house dates at four different museums available for you to come record your story: *(cont'd p. 5)*



(cont'd from p. 4)

- Saturday, June 6, Goshen Historical Museum from 10 am-3 pm
- Saturday, June 13, Elkhart County Historical Museum from 10 am-12 pm
- Monday, June 15, Ruthmere's Beardsley Discovery Center from 11 am-2 pm
- Wednesday, June 17, Nappanee Center, from 2-5 pm

Recordings will be archived and searchable through the Evelyn Lehman Culp Heritage Collection, a part of the Nappanee Library. Stay tuned for more information.

Another major milestone we'll be commemorating hits a little closer to home: the 175th anniversary of the railroad in Elkhart County. The first train passed through Elkhart on Friday, October 3, 1851. The National New York Central Railroad Museum (NNYCRRM) is leading the celebration for this momentous occasion (visit their website at nnycrrmuseum.org to learn more about all of the 175th programs they have to offer this year), but we are joining in by collaborating on a fun and interesting program series. Our "Waterways to Railways" walking tours, developed by the Railroad Museum's Asisstant Curator (and part-time Ruthmere employee), Abby Gratzol, and myself, will take participants through the history of Elkhart transportation, sharing how the Elkhart and St. Joseph Rivers were first used for travel and commerce and then the arrival of the railroad and the changes it brought to our city.

These tours will begin at the Havilah Beardsley House, head over the rivers and downtown, stop at the NNYCRRM, and then loop back to Ruthmere. We plan to have two versions of the tour: a shorter version that will run 1.5-2 hours, and a longer version that will run approximately 3 hours and include a lunch break at the NNYCRRM in their dining car. They will all take place on Saturdays at 10 am. Our tentative dates are May 16, June 13, July 18, and August 29 (alternating between short and long versions). If there is enough interest, we may extend the program into September and October. Stay tuned for more information.

Welcome New Team Members

by Jennifer Johns, Curator

We're pleased to announce Dorothy Tobe and Kara Anderson as new staff members to our team!

Dorothy is the new Volunteer Coordinator and Museum Store Manager. Originally from Owensville, Indiana, she received her Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Art History from Purdue University in 2024. She has participated in two archaeological field schools: an excavation of the French fur trading outpost of Fort Ouiatenon in West Lafayette and a survey of Plataea, Greece. In her spare time, Dorothy enjoys reading, crocheting, printmaking, and hanging out with her cats.

Kara is the new Donor Services Manager. After earning her B.A. in History from Purdue University, Kara moved to Newcastle upon Tyne, England, to pursue a Master of Arts in Museum, Gallery, and Heritage Studies, graduating with Merit. During her time there, Kara gained valuable experience working at historic sites like Newcastle Castle and Seaton Delaval Hall. Outside of her professional life, Kara enjoys spending time with family and friends, baking, and entertaining with her two dogs. A proud native of the Elkhart/Michiana area, she is excited to work for this historic landmark and contribute to its continued success.

Please help us welcome them to the Ruthmere team and we look forward to them bringing their skillsets!



Dorothy Tobe (left) and Kara Anderson (right)

Ruthmere Signature Events

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

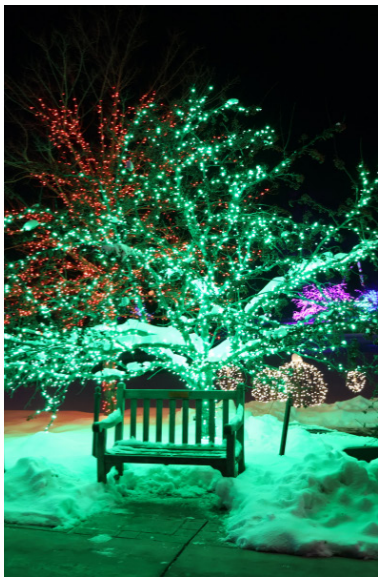
In our continuing effort to fine tune our Ruthmere Rising Funding Plan that we launched in 2023, we are trying something exciting and new for 2026. Instead of a big gala fundraiser which is a bit like jumping off a diving board and hoping that there's water in the pool, we are going to host 3 very different, fun and engaging "mini-fundraisers" that we are calling our ***Signature Event Series***. Each event as distinct and as personal as a human signature, our goal is to make attending a Ruthmere fundraiser more accessible for the supporting public while still delivering the exceptional quality upon which Ruthmere has built its reputation. Your participation and input can help us determine if this is the best path forward.

