

Museum Notes

for the week of October 12 – 18, 2025

by Kristen Parrott, curator

Ames, Cook, Elk Run, Manning, Sherry, Spring Valley. Do you recognize these names?

They were all names of country schools located in the south-central part of Vernon County. Our region was once dotted with little country schoolhouses. For about 100 years, from the 1860's to the 1960's, the country school was an important part of life in this rural area. Today almost all of the country schools have closed, but often the old buildings are still standing.

Our annual country schoolhouse road tour will be held on Saturday, October 18, and this year's tour covers south-central Vernon County, including the schools named above. The self-guided tour will lead you past remaining schoolhouses, and past the sites of schools that are now gone.

Start your tour at the historic Foreaker School in Viroqua, located at 606 W. Broadway St., between 9AM and 1PM on October 18. For \$10, you can pick up the guidebook and map, and then drive along a beautiful route full of fall colors through the Towns of Viroqua, Webster, Liberty, and Kickapoo. The individual sites will be marked for the day with little red schoolhouse signs.

The Foreaker is the only school that will be open for touring inside. Originally located in the Town of Liberty, it is now operated as a one-room school museum by the Vernon County Historical Society. You are welcome to sit at a school desk, write on a slate, and look at old textbooks. Also at the Foreaker you will have the opportunity to purchase our recent book, *Country Schoolhouses of Vernon County, Wisconsin*, for \$25.

The tour will include about 20 schools. Check out our website at <http://vernoncountyhistory.org/>, or call us at 608-637-7396, for more information.

This week our country is marking Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples Day, both on October 13. Columbus is one of the most famous foreign explorers to come to the Americas. When he arrived, Indigenous people had already been living in the Americas for tens of thousands of years. The Ho-Chunk and the Menominee peoples both have origin stories that place them in Wisconsin since time immemorial, and Indigenous Peoples Day is a Wisconsin state holiday. You can learn more about Indigenous peoples in the Americas from the excellent website of the National Museum of the American Indian, <https://americanindian.si.edu/>

Save the date: Sunday, November 9 will be the day of the Vernon County Historical Society's annual recognition dinner. The event will begin at noon in the dining hall of the Viroqua United Methodist Church, and will feature guest speaker James Marten talking about his new book, *The Sixth Wisconsin and the Long Civil War: The Biography of a Regiment*. Tickets are \$16 each. More details next week.