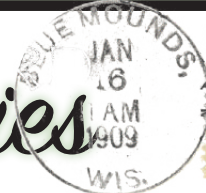


## POST CARD Stories



By Jane Considine

In 1906, a popular magazine satirically noted that the “Great Post Card Craze” had eliminated all interest in polite letter writing and magazine reading. Postcards were a new and fast way to communicate. They lent themselves to abbreviated and quick messaging, and could sometimes even be delivered within a day. With the post-Industrial era ushering in a faster pace of life, the embrace of the efficient postcard seems logical—but at the time, it was quite revolutionary.

Dr. Dan Friedman in *The Birth and Development of American Postcards* suggests that a precursor to today’s postcard may have been “a piece of cardboard with a stamp mailed during the first few years of the postal system” ... a “mailed card.” The U.S. government issued these “postal cards” with prepaid one cent postage in the early 1860s. One side had a simple message or image, while the other side was reserved for the recipient’s address only. Later, the first American postcards printed explicitly as souvenirs were created for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, helping to popularize picture postcards.

While postcards were already rising in popularity, a 1907 U.S. Post Office rule change made them even more customizable: now a divided back, facilitating a right side message and left side address, meant the postcard front was now a canvas of limitless possibilities. The next few years saw a deluge of postcards travel through the postal system. (Interestingly, this “postcard craze,” period coincided with



1915 “that would be seven postcards a year for every man, woman and child in the nation, and doesn’t count the postcards collected in albums and boxes and never mailed.” Postcards in this format, of an image on the front and a divided address and message space on the back, are still standard today.

Just as posts on social media in the 21st century reveal what an individual is doing or thinking, so too did postcards of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Messages such as: “why haven’t you written,” or “I’m fine and dandy,” or “threshing today and

going to the dance tonight,” are similar to the virtual updates of today. The difference, of course, is theoretically a social media post is an instant message to the masses, while a postcard is directed to one person and they may not receive it for several days—but both forms of communication are brief and both can offer hints about the larger touchstones of our culture.

### CATCH IT WHILE YOU CAN!



The living room exhibit, a visitor favorite, will be coming down in March 2023. Don’t miss your chance to see a full-scale Victorian parlor, cozy 1930s living room, and groovy 1960s family room—chock full of furniture, knick-knacks and the “newest” technologies of Mount Horeb area families.

During my volunteer work at the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society, I found myself especially intrigued with the dozens of postcards that I handled as I was cataloguing the Buechner-Birrenkott Collection—a multi-generation, diverse assemblage entrusted to MHAHS by the children of Ralph and Beverly Buechner. Some members of the Birrenkott family received many postcards from friends and family, and

the increased popularity of another quick communication invention: the telephone.) **U.S. Post Office records indicate that for the year ending June 30, 1908, an astonishing 667,777,798 postcards were mailed.** “Based on 1910 census records,” author Daniel Gifford writes in *American Holiday Postcards 1905-*

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the correspondence provides a glimpse into everyday life in the first quarter of the 20th century in Mount Horeb, Cross Plains, Pine Bluff, Klevenville, Riley, and other nearby communities.

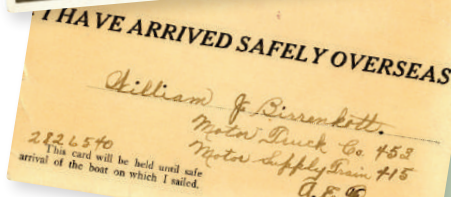
MHAHS's general collection of postcards represents a cross section of design and artistry through the years. Elaborate postcards on holiday themes captured my attention as I sorted through hundreds of postcards. The colors were bright and the artwork was sometimes quite elaborate. Some postcards were embossed, others had light traces of glitter. Then, as now, not every purchased postcard was mailed. Many were saved in the same way today's travelers bring home postcards as souvenirs of sites they visited. Gifford's study of the holiday postcard phenomenon concluded that 1907-1910 were the boon years for holiday postcards. More than 2/3 of the postcards he examined originated in small towns of the Northern United States, with women and youth being the primary recipients.