VIP packages will be available for each Signature Event allowing you to share this unforgettable experience with a private table for eight. And if you decide to purchase VIP packages to two of the three Signature Events, your price for the second drops dramatically. If you purchase VIP packages to all 3 Signature Events, you are automatically enrolled in Ruthmere's highest donor honor, being recognized as a Ruthmere Cornerstone.

The first Signature Event is May 2, Derby Day! Back by popular demand we will watch the race at Churchill Downs live on the monster message board, we'll sip mint juleps, place our bets on the winners, bid on prestigious bottles of rare bourbon such as Van Winkle, show off our amazing hats and derby attire, and pose for one-of-a-kind photos with our favorite equine "Sarge" from RC Egan Training Stables. VIPs will enjoy bottles of champagne, and be invited to attend the "Derby After-Party" at the Hotel Elkhart High Note Bar where the fun continues into the night.







Our second Signature Event is wholly new, but should come as no surprise. On August 15, we are transforming the site of the new Beardsley Discovery Center and the Havilah Beardsley House, the place where the story of Elkhart begins, into the Elkhart Summer Celebration Cookout! Both buildings will be on full display for tours and exploration. Gourmet grills featuring fine cut meats of all kinds and, of course, tasty grilled veggies will keep the plates hot while chilled local brews quench your summer thirst. But this is also an event to kick up your heels and get down to the high energy sounds of the band Mr. Z. Bring you dancin' shoes!

The final Signature Event for 2026 will be a return to our favorite neighborhood garden, with Ruthmere Night at Holiday Lights at Wellfield Botanic Gardens on December 4. It's a Friday night and we're ready to take this party to the next level with a few new twists combined with your favorite holiday light show. Every attendee at Ruthmere Night at Holiday Lights receives a complimentary pass to attend Ruthmere a Campus Holiday Tour on a date of their choosing.

Three great events supporting one great place, the Ruthmere Arts and History Campus. Visit Ruthmere.org/Signature-Events to learn more or sign up. Space is limited.

Something New in Music at Ruthmere!

by Mark Doddington, Music Manager

Just when you thought you'd seen it all, Ruthmere goes and does something crazy…uh, revolutionary! Building on the success of the Robert Buchanan Beardsley Memorial Piano Prize Competition, now in its ninth year, we are proud to launch the First Annual Ruthmere Solo String Competition. Modeled very closely on the piano competition, this new endeavor seeks to find the newest prodigy in wood and strings.



Students from all over the world (though mostly studying in the United States) are signing up to showcase their talents on the violin, cello, viola, mandolin, sting bass, and classical guitar. A panel of three judges, all doctors of music and string artists themselves, will select the top six to compete in person in the Ruthmere Game Room on Saturday, April 4. The gifted winner will receive a check for $1000 and an opening performance in the 2026 Spring Concert Series on Thursday, April 23.

Second- and third-prizes of $300 and $200, respectively, will also be awarded. The competition is open to the general public. Seats are only $5, so don't wait! Seating is limited. For more information on how to enter the competition, or to reserve seats, please call (574) 264-0330 x 107, or visit Ruthmere.org.

If this proves to be as successful as the piano competition has become, Ruthmere will make yet another very impactful impression on the music community, not only in Elkhart, but throughout Indiana and across the nation. Who knows? We may even strike an international chord!

Taking Home Museum Memories

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Soon, our Museum Store will offer a new souvenir for both regular and new visitors alike. It's for anyone and everyone who wants to take home a bit of Ruthmere.


Ruthmere was designed by E. Hill Turnock in an eclectic Beaux Arts style with Arts and Crafts accents. At the request of the homeowners, Turnock tried to use as many close-to-home materials as possible; the three-story structure is faced with buff-colored Belden brick from Ohio and native Indiana limestone. Carved stone quoins, capitals, cartouches and window surrounds adorn the mansion, considerably different than the other Turnock homes throughout Elkhart. The covered entrance is supported by square brick pillars topped with carved capitals. A marble piazza with balustrade walls extends to the east side of the building; there, a porte-cochere protects visitors as they arrive by carriage or car. When the Beardsleys hosted a gathering, this is where the night began.

When weather permitted, Elizabeth often brought her friends to Ruthmere's formal garden. She was the outgoing entertainer; her husband was more reserved. While A.R. was busy working with Miles and serving as state senator, this was one of Elizabeth's favorite places to entertain. She had gardens planted with a variety of her favorite flowers, such as roses. An impressive formal conservatory was attached to the main house via a tunnel so that Elizabeth could tend to her plants in any weather, year-round.

