

Rotarians hear history of Sherman's Yorker Museum at meeting

Roberta Tenpas, who has been the Sherman Historical Society President since 2011, presented a program titled "Sherman's Yorker Museum: A Brief History" for Westfield-Mayville Rotarians and guests during the Rotary Club of Westfield-Mayville's Aug. 20 session at The Parkview in Westfield. Tenpas' program was sponsored by Mary Swanson, Westfield-Mayville Rotary Club Immediate Past President.

The Yorker Museum is located on the Village Common at the corner of Park and Church Streets in Sherman. It is made up of six original buildings dating back to the 1750s. Its origins date back to 1946 when Miss Genevieve Matteson (later Larson), a Sherman Central School seventh grade social studies teacher, started a Yorkers chapter with five students. The Yorkers were junior members of the New York State Historical Association, and there were many NYS chapters. The Sherman chapter was named The French Creek Yorkers, and at one

point it had 276 members.

Tenpas, who is a lifelong resident of Sherman and a graduate of Sherman Central School, always had an interest in history. She minored in Social Studies in college. When she was in the seventh grade, she joined The Yorkers. Tenpas said, "It was the thing to do. Many of us remember when girls weren't able to play interscholastic sports and could participate only in intramural athletics. So, we joined clubs and other activities."

Tenpas has remained dedicated to the Yorker Museum throughout her life. She and other members of the Sherman Historical Society oversee the Yorker Museum. They volunteer as tour guides of the grounds, sponsor educational programming, and perform hands on repair, cleaning, and upkeep services there.

According to Tenpas, Matteson "was a dedicated teacher, citizen, and church member. In her class, you knew exactly what she expected. She was fair, and



Photo by Sue Hammond

Roberta Tenpas (left), Sherman Historical Society President, shares a brochure about the Yorker Museum with Mary Swanson (right), Westfield-Mayville Rotary Club Immediate Past President. Tenpas outlined a brief history of Sherman's Yorker Museum during the Westfield-Mayville Rotary Club's Aug. 20 meeting, which was held at The Parkview in Westfield.

was a very good teacher. When she started a unit on colonial America, she asked students to bring artifacts from home. Students did, and at the end of the unit, the consensus of the students' par-

ents was that she could keep the artifacts at school. As boxes of artifacts grew, it was suggested that perhaps it was time to find a building for them."

In May of 1950 the Peter

Ripley House, which is the oldest framed residence in the village, was moved to the Village Common from Miller Street in Sherman. It was gifted to The French Creek Yorkers. Tenpas recalled, "It was in bad shape and we didn't have any money to refurbish it. Yorkers earned every penny to bring the building up to code."

She continued, "To raise funds, each class took a turn hosting school dances after home football games. We took orders for cookies, and then baked and delivered hundreds of dozens of cookies on Saturday mornings. Also, before the days of recycling, people saved their newspapers throughout the winter. Trucks would pick up the newspapers and take them to a facility in Erie in exchange for money. Our philosophy was waste not, want not. Everything for the Yorker Museum was saved and reused. Students learned to refinish and reupholster furniture. Everybody in the community donated their time, equipment, and fuel in sup-

port of this museum."

Five more colonial buildings were added to the grounds after the Peter Ripley House. They are the Nettle Hill School House, the Buggy Shed, the Log Dwelling, the Ray Larson General Store, and the Chapel. A gazebo and the Meeting House were also added. Tenpas noted, "I'm proudest of the fact that everything is set up in the buildings as it would be seen in everyday life in the colonial times. We have only one showcase, which houses military memorabilia."

The Yorker Museum is open on Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. in June, July, and August, or by appointment. Group tours may be arranged. Donations of artifacts and funds are welcome, and volunteers are needed to help maintain the grounds and to act as tour guides. For more information, find the Yorker Museum on Facebook at www.facebook.com/yorker-museum, or call 716-761-6659, 716-761-6492, or 716-708-9354.