

Rosendale Historical Society Newsletter

Summer/August 2025

PO Box 254, Rosendale, WI 54974

www.rosendalehistoricalsociety.org

Next meeting ~ Monday, September 8, 2025 at 6:30 pm

A program & tour are planned at the Elderberry Farm east of Rosendale just off Highway 23 at W862234 Smith Rd. We plan to meet there at 6:30.

Many things have happened since our last newsletter, so I need to prepare you for changes. Marcie Kunkle passed away on June 3. For many years I have written the newsletters and sent what I wrote to Marcie. Then she formatted it, added pictures and comments and sent it out to all of you. I can still write it, but it will not be formatted like you are used to seeing it. Celesta Griffiths will be sending it out to you. I am not at all sure what it is going to look like, but we will do the best that we can. Our Society is really suffering as we lost Fred Mattheis in January and now Marcie. Both were very active Board members who each contributed so much to our society. We appointed Fred's grandson, Kyle King, to replace Fred and Elizabeth Crook, my daughter, to replace Marcie. We welcome both to our Board, but it will take some time for them to learn how to fill the shoes of the two that we lost.



Marsyl "Marcie" J. Kunkle, age 80, died Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at home with her family around her. Marcie had served on the Rosendale Village Board, the Cemetery Board, the School Board, the Memorial Day Committee & the Historical Society Board. She was a lifelong member of Peace Lutheran Church. She is survived by her 2 daughters, Ann & Susan & their husbands; her 3 grandchildren and her sister, Carolee Floyd. For a complete obituary Go to Butzin-Marchant website.

Peony Sunday:

Peony Sunday was June 8 and the weather that morning was sunny & warm, but when we looked at the radar for the day it showed showers coming later. The committee discussed whether we should set up in the Gardens or use the UCC Church for the lunch. After much discussion it was decided that we should proceed to serve lunch in the Garden. Tables had already been brought by Jeff Riedeman and were all in place. The garden shed had been cleaned out and ready for food. Our serving time was from 11 – 2. At



11 a light rain started to fall, but we thought it would clear up. A few brave people came to eat and went into the Gazebo to eat to stay dry. By 11:30 it was pouring, and it continued until 2 when the sun again came out. Thanks to our faithful workers the meat was put in smaller containers and sold to members along with buns. The buns had been donated by Hy-Vee in Ripon and Brandon Meats had given us a discount on the meat. Wonderful homemade desserts had been donated by our faithful members. When all was tallied up, we were \$461.00 to the good. *Peony pictures by Julie & Bob Kissinger.*



Later that week, on a picture-perfect day, we were honored to have the American Peony Society visit our Garden. They were having their national convention in Beaver Dam and had rented 3 buses to bring those interested to several gardens in our area. The last time they held their convention in Wisconsin was in 2016 in Green Bay when they also visited us. We learned a great deal from the Washington State University Specialist of Plant Pathology, Gary Chastagner, a speaker at the convention. Thanks to a specialist from Belarus who introduced us, he was able to identify and give us advice about some of the fungal diseases that we have in our raised beds.

Feature Article:





The Primary School will soon be demolished because grades 4K – 3rd will be relocated to the Intermediate School just north of the cemetery. The bell which had originally hung in the belfry of the 2-story frame school had been moved to the Primary School in 1972 when the frame building was demolished. As everything was being removed, the school offered the bell to the Historical Society. Thanks to the ingenuity of Michael Krause, he was able to remove the bell from the enclosure. He then rehabbed the wheel which allowed the bell to be rung. He attached a rope to it; made a wood frame to hold it; brought it to the museum where it now stands in the entry. The bell was cast in 1893, by the McShane Co. of Missouri. This was 1 year after the school was built. Bells were usually made of 80% copper & 20% tin. Weather causes them to have a greenish/blue patina.

Rosendale Schools

Rosendale's first settlers came from the East in 1845 and it didn't take them long to determine that they needed a school for their children. The first schoolhouse was built of logs in 1847. The land was owned by Stephen Sanborn and he gave it to the community for the purpose of a school building. In 1855, the log building was sold and a frame building took its place and then 5 years later a second room was added to the one room frame building. By 1890 residents wanted higher education than the 8 grades that were being offered. This would require a larger school building so in 1892 a larger 2 story building with 4 rooms and an attic was built. All these schools were at the same location, the corner of Lafayette St. & Highway 23.



First and second grade in one room and third through fifth in another – both on the first floor. Grades sixth through eighth occupied one room upstairs and the other upstairs room was for high school classes. A three-year high school course was adopted. A 4-year course was not offered until 1903. Class sizes for high school grew rapidly and the 3rd story attic had to be remodeled for high school use. Screen dividers and the chimney separated the east side from the west side with the north side being left open. In 1921 the State condemned the third story which was being used for classes, so pupils were moved to the lower part of the Masonic Hall, the Odd Fellows Hall and a building on Main St. that stood on the east side where PC Mobile now stands. The next year an objection was raised by the state

of the idea of pupils going from one building to another in all kinds of weather. The first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall (our present museum) had been used by the school for many events - graduations, plays, concerts, dances and on a regular basis for basketball games for the past 34 years.

In December of 1924 a vote was taken on whether to build a new high school. The majority voted to build one. Many sites were considered with a final choice being 4 acres of land on the south side of Rosendale just north of the cemetery. A brick building was constructed for \$45,000 (\$817,284 today) and dedicated in November 1926 as Rosendale Union Free H.S. The enrollment was 61 students. That building had a small gymnasium, so they no longer used the Odd Fellows Hall for basketball games. In 1955 a larger gymnasium, kitchen & shop were added on the north side. Another addition was added in 1960 for a science room, library and music room.



The original 4 room two story school continued to be used for grade 1-8. The upstairs vacant room was used as a “gym.” Square dancing, PTA meetings and programs were held in that room. In 1960 the state closed the one room schools to consolidate those students to the new Elementary School that had just been built on Wisconsin St. A new

building was also constructed on County N near Hwy 41. B.D. Leith school had 3 rooms plus a small gymnasium for pupils in grades 1-5 living in that area.

In 1971 a new High School was built on the west end of Rosendale for the combined school districts of Brandon & Rosendale. The original H.S. was used for grades 6-8 and the Primary School could then be used for Grades 1-5. Because the 1892 4-room school no longer needed to be used for grades 1 and 2, it then was demolished in 1972 and the bell was taken to Primary School. Now we have that bell in the museum and that is the journey from its origin to its final resting place.

A new era for our schools is about to begin this September. Brandon’s school and Rosendale Primary will no longer exist. They are being combined and pupils from both areas will attend the newly renovated and enlarged Rosendale Intermediate and the name will be “Laconia Primary.” This will be for grades K4 –5th. The only part of the 1955 building remaining is the gymnasium. The newly constructed Laconia High School was added to the 1972 H.S. and the original Laconia has become the renovated Laconia Intermediate School. This will all take some getting used to, but by looking back through our history, we’ve had many changes and we’ve adapted.

Board of Directors: Emajean Westphal, President;
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Chuck Marousek

Newsletter: Emajean Westphal & Rebecca Westphal