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The Driveway and Porte-Cochere

"At the turn of the century, [the conservatory] was a showplace for wealthy people who collected plants or invested in gardening. Mrs. Beardsley might have taken her guests there after dinner to see the latest exotic plant that she was able to secure."
- Robert B. Beardsley

The Wedding Garden

The Greenhouse Conservatory

We are in the process of developing a book (with an undecided title) about the house museums on the Ruthmere Campus and the history of their inhabitants. By compiling the available information we have about these buildings and their owners, we have been able to edit together a comprehensive overview with beautiful photographs that will bring readers right back to their museum experience. The book covers early Elkhart history from the time of its founding, the several families who occupied the Havilah Beardsley House and Ruthmere, and how each publicly accessible part of our campus was acquired and assembled into the organization that we have now. Additionally, it takes the reader on a tour through both house museums from start to finish, providing important context through each room about how it was used, who designed and/or decorated it, and what it might have been like to live there when it was first built.

We hope that this book will be available in our museum store soon! Keep an eye out for details about how you can purchase one for your own bookshelf.

Ruthmere's 2026 Spring Concert Lineup is Set

by Mark Doddington, Music Manager

Ruthmere is in for an exciting musical year as we launch the newly-minted Ruthmere Solo String Competition. *(see "Something New..." on p. 7.)* Violinists, cellists, guitarists, and others will be vying for six slots in a live competition to be held in the Ruthmere Game Room on April 4 at noon. In keeping with the tradition established by the Beardsley Prize, first, second, and third prizes will be awarded.

The winner will then go on to open the official concert season in a bonus concert on April 23, making a total of five concerts instead of the usual four. Normal ticket rates will apply for this added event.

Settling into the normal pace of things, the annual Fischoff Soirée will grace the Game Room on May 7. With an ensemble selected by the Fischoff committee, drawn from their own competition pool from around the world, these young musicians bring a truly professional shine to any venue. The fact that even we don't know who they'll be until shortly before adds an extra zest to this event.

May 21 sees The Shelest Piano Duo perform at Ruthmere. Anna and Dmitri Shelest, both Ukrainian natives, began performing together after their marriage, beginning in 2018. Drawing on their heritage, they bring an international flavor wherever they perform while sharing their own culture with the world at large.

On June 4, American pianist Thomas Pandolfi brings his timeless stylings to Ruthmere. Pandolfi has performed in multiple continents in such places as England, Italy, China, and Romania. A graduate of the legendary Juilliard School in New York, he has studied, performed and collaborated with some of the greatest names in contemporary classical music.

Finally, on June 11, pianist Jonathan Mak and cellist David Dietz will showcase their talents here in Elkhart. As two-thirds of Trio Menil (along with violinist Jeongwon Claire An), Mak and Dietz bring their own versatility to Ruthmere. Based in Houston, Trio Menil has been performing since their days together at Rice University.

2026 Spring Concert Lineup



April 23
Solo String Competition Winner



May 7
Fischoff Soirée
Sponsored by Wade Mayberry



May 21
The Shelest Piano Duo
Sponsored by Janet Evanega Rieckhoff and James Rieckhoff



June 4
Thomas Pandolfi



June 11
David Dietz & Jonathan Mak
Sponsored by Marie Smith

Presenting Sponsor
Sandra Van Tilburg

Concert Receptions Sponsor
Jon Smoker

2026 Annual Season Sponsors
Shelly Seely
Brenda & Michael Tudor

Coming Again on July 11 - The Ceramic Showcase

by Carolyn Bonanno, Communications Coordinator

The 5th Annual Ruthmere Ceramic Showcase is set for Saturday, July 11 from 10 am – 3 pm on the Ruthmere Quilt Garden Green. The Ceramic Showcase is a partnership with the Northern Indiana Clay Alliance (NICA). NICA is an arts-focused organization that coordinates events throughout the year which bring exceptional clay artists together with the public in unique gatherings.

The Ceramic Showcase is one of Ruthmere's busiest marquee events of the year with many hundreds in attendance. For those over 21, Ruthmere will host a craft beer and wine tent during the afternoon hours of 1 – 3pm. The Erly will perform for Coffee on the Piazza in the morning and afternoon music will feature reggae artist Kingly T.

Enjoy a complimentary cup of coffee in the morning, purchase lunch on site from Ricky's Taqueria, and of course, shop for your very own one-of-a-kind ceramic work of art. Come enjoy this free event made possible by our presenting sponsors, Jack and Karen Cittadine. Please contact Carolyn Bonanno at (574) 264-0330 (ext. 101) or cbonanno@ruthmere.org if you have any questions about the event.



