

Parkman Community House

Celebrating over 160 Years of Community Service!!



Photo Circa 1900

1863 – 2024



Photo Circa 1940

Parkman Historical Society validates that our Parkman Community House building was built in 1863 - and is celebrating its 160 years in 2023. The building hosted many various operations - but the cheese house is how it began.

The Parkman Cheese Factory was built in 1863 by a New York company called Stokes and Budlong. It is said that they went into production right away and were very successful. Milk was collected by horse then. Nearly every farm in the community contributed to the supply of milk. In the late 1860's the company changed owners to OC Smith. This became known as the O C Smith Manufacturing Company. There was a patent in 1881 where rotary cheese vats were invented. In one year 260,000 pounds of cheese was made netting a profit of \$27,000... which was a very productive business back then.

Successful farming in this area took notice and many various agricultural cultures began to migrate into our community. The first Amish settlers in Geauga County arrived in 1886. Samuel Weaver and his family arrived from Holmes County to Parkman Township and settled on a small farm on the old Parkman - Middlefield Road. He is considered the founder and first settler of the Geauga Amish settlers. As other farming cultures moved into the area, both Amish and Yankee farmers worked together to support all ends of the cheese industry by supplying both grain and milk production. In the late 1880's, after the death of Smith, the company changed hands several times and was managed poorly. At the turn of the century there was a craze for roller-skating and a new floor was put upstairs to support the new trend. Hoping the gimmick might add revenue the failed investment was not enough to save the company. Sometime around 1900ish, the cheese production ceased and the building was closed.

In 1924 the cheese factory was redesigned as the new Parkman Community House. A local group called the Mothers Club donated money to help fix it up. They were active in raising money with fund raisers and bake sales to help organize its construction. It was remodeled to the current look and uses.

Here are a few examples of the recent milestones for this historic building.

In 2006 the Parkman Community used fundraising from our annual Pancake Breakfast to remodel a new kitchen to modernize it to current FDA standards. Many local non profit groups and residents have used this kitchen to support their venues and fundraisers as well as Pancake Breakfasts since 1968 - which is our 55th year of serving this tradition.

In May 2011 the Parkman Community House went active with a large 45 panel solar array on its south side roof. This Green Energy project has helped save on our community house electric bill with renewable energy for over a decade. You can visit the Parkman website on the Community House link to actually view the entire span of data that these solar cells have produced since they went active.



The new metal roof was installed onto the Community House in 2015, after noticing major leaking from the old roof. This preservation effort helps give the building an extra-long future. It was decided to spend a little more for the better quality roof since this building is the heartbeat of this community.



In 2017 Parkman decided to professionally replace all of the old style lighting with some newer energy efficient LED lighting in its buildings (community house, fire department, and road department). Also that same year a new generator was added in case of any power outages and all of the old and broken windows on the community house were replaced by brand new and energy efficient windows.

In 2018 the Parkman Community decided to register its community house as a possible American Red Cross Emergency Response Shelter location. Thus another remodeling

project occurred that allowed the Community House accessible to those with special needs such as wheelchair accessibility. The entrance doorway had electronic door opening mechanisms installed and soon there will be an elevator added to the building structure to allow second floor access to those in wheelchairs. Also both the upstairs and downstairs ladies and gentlemen bathrooms were completely redesigned and rebuilt from the stud level to accommodate the ADA current standards.

In 2020 a brand new community event digital sign was installed replacing the old snap letter sign. This allows more flexible communications to help promote upcoming events and share community information. New flooring was also installed replacing the old tile that was aged and chipped. The new floor helps to keep the facility clean and modern looking. Both the exterior of the Community House and the interior were recently repainted. All of this is to help preserve our local gem.

Many residents have helped volunteer to keep our Community House in good shape and a modern local gem in the last 160 years. It is a passion in this Parkman Township to have such a site that can support many various groups and functions. It is a local treasure and used by the community regularly. Many Geauga County and Parkman non profit groups use this as their primary meeting and fundraising location. The Trustee and Zoning meetings as well as many private functions are hosted there throughout the year. It hosts many Parkman historic items for display. Our Parkman Community House is a very diverse facility.

Each year the Parkman Chamber of Commerce decorates both the Community House and the town square for the holidays. The Parkman Community always looks awesome for our residents and those who pass through our town.



If you would like to see the remodeled photos of the current Parkman Community House, look at the Community House Rental page in this issue or go to the Parkman website.