Rosendale Historical Society Newsletter

Fall/November 2025

PO Box 254, Rosendale, WI 54974

www.rosendalehistoricalsociety.org

Next meeting ~ Monday, January 10, 2026 at 1:00 pm at Peace Lutheran

We welcome three new members, Greg & Marcia Lentz. They live in the home on N. Main St. originally built by the Westenbergs. A big welcome to Donna Bleuel who grew up in Rogersville but now lives in Fond du Lac. We know they will be a great asset to our group.

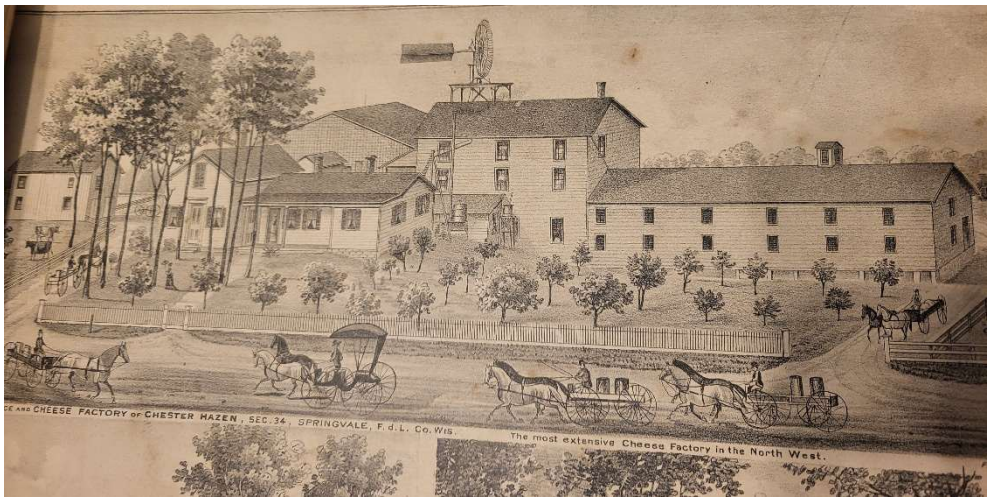
A longtime member, Roger Jones passed away on Oct. 21 at the age of 91. Roger was married to his Rosendale HS classmate, Donna Pfeiffer for 67 years and they had 2 sons. Both spent many years as teachers, Roger as a business education teacher and then as part-owner of Barron County Abstract Co. They retired in Fond du Lac, closer to many family members. A complete obituary can be found at Kurki Funeral Home.

We were given a frame with two pictures of 1920 Rosendale Basketball teams - both a women's and men's team. It was found hanging in the old Village Hall on N. Main. The building was recently sold and the new owner wondered if we would like the picture. Neither picture has any names. I can only identify one of the women - Verna Gruett Peters. The one man that is easy to identify is Lester Madigan. Perhaps some of you can tell us some of the others. The interesting thing about this is that we do have one picture of a women's basketball team in 1913 and we did not know if that was the only year that Rosendale had a women's team, but this proves that there was still one in 1919-20. We do not know how long that continued, but there were not any in the 40's, 50's or 60's.

At our October meeting, Don Marschall was going to tell us about unusual people who formerly lived in Rosendale. For anyone who knows Donny, you know he lives and breathes baseball. Unfortunately, our meeting was on the night of the first Milwaukee Brewers playoff game against the Chicago Cubs. On that afternoon he told me he just couldn't come as he had to watch every minute of the game. After a little convincing he did agree to be there for a short time if he could leave to watch most of the game. At 3:30 Donny came over and said his daughter had just surprised him with tickets for the sold-out game and he was leaving at 4 to go to Milwaukee. We all understood and Celesta filled in by reading interesting obituaries from our archives.

Feature Article:

Rosendale was always known as a "farming community" with 3 well-known farms raising prize purebred cattle. The Gillettes raised Holsteins that became very famous; the Hills raised Guernseys imported from the island of Sarnia; and the Welles raised Jerseys, later changing to Guernsey cattle. Past newsletters have had articles about all of them. This time we will feature what happened to the milk from these cows.