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We are thrilled to once again acknowledge all of those who contributed to our Ruthmere Forever campaign in 2025! THANK YOU for your support of Ruthmere!

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Andrea Hutslar
Joselyn & Earl Huxhold
Kate Irelan
Dreama Jensen
Jennifer Johns
Alex Johnson
Ann Johnson



Actors for our 2025 Cemetery Walk - all new members!

Brenda Johnson
Brenda & Randall Johnson
Brianna Johnson
Jay & Tonya Johnson
Mike Judson
Kathleen Kalman
Betty Kegerreis
Jim Kelly
Judy Kelly
Kathleen Kelly
Jeff Kendall
Lesa Kershner
Celia & Charlie Kirk
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Sisi Poland
Susan Ponce
Mary & Jim Rasp
Kris Reiff
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Nancy Rinke
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Rusty & Anita Ritchie
Randy Roberts
Ruth Rockwell
Will & Holly Rodriguez
Donna Rodwick
Kirk Root
Rev. Willard & Alice Roth
Nicholas Roth & Joe Freund
Kay Roy



2025 Ruthmere Night at Holiday Lights

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Jen Rupnow
Linda Rupnow
Melissa Rutledge
Connie S.
Shelly Seely
Roma Shah
Paula Sharp-Harris
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Carolyn Shelley
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Karen Zusman

New Ruthmere Experiences

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

"Experience" has always been an important word at Ruthmere. We've built our entire mission and vision around the concept of delivering high quality experiences in history, art and architecture. We interpret that broadly to include personalized unscripted tours, musical concerts of all stripes, exhibitions, lectures, children's programs and even the occasional road trip. Experience is the word that defines Ruthmere.

In 2026 we begin a new journey with a new facility, the Beardsley Discovery Center (BDC). For the first time we will have an "open door" to the public, and while that might seem trivial for some, for us it is transformative. The BDC's open door will welcome visitors for every guided tour, offer our free Family Tree Explorer program to anyone who wants to know more about their roots, and will serve as a platform for more exciting programs. A new suite of these programs pushes the envelope for deeper, more immersive encounters, and we are branding this new series simply Ruthmere Experiences. In truth, we began the Ruthmere Experience series in 2025 with our serendipitous Night Blooming Cereus Parties, we just had not given this new series a name or purpose, but those magical evenings helped us define what we wanted Ruthmere Experiences to be.

For 2026 we are launching two new Ruthmere Experiences—"In Plain Site: Above Ground Archaeology" and "Telling Tales with Objects: Inside the Curator's World." The goal of these programs is to provide the visitor with a deeper, richer understanding, and providing new perspectives and insights into ordinary life. These new offerings are designed to be between 90 minutes to two hours in length.

In Plain Site: Above Ground Archaeology will explore Ruthmere properties along Christiana Creek as well as other "built environment curiosities" in the immediate Ruthmere Campus neighborhood. This program is supported through a Historic Preservation Education grant from Indiana Humanities, and is being developed by Ruthmere Visitor Services Manager Abby Gratzol and myself. We intend to offer it on the third Monday of each month starting June 15th, or by group appointment subject to availability.



Joe Veneto (right) and Danielle Lewis Jones (left) from the Veneto Collaboratory test out Telling Tales with Objects: Inside the Curator's World with other guests

Telling Tales with Objects: Inside the Curator's World has been developed and in cooperation with the Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ECCVB) and their hired consultant the Veneto Collaboratory. Joe Veneto and his assistants led Ruthmere staff and a cohort of local attractions through a 7-month process to develop this unique experience. Ruthmere Curator Jennifer Johns is OUR Curator, leading participants down the fascinating path of how an artifact becomes an interpretive museum object through a variety of hands-on, white-gloved tasks. Other Ruthmere staff play supporting roles along the way. We are opening this experience exclusively to Ruthmere members at a 50% discount price for the months of June, July and August, before launching to general public in September. Scheduled dates are second and fourth Mondays starting June 8th.

Watch for upcoming e-mail announcements, and be the first to sign up!

It Takes a Village to Keep the Penny Alive

by Tehillah Moses, Program Educator and Kara Anderson, Donor Services Manager

In 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, calling on Americans to dedicate themselves to the work of continuing to build a country founded on liberty and equality. His words reminded the nation of its responsibility to uphold the belief that all are created equal. That same year, the First National Bank of South Bend was established to serve the people of Indiana and Michigan…an institution we know today as 1st Source Bank. Built on a foundation of service and community, it began a legacy that continues more than a century later.

