



Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00
or by appointment**

Chilton Senior Citizens Club 1971-2023

By Ray Mueller

A once thriving and very active organization in the Chilton area has disbanded – ironically on the same calendar date (April 14) as when it was founded in 1971.

That group is the former Chilton Senior Citizens, which counted up to 333 members in the 1980s but had only five attendees at its last formal meeting in July of 2019.

According to the program brochure for a 16th anniversary dinner and dance on April 23, 1987 at the Kloten Oasis with music by the Jerry Schneider Orchestra, the group was organized as a club on April 14, 1971 at the old Chilton City Hall. Within a month, it had 55 charter members and a temporary set of officers, led by president Lester Nelson.

At the time of that anniversary, the officers indicated that the “quite remarkable” success of the group was due to an “emphasis on the spirit of friendliness, meetings on each first Wednesday, and the annual pattern of picnics, dinners, and dances.” Those events included a spring dance, a summer potluck picnic, a fall dance, and a Christmas dinner and dance. The dances were held at the Kloten Oasis and the Chilton Eagles Club with music by the Schneider band and the Gene Birschbach Orchestra.

A major activity offered by Chilton Senior Citizens for several decades was the sponsorship of bus trips to events and a variety of attractions throughout Wisconsin and sometimes beyond. There were 69 bus trips during the first seven years of the organization – some of them so popular that they required five or six chartered buses (up to 46 passengers each). A later tabulation listed 48 trips in the previous five years.

Meetings were held at City Hall until a move was made to the first floor of the former Masonic Temple at the northwest corner of Madison and School streets. By 1976, some members had worked to make the basement of that building suitable for meetings. A Christmas party at that site in late 1976 drew a crowd of more than 150 members.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the monthly meetings often had more than 100 attendees. In



New Chilton Senior Citizens officers named

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Chilton Senior Citizen officers named at the recent annual meeting at the Chilton Senior Citizens center for the ensuing year are: President Bruno Zucollo, Vice President Victor Geiser, Treasurer Alice Richter and Secretary Leona Rollmann.

The hostesses for the coming year are Zita Rollmann and Adeline Hoerth, Membership chairman Hatti Jansen, games chairman Herman Seipel and assistant Bob Coffeen.

Henrietta Nelson is in charge of sending cards of good wishes to members. Kathryn Vogel and Vi Blohowiak are in charge of tours; several tours are being lined up. If interested, sign up at the center.

The election was followed by the monthly birthday party and social with 99 members taking part.

addition to the meeting business, members played cards or Bingo and enjoyed servings of cake, ice cream, coffee, and soda. The meetings often included guest speakers from both the public and private sector. One long-standing tradition of the group was to sing “America the Beautiful” at the start of each meeting.

A constitution and bylaws were approved on March 6, 1985. Those provisions identified nine committees, indicated membership was open to anyone age 55 and over, and set annual dues at \$2 (\$1 of which was to be designated for monthly birthday awards). At times, there were up to 35 members with a birthday in a given month.

The dues were held at \$2 per year until 1992. They were then doubled to \$4. It was calculated that members who regularly attended meetings were getting a value of up to \$12 per year in treats – not including any prizes for Bingo. Membership declined from 243 in January of 1990 to 114 in 2000.

Lester Nelson served as president until 1978, followed by Leona Miller for two years, Betty Flack and Marie Fluhr for one year each, and Bruno Zucollo from 1982 until his death in 1985. Raphael “Ray” Wagner was chosen as president in October 1985, serving until 1990, when he was succeeded by former Chilton mayor Alpheus Larson for two years.

Starting years for subsequent presidents were Louise Sohrweide in 1992, Ethel Mueller in 1995, Ruth Miller in 1998, and Eva Rusch in 2004. By 2007, when 47 members paid the \$4 dues, the secretary's notes indicated that the group was “begging for officers.”

With the secretary's notebooks that are available since 1977, it was indicated that Elda Scholz was the secretary who preceded Marie Meyers, who served from 1977 to 1979. Starting years for later secretaries were 1980 for Zita Rollmann, 1983 for Leona Rollmann, 1988 for Eileen Schneider, 1990 for Estelle Lorenz, 1992 for June Gasch, 1995 for Hildegard Geiser, 1998 for Hildegard Depies, and 2004 for Vi(olet) Laack.

The secretary minutes – all hand written – detail the many activities of the group for nearly 50 years. Along with artifacts and other materials, there is also a collection of newspaper clippings and photos.

The Sept 7, 1977 Meeting was called to order by our President Mr. Nelson. America the Beautiful was sung by the group of 120 members. Secretary and Treasury reports were read and approved. On the sick report are that Tillie Schornisch, Lioba Rehardt, and Dorothy Diederich was unfortunate after a fall in her home. And Luena

After the membership and activities had continued on a downturn trend in the mid 2000s, Mary Ann Gruber agreed to become president in 2007 and Hildegard Depies returned as secretary.

In 2010, Rosemary Schneider became the secretary (until 2017) and Louisa Meier became the treasurer.

Judith McFarland served as secretary for the final few meetings of Chilton Senior Citizens.

As it turned out, Gruber was the last president of the group and Meier continued as the treasurer. They were present at the State Bank of Chilton on April 14, 2023 for the closing of an organization after 52 years.

The remaining funds were distributed to the Calumet County Historical Society, Chilton Public Library, Chilton Area Catholic School, Trinity Lutheran School at Rantoul, and the United Fund of Chilton.

