

CHERRY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2015

What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.
John Steinbeck.

The following have passed away since our last newsletter:

Marilyn Susanne ("Susie") Klinck 71 Nov. 2014

Proposed closure of Cherry Valley School

By Eve Kirk

First a little background is in order. Cherry Valley has had an elementary school in the community since 1848, with a high school in the community since 1889 that lasted more than 50 years. By 1967, the Cherry Valley Elementary District covered considerable territory. But times change. The village that supported its own school for more than 120 years, and had the initiative to collaborate with the developers of the Cherry Vale Mall, was required by the State Board of Education to consolidate with a larger school. RPS 205 was chosen.

Many other rural or country schools in the late 1960's through 1970's also followed this mandate and became part of RPS. The result? Over the decades Rockford Public School boards have closed every country school except two. Cherry Valley and White Swan are the last two legacy country schools left.

During the month of May, 2014 Rockford Public School District 205 introduced a long range facilities plan. Cherry Valley School was once again selected for closing. If media had come, they would have found a clean, welcoming cheerful school in good order. The failings of Cherry Valley and White Swan have little to do with the teachers, students, or test score performance. It is perceived to be too small by today's standards.

In 2012, meetings were held in downtown Rockford, on the same night that the Village of Cherry Valley has its board meetings. Which means local officials most familiar with the economics of the area and most able to advocate for their constituents were, in effect, excluded from the conversation.


What the officials might have said was that closing Cherry Valley School would have a negative economic effect on the entire Cherry Valley area. Smaller communities are diminished by the lack of vitality that comes when a local school is shuttered. Without the school, commerce in the old village will be effected- the gas stations, restaurants, the orchard, and yes, the library, sited one block from the school to be a support to the school. The loss of a school from a long-established village effectively drives a stake through the collective heart of the village stakeholders. Many families moved to Cherry Valley years ago because of the good reputation of the school, and property values could be affected with this loss.

I should know about consequences from school decisions. In 1965 my small elementary school in another Illinois county was forced to consolidate with another school 9 miles away. My "inadequate" school produced scores of teachers, National Merit Finalists, an editor for the Denver Post, etc. Think of the decades of wasted time on buses, wasted gas, and lost time commuting to a far away facility.

Dear RPS School Board, please take a step back from the destruction of another community's school. Take the time needed to forge a real consensus from this community. The extra time invested could surely bring praise rather than criticism to a board that desires to serve all the children's educational needs as well as the community.

This excerpt was taken from Eve Kirk's Guest Column published in 'The Rock River Times' June 4-10, 2014 issue. Used with her permission. She is the director of the Cherry Valley Public Library District for the last 14 years.

In the months following this article, it was released that the RPS plan is now to close Cherry Valley and White Swan in 2018 and 2019. News that made me sad and disappointed. My father went to grade school and high school in the valley, and I'm an alumnus from the 1966 8th grade graduation class of 23 students. While many of you may have followed this story in the local news, almost half of our members live outside of the Cherry Valley/ Rockford area. Many live in other states and enjoy the small connection with their roots that the newsletter provides. I felt that they would care about learning the fate of our school -a building filled with so many wonderful memories.



"When I was in 6th Grade"

A Cherry Valley School story by Patty Campbell

The 5th/6th grade classroom was on the main floor. We hung up our coats in a large old closet (the size of a bedroom) that had orange crates stored in there as well.

Our teacher was young, and had just begun her first teaching job that September. Some of us students were overly talkative, got out of our seats, threw 'spit balls' and were good at not being quiet! She could not figure out how to control us.

One day, close to Christmas vacation she passed out/fainted onto the floor. We picked her up (two at each end) and carried her into the big closet. We laid her on top of the orange crates, covered her with our coats, and called the principle. One of the kids in our class tried to take charge and get us to be quiet. Her parents came and took her home. We learned she had had a nervous breakdown, and never returned to teach again at Cherry Valley School.


We kids soon 'woke up' to realize we were at school to learn and our being quiet and attentive was the first steps.



Class of CV 1951-East 1955

When Cherry Valley ceased teaching high school, our class was bused to Lincoln for a year, then to East High. It was a major change for my Cherry Valley 1951 graduating class of 13 students. Fortunately we got to visit Lincoln before graduation. The girls were escorted by Kathy Murphy and Sally Bryden. They introduced us to class rooms, teachers and their friends. Although it was a scary, exciting day, they made us feel very welcome. It was a great help to ease us into our fall bus ride and transitioning from such a small class, to later having hundreds of classmates at East.

Now, sixty years later, the East High School Class of 1955 will have their class reunion on July 10th 2015! There's golfing and supper on the 10th, and the Reunion Dinner on July 11th. The \$6.00 Reunion Book is worth every penny! If you were part of that class and have not been contacted, please email ERABS55@aol.com or write to Toni (Palmer) Mulford, 6434 Charles St, Rockford, IL 61108 by June 1st.



The Oldest Buildings in Cherry Valley?

Someone visiting the museum happened to ask which the oldest house in the village was. The answer is...WE DON'T KNOW! Wow, how had no one asked that before? It just seems like information we SHOULD have! We'd like to ask for help in trying to find out. Anyone with some suggestions on "oldest" houses please let us know. Actually it would be wonderful to be able to tell visitors where the 10 oldest places in the valley are. But we're not sure exactly where to begin and how to accomplish this. Any information or insight would be appreciated! Got a building to nominate for research?

The Davis House on Mill Road, north of Cherry Valley, dates at least a few years prior to 1894. Fred A. Davis being born that year in the home his father Abraham built. Three of the rooms still have the original floors and it is in mostly original condition.

The home Jack Anger and family moved to in the '50's was built in 1863 by J. D. DeGraff, a Dutch Carpenter. One of the interior walls is a 12 inch thickness of solid brick that goes up through the 2nd story. While some renovations were necessary (!furnace and indoor plumbing!) the Angers' worked hard to preserve the feel and charm of its early American decor.

Please help us with our quest to identify the village's oldest treasures.



Fred & Abram Davis, Marrion Whittle, Carrie Whittle
Davis, and Belle & Fred Whittle. Vehicle approx 1915.

The soft-shod spirits of the snow
Pass lightly o'er the world, and though
I do not, cannot hear them go
At morning, noon and night I know
That they were there.
For though I may not hear, I see
Where they have touched earth or tree
They left it white as white could be
All newly clad and gloriously
What once was bare.

Dorothy Sheldon

Thank you to the Cherry Valley Village Hall for their wonderful support and assistance.
And to CV Methodist Women group for their sponsorship.
Please let our sponsors know you saw their advertisement in the newsletter, we appreciate them!

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H h h h h h

Editor.... Pam Jeske (golfnsew@aol.com)

Please feel free to drop a line, add some content, share some stories either to my e-mail,
the Historical Society's e-mail (cv.historical186@frontier.com)

Cherry Valley Historical Society, Box 266, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Or stop by, leave a note ...have a chat with a member!