President Lincoln was later honored as the first U.S. president to appear on a U.S. coin, the Lincoln cent. Since then, the penny has long been accepted in nearly any condition without losing its value. Today it serves as a meaningful tribute to a leader who stood firm in the conviction that every person is equal. Inspired by that symbolism, the Lincoln Penny Story Hour shares stories with grade-school children to help them connect with their community and understand the values of unity and individual importance. It is a simple but powerful reminder that each child is valued and each one comes first.

Having begun with a history lesson, we are looking forward to a new year of programs with the Lincoln Penny Story Hour! This year, we are thankful that 1st Source Bank in Elkhart has agreed to be our sponsor. They are helping us keep the history of the Lincoln penny alive in young minds at a time when penny minting has ceased.

1st Source Bank is doing their part to contribute to this program, but anyone can help the Lincoln Penny Story Hour. Do you have pennies that aren't serving a purpose? You could donate them to the Lincoln Penny Story Hour! We are still taking pennies to be used as souvenirs for students that attend a Lincoln Penny Story Hour. You can drop them off at the new Beardsley Discovery Center in the designated box in April when we open, email tmoses@ruthmere.org, or give them to any Ruthmere staff. We would greatly appreciate any contributions, no matter how small. Help us keep this symbol of unity alive!

Are you a teacher that is interested in learning more about this program? Would you be interested in having a story hour created around your class curriculum needs? We can do that! If interested, you can email tmoses@ruthmere.org for more information or call Ruthmere and ask for Tehillah Moses or Bill Firstenberger.

Be a Part of Elkhart History!

by Kara Anderson, Donor Services Manager

5 Reasons Why a Ruthmere Membership is a Great Idea:

1. **You'll Save Money** - A Ruthmere membership provides free entry for up to four people to visit all of our sites.
2. **Behind the Scenes Access** - Members receive exclusive newsletters and behind the scenes information about everything Ruthmere.
3. **Discounts for Days** - Enjoy 10% off in our gift shop, as well as discounted admission to ticketed Ruthmere events.
4. **There's More to Your Membership** - All Ruthmere memberships include access to the Time Traveler's network which allows free/discounted entry to over 400 museums and historic sites all around the country.
5. **Support your Community** - By purchasing a Ruthmere membership not only do you gain amazing benefits, but you also become part of a community that is dedicated to contributing to the education and preservation of art, history, and architecture in Elkhart. Whether you join with a personal or business membership, you are a valuable part of Ruthmere!

Want to be even more involved? Consider becoming a sponsor for one of our programs or attending a Signature Series event as a VIP. Both event sponsors and Signature VIPs receive exclusive perks for their selected programs. See a list of current sponsors at Ruthmere.org/Program-Sponsorship. If you are passionate about contributing in this way, contact Kara Anderson (kanderson@ruthmere.org or (574) 264-0330) to learn more.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator and Dorothy Tobe, Volunteer Coordinator

Time is a precious thing. We are all mindful of the ways we spend our time, and we like to make sure that not a moment is wasted. That's one of the many reasons we cherish and appreciate our volunteers: of all the places, activities, and causes they could donate their time to, they choose to give it to us. We are incredibly honored and thankful for all that they do, and we could not run this organization without them.

We celebrated our dedicated volunteers on March 16 at our annual Volunteer Luncheon, where we both cheered our collective accomplishments and shared our plans and changes for the future. During the event, we introduced everyone to our new staff (Dorothy and Kara), showed off the newly opened Beardsley Discovery Center, and handed out our three annual awards for exceptional volunteers.



Beth Hall & Amber Taylor

The Annette Kozak Volunteer Award for Hospitality was awarded to Amber Taylor! Amber has been volunteering with us since 2022 and is a docent at Ruthmere on Saturdays. She is always extremely friendly and positive towards guests, fellow volunteers, and staff, and is a pleasure to be around.

The Laura Funk Volunteer Award for Education was awarded to Kate Irelan! Kate has also been volunteering since 2022 and works as a docent every other Tuesday





Kate Irelan and our Volunteer Recognition Cake

afternoon at Ruthmere. Kate is always eager to meet people and ask questions. She also leads very rich, interesting tours!

The Ben Jeffery Community Kindness Award was awarded to Beth Hall! This is the second year that we have given out this award, which recognizes volunteers who give their time to many organizations and causes in the community. Beth has been volunteering with us since 2021 as a docent on Thursday mornings. She also volunteers in several other areas, including the Prairie Street Mennonite Church, the Elkhart County Humane Society, and the Homeless Coalition of Elkhart County (including many others!).

