



# RESTORED ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE PRESERVES WISCONSIN'S RURAL PAST

*The year is 1954. The school bell echoes across the countryside, warning you it's time to leave for school. You've just finished the morning chores and changed into your school clothes. After your mile walk, you arrive at the school yard where you wait outside until the teacher gives you the okay to enter the one-room schoolhouse. The sign above the door reads Spring Creek School. You enter single file, hang your fall coat on the rack, place your tin lunch box on the shelf, and take a seat at a wooden desk. You are one of the older students in the room, and the teacher starts your grade off with an arithmetic lesson. Meanwhile, the younger students are reading. This is your typical day in your one-room schoolhouse.*

Fast forward to year 2021. The Spring Creek School has been closed for 58 years. Since then, it has been owned by the same family. The Holder Family Trust approaches the Jackson County Historical Society (JCHS) with their intent to gift the 1885 school building and about an acre of land. The Holders are descendants of the late James Thomas, who leased land on his farm for the school site. The JCHS accepts. "It's important to preserve the history of this area because once the generation that experienced it is gone, no one knows the stories and memories," shares Darren Durman, JCHS board member. "The Spring Creek School Museum will be here

The Spring Creek School remains in its original location on Moss Hill Road. The museum will provide future generations with a taste of country school life. The playground equipment was acquired from the Squaw Creek School. Those who attended Spring Creek recall playing outdoor games during recess.

for future generations to enjoy and learn about its history."

If you take a drive through the countryside, you may notice the few old country schools that remain, some in better condition than others. Some have been converted into homes, while others are in disrepair or completely gone. The Spring Creek School, located at Spring Creek and Moss Hill Roads, is believed to be one of the few remaining country schools in Jackson County that is still fully intact and original. "It was still in good shape overall when the JCHS acquired the property," shares Darren. "We began with a Facebook fundraiser and formed a committee for anyone interested in the restoration project."

The school closed in 1963 when the Black River Falls School District consolidated. The land was reverted to farmland, and the school building was put up for sale. Mrs. Thressa (Thomas) Durrin, daughter of James Thomas, purchased the school for her sister, Grace Holder, an alumnus of the school. "Grace did some of the restoration herself throughout the years," says Darren. "The first



The JCHS took a step back in time when they entered the schoolhouse for the first time. The 48-star flag was still tacked to the front of the room. It has since been framed for preservation.

thing she did was to remove the oil burning furnace, changing it back to the woodstove she remembered as a schoolgirl.”

When the JCHS started cleaning and maintenance on the school building, they found it in decent condition thanks to the upkeep by the Thomas/Holder families throughout the years, including a newer roof. They started by carefully packing up all the original items left in the school so that a fresh coat of paint could be applied. “We found a 48-star flag still tacked to the wall and the rally flag designed by the students,” shares Darren. “We had these items framed to preserve them.”

After the school closed, the electrical service was retired. The original wiring passed inspection and the fuse box was converted to a breaker panel. Jackson Electric reinstated power to the location in mid-2022. With the flip of a switch, the old lightbulbs and electric recess bell were still functional, taking the school back to the days when it was filled with children. “We have since replaced the bulbs with good LEDs because there is always a risk in breaking the globes each time you change a bulb,” says Darren.

The restoration committee also found that the bell tower was rotting. Upon closer inspection, the bell was found to be just hanging by a thread. Darren rings the now repaired bell as he shares its significance. “The teacher arrived much earlier than the students. It was her job to start the fire and ring the bell as a signal that it was time to be heading to school,” he says. “There are neighbors that can attest that it can be heard up to two miles away.”

During a visit to the school, you’ll notice the original windowpanes. All but one pane was left intact when the JCHS took possession. The pane had fallen out due to the weathering

of the windows. This would have eventually happened to the remaining panes had no one stepped in. “We hired a small business that specializes in reglazing and restoring historic windows,” shares Darren. “We also installed new blinds to control the amount of sunlight coming through to protect the items from damage.”

The exterior of the building also received a facelift: fresh paint, newly poured concrete steps, and a wooden landing on each side of the stairs. The left landing features the water pump. The right landing wasn’t original to the design, but it creates balance and has a future use. “We poured the new steps and built the landings with accessibility in mind,” shares Darren. “There used to be a step up into the doorway, but we’ve made this level. We also plan to install a ramp.”