The Christmas postcard from 1909 on the first page was printed in Germany where the lithographic printing process was highly developed. After the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909 that increased tariffs on European goods, and the outbreak of World War I, the import of postcards from Germany declined dramatically. Reduced quality postcards printed in the U.S. and England became more common. Postcards continued to display photos and artwork, but the brilliant color was often absent, and led to a decline in the postcard collecting frenzy.

A visual record of changes in the Mount Horeb area can be found in the society's large collection of postcards. There are postcards of individuals, schoolrooms, workers, family

### Snapshots of the Past

Postcards can recall scenes or institutions from our collective history that have disappeared. For instance, Mike Birrenkott received postcards from friends and family when he was convalescing at the Prairie du Chien Sanitarium. In the first 50 years of the 20th century, Wisconsin had at least 15 sanitariums, with two in Dane County. Patients of all ages with tuberculosis or other conditions that affected the lungs were sometimes referred there for rest, fresh air, and a healthy diet. With the discovery that streptomycin was an effective cure for TB in 1944, the number of patients began to decline.



### Keeping Up with Troops

War-time postcards are well-represented in the MHAHS collection. Thousands of men from Wisconsin received basic training at Camp Grant near Rockford, Illinois, before being shipped overseas. Panoramic and aerial postcard images of the sprawling Camp Grant were saved, probably by Michael (Mike) Birrenkott (1889-1963) and William (Bill) Birrenkott (1894-1975) who both trained there before shipping overseas. Other postcards from Camp Grant show groups of recruits in the mess hall, shoveling snow, relaxing in the barracks, or practicing weapons training in trenches. Mike and Bill both returned to the States with souvenir postcards from Germany, Luxembourg, France, and Monaco. One heartbreaking postcard, commercially distributed, shows the shattered body of Quentin Roosevelt, son of Theodore Roosevelt lying on the ground by his plane, shot down by the German army. Mike's brief comment is that while he didn't see that particular accident, he saw a similar crash occur about 100 yards away. "It was a terrible thing to see," he wrote.

The devastating influenza pandemic of 1918 is noted in postcard correspondences to Mike Birrenkott while he was in training at Camp Grant. Postcards to him were re-routed from his barracks to the base hospital quarantine. In the same time period Ralph Dahle of Mount Horeb sent a postcard to his stepmother Mrs. Julie Dahle when he was at Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois. He mentions that the photo of enlisted men relaxing on the lawn was taken the last day of their quarantine.

gatherings, buildings still standing and buildings long gone, barns, farm animals, circus parades, construction, and area tourist attractions.

Some of the photo postcards may have been from a new Eastman Kodak product that was intended to "make photography so simple and foolproof that even a child could take good photographs," according to George Miller of the online newsletter *Postcard History*. Designed for amateurs, the camera with its finished roll of 100 exposures was mailed to Kodak where the film was developed and the camera was loaded with a new roll of film and returned to the customer. In 1903 the Model 3A Folding Pocket camera—dubbed a "postcard camera"—used postcard-size negatives. The amateur photographer in small-town America could purchase a complete kit for developing the film and printing the photos for \$1.50. The result of this new technology is evident in scenes from everyday life on postcards that were saved in desk drawers, scrapbooks, correspondence files and shoeboxes, just waiting for the day to be discovered and appreciated once again. Studio photographers were also in on the postcard trend; from 1907 to about 1920, many studio photographs were printed as postcards. We often think of postcards as always being commercially sold, but it was also just the way photos were printed at the time.

Reading the messages on postcards reveal a...continued on pgs 3-4

### Big History in the Moment

In the Henderson family postcard collection are found two postcards, from spring 1912, making a pointed reference to women's suffrage. It would be a referendum question on the ballot that November. One unnamed writer's postcard comment to Mrs. J.R. Henderson was "This is a fine election day is it not. Too bad that the women can't go up



and vote." The referendum failed, but National Women's Suffrage later came in 1920.