Congratulations and thank you, ladies, for your time. It's made a world of difference for us and our community.

Another Great Coffee Season Shapes Up

by Mark Doddington, Music Manager

Ruthmere would like to welcome everyone once again to join us for coffee and live music on Elkhart's front porch! The 2026 Coffee on the Piazza series is ready to kick off in high gear. This year, we have twelve artists set to grace the iconic piazza, including five first-timers and a few old favorites, as well. *(Cont'd p. 15)*

(Cont'd from p. 14)

Opening the season on June 6 is StarHeart. An energetic duo, brother and sister Jake and Jess bring their version of Americana our way. This marks their third (at least) visit to Ruthmere. On June 13, get in the swing as Phat Tuesday gives us a taste of Jazz Fest, set for the following weekend.

Time-honored faves The Cool Change Band bring their arrangements of classic pop/rock songs with a distinctly 70's groove (my favorite era!). Then, wrapping up the first month, newcomer Marta Koonce makes her Ruthmere debut. She brings a wide mix of pop, country and faith-based music, a combination Ruthmere has not seen before.

As luck would have it, July 4 falls on a Saturday this year, so Ruthmere will be closed. But rest assured, Coffee will be back on track on July 11, welcoming The Erly in their first Coffee on the Piazza performance. You may remember The Erly from last year as they provided the music for our annual Ceramic Showcase. The Showcase will be held all day on the 11th. While technically not part of Coffee on the Piazza, reggae act Kingly T will take the stage to play for the afternoon during the Showcase.



The Erly performs at our 2025 Ceramic Showcase

July 18 welcomes another first-timer to the Coffee stage. Levi Lamberjack brings his blues-influenced style our way, performing a mix of original tunes and classic covers. Long-time fave Doug Harsch makes a return appearance on July 25. Noted for his original compositions, he always brings a level of anticipation too irresistible to miss.

Swinging into August, we welcome back 30-Year Wait on the first. This husband-and-wife duo (and their gnomes) play a rollicking blend of covers and originals with a distinctly cheeky flare. Following them, Ruthmere welcomes three "new" artists in a row! On August 8, we welcome pop/rock group Shiny Shiny Black, courtesy of Music Town and Juke. (Look for their signs on the Ruthmere lawn and scan the QR code to learn about Elkhart's rapidly-growing live music scene!) August 15 greets harpist Anna Hagen, making her first Coffee appearance. Anna is no stranger to Ruthmere, however, having played here a number of times for assorted events. She offers up a wide range of musical genres set to the dulcet tones of her harp.



30-Year Wait performs at Coffee on the Piazza in 2024

Another first-timer, courtesy of Music Town and Juke, is Jake Miller and Midwest Heat. This eclectic band has played all over the Michiana area, including on the roof of the Elkhart Public Library. Now it's our turn as they join us on August 22. Finally, closing out the year is another returning favorite, Natalie Gaza, on August 29. With her soft, smooth pop styling, she brings the season to a close with a cool, refreshing groove to usher in the fall.

Coffee on the Piazza is free (as is the coffee) and open to everyone! The gates open at 10:00 a.m., the music starts at 10:30 and goes until noon. Tours of Ruthmere and the Havilah Beardsley House are also available during these events. Tickets may be purchased at the standard rate at the new Beardsley Discovery Center, 819 N. Main Street, immediately adjacent to the Havilah Beardsley House. For more details, please call (574) 264-0330 or visit Ruthmere.org. We hope to see you there. Bring friends!

Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Tom Myers, and The Refinery in Goshen, who provides our delicious coffee!

Anna Hagen: Harpist Extraordinaire

By Joy Olsen, Collections Manager



Anna Hagen

One of Ruthmere's original homeowners, Elizabeth Beardsley, had a special gift to invite young musicians in to Ruthmere to play and perform. These were young people, mostly girls, that she would give a start to their musical careers. Truthfully, I believe Ruhmere is still practicing this tradition to this very day.

In this article, I would like to shine a spotlight on one such musician: Anna Hagen, harpist extraordinaire!

She was only 15 years old when she first played at Ruthmere. Even while struggling down our carpeted steps with a harp much larger than she was, she was grace and talent all rolled into one. Now, a decade and a half later, she is still our "go to" when a harpist is wanted. She has become like family, and it has been a treat watching this young girl blossom!

Anna often plays for our teas and civic events. I love when she plays beautiful classical pieces and then throws in a bit of Beatles or Metallica. Yes, and it fits! It sounds absolutely beautiful. She really has a gift.

