

# The Rockwood Area Historical Society

Vol. 150



PO Box 68  
Rockwood, Michigan 48173  
***Newsletter Fall 2022***

Greetings!!! Our next regular General Membership meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 22, 2022.** (Notice the date.) It will be held at the **Rockwood First Congregational Church**, just down the road from the Museum. We will be on our afternoon schedule, starting at **2 pm**. Please mark your calendars.

We have a **special musical guest** so bring your friends. And be ready to sing some Christmas songs. We start at 2 pm.



**Museum hours**—the Museum is now OPEN on **Saturday afternoons between 1 pm and 3 pm**. Please stop by and see us! Bring the family, too! We have so much to show you. We also are looking for volunteers to work at the Museum on Saturdays. Please let Barb McCoy know if you are interested.

## ***Officer's Reports***



### **President's Report—Carol Tilley**

Carol is still out of commission as of this writing. She is still recovering but her progress is slow. I'm sure she would like a get-well card to lift her spirits. Cards can be sent to her home address or to the Museum. We'll make sure she gets it.

**Hurry and get well, Carol. We really, really miss you!!!**

*Barb*

## **Vice President's Report—Barb McCoy**

I hate to see the summer fade and the colder weather creep into our area. However, the color this year was stunning. It only lasted a few days but I hope that everyone had a chance to appreciate what nature had painted across the horizon this year.

Our Book Committee is still working on compiling pictures and a historical rendering of the area. We are about half-way through the project. We meet on Saturday afternoons when the Museum is open to the public. Many thanks to Mayor Guzzi and a recent visitor (who did not leave his name) for donating some pictures. And thanks to all of you have shared your pictures during this process. Anyone can come and join us. We meet on Saturday afternoons between 1 and 3 pm at the Museum.

To finish out calendar year 2022, Santa Claus is coming to town on December 10. We will kick off the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual **Santa's Sweets and Treats** event. He and Mrs. Claus will be arriving just in time for our annual **Virginia's Cookie and Candy Sale**. We will be needing some volunteers to bake some of their delicious treats for the event. We also hope to have a silent auction/raffle for holiday baskets and maybe include a plant or two. If you can donate a basket, that would be fantastic.

For the next calendar year, we are planning a **Victorian Tea** with a tentative date of **March 5<sup>th</sup>**. Time and place to be announced as we get a little closer to the date. If you would like to work on this important project, please leave a message at the Museum. Our phone number is (734) 379-0674.

See you at the meeting on Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

*Barb*

## **Secretary's Report—Juanita York**

In the absence of Juanita, I want to thank Sharon DuChene for jotting down some notes for the meeting.

The Rockwood Area Historical Society General Membership meeting was held on Thursday, September 22, 2022, at the Rockwood First Congregational Church. The meeting began at 7:00 pm.



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**Secretary minutes of May 17, 2022**—Motion by Marg Cramer and seconded by Judy Ford to accept the minutes as recorded. Motion carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report**—Judy Ford provided a statement as of July 31, 2022 that showed a balance of \$16,148.56. Motion to approve Treasurer's Report was made by Jerry Skinner and seconded by Bob McCoy. Motion carried.

**Fundraising**—there was discussion regarding the coming three events:

1. **Victorian Tea**—Jeanette Herzog discussed the Victorian Tea, or the Spring Tea Party, scheduled for the first Sunday in March, 2023. Ladies should dress for the occasion and bring their own teacup. The subcommittee includes Marg Cramer, Dannielle Laura, Theresa Walker, and Jeanette Herzog. Organization meeting will be scheduled soon.
2. **Spaghetti Dinner**—the dinner to be held at Big Al's is cancelled.
3. **Cookie and Candy Sale/Santa's Sweets and Treats**—the event will be held at the Museum on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We need volunteers to bake and to donate baskets to the Silent Auction.

**Research**—Barb McCoy will present a history on education of children in the Rockwood Area after this meeting.

**Old Business**—there are two items:

1. **Tree for Pat Quick**—the tree has not been planted as of this date. The dedication is rescheduled for April or May of 2023.
2. **Book Committee**—the committee has worked through its first task of categorizing pictures of businesses in the area. The group meets on Saturdays between 1 and 3 pm at the Museum.

**New Business**—there was no new business to discuss.

**Motion to adjourn**—a motion was made by Sharon DuChene and seconded by Judy Ford. The meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.

*Respectfully submitted*

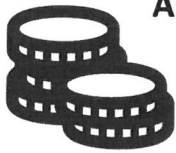
*Sharon DuChene*

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## Treasurer's Report-Judy Ford

We continue to cover the bills but we are getting low.