The appearance of Halley's comet in April 1910 was a noted event around the world. The event was recorded on a postcard from the Buechner-Birrenkott Collection when "Kittie" greeted Anna Adler with "Suppose if you didn't get hit with the comet you are still living and well."



Tall Tale postcards were popular in the first 20 years of the 20th century. Oversized produce and animals were offered to extol the bounty of agriculture. Waupun photographer Alfred Stanley Johnson, Jr manipulated photos to create entertaining postcards like this one.

### Talking the Talk

Studying postcard messages gives the reader a glimpse into language trends of the time: for instance, writers frequently report that he or she is "fine and dandy," an idiom that was first popularized in the early 1900s and means "excellent," or is sometimes used ironically to mean just the opposite. Also seen in the postcard collection is "Oh you kid" a term that came into usage on the heels of a popular 1908 song "I Love My Wife, but Oh You Kid." The use of the term "kid" in reference to a friend also appeared often. A 1909 postcard mailed to Cathie Adler carried this brief message: "Dear Cathie - Such a lovely day. Thot [stet] would drop you a postal. Oh you kid. Nothing doing Fri night but come and see me soon." Proper grammar and spelling does not seem to have been of high concern, just like texting today. Language transitions, particularly among the Mount Horeb area's Norwegian descended residents, are also evident with messages written partially, or entirely, in Norwegian.

### Sent with Love

Romance was relayed through postcards from several young admirers to the popular Mike Birrenkott while he was still a teenager. An assortment of postcards sent by "A.B.C.- X.Y.Z" in 1908 all have brief messages inquiring about the weather, plans to attend a baseball game, or just an intriguing nudge to "notice the stamp." That prompted me to dig for more information about stamps and postage. Research reveals that in the late 1800s and early 1900s a "language of stamps" was developed in Great Britain. The placement of a stamp on a letter or postcard carried a hidden message: upside down in the upper left corner meant "I love you" and various other sentiments related to friendship or love could be expressed through stamp placement. This had led postal administrators to rule that postage must be placed in the upper right corner. Writing a tiny personal message to be discovered under the stamp was also popular.

Sorting through postcards chronologically, one can trace the evolution of the relationship between "Bill" Birrenkott and Anna (Anne) Adler—that would eventually lead to a long marriage. A 1917 postcard to Anna has a simple message "A Happy New Year from a Friend" with no signature, but meticulous handwriting



that is a match for Bill's. Four months later "Friend Billy" wrote to Anna that he arrived at his destination and expects to be home about Saturday. The entry of the U.S. into World War I saw Bill volunteering in the U.S. Expeditionary Force in Europe. Anna received a "Soldiers' Mail" postcard with the pre-printed message "I have Arrived Safely Overseas" and signed by William J. Birrenkott (see opposite page). In May 1920, Anna heard that Bill was coming back from the War, addressing a postcard (at left) to his "Dearest Friend" and signing it "Bye Bye, Billy."

Later Bill wrote to his "Dearest Friend" when he arrived in Chicago on his way to Pontiac, MI. (The stamp on that postcard was upside down.) Bill and Anna were married in 1921, but correspondence continued when Bill was traveling for business. In March 1923 he wrote to "Mrs. W. Birrenkott" that he had arrived in Waukegan, Illinois from Kalamazoo, Michigan: "Storming here at present, so do not know when we will get home. May have to take the train from here." He assured her that "everything O.K. I'm with the Buick dealer from Mineral Point."

sustained relationship with friends and relatives that had moved far away from the Mount Horeb area, often to the Western states. There are frequent comments about dances, the season's crops, or instructions to be at the train depot to meet them at the train. Was mail service in the first two decades of the 20th century so reliably efficient that a person could assume a postcard mailed on Friday would be received by Saturday? The accompanying article below, by MHAHS volunteer John Pare, provides a quick overview of the mail sorting and delivery that occurred on regional trains, allowing for same day or next day delivery to nearby towns on the railroad line.



Above: This real photo post card or "RPPC" was taken of the Henderson family of Springdale on June 30, 1909. Notice their beautiful hydrangea tree.