Anna was only 8 when she asked her parents if she could learn how to play the harp. They told her that she had to take a year of piano lessons first. That did not discourage her; after a year of piano lessons, she got her hands on a harp and has never looked back.

After relocating to Elkhart, the Hagen family realized that there were several opportunities for a young musician. From symphonies to concert venues, music students had ample opportunities to perform and hone their skills. Early in her musical career, she picked up on an absolute delight in bringing music to people, sharing her joy in the harp and taking requests. She still performs in beautiful spaces such as Ruthmere (her favorite), senior communities, and programs for church groups and civic clubs. She also joined the Elkhart County Symphony, where she is currently their principle harpist.

Anna shared that she loves when she is playing at a senior or memory care center and is able to spark a memory for someone through music. Often, people will start to sing, and the song takes them back to a younger time. That's what music can do, and that's what Anna can do with her awesome talent.

Through the years, Anna has played for several events and weddings at Ruthmere. It is always a pleasure to have her perform. Her tagline on her business card says, "making your event memorable," and that's exactly what she does, with style and grace.

So, just like the tradition Elizabeth Beardsley started, it is evident that it is still working. I think about a young Nicolas Roth, a young Anna Hagen, and many other young performers, from musicians to dancers and many more in-between, who are blessed with talent and had their start at Ruthmere.

I want to thank Anna for sharing her talents, smiles, and musical blessings with us. Her name goes down in Ruthmere's history, and that is a wonderful thing!



Anna Hagen performs at our 2025 Mother & Me Tea

Hoosier History Exhibits

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

We are very excited to announce that we are once again hosting traveling exhibits from the Indiana Historical Society (IHS)! This summer, visit the Havilah Beardsley House to see *Who is a Hoosier* (May 9 - June 14) and *Faces of the Civil War* (June 16 - July 16).

Who is a Hoosier?

Many people ask, "What is a Hoosier?" – and while the term's origins might be up for debate, this exhibit looks at how people with many different backgrounds have come to take pride in the nickname. Using maps and informational graphics, this exhibit highlights the statistical impact of changing ethnic groups over time in Indiana. It shows how the comings and goings of newcomers to the state, through immigration or migration, have created the Indiana we know today—and will continue to shape its future. Photographs from the IHS collections and other institutions across the state bring the personal stories of immigration to life.



Photo Credit: Indiana Historical Society

Faces of the Civil War

This special exhibit tells the stories of Hoosiers whose lives were touched, and in some cases taken, by the American Civil War. Not all are well-known or revered – many were just everyday citizens fulfilling their duties to their friends, family, state, and country. Rather than focusing on statistics and large scale battles, this exhibit illustrates how regular people coped with the tragic experiences of the day—all from an Indiana perspective.

Admission to these exhibits will be included with a Havilah Beardsley House tour. See Ruthmere.org for more details.



Photo Credit: Indiana Historical Society

Robert Beardsley's Autobiography Coming Soon

by Mark Doddington, Music Manager

Over the course of 2008, Robert Beardsley, Ruthmere's Founding Director, set down in words his story. Comprising 22 chapters, it recounted in great detail his life from the time of his birth on September 8, 1933 until illness and other distractions caused him to put the manuscript on a shelf for the next dozen years.



Robert B. Beardsley

Finally, in 2020, Robert picked up his pen and began finishing his saga. Five more chapters would appear over the next few months. Sadly, Robert Beardsley passed away in 2021 with only one more chapter left unwritten.

Having been offered the chance to edit and design his autobiography through to publication, I felt a certain responsibility to ensure that the finished product came to fruition. After several fruitless attempts to get others to write the final chapter, I took it upon myself to draw a conclusion to Robert's life from my own, hopefully disinterested, perspective.

The result is a 27-chapter first-hand account of a life full of color and adventure, spread across two continents (and much of the ocean in between), topped off by my modest summation of his final year. Having only met Robert once back in 2016, I certainly did not consider myself an expert in his life beyond having read his own words. To the best of my knowledge, Bill and I are the only two people who have read his story so far.

Still untitled, the manuscript is finally coming together in publishable form. Clocking in at over 340 pages, it covers a vast array of exciting people, exotic places, and exacting standards that made Robert Beardsley's life so worth living.

My next step is to reach out to members of the Beardsley family in hopes of coming up with a suitably gripping title. I also want to include a center spread of pictures showing the many facets of Robert's complicated life. With luck, family members may be able to fill in some of the gaps in the museum's archives.

At this time, no publication date is set in stone, though ideally it will appear by Robert's birthday on September 8, 2026 (he would have been 93). If anyone out there has old photos of Robert Beardsley, I'd be very interested in seeing them. Who knows? Your photo may actually make the front cover!



