



DOOR COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EST. 1926

September 23, 2026

Dear Nonprofit Partner,

The Door County Historical Society is pleased to invite your organization to take part in our 4th Annual **"Glimpse of Christmas Past"** at Heritage Village in Sturgeon Bay.

This holiday tradition has quickly become a community favorite and we would be delighted to have your nonprofit join us in making this year's celebration even more memorable.

Here's how it works: Six of our historic buildings at Heritage Village are available for this event. Nonprofit organizations are invited to sign up. Six organizations will be selected and assigned a building to decorate—inside and out—for the season. There is no participation fee; however, each group is responsible for providing its own decorations and supplies.

We encourage you to let your creativity shine while keeping within the time period of 1880–1910. Don't worry if that feels unfamiliar—our team will provide ideas and historical resources to help inspire your design.

During each **Friday and Saturday evening in December** (*with the exception of Christmas Day*), Heritage Village will open for free tours from **3pm - 6pm**. Visitors will vote for their favorite decorated building by making a donation to the nonprofit responsible for it.

Dollars count as votes and proceeds will be split 50/50 between your organization and the Historical Society, with the top-earning building crowned the winner at the close of the season. It's a festive way to raise awareness, celebrate the season, and generate support for your mission.

(And yes, "stuffing the ballot box" is not only allowed—it's encouraged! Rally your members, friends, and supporters to cast their votes early, often, and generously!)

If your nonprofit would like to participate, please reply by **November 1**. Buildings will be assigned on a first-come basis and decorations must be completed by Wednesday, December 2 at 4:00 p.m.

We hope you'll join us in creating another magical holiday season at Heritage Village, while also raising funds to support the important work your organization does in our community.

With gratitude,

Amy Frank
Executive Director



A Glimpse of Christmas Past 2026: Heritage Village Building Decorating Contest Rules

Eligibility: The contest is open to all nonprofit organizations in Door County. Participants must sign up in advance to be eligible.

Decorating Period: All decorations must be installed between November 27 and December 2. We will work with you to schedule times to decorate. Please remember, our buildings are not heated. The contest officially starts on **December 4 at 3:00 pm** and ends on **December 26**.

Buildings Eligible for Decoration: Participants will be assigned a building. You may decorate both the inside (first floor only) and outside of your designated building within Heritage Village.

Safety First: Safety is a top priority. All decorations must comply with local safety regulations, and no open flames, fireworks, or hazardous materials are allowed. Participants are responsible for ensuring their decorations do not pose any safety risks.

Electricity Use: The buildings **do not have indoor lighting** and they get very dark. Each building has one electrical outlet available. Participants may use electricity for lighting and small electrical decorations. However, decorations requiring extensive electrical power or generators are not allowed. Participants must use UL-listed electrical decorations. The Door County Historical Society will light the exterior.

Environmental Responsibility: The use of environmentally friendly and energy-efficient decorations is encouraged. Participants should consider using battery- or solar- powered lights (to simulate candlelight). Please use natural and/or recyclable materials whenever possible. We can provide evergreen branches for your use.

Property Protection: Participants must respect the heritage and historical value of the buildings and property at Heritage Village. No damage to the buildings, grounds, or artifacts is allowed. Any damage caused by decorations will be the responsibility of the participant.

Public Viewing: Heritage Village will be open for public viewing each Friday and Saturday in December from 3pm - 6pm. **We will not be open on Christmas Day**, but will be open on Saturday, Dec. 26, Participants must ensure that their decorations are visible at night. All lights and decorations must be operational and turned on during the evening hours for public viewing. Timers and dusk-to-dawn products are permitted.

Judging: Visitors will vote for their favorite buildings via donations. All the donations will be split 50/50 with the sponsoring organization and the Door County Historical Society. **Encourage your constituents to visit often and donate to your building!**

Awards and Prizes: The building that receives the most donations will be crowned the winner. In addition to bragging rights and recognition in local media, the winner will receive a certificate of recognition and a free annual DCHS Business Membership.



