

Museum Notes

by Carol Krogan, assistant curator
for the week of January 27 – February 2, 2019

It is January, 1919. World War I is over but local soldiers are still serving in the nation's military camps and overseas. Local Red Cross chapters are continuing to provide warm knitted socks for our servicemen and clothing for refugees. The *Vernon County Censor* features a column each week with a list of deaths of county residents, many from influenza, including those serving in the military.

The January 8, 1919, issue of the *Censor* features an article relating regulations made by the town of Harmony in the battle against the spread of influenza. Infected persons are not allowed to leave their homes and must avoid public places such as schools, churches, theatres and other public meeting places. Monitored by the health department, those persons not in compliance could receive a fine of up to \$100 or be jailed for up to three months. An urgent plea is made for more nurses in the Army.

Former President Theodore Roosevelt dies suddenly on January 6 at age 60. Wisconsin legislators vote in favor of woman's suffrage. Debate continues on an amendment which will prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcohol. And, the Vernon County Teachers Training School, also called Vernon County Normal, is under construction.

The Vernon County Teachers Training School was established in 1907; however, there is evidence that there was a "Normal Institute" as early as 1878. Both grew out of a need for better prepared teachers for the many rural schools in Vernon County. In 1907, when the Vernon County Training School went into session, it was located on the second floor of Viroqua High School, on the east side of town.

In 1917, realizing the need for a permanent location for the school, the County Board voted to construct the Normal School for the sum of \$30,000. Soon it was discovered that these funds were insufficient, and a later Board session appropriated an additional \$25,000. In the end, the final cost was approximately \$65,000.

The 4 - story brick building was designed by La Crosse architects Bernard Dockendorff and Albert E. Parkinson. The contractors were Anderson and Lindstrom of the Twin Cities, Minnesota, and the foreman was Viroqua resident Carl Ahlman. When construction began in 1918, there was hope that the building would be ready for occupancy in one year. Due to the difficulty in securing materials and labor due to World War I and the influenza epidemic, the building wasn't ready for occupancy until autumn of 1919. Classes began on September 15.

Now, in the year 2019, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Vernon County Museum, the former Vernon County Normal School! Soon, an exhibit with more details about the school will be on display. Also watch for special activities coming up later this year.

Remember that our next free public program will be held next week on Tuesday, February 5, at 7PM at the museum. Eric Schlehlein will talk about the Civil War's Iron Brigade, which included Vernon County soldiers. The Iron Brigade was involved in many of the war's key battles. This program will be preceded by a brief presentation of our 2019 budget.