At the top of the stairs, you’ll notice a unique historical feature. A horizontal bar is cemented into the concrete on each side of the entrance. Some may instantly know their purpose. These are the original shoe scrapers that were chiseled out of the original stairs. “We felt it was a significant detail to preserve,” says Darren. “The children would scrape the dirt or snow off their shoes before entering the building.”

Like any restoration project, the timeline for completion fell behind. However, an open house was recently held in September for community members and alumni to visit what is now the Spring Creek School Museum. “We recorded interviews with alumni to capture memories and preserve the history of the school for future generations,” says Darren. “We plan to have the museum open by appointment and possibly school field trips.”—*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*

**For more information:**  
**Jacksoncohistory@gmail.com**  
**Facebook:** Search for the Spring Creek Schoolhouse public group to join the discussion, view photos, and follow the restoration process.

**Address:**  
**N5311 Moss Hill Road,  
Black River Falls, WI 54615**  
From Black River Falls, take Highway 54 W. After you pass the Rustic Mill Park, turn right onto Spring Creek Road. Follow the road a mile to the schoolhouse.



Left: Students at Spring Creek School carried their cold lunch to school. Water was carried into the water cooler, which functions like a water fountain. The school bell rope dangles in this room, waiting for the teacher to sound the warning bell. Center: The original school desks were once filled with students in first through eighth grades. Right: The original rally flag is thought to have been designed by the students by first drawing with crayon and ironing over it to set the wax. The area country schools gathered at the Jackson County Fairgrounds for the end-of-the-year Rally Day Events, proudly marching with their school’s flag, competing in events, attending programming, and exhibiting work from the school year.



## JACKSON ELECTRIC'S GREEN INITIATIVE

Jackson Electric/JacksonSolar's crews installed solar energy systems at two of Jackson Electric's substations. A 40-kW solar system recently was interconnected at the Irving Substation, and this 100-kW solar system was interconnected with the Brockway Substation.

Jackson Electric owns the RECs on the Irving Substation solar and plans to own the RECs on the Brockway solar. RECs are renewable energy certificates that are used to track renewable electricity from the point of generation to the consumer. These solar systems will help in offsetting some of the consumer demand at the substation, thus keeping the cooperative's demand fees from their wholesale power provider manageable.

In addition, Jackson Electric's headquarter building is an Evergreen Green building. This, along with the solar energy installations, is part of Jackson Electric's sustainability plan in reducing the organization's carbon footprint.



Summer employees not only learn how to build and repair lines, they also learn how to install a solar energy system. As the electric industry progresses with renewable energy, these crew members will be well-trained in solar technology. This system can be seen at the Brockway Substation, located on Hwy. 54 east.



**SPOOKY ENERGY-SAVING TIP**

It's the season for soup, chili, and hearty meals. Get out the slow cooker for energy efficient meals. Slow cookers use less energy than cooking on the stovetop or heating the oven.



## PAY MORE FOR A NEW LINE BUILD

If you would like to pay more for a new line build, then plan to install your new service when there's frost in the ground. No one wants to pay more for any type of service, but there is a possibility that it will cost more to install your new line build November 1 and later.

Why? Jackson Electric needs to contract specialized equipment to break through the frost to plow in your electrical service which is costly.

It is our recommendation that if you're planning to build a structure during the winter season and need electric service, contact Jackson Electric now so any line build can be arranged.

## ZOOMING IN ON MAGGIE

Maggie Mickelson was drawn to Jackson Electric about 2 ½ years ago after hearing that it was a great place to work and develop professionally. As a member service representative, her primary responsibilities involve assisting members when they come to the office, applying payments to accounts, and directing members' phone calls. "I have started training with the operations department and putting together packets for our new service requests," Maggie says.

Maggie has enjoyed her time at Jackson Electric and looks forward to learning more so she can better assist members with their questions. "We're always trying to find improved ways to accommodate our members," she says. "We can also reach out to other cooperatives to share ideas and best practices."

The energy sector is an ever-changing industry, and there are always new tools and opportunities to gain knowledge. Maggie recalls a time where she was able to help a member access the tools currently available through Jackson Electric's SmartHub payment portal: "A member came in and needed

help setting up SmartHub. I helped them download the app, set up their account, and showed them how to use some of the tools in the app."