This has been just a smattering of the topics and themes present in the MHAHS's expansive and fascinating postcard collection. From firsthand perspectives of big history moments to the correspondence of everyday life, these small cards are snapshots in time. We invite you to come explore our archives, and experience even more long ago mini-sagas and amazing stories chronicled by our Dane County neighbors of the past.\*



## WHEN NEXT DAY DELIVERY COST A PENNY by John Pare

For several decades in 19th and 20th century, you could mail a postcard or a letter to anywhere on a local train route and be assured that it would arrive on the same or next day. This applies to local trains which served the small towns in America. The rate for mailing a postcard or a postal card was 1¢\* and these cards became a convenient and inexpensive way to communicate. What follows is a brief description of how that system worked. The system was a bit different for cross-country train routes not discussed here.



Most trains hauled a specially built mail car. The car had a bank of pigeon-holes (see image) with the name of every station on the route. When the train stopped at a station to take on or drop off passengers, mail bags were delivered to the train and mail was dropped off from the train. When there were no passengers, the station master hung the mail on a hook near the track and a mail handler on the train would snatch it with a long pole and haul it aboard as the train passed. He also tossed off the mail destined for that stop.

Once on board the train the mail would be sorted and put into the pigeon-holes marked for the towns on the route. This would have

to be done quickly since many stations on local trains were close together. If your postcard was intended for the next town on the train's route (i.e. Mt. Horeb to Klevenville) it would likely be delivered on the same day. At worst, if your letter was intended for a town that the train had already passed, it would be carried to the end of the route and carried on the train the next day heading back in the direction of the your addressee's town (i.e. Mt. Horeb to Ridgeway).

The mail car system described here fell into disuse as other methods for sorting and delivering the mail were developed. For instance, during the period of railway mail cars, the postal customer delivered their mail to the post office where it was cancelled and put in bags for the next train. Now with high speed optical scanning when you mail a birthday card to your neighbor in Mt. Horeb, the card is transported at day's end to Milwaukee where it is sorted and sent on its way. In most cases, it is sent back to Mt. Horeb to be delivered to your neighbor the next day. \*

\*The 1¢ rate was in effect from May 1, 1873 to November 1, 1917 and again from July 1, 1919 to December 31, 1951. For twenty-three months during and shortly after WWI, the rate was 2¢ with the additional penny helping to pay for the war.

# SPRINGDALE TOWN HALL by Jackie Sale



Top: Springdale Town Hall in its early days.

Bottom: The town hall today.



The old Springdale Town Hall, sitting close to the road at the corner of Town Hall and Offerdahl Roads, is identified as culturally significant in the town’s Land Use Plan (2002). This small brick building has been adding character to the landscape since it was built in 1915, though it has been generally unused since the new Town Hall next to it was built in 1980. Now there is a movement afoot to bring the building back to life and restore it for public use.

A township citizen’s committee, chaired by long-time resident Steve Gauger, is investigating the preservation potential of the structure for future generations. While a definite long-term plan is not yet in place, it is known that whatever happens there will be no dancing in the structure. In fact, it’s likely that there never has been dancing because of a stipulation in the deed to the town from Anton Field that states “said premises shall never be used for dancing in any form.”

Field donated the land for the town hall from his farm when he and his wife, Inger Erickson, lived and farmed on Town Hall Road. As a mason, Field built the town hall himself and, working with other Town of Springdale Norwegian immigrants Ole Bakken, Ole Rockstad, and Iver Kleven, he was involved in the construction of many area homes and buildings. He was also among those who built the St. Mary’s Church in Pine Bluff.

Anton Field emigrated to this area from Bang, Valdres, Norway, in 1883 when he was 26; he followed two of his uncles, Ole and Halvor Bakken, who had immigrated a few

years earlier. Two of Anton’s sisters, and later his parents, also emigrated from Norway. He lived for a time in Klevenville, working with his uncle, and later Ole Rockstad, as a mason. In 1891 Anton married Inger Erickson of Mount Vernon. They lived in Mount Horeb on Main Street before he buying their Springdale farm in 1899. Anton and Inger farmed there until 1920, when they moved back to Mount Horeb.

