

Out in the Garden

Rockport Garden Club, April, 2022



Garden Diary: A Community House is Found

Our predecessors in the Rockport Garden Club played a leading role in setting up the Community House and establishing it as the club's meeting space.

One of my activities as a member of the new History Committee has been reading the original meeting minutes. Looking through the notes and hearing the voices of those original members has provided new insight to the early days of the RGC. It also shed new light on how savvy and effective these ladies were at making things happen in town.

From their first meeting on February 29, 1928, the Rockport Garden Club was gathering in the homes of various charter members. By the beginning of the following year new ideas began to percolate. From the original minutes:

"The regular meeting of the Rockport Garden Club was held on the afternoon of January 21, 1929, at the home of Mrs. McFarland, Vice-President of the club who opened the meeting in the absence of the President.

The Secretary being absent, Mrs. Gertrude Ruston was appointed Secretary Pro Tem, and asked to read the minutes of several past meetings.

A letter was read from the Board of Trade, thanking the Club for a donation to

Community Christmas tree.

The usual question of a meeting place arose and much discussion followed.

A Community Centre is a real necessity to the Town of Rockport, and the old High School building which is at present unoccupied, and fast becoming dilapidated in appearance from disuse and lack of care was suggested by Mrs. J. M. Wetherell as a fitting place for a Community house, it being centrally located; near the depot; situated on a main street, with grounds which could be easily beautified; a place where a living Christmas tree could be planted, and splendid rooms where different organizations of the town could meet, and a Community House made of this building which would become a thing of beauty in the town, instead of an eyesore because of disuse and neglect. The following organizations could meet at a Community Centre,

The Rockport Garden Club

" " Woman's "

" D.A.R.

" Historical Society

" Women's Catholic Guild

" American Legion

" Rockport Board of Trade

And smaller clubs and societies of the town.

Mrs. McFarland was asked to see Mr. Frank Todd, and find out if the old High School building was available or any other building in town could be used for this purpose.

Mrs. S.Y. Wheeler was asked to find out the legal aspect of this proposition.

Out in the Garden, page 2

Rockport Garden Club, April, 2022

A Community House is Found, cont'd

Mrs. Ruston was asked to see as many of the Board of Trade as possible to learn the attitude toward such a centre.

Mrs. Cooney to see Mrs. Babcock as to feeling of the Woman's Catholic Guild toward this proposition."

On February 18, Mrs. W.D. Ruston is unanimously voted chairman of the Committee on Community Center and she is to appoint its members.

By March 7, not only has Mrs. Ruston appointed her committee:

Mrs. J.M. Wetherell

Mrs. McFarland

Mrs. Bray

Mrs. Merrill

Mrs. Cooney (Mary)

Mrs. Johnson (JLH)

Mrs. Chas. Higgins

Miss Margaret Dwyer

...but she also "thanked this committee for its good work in obtaining votes and being present at the town meeting to vote for the privilege of having the old High School Building as a Community Centre which resolution was put to the voters by Judge Sumner D. York at the regular Town Meeting and which resolution was unanimously adopted.

Some of the Committee reported having talked with heads of different organizations who might want to meet at this center regularly and this question is being discussed among said organizations.

The Garden Club will have the first and Third Mondays of each month.

The Woman's Club asks for the second and fourth Mondays from October to April inclusive. Although its decision is not definite.

The D.A.R. is considering the matter as is also the Women's Catholic Guild and the American Legion."

On March 18, the regular "meeting adjourned early. Members going to proposed Community Center to inspect building."

It was only 56 days from the date Mrs. Wetherell conceived the idea to the day Mrs. Ruston had the keys and led a tour of the club's new space.

By June 3, the first regular "meeting of the Rockport Garden Club was held at the Old High School Building"

Through the summer they work on the building, install window boxes and electric lights, and even hire a boy scout (Carleton Merrill for 50 cents per week) to water the window boxes. They "held a meeting on June 24th where the Charter Corporation and By Laws for a Community Center Corporation were carefully gone into, and drawn up to take care of the existing conditions in our town." This was done because "if a Community Center League is incorporated individuals cannot be held liable for any debts incurred by the league."

Finally on September 16, the "regular meeting of the Rockport Garden Club was held at the Community House."

As we prepare to return to live meetings at the Community House, this seemed like a timely story to tell. This building has been the home of our club for the past 92 years.

If you are related to anyone or know of anyone mentioned in this story the History Committee would love to hear from you.

—Nancy Duda

Out in the Garden, page 3, Photos

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Photo of the Community House 1875

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, February 22 & Thursday, March 7, 1929

The Rockport Garden Club held its regular meeting on Monday, February 18, 1929 at the home of Mrs. McFarland who presided in the absence of the President. Seven members present.

Minutes of meeting of January 21st read and approved.

Discussion of Community Centre.

Mrs. Ruston making report on same.

Voted - unanimously - that Mrs. W. D. Ruston be made Chairman Committee on Community Centre - she to appoint Committee to work with her.

General discussion on gardening - Papers to be read at next meeting, on different subjects relating to gardening.

Motion carried that next meeting be on ^{Wednesday} March 6th at Mrs. McFarland's home.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gertrude M. Ruston

Sec. Pro Tem,
Judicial Bonds



The regular meeting of the Rockport Garden Club was held on Thursday, March 7, 1929 instead of Monday, March 4, 1929 in account of Town meeting being held on that date.

The Club met at the home of Mrs. McFarland, Vice President, who presided in the absence of the President.

Minutes of last meeting read and approved.

Mrs. Ruston, Chairman of Community Centre Committee, reported Committee appointed to serve with her as follows:

- Mrs. J. M. Withers
- " McFarland
- " Bras
- " Merrill
- " Cooney (Mary)
- " Johnson (J. B.)
- " Chas. Higgins

Miss Margaret Dwyer and thanked this Committee for its good work in obtaining votes, and being present at the Town meeting to vote for the privilege of having the old High School Building as a Community Centre, which resolution was put to the voters by Judge Samuel D. York at the regular Town meeting, liability insurance and which resolution was unanimously adopted.