Robert with Ruthmere's choralcelo

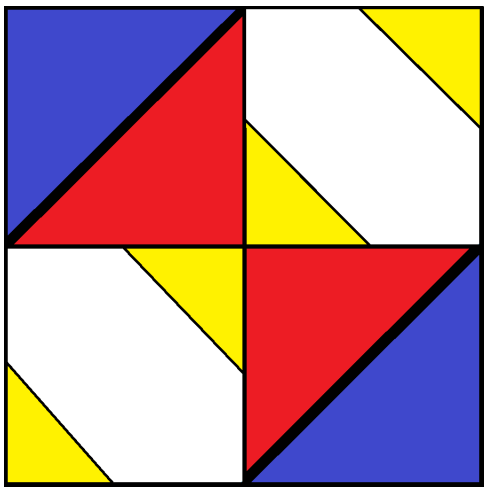


Governer Otis Bowen, Walter Beardsley, Elizabeth Bowen, and Robert Beardsley at Ruthmere's opening day in 1973

The 2026 Quilt Garden: Railroad

by Bree Askew, Gardens & Grounds Manager and Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Another year, another Quilt Garden – and we couldn't be more excited to share this year's design! It ties in (pun intended) perfectly with Elkhart history, especially considering the major 175th milestone that we are celebrating this year with the National New York Central Railroad Museum.



Our design for this year is called "Railroad." Pretty fitting for such a commemoration. The center design, composed of red and white begonias along with yellow snapdragons, represents the railroad. The railroad was brought to Elkhart for the very first time in 1851. The first train, consisting of a wood-burning engine, flat cars, and a caboose, traveled in from White Pigeon, Michigan. It traveled over the Main Street crossing, which was in the same location it is today. Instrumental to this development in our transportation history was Dr. Havilah Beardsley, a chief agent in securing the railroad through Elkhart.

Havilah witnessed an incredible change throughout his two and a half decades in Elkhart. The area depended entirely on water travel when he and his family arrived in 1829. Havilah himself built the first rope ferries over the river, which made crossing it feasible and allowed business to boom. By the end of his life, the railroad had completely transformed the landscape and the way in which Elkhart functioned. These two threads – water travel and rail travel – are connected through Havilah. Therefore, both are very important to us.

The outer sections of our Quilt Garden design consist of blue ipomeas, representing the rivers and water travel. This is our nod to the rich history of transportation in Elkhart County, Havilah Beardsley's influence, and the commemoration of a major milestone.

The Quilt Gardens along the Heritage Trail will be available to view throughout the county from May 30 through September 15, 2026. If you are interested in helping us plant ours, reach out to our Gardens & Grounds Manager, Bree, at baskew@ruthmere.org or call us at (574) 264-0330. Our planting date is TBD.

"Toys Through Time" Winners

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

In case you missed it, we are happy to announce the winners of 2025's "Toys Through Time" holiday decoration competition: Ruthmere's Tea Team Volunteers, and their chosen non-profit, Soup of Success! The Tea Team (Brenda Johnson, Jodi Mann, Marty Weber, and Nadine Zerger) won 26% of the overall votes with their Victorian-era doll tea party display in the French Drawing Room. Betsy Ayrea Delfine accepted the $1000 prize on behalf of Soup of Success on January 6. Congratulations!



Ruthmere
An Experience in History, Art & Architecture
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Blooming Partnership!

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director

It was at last year's Derby Day when Kathy Freese first introduced the Ruthmere staff to Nancy Stoelting, the founder of Joy Blooms, who graciously accepted our donation of the Derby roses so that they could breathe new life into our event decorations. Nancy and her energetic staff do all kinds of creative good works by recycling flowers from weddings, funerals, galas, etc., to help bring happiness into the gloomy corners of Elkhart County as a way to lift up and inspire. Together, we came up with a winning idea.

For 2026, Ruthmere is partnering with Joy Blooms to transform the month of April into a sensory tour season, "Smell the Flowers at Ruthmere." We are billing this opening month as a kickoff bookend to our spectacular end-of-year Holiday Tour Season that has become an annual tradition for so many families in our region. Now, these folks have a great NEW reason to see (and SMELL) Ruthmere in the Spring!

Joy Blooms' motto is "Sharing Joy with Flowers." This budding partnership helps us appreciate how supporting each other builds and strengthens our community. What could be sweeter than that?

Thank you to our sponsors for this new fragrant experience: Don & Cidney Walter and George & Kathy Freese!