The historic Springdale Town Hall is the only township building in the area that was constructed for the purpose of being a “town hall,” a public place specifically for township business and community functions. It served as a community center where many different activities, social and governmental, were held and was, of course, where township residents went to vote. Many residents can remember voting in the little wooden booths along the south side windows with the curtains hanging on the front of the booths; voters then placed their ballots in one of the large wooden voting boxes. Voters were greeted by local poll workers, all neighborhood ladies, who brought food and desserts to share with the other workers and were kept warm by the stand-alone oil burner. At every election the poll workers put out the same 48-star flag that was there from the time the building was constructed. It was a well-used, tattered flag by the time it was retired to the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society’s (MHAHS) permanent collections.

Brian Bigler, who grew up on the farm next to the old town hall, remembers that the building had a vaulted ceiling with schoolhouse-style lights hanging from chains. The lights were most likely put in during rural electrification in the 1930’s. Some of the wooden tables and chairs that were used at social events are still present. Also present inside the building is the black wooden bulletin board that once hung outside by the front door and relayed information to residents about meetings and events—no email or Facebook in those days.

On the main level of the building, portraits hung by wires from the picture molding, including those of Presidents McKinley, F. D. Roosevelt, Washington, and Lincoln, all of which are now in the collections of MHAHS. Also in the collections is a pencil-drawn memorial depicting Robert LaFollette drawn in 1925, the year he passed away; it hung in the town hall alongside the presidential portraits.

The Springdale 4-H Club met at the old Town Hall for years with the 4-H’ers sitting on the wooden benches being educated and entertained. There must have been other shows, plays and programs because a wooden stage was stored in the basement and brought upstairs; the voting booths were used for changing rooms, noted Bigler. ....continued on pg 10

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

ARLO PAUST



In terms of the local historical society universe, 39-year-old Arlo Paust is a tiny newborn baby—a rare volunteer gem; one of the “young people” that we all dream of recruiting.

Here at the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society, we are very grateful that Arlo wandered into our archives space several years ago, intent

on his own research project. Since then, he has become an integral part of the History Team, and our first line of defense for unidentified photos. (His ability to “learn families” and recognize individual relatives is uncanny!)

Really, he is a jack-of-all-trades: Arlo is a passionate historian and genealogist, skilled picture framer, talented graphic designer (including the much-admired layout of our newsletter), cultured world traveler, flexible yoga instructor, and secret cat



lover. (.....Or maybe not-so-secret; refer to photographic evidence)

He also happens to be a pretty wonderful human being with a markedly tranquil and calming aura, which makes his annoyingly wide array of talents palatable.

Cheers to Arlo!—and several future decades of volunteering and partnerships, as he matures into a more respectably aged local historical society volunteer.

**Job description:** At the historium I have no one official title, but I suppose I could be the “newsletter editor,” “curator’s assistant,” and “exhibit planner.” I do all sorts of things and am particularly interested in the photo collection, genealogical backgrounds of Mount Horeb area families, fact-checking, and the puzzles of local history.

**How long have I volunteered for the Society:** I first volunteered with the historical society in July 2015, but became a more regular volunteer in 2017 when I became involved with planning for the permanent exhibit in the Driftless Historium.

**What is your favorite part of volunteering?:** My favorite part about volunteering is the people I get to hang out with. I also love geeking out over old photos and maps, researching for exhibits, and working with Johnna on various historical wonders.

**Who or what got me interested:** When I lived far away in Brooklyn, NY, I became obsessed with family history as a grounding connection to home. I began to write a history of my family who had originated in the historic Blue Mounds Norwegian Settlement and this research brought me to visit the previous configurations of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society Museum and archives. In the exhibit, I saw a picture of a great aunt on the wall and the collar worn by Reverend Helge Hoverstad in a case and it helped bring the local history to life. On my second visit, I picked up a “Past Times” newsletter that mentioned a donation of the photography of Albert N. Thorhaug, a photographer whose label I noticed on one of my favorite familial photos, so my first visit to the archives was to

look at the Thorhaug collection. I really appreciated that the historical society was focused on not just Mount Horeb, but also the surrounding rural areas, and I wanted to help their mission succeed. Both Destinee and Johnna were very inviting for volunteering opportunities. Furthermore, I have a continued fascination with the ethnic settlements of the area... particularly Norwegians. Although I never enjoyed history in school, I always cherished the stories of the past told by elderly neighbors, story books, and my grandmother.