### Assets:

September 30, 2022

#### Cash and Cash Equivalents:

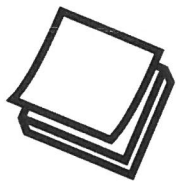
Building Maintenance Fund.....	\$619.58
Caboose Maintenance Fund.....	2,198.50
Memorial Fund.....	10,10.51
Merchant's Bank Checking.....	<u>943.49</u>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$13,892.08</b>

### Announcement!!!



Beginning in 2023, we will be asking for email addresses from our membership. Unfortunately, it is getting very expensive to send paper copies due to the price of stamps and the cost of printing. So, when you renew your membership in February, **please provide your email address**. If you don't have one, we will continue to send it through the mail. However, we hope that we can cut down on the expense by sending out most of our communications electronically.

## Committee Reports

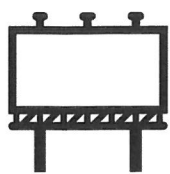


### Membership—Sharon DuChene and Shayla Johnson

Welcome to Pat and Mike Lawrence as new members to the Historical Society!

Renewal time for membership is just around the corner. To renew your membership, dues are just \$10 for single adults and \$15 for married couples. There are discounts available for seniors and for students. You can pay your dues at the next general membership meeting on November 22<sup>nd</sup>!

*Sharon and Shayla*



## **Fundraising—Upcoming events**

If you haven't participated yet, **the Bakeless Bake Sale** is still underway and will continue until the end of next month. Many thanks to those who have already supported us.

**Santa's Sweets and Treats**—please join us on December 10<sup>th</sup> for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual event. Time is from 10 am to 2 pm. We need volunteers to bake cookies and snickerdoodles and all kinds of candy for our Christmas event. (We will need some volunteers to help decorate the Museum the week before, if you are available.)

**Victorian Tea (Spring Tea Party)**—our newest fundraiser is scheduled for March 5, 2023. Time and place will be announced at another date. This sounds like a fun event so dress up and make sure you wear your most beautiful hat to the Tea.



## ***Shout-out!***

Many thanks to the volunteers that open and close the Museum on Saturday afternoons. You have been a big help all year, and I thank you for your time.



## ***Family Legacy Corner***

We don't think we've had someone pass in the last couple of months. If we missed anyone in this **Corner**, please let us know so we can recognize him or her next time.



## ***Research corner***

***by Barb McCoy***

### ***Rockwood—Basket Capital of the United States?***

Today, we go to the store and buy a few groceries at Save-A-Lot, Meijer, or Kroger. When paying for our purchases, we take those items and usually place them in a plastic bag, as provided by the store. There was a time when there were no plastic bags, only brown paper bags of three different sizes. (Grocery stores started using plastic bags around 1979.) Paper bags made their

debut in grocery stores in 1883. But there was a time when there were very few to no paper bags. So, what did people do when they had to go to the store—or the market, as it was normally called back in those days?

Customers brought their own receptacles. Some were made from light-weight cloth but didn't hold up well due to the weight of the items. Some had paper bags, but those were flimsy and would tear easily. The only other alternative was a wooden basket. And guess where most baskets in the United States were made in the late 1880s?

Right here, in Rockwood. Yes, that's true. So why was this area so noted for baskets? It was due to the type of woods that grew in this region, especially the prevalent maple and honeysuckle trees. (Even though honeysuckle is more like a vine, it is classified as a tree.)

There were four basket weaving factories in Rockwood: the Baumeister Factory (located on the site of St. Mary's Church), Shabinaw, Metzger, and the Schmitt shops. On the following page, we have a copy of a drawing of the Schmitt Basket Shop, as provided by Ken Browne for the August 1989 Rockwood Area Historical Society Calendar.

The Schmitt Basket Shop was built in the late 1880s and located on the north side of Huron River and Swallow Drives. The shop was in operation for about twenty years when baskets fell out of fashion and brown paper bags were more convenient. The following is an excerpt from "The Schmitt Basket Shop" by Mary Ellen Viau, granddaughter of Joseph and Margaret Schmitt.