Chester Hazen is credited with building the first traditional full-scale cheese factory in Wisconsin in 1864 just west of Ladoga. His cheese factory was successful and led to the construction of many others. They began appearing about every 3 or 4 miles from each other so that farmers could take their milk in cans to these factories. The milk cans were loaded on wagons pulled by a team of horses. The rural cheese factories were usually owned and run by the family who lived above the factory. All of them made cheese and had whey left over which was then given back to the farmers to feed to their pigs. The cheese was taken to Fond du Lac and sold to a broker. When motor vehicles became more available the cheese factories went to the farms and picked up the milk. The cans were put in the back of the trucks and there usually was a tank behind the cab where whey was held to then be given to the farmers who had a tank where it was kept.

Many of these cheese factories were converted to homes when cheese was no longer made there. Examples of these are the following: Seiler's on the corner of Cty C and Seiler Rd (home of the Conrads); Dodd Cheese Factory on the corner of Hwy 26 and Olden Rd; Woodhull Cheese Factory on the corner of Forest Ave and Y; another one on 26 South just south of TC; and the abandoned one on 26 just south of Forest Ave (which was once the home of the Gieses.) Eldorado had one on the corner of Rose Eld Rd and C; County I and Church Rd and another on

the corner of N and Town Hall Rd. The cheese factory in Rogersville is still used for cheese except now it is processed and packaged but not made there.

At one time the Village of Rosendale had 2 creameries where farmers brought their milk, but they made butter and cheese and were called "creameries." The smaller of the 2 was located at the west end of the Village across from the current HS. That building was moved several times and in 1928 ended up behind Bluemkes and was used for the storage of implements before the cement block building was constructed in 1949.

Then there was the larger creamery known as the "Carnation Building" located just south of Bluemkes next to the creek. Following is a story written by Charles Marschall about that building when his dad, Walter Marschall was in charge.

"One of my good memories of when cheese was made at Dad's factory is eating fresh curd. In making cheese, milk was placed in long, rectangular tanks that were made of wood & lined with stainless steel. I'd guess that the tanks were about 30' x 4' and 3' high. After the milk was heated, it was curdled by adding some chemical & the curd would gradually settle to the bottom of the tanks. Then the leftover milk, called whey would be drained off & pumped to a large tank behind the factory. Many farmers would fill their empty milk cans with this whey & take it to feed their pigs. The curd remaining in the bottom of the tanks was about 2-4 inches thick & was a rubbery solid material. The curd was then cut into large slabs perhaps 1' wide & 4' long & manually fed into a motor driven cutter & slicer which was placed on top of the tank & moved along as the cutting progressed. It was at this point that we were allowed to take bite-size pieces of the curd out of the tank, still warm, & eat them, either with or without adding salt."

Later the Carnation Co. closed the cheese making in Rosendale, but milk was received there and then taken to Waupun where they had a larger factory. They kept the building and used it for other purposes and that's what Charles is referring to in the following story.

"Some of the farmers who brought their milk to Dad's factory would buy their butter there and have the cost deducted from their milk check. Many times, especially during the summer, when the butter would come in from Waupun, four of us, usually Bud Tetzlaff, Bud Knapp, my brother, Gordon, and I would package the butter for Dad. We would work in the "butter room" where the butter & cheese were stored. The room was kept cool by circulating cold water through pipes located in that room. In the packaging operation, the 4 of us would position ourselves on low boxes around a cardboard box that contained individual pound packages of butter in a light paper wrapper. Two of us would prepare a separate container already printed with the name of the product for each pound of butter. Each container had been manufactured with creases & end flaps & then flattened. We simply undid the creases to form a container & then closed 1 end before passing it on to the other 2 guys. They completed the job by inserting the butter into the open end & then closing that end & putting the butter into a cardboard box. We prided ourselves on our skill at doing this and the swiftness of our work. I think we knocked off 50 pounds of butter in a short time."

In 1949 the Carnation Co. discontinued receiving milk in Rosendale and closed the factory. Bluemkes bought the building in 1950 and used it as a warehouse. I remember Jim Marschall and I riding our tricycles between the steel vats when his Dad worked there. It was a milk receiving station then. It was always cold inside, but it was a great place to cool off on a hot day in the middle 1940's. In 1971 the building was demolished and the steel building on the south end of Bluemkes took the place of the Carnation Cheese Factory.

The first picture of this building was taken around 1900. Notice the fur coats that many farmers are wearing and also note the 2 different kind of milk cans – some with narrow tops like we think of them and then earlier ones with straight sides and wide tops.

Gifts to RHS

- In Memory of Marcie Kunkle from friends & family
- To Honor Jim & Emajean Westphal, her brother & sister-in-law, from Mary Geiger
- From Kleone & Phil Nelson