Top: Tour Guide Arlo, ready to entertain and educate via this year’s debut of downtown walking tours.

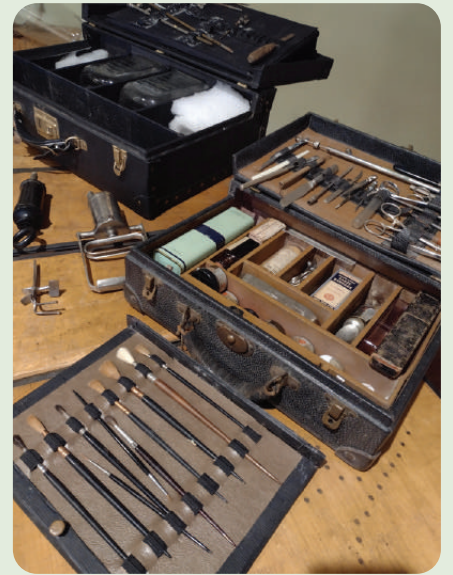
Left: Young Arlo, sometimes his brother... and an assortment of cats.

Opposite Top: Even Tinier Baby Arlo and his proud mom Barbara (who Arlo recruited to join our Volunteer Team after her recent retirement).

Opposite Left: A dashing pre-beard, teenage Arlo.

Opposite Right: Volunteer Arlo on the job, exuding his characteristic charm.

# DEATH DRAWS LIVELY CROWD



On Saturday, November 12, over forty guests filled the Kalscheur Family Foundation Community Room—which also held a display of four antique coffins, embalming equipment and memorial hair wreaths—for a “Dust to Dust” afternoon program. Presenter Steve Person, clad in his somber mourning best, gave a fascinating overview of the increasingly sophisticated and intricate Victorian-era death rituals and funerary practices. To further illuminate the topic at hand, Person highlighted select pieces from his extensive private collection of mortuary and embalming equipment amassed during a 47-year career as a Midwestern undertaker. \*



**Tell us about your family:**

I am the youngest of four and was raised in the hills between Blanchardville and New Glarus in the same house where I now live with my mother. My mother’s paternal side is Norwegian and all emigrated to this area between 1853 and 1868. I wrote a book on the subject of my great-great grandmother’s life called “Lina of York” that can be viewed in the archives at the Driftless Historium.

**Education and vocational:**

I went to Pecatonica Area Schools in Hollandale for elementary and Blanchardville for junior and high school. I studied graphic design, art, and spanish at Edgewood College. While in college I began picture framing which I still do part time. While in NY I took several classes in various subjects including historic preservation and architecture classes at the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Other activities include teaching yoga classes at The Yoga Space in the old Opera House and singing with the New Glarus Yodel Club.



**Why is the Mount Horeb area the best place on earth?:**

The Mount Horeb area is the best because it has a beautiful landscape and a fascinating history that people care about. There are magical creatures, like trolls, around every corner. I remember always having a good time in Mount Horeb when I was little: the art fairs were fun (and still are) and Open House Imports was the best place to find trolls. Who could not love bringing more of those colorful creatures into your life? \*



# 2022 MEMBERSHIP

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**"LET ALL YOUR THINKS BE THANKS." - W. H. Auden**

**We love our History Family! You make our mission of saving and sharing the stories of southwestern Dane County possible.**

**Our Members deserve to be recognized—and recognized accurately! Please inform us promptly of any omissions or corrections. Call 608-437-6486 or email mthorebahs@gmail.com.**

**NOTE: This is a listing of our 2022 dues-paying Members, and does not include our valued Lifetime Members.**

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# WHAT'S IN A NAME?: THE SCHOOL WITH THE ELEPHANT FOOT by Jackie Sale

Elephants aren't common around western Dane County, but there is a spot here that has an elephant's foot. It is just north of Blue Mounds in the Town of Vermont along Highway F. Here, at the eastern edge of the Driftless Area, is a massive pachyderm's appendage on the grounds of what was once the Deneen School.

