

# RCHS, BHCCU partner to develop ‘Rock County Legacies’

*Submitted by Rock County Historical Society*

The Rock County Historical Society (RCHS) and Blackhawk Community Credit Union (BHCCU) announced recently their plans to partner in developing Rock County Legacies, formerly known as The Legacy Center.

As part of RCHS, Rock County Legacies will focus on the rich history of the generations of people who worked at General Motors, Fisher Body and the UAW in Janesville. With a mission of enriching and engaging the communities of Rock County through preservation and dissemination of the history of our area, RCHS has the experience and knowledge to actively develop Rock County Legacies here in the county.

BHCCU, which was founded within the walls of the GM plant 56 years ago, has been collecting stories, artifacts and mementos from the community and the plant for many years. Now, the two organizations are working together to share this history with the community and future generations.

“RCHS is excited to be collaborating with BHCCU on Rock County Legacies to honor the thousands of people who worked at the General Motors plant in Janesville,” said Tim Maahs, RCHS Executive Director. “Collecting stories and artifacts is a large focus of our

organization; we are honored to be partnering with BHCCU, which has been working diligently to ensure that the history of GM employees is captured, not lost.”

BHCCU President & CEO Lisa Palma added, “This project has evolved over time, and the memorabilia, artifacts and stories we have collected are important to us and will be in excellent hands with RCHS. This partnership is vital to Rock County Legacies and will provide us with the opportunity to focus all our efforts on our members and our community while continuing the preservation and sharing of stories from GM by working with RCHS. We see this as the perfect community blend. We thank the community for their donations and patience.”

The collaboration to develop Rock County Legacies will begin in stages, focusing initially on collecting oral histories from the generations of people who worked at General Motors, Fisher Body and the UAW, to help commemorate and honor the history of the community. The recorded stories will be shared in a variety of ways, including through exhibits, programs, on social media and the RCHS website. To share your story, visit [bhccu.org/legacy-story-collection](http://bhccu.org/legacy-story-collection).

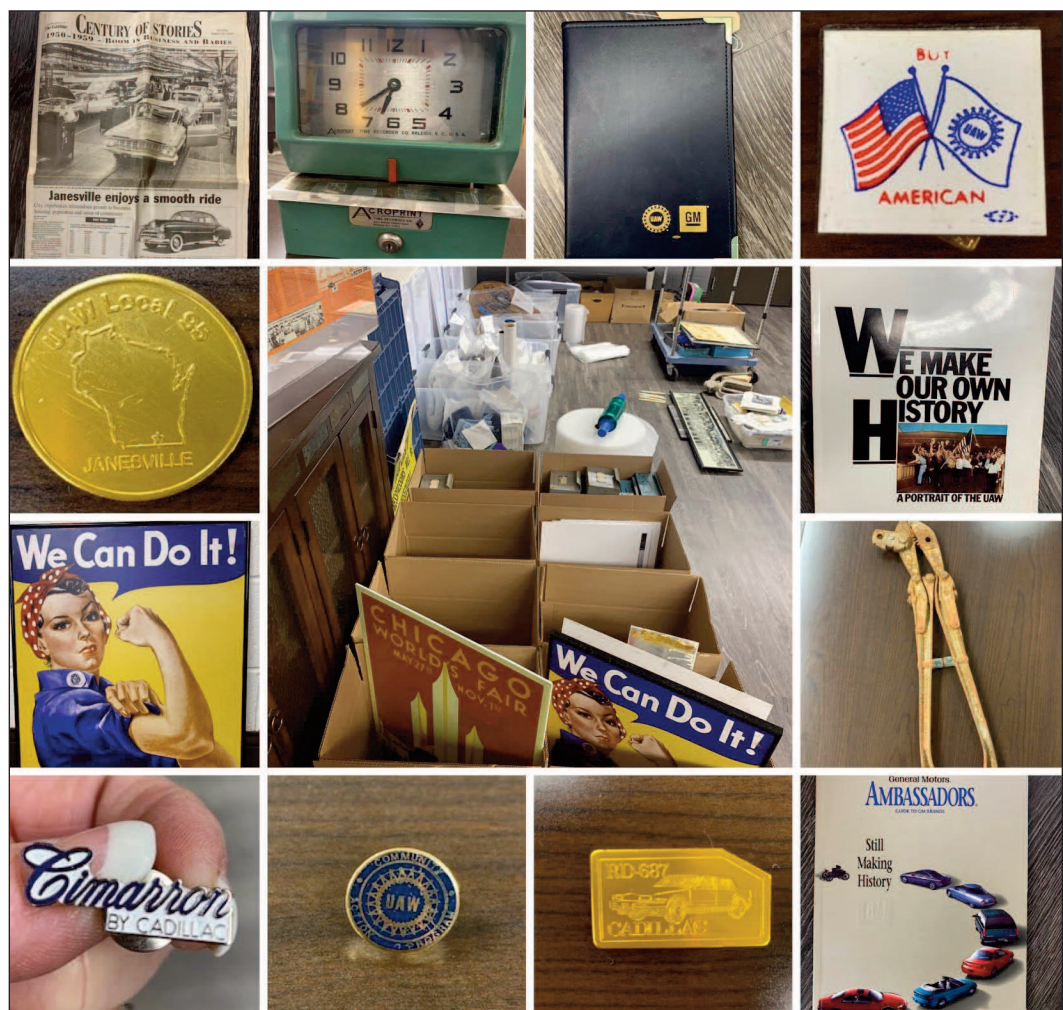
The two organizations will work together in phase one to survey a strategic representation of their memberships of more

than 50,000 people about what they would be most interested in seeing and hearing related to the history of the people in Rock County who worked at GM. The survey results will help to determine how Rock County Legacies can best serve the community and region.

In the next year, RCHS and BHCCU will work to finalize plans for future developments of the Rock County Legacies exhibit.

RCHS has been welcoming the community to its campus since 1950 when William Tallman’s Italianate-style mansion was donated to the city of Janesville, with the agreement that it serve as a museum for the community. RCHS operates the Lincoln-Tallman House, along with a Museum & Visitor Center, the Tallman Carriage House, the RCHS Archives, the Frances Willard School House and the Wilson King Stone House. A nonprofit organization, RCHS offers tours to people of all ages, provides thought-provoking programs and hosts many events each year, including an annual awards gala and a holiday tree show.

The history of GM in Janesville dates back to 1918, when the company branched out into farm vehicles by buying the Samson Tractor Co. Within 12 months after the purchase, nearly 150 tractors per day were rolling off the production line. Car production at the Janesville



A collage showcasing the history of Janesville’s General Motors plant. Photos courtesy of Rock County Historical Society

plant began in 1923, but the Great Depression shuttered the plant from 1932 to 1934. The plant made 16 million 105 mm artillery shells during World War II, then returned to automot-

ive production after the war. The Janesville GM plant ceased all production in April, 2009.

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West Neighborhood, the Rock County Historical Society’s mission is to bridge past and present through capturing and sharing stories about Rock County.

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