

Rural Schools In Waupaca County

Presenter: Joan Paulson

July 29, 2013

- Joan is the co-editor of the book "Rural Schools in Waupaca County ", along with Don Hanson. She had met Don at one of our Historical Society meetings. The book contains school histories as well as photos of students and recollections from both students and teachers. Many members of our Historical Society were helpful in providing information.
- From 1848 until 1861, the certification of teachers was the responsibility of township superintendants. In the early 1900's, county superintendents became more involved in developing the school systems, which reduced the number of rural schools.
- 1939: if less than 10 students were in a school or the area valuation dropped below a certain minimum, then that school had to join another district.
- 1947: county committees pushed towards more area schools. Residents of the local communities resisted, since the schools were an integral part of their lives.
- 1959: a county committee decided that school systems had to contain a high school. Those that didn't have one had to merge with one that did.
- Records for the lola school system prior to 1965 have been destroyed, so a lot of valuable information has been lost.
- Features of a typical rural school during the 1800's,
 - The primary objectives were to learn English and to read, particularly the Bible.
 - Log houses were common, and the schools were typically made of logs too.
 - Instead of slate, the "blackboard" was actually a smooth wooden board that was painted black. The alphabet was written above the blackboard in cursive style, which is something that is rarely taught in schools today.
 - The teachers had an eighth-grade education, and they were unmarried.
 - There were two sessions of school held during the year. There were four to twenty students in each school, and schools were typically located about two miles apart.
 - It was common to have hitching posts located in front of the schools.
- By the late 1800's, teacher training schools, or normal schools, were being put in place. The closest normal school was in New London.

- Joan then talked about several area schools, which included Anderson School, Pleasant Hill School, Harrison Center School, Loberg School, Shady Grove School, Twin Grove School, Dow School and Hellestad School.
- The Weekly Reader was an important source of world news back then.
- A school better have a good Christmas program or a teacher would not be hired back the following year.
- At one time, parochial schools were held within the public schools.

At the end of the presentation, Charlie Thompson mentioned that the Elm Valley School was having its first reunion in September.