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Clean-Up: Participants must remove all decorations by January 8. Please set-up a day/time with DCHS staff to access the inside of the building. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from future contests.

Photography and Media: Heritage Village reserves the right to photograph and share images of the decorated buildings for promotional and media purposes.

Disqualification: Participants who violate the rules, engage in unsportsmanlike conduct, or fail to adhere to safety regulations will be disqualified from the contest.

Changes to Rules: Heritage Village reserves the right to modify the contest rules at any time and will notify participants of any changes.



A Glimpse of Christmas Past 2026: Agreement Form

Organization Name: _____

Primary Contact Person: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please Provide a Brief Description of Your Nonprofit (for publicity purposes):

Building Responsibility:

The Door County Historical Society (DCHS) is not responsible for turning on lights or adjusting decorations each Friday and Saturday inside your building. Do you agree to have someone from your organization periodically check on your assigned building?

YES / NO

Event Promotion:

This fundraiser relies on participating organizations encouraging their supporters to visit and donate. Do you agree to promote this event to the best of your ability? (DCHS will provide social media posts, press releases, and images to support your outreach efforts.)

YES / NO

Contest Participation:

By entering the Heritage Village Building Decorating Contest, your organization agrees to follow the contest rules and abide by any decisions made by the contest organizers. This contest is an opportunity to spread holiday cheer and strengthen our community's festive spirit.

Signature

Date



Historically-appropriate Christmas Decorations

In rural communities from 1880-1910, Christmas decorations were often simpler and more homemade compared to today's commercialized and elaborate decorations. Here are some common types of Christmas decorations that people in rural communities during that period might have used:

- **Evergreen Branches:** Evergreen branches, such as pine, spruce, or holly, were commonly used to decorate homes. These branches symbolized eternal life and were readily available in rural areas.
- **Paper Chains:** People would make paper chains by cutting strips of colored paper and linking them together to create long chains that could be hung around the room.
- **Candles:** Candles were a popular form of decoration, both on the Christmas tree and in windows. These candles were often placed in simple metal or wooden holders. (*battery-operated candles will be allowed)
- **Handmade Ornaments:** Homemade ornaments were common. People would create ornaments out of dough, wood, or even dried fruits. These ornaments often had a rustic and personal touch.
- **Fruit and Nuts:** Fruits like apples and oranges, as well as nuts like walnuts and hazelnuts, were often used as decorations. These were hung on the tree or placed in bowls as both decoration and treats.
- **Wreaths:** Wreaths made from evergreen branches and other local materials were hung on doors and walls.
- **Stockings:** People would hang stockings by the fireplace, hoping that Santa Claus (or Father Christmas) would fill them with small gifts and treats.
- **Tinsel:** While not as elaborate as modern tinsel, people would sometimes use strands of shiny metallic paper to add a bit of sparkle to their trees.
- **Mistletoe:** Mistletoe was hung from the ceiling, and it was customary for people to share a kiss beneath it.
- **Nativity Scenes:** Some families would set up nativity scenes to depict the birth of Jesus, with figurines made of wood or clay.
- **Garlands:** Garlands made from popcorn or cranberries were sometimes used to decorate the tree and other areas of the home.
- **Handmade Crafts:** People in rural communities often used their crafting skills to make Christmas decorations, such as creating small cloth dolls, knitted ornaments, or painted wooden figurines.
- **Paper Decorations:** People would also create paper decorations, such as paper snowflakes, to hang around the house.
- **Homemade Wreaths:** Families often made their own wreaths from local foliage, such as pine branches or dried flowers.

It's important to remember that during this time period, decorations were simpler, and many families focused on the symbolic and religious aspects of Christmas. Homemade and natural decorations were cherished for their sentimental value, and the spirit of the holiday was often more about togetherness and reflection.