In her time outside of work, you'll find Maggie spending time on the ice, watching her son, nieces and nephews carrying on the family tradition of playing hockey.

We knew you'd want to know more about Maggie, so we asked her a couple of random questions:

- 1. Coffee or tea?** "Just water. I don't like the taste of coffee. I drink green tea once in a while."
- 2. If your pet could talk, what do you think they might say about you?** "I have two cats. They would probably say I don't get up quick enough to let them out in the middle of the night."



# OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

## Jackson Electric Cooperative's Mission:

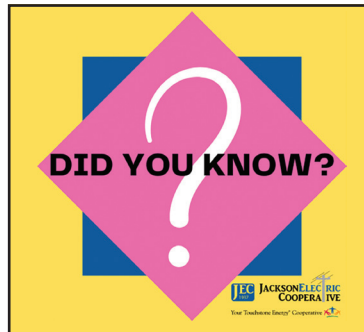
To provide safe, reliable power for all generations.

## Jackson Electric Cooperative is guided by the seven cooperative principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

## Jackson Electric's pledge is to:

- Encourage the wise use of our energy resources
- Perform our work in a manner that is environmentally and socially acceptable
- Reference "The Seven Cooperative Principles" as our guide to do our business
- Operate our business in a financially sound manner
- Hold ourselves accountable to the highest standard for employee and public safety and security



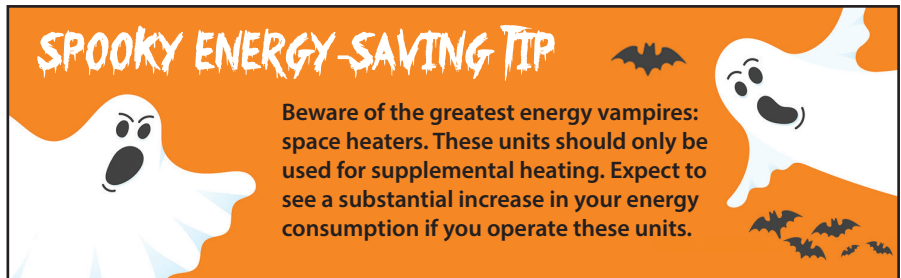
**DID YOU KNOW?**

The seven principles that guide cooperatives were established in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in Rochdale, England. Woolen mill workers formed a cooperative to purchase household supplies in volume, and they then established principles that have guided cooperatives through the present day.

# ENERGY ASSISTANCE BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE

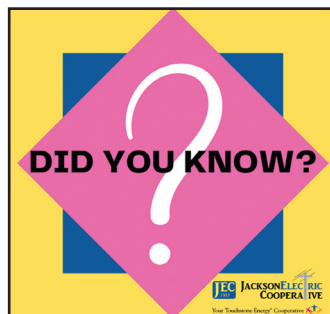
The regular energy assistance benefit period is October 1 through May 15. Crisis and emergency assistance may be available outside of this timeframe. Jackson Electric members are encouraged to contact their county's local energy assistance department directly to see what benefits are available. By submitting an application locally, your request may be processed sooner, and your local agency can inform you of other programs you may be eligible for.

- Jackson County .....715-284-4301
- Clark, Eau Claire, .....715-836-7511
- Trempealeau Counties
- La Crosse County .....608-785-5582
- Monroe County .....608-487-9356



**SPOOKY ENERGY-SAVING TIP**

Beware of the greatest energy vampires: space heaters. These units should only be used for supplemental heating. Expect to see a substantial increase in your energy consumption if you operate these units.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Jackson Electric is governed by a board of directors who annually review the cooperative's bylaws. The bylaws are a set of rules that regulate the cooperative. A copy of this document is available on our website for members to review at any time, and it addresses the qualifications for memberships, member meetings, electing board directors, and more.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Customer Service 715.284.5385  
800.370.4607

Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)

Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511

Card Payments 844.759.3984

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Chris Curran, Vice President  
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Jerry Huber, Dairyland Power Representative  
Dan Smrekar, Krisi Hanson, Brian Huber,  
Troy Torkelson, Les Dokkestul

Kevin Babcock, General Manager/CEO

*Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner