

## Silver Tea



This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Silver Tea. It began in the second year of the Historical Society, as a community social event, and is the longest running event by any one group here in the Falls. The theme this year is the Golden Silver Tea, being that a 50 year anniversary is Gold.

A Silver Tea is a tea at which voluntary donations of money are given usually for special fund-raising or charitable purposes. Way back when, silver dollars were dropped upon a silver tray or in a silver bowl in exchange for an afternoon of tea service with sandwiches, scone, sweets and tea. Ours began as a way of support for the upkeep of the Miller Davidson Museum.

At our Tea, the items used are 2 silver trays, for home-made Christmas cookies, a silver coffee urn and silver tea pot. We also have a punch bowl with fresh home-made punch with a decorative ice ring. The silver items are actually quadrapel plate, meaning they're coated with a less expensive material, with 4 layers of silver plate. We have three volunteers to pour the tea, coffee and punch. There are five volunteers throughout the house guiding for each room. There are a number of men on the porch to welcome each guest (and keep Santa company), along with a kitchen crew of 3 to keep the hot beverages coming and cookie plates full. In the public House are volunteers that sell the cookies, holiday breads and other items from the depot that were organized the day before. For many years, Mrs. Santa would read stories by the Christmas tree, to the children as they waited for the cookie shopping to be completed.

In 1993 the Strajewski family received a certificate for attending twenty five consecutive years of the Silver Tea. In 1994, we had 19 bakers making 3 doz. Cookies each. That was considered more than enough to fill the silver trays in the dining room as a treat to those who came to the tea. 1996 was our first cookie sale and was advertised; "For your holiday enjoyment, mouthwatering home-made Christmas cookies will be for sale in the Publik House of Old Falls Village, during the tea." A new format for organization of the tea came in 1997. Three co-chairs, one for flowers, one for cookies, one for the tea. By 1998, we had 80 plates of cookies, and 3 breads at \$2.50 each and made a net profit of \$179.00!

1999 had a “Community Christmas Tree” set up. Anyone from the Village could bring an ornament for the tree that would represent their heritage or traditions.

There have been many different people through the years overseeing the tea. I myself have had that honor for the past eight years, this will be my ninth. Even when there was no chair, or theme, everyone would group together to get it done. I hope this tradition continues as long as the Society does, but like any event it is only possible through the generosity of the volunteers.

The past 50 years has seen many different themes, some years had no theme at all. The following is as complete a list as I could find in my research;

1967 no theme	1984 English Christmas	2001 no theme
1968 no theme	1985 Italian Christmas	2002 no theme
1969 no theme	1986 the trees of Christmas	2003 Czechoslovakia
1970 no theme	1987 Wisconsin Christmas Past	2004 no theme
1971 God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen	1988 Mexican Christmas	2005 no theme
1972 Storybook Christmas	1989 Christmas at Grandma’s	2006 no theme
1973 Sugar and Spice	1990 Christmas at Old Falls Village	2007 no theme
1974 no theme	1991 German Christmas	2008 no theme
1975 Calico Christmas	1992 Polish Christmas	2009 Dutch
1976 Colonial Christmas	1993 Swedish Christmas	2010 1920’s
1977 The beauty of being natural	1994 Christmas Memories	2011 WW II
1978 Christmas in Song	1995 Home for Christmas	2012 Currier and Ives
1979 German Holiday	1996 Celebrating Christmas Past	2013 1930’s
1980 Scandinavian Christmas	1997 Victorian Christmas	2014 Over the River and Through the Woods
1981 Croatian Christmas	1998 Creche Christmas	2015 Dutch
1982 Victorian Christmas	1999 Turn of the Century	2016 Winter Wonderland
1983 Irish Christmas	2000 Turn of the Century	2017 Golden Silver Tea

The Creche Christmas of 1998 was quite memorable. Bill and Sue Gay gave us access to their creche collection. Every room in the house was decorated with multiple creches (nativity scene). There wasn't an empty spot anywhere.

2009 and 2015 were Dutch Theme because the Silver Tea landed on the Feast of St. Nicholas.

2011 was "I'll Be Home for Christmas" a World War II theme. This was by far and away the best attended Silver Tea ever. Many girls were dressed as Rosie the Riveter. People were shoulder to shoulder though out the house. Many WWII memorabilia were on display in the Publik House. Ken Pruess wore his Marine uniform (and still looked real good in it too!)

2013 was our 1930's theme. That day started out nice, but saw a horrific snow storm by tea time, which hurt attendance very much. But the Guys and Dolls who attended had a blast.

2014 Over the River and Through the Woods was in honor of our grandparents. Sleighs decorated the house. Words of wisdom that we had all learned from our Grandparents were set out all over the house too.

2016 Winter Wonderland was all about being a kid. What was your favorite thing to do in winter?

I still have a few more ideas for upcoming Silver Tea's. If you would like to be a part of the event, let me know. Would you like to pour, be a guide, help in the kitchen? Are you a musician or someone that can sing a few carols through the event? I'll be calling you all to do some baking starting in November. If for some reason you can't help out, maybe you could just come and support the event.

Call or email me with any questions you might have.

Jill Schmidt 1-262-255-3728

[jabs@wi.rr.com](mailto:jabs@wi.rr.com)