"In the early 1880s, my grandparents, Joseph and Margaret Schmitt, emigrated to the United States from Alsace-Lorraine, [a region] on the border between Germany and France. It was an area that was predominately Catholic. The couple had two children at the time, and Margaret was pregnant with their child. The trip was extremely difficult for Margaret—they traveled steerage class, and she was so ill that she had to stay in bed for most of the voyage. When they finally arrived, they were greeted with the distressing news that Margaret's brother, who had

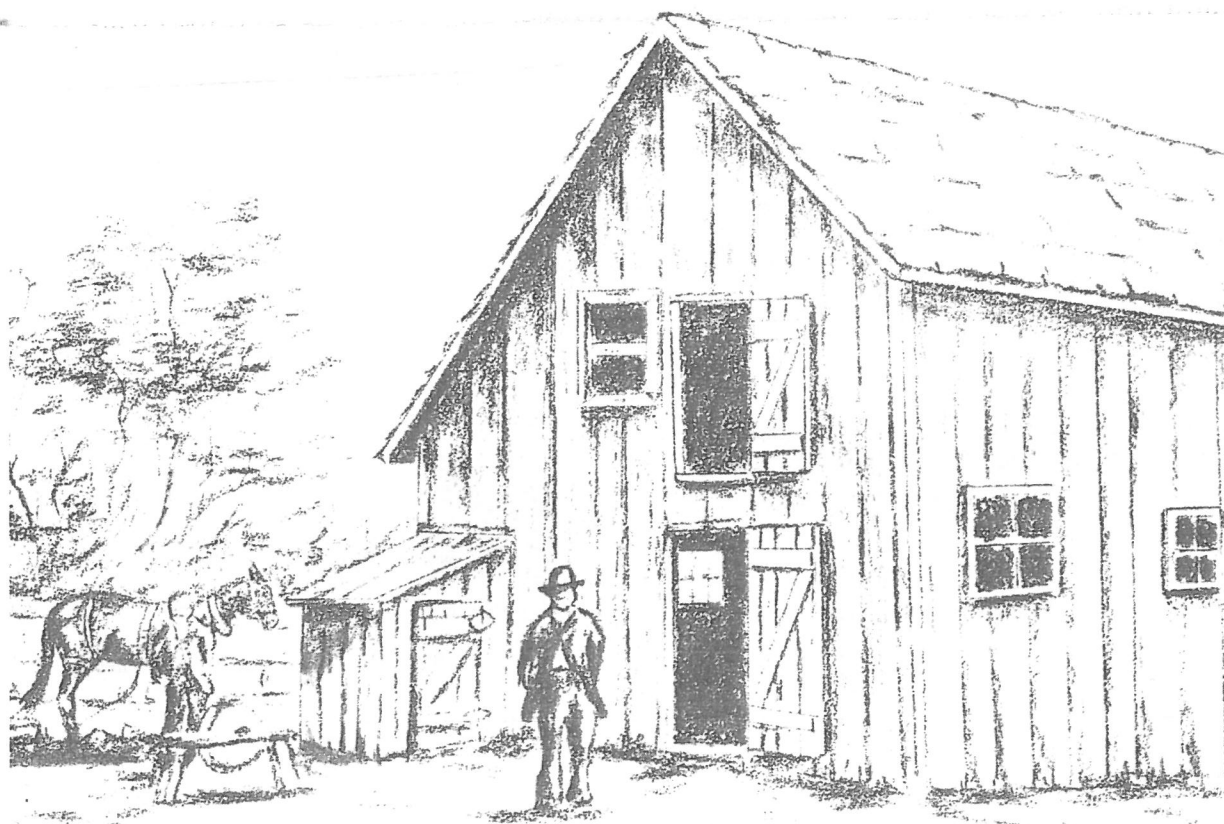
persuaded them to join him in the new world, had died while they were enroute; it is said [that he passed] of sheer loneliness.

My grandparents, Joseph and Margaret, made their way to Rockwood, Michigan, where Joseph established a basket shop. In the ensuing years, the family grew

## **SCHMITT BASKET SHOP**

**1880 - 1908**

*Huron River Dr. - Rockwood*



and prospered in their new home. In 1895, Joseph died, leaving my grandmother with seven children to support, ranging in ages five to 17. Although it was nearly unheard of for a woman at that time to be involved in business, Margaret took over the basket shop and ran it with the help of her sons and two or three employees. By about 1910, however, the demand for hand-made baskets had



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decreased. The older boys were married and starting their own families, and the shop was not making enough to support them. They all moved to Detroit where opportunities for employment were more available.

Grandmother Margaret was a very strong woman, who they say, demanded and got obedience and respect from her children whom she ruled with an iron hand, tempered by love. Until she died in 1924, she reigned as the matriarch of the family, their spouses, and their grandchildren. In many cases, they deferred to her wishes and opinions."

I had a grandmother like that. Ironically, her maiden name was Schmitt, but I don't think she was any relation. But then again...

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**ROCKWOOD**

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