

Quilting Party written in January 2023

I was recently at a quilting party. The old Dover, Minnesota school building is now Dover city hall. I stopped by to visit with the city clerk Gary Pedersen who gave 3 of us WC Historical Society board members a tour of the building back in November. I had a thank you gift of a WCHS coffee mug I wanted to drop off for him. There were only about two parking spots left in the front of the building which I thought was unusual for the city of 795 residents on a Wednesday afternoon. I asked Gary if he was having a sale on building permits or something but he said no, there's a quilting party in one of the old classrooms, one of the rooms that Gary attended for one of his grade school years back in the day.



Quilting party at Dover, MN City Hall in an old classroom

I had a souvenir coffee mug for Dover city employee Marvin Ihrke who was there for the tour in November too. He said Marvin was over in the other room quilting. I thought to myself, I have to see that. Well I misunderstood; it was Mrs. Marvin who was one of 15 ladies who were quilting and not Marvin himself. So I visited with the ladies a little, talked about the old school in West Concord and they told me a little more about the 1925 building in Dover. As I left the quilting party after taking a picture, I told the ladies I noticed there was no wine or wine glasses on the tables. They told me that started at 4 o'clock. Darn the luck, I was there at 2:30.

As I drove away I got thinking back to the quilting parties my mom would have in our basement on the farm. There would be from 8-10 ladies who would put long 1x4" boards precariously on top of old wooden chairs to use as their frames and then begin to stretch out pieces of fabric that would eventually end up being a beautiful quilt. While I did not partake of the actual quilting, I did get to enjoy lunch which always included Thelma's cinnamon rolls. That was the best part of the quilting, the cinnamon rolls.

Thelma Hilling, yes Reenie's mom, would make thee best cinnamon rolls and I would always try to find them before the quilters took a break. My mom got wise to this so she would hide them. Well much to my delight, in the Hegre Lutheran Church cookbook, which was produced in 1968, right there on page 9 is the recipe for Thelma's cinnamon rolls. I made them a number of years ago and then this year over the holidays in Omaha, my kids and I decided we'd have a Hegre dinner where we would make things from the cookbook. I made the Tator Tot hotdish and Thelma's cinnamon rolls. And they turned out pretty darn good. Reenie, your mom would have been proud of how good they turned out!

It's fun to go through these old cookbooks and find a number of recipes that bring back great memories. But I have found that sometimes all these great cooks of yesteryear would leave out certain instructions that apparently a person is just supposed to know. For instance, I found out when making a hot dish with rice, you should probably boil up the rice first. Sometimes you just have to figure out which ingredient they left out of the recipe whether intentional or not. I think back to the TV show 'Everybody Loves Raymond' where the mom, Marie, left out an ingredient or two before giving the recipe to Ray's wife Debra. Marie did not want her to be a better cook than she was. Now I don't think the Hegre ladies did that but sometimes I wonder why a recipe just doesn't taste right. I did what the book said but it's the instructions left out that leave room for a conspiracy theory.

The recipes can sometimes be very precise and sometimes they say just add flour until its thick enough. Well what does that mean? The precision was in a lazagne recipe that my aunt Marion put in the book. In the book it's spelled with a 'z'. It says after you get all the ingredients prepared and then get the lazagne layered correctly with the noodles you bake it for about 20 minutes at 359°. Of course that's probably a typo. She meant to say bake it at 358°. And what's with ABOUT 20 minutes? Do I have to start checking at 10 minutes and then every two minutes after that until I see black showing up on the cheese or noodles or both?

You are a master chef if you get a recipe to turn out on the first try from these old cookbooks. However I did get the cinnamon rolls on a first time and they've turned out good every time since. I think next I'll try the 5 can hot dish. Everything is pre-measured by the can. Can't mess that one up right? Well at least by the third time it should turn out.