Actually, it is an ancient rock outcropping that, there is no denying, does look like a huge upside-down elephant's foot. Because this natural sculpture dominates the grounds, Deneen School became known as the school with the elephant foot. This exposure of St. Peter Sandstone has been on the landscape for millions of years. Unlike the rest of the Midwest, the Driftless Area wasn't covered by ice during the last ice age some 11,000 years ago; the absence of that glacial activity has left us with steep hills, deep stream and river valleys, and the large rock formations that are so distinctive to our area.

And of course, generations of residence have enjoyed naming these unique geological formations. Looking out the window, the scholars at the one-room Deneen School must have been delighted with their elephant's foot and found it fun to have it as the centerpiece of the playground. After all, it is not always about geology.

The elephant foot and the Deneen School building still stand proudly today. The school building was converted to a home in the 1970s by Donna and Robert Read whose intention it was to keep the building looking like a school. When the Reads first moved in, the schoolhouse still had the blackboards on the wall and no plumbing; water had to be hauled in from Brigham Park. But the building itself was extremely solid. When they decided to stay in the area, Donna and Robert found an architect knowledgeable in adaptive reuse and hired Stensby Construction to remodel, keeping the six huge windows and the birdseye maple floors. Before being converted to a home, the Deneen School was used by St. James Church for a couple of years for catechism classes until the church was destroyed by fire in 1969.

The present building was built in 1925 after the first Deneen School, built in 1868, was torn down. The total cost of the new building and furnishings was \$5,517 and the teacher's salary in 1921 was \$100 per month. The land for the school was donated by P. K. Deneen who, as reported in a local history book, owned a "beautiful 228-acre farm, worth \$4,000."

The Deneen School was the last of the seven rural schools in the Town of Vermont to close. As had happened with most other rural schools, it consolidated with the Mount Horeb School District in 1964. Steve Frame, who was a student at the school when it closed,



Top: The Elephant's Foot, 1908.

Bottom: The Deneen school. The Elephant's Foot was just to the left of the schoolhouse and is about a quarter of the building's height.



reports that there were five or six students the last year; finding a teacher willing to teach all subjects to all grades in one room was difficult. One family that had seven children in seven grades at the school had moved, reducing the enrollment by more than half.

Rural one-room schools were the backbone of education in the U.S. for more than 200 years. Although many have been torn down or neglected, many have been restored as museums, homes, or adapted for other uses. More than 200 have been named to the National Register of Historic Places. Considering that most are of

humble architecture, it can only be surmised that the honor is given out of respect for education and traditional values. \*

....continued from pg 5: Very little attention has been given to the building over the years. Springdale 4-H at one time undertook a beautification project and planted pines, spirea, and flowers on the grounds. Steve Gauger noted that despite 42 years of being mostly unoccupied the building is in surprisingly good condition. This is according to Rod Helt, a registered architect living in Springdale who inspected the building last summer. Gauger said that immediate needs include general cleaning, replacement of the front entry steps and canopy, and installation of gutters to divert water away from the basement foundation.

There has been much interest in the restoration project, Gauger said, with offers to help from many residents who are looking forward to again using the 1915 Springdale Town Hall. \*

COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

# NORWEGIAN ROSEMALED TRUNK by Arlo Paust

Recently, the Driftless Historium was happy to receive the donation of a very large Norwegian emigrant trunk with original rosemaling from the mid 19th century. As is often the case, the story behind the artifacts the society receives are not 100% remembered by the families they come from and this was no exception. At first we had the following clues: the trunk came from the family of Rita Paulson Orshall, the painted initials (that we still cannot interpret with certainty but look like "O.S.S."), a date of 1839, the Telemark rosemaling style, and a photo that came along with the trunk. Thanks to some sleuthing by historical society researchers, the society believes the trunk belonged to a woman from Telemark, Norway, Turina Halvorsdatter Rensvigen Kjellesvik (Kellesvig).



