

Smithsonian Loans Exhibit To Chillicothe **News**

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Chillicothe, known for its slogan "the home of sliced bread" will soon become the temporary home of the Rohwedder bread slicer.



According to Ron Wilder of Chillicothe, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. has agreed to loan the second model of the machine to the Grand River Historical Society and Museum for a period of three years. The original slicer used in the Chillicothe Baking Company is not available because it fell apart after six months due to heavy use. This display has been in the works for ten years.

The exhibit, "A Slice of America," will open Sunday, July 7th. A ceremony to honor the 85th anniversary of sliced bread will be held. Grand River Historical Museum at Chillicothe will be closed from June 27th to July 6th to prepare.

I'm sure that many of you have heard about the Rohwedder sliced bread machine coming to Chillicothe. To bring everyone up to date the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., is loaning the Rohwedder bread slicer to the Grand River Historical Society and Museum for a period of 3 years. This is the second model of the bread slicer, manufactured by the Micro Machine Co., of Bettendorf, Iowa which was donated to the Smithsonian by his daughter Mrs. Margaret (Rohwedder) Steinhauer in 1974. The original bread slicer used in the Chillicothe Baking Company fell apart after just six months due to heavy use.

The Museum's quest for the Rohwedder bread slicer has been a long one beginning ten years ago with the initial loan request made by Dr. Jack Neal and Dr. Frank Stark, long time boosters of the Museum. However, after reviewing all the information required by the Smithsonian for the loan of the artifact, the Museum board concluded that it did not have the finances or time to continue with the loan request and the project was shelved. In 2011 after an endowment that allowed us to make much needed upgrades to the Museum facility and to add Pam Clingerman as a full time Curator, in 2011 the board felt it was time to contact the Smithsonian again.

Our Curator with the help of former Smithsonian board member Claudia (Ream) Allen, a former Chillicothe resident now living in California, was able to cut much of the red tape which allowed Pam to make contact with the right people in the Smithsonian. After 20 months of hard work completing official letters of intent, a 27 page facility report, an emergency handbook, upgrading the environmental controls, submitting four months of environmental readings, an updated security system, floor plan, photographs and agreeing to cover the cost of crating, shipping and insuring the slicer we can finally report that it is on our way to us and will be in our Museum for three years!

The Museum will be closed between June 27th and July 6th to complete the exhibit area for the slicer and to make preparations for a special ceremony to honor the 85th anniversary of sliced bread on Sunday, July 7th. On that date we will have extended hours from 1:00 to 6:00 P.M. and will introduce our new exhibit "A Slice of America." We anticipate that we will have present that day representatives of the Rohwedder family as well as descendants of the Bench family--Frank Bench was the owner of the Chillicothe Bakery Co. which produced the first sliced bread in the nation. Several other local and state dignitaries are also expected.

We want to give special credit to Cathy Stortz Ripley of the Constitution-Tribune who originally broke

the story of Chillicothe being the Home of Sliced Bread and wrote about the Rohwedder bread slicer. It is due to her research and diligence that this story came to light.

We also want to commend the Sliced Bread Committee which has done an excellent job of marketing Chillicothe nationwide as the "Home of Sliced Bread."

On Tuesday April 23rd the Museum board met with Randy Mason, host of "Rare Visions and Roadside Attractions" on KCPT in Kansas City. Randy is working on a documentary highlighting Chillicothe as the "Home of Sliced Bread". After he learned of the pending loan of the Rohwedder sliced bread machine from the Smithsonian he is going to include the acquisition in his film.

Another recent national recognition is in the July issue of Readers Digest. A feature entitled "Fifty Surprising Reasons We Love America" includes as number 10 an affirmation that Chillicothe is the "Home of Sliced Bread"--it's on page 93--see if you can find a copy.