Above: The 57"x24"x24" trunk

Above Right: Turina Kellesvig

Right: Turina seated at far right with her family in front of their house in the Town of York

Left: the right side of the face of the trunk

Below: the interior lid of the trunk

Turina was Rita Paulson Orshall's great grandmother and her only ancestor from Telemark. Turina was born the year on the trunk, 1839. However, the initials do not quite match up and this may take further investigation as Norwegian script initials can be difficult to decipher. It is clear that the trunk



is from this side of Rita's family. The donor of the trunk, Rita's son, Craig, was generous enough to donate Rita's ancestral photo collection as well, further revealing a stronger story of this trunk and the family it came from.



Turina Halvorsdatter emigrated to Wisconsin in 1861 with her family, at the age of 22, settling

in the Town of Perry. She had one child in 1865, but she never married the father, whose story is unknown. Instead, she married Ånon Kellesvig three years later. They had an additional seven children and lived on a farm on Hwy 39 in the Town of York, Green County. Both Turina's and Ånon's mothers lived here with them until their mothers' deaths in the late 19th century. It has been told that the old grandmothers

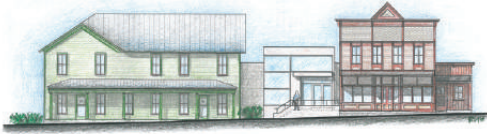
wove rugs together on their looms in the upstairs of the house.

Turina remained in the same home until she was in her mid-60s and was committed to the Green County Insane Asylum. She was released from the asylum for her final few years and then lived with her daughter Lena Stolen's family on the east end of Mount Horeb until Turina died in 1920, aged 81. The family farm was passed down to her and Ånon's son Theodor "Tommy" Kellesvig. The farm was then passed down to Tommy's daughter Alice who married Tilman Paulson, the parents of Rita Paulson Orshall. Rita was raised in this home that had been in her family for around 115 years until it was sold in 1977.

The Kellesvig family was part of the Norwegian Blue Mounds Settlement and many family members lived in the Mount Horeb Area. Kellesvig Street on the east side of Mount Horeb is named for this family.

The trunk itself is uniquely large and its rosemaling has been miraculously well-preserved. The society is thankful the family did not care to modernize the artistry of this historical artifact. The trunk and its unique "old world" qualities may have been preserved because of the physical connection the family had to their homestead for such an extended period of time. By the time the family, and the trunk, moved out of the home above, rosemaling had seen a resurgence in popularity. As suggested by rosemaling patterns and books found in Rita Orshall's collection, she became a rosemalar herself. Perhaps she was inspired by her own great-grandmother's trunk. \*





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## “PRAIRIE SHIP AT 40” NOW SHOWING!



Prairie Ship artist Naj Wikof, Alice in Dairyland Dorothy Farrell, and farm owner Richard Losenegger at the unveiling of the Prairie Ship in 1982.

This special exhibit in the Kalscheur Family Community Gallery commemorates the Prairie Ship, a 95 foot tall art installation that still stirs the imagination four decades after it dropped anchor on the hillside of Richard and Carol Losenegger’s Bergum Road farm. Original artifacts from the MHAHS collection, photos that appeared in a 1982 photo exposition at Glavee’s Art Gallery, and items graciously loaned by Carol Losenegger and then-Village President Peter Waltz help tell the story. Visitors will also see a modern model of the Prairie Ship, complete with nylon sails buffeted by the recreated Driftless winds of a pedestal fan.

“Prairie Ship at 40” is showing now through Tuesday, January 17 during the Historium’s regular open hours of Friday through

Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. A reception is planned for Thursday, January 5 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to reconnect those who remember the 1982 installation and introduce it to a new generation. Both the exhibit and the reception are free and open to all. For more information or to discuss donating your own Prairie Ship-related historical items, call the museum at 608-437-6486.

