

# The AKEY BRAKEY News

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a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

April, 2013 Volume #5 – Issue # 1 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ADA JAMES

### I. Family Is Important

By Jerry L. Bower

We all know that one's family instills in its children the family values and interests. This was absolutely true for Ada James' family. We will briefly sketch Ada's family history because it made Ada a "radical."

George H. James, the patriarch of the family, came to Richland Center in 1855 from New Hampshire. Soon George and his eldest son, Norman, began a hardware store that remained in the family for almost one hundred years. Later, David James, Ada's father, also joined the business. The hardware trade prospered under good management and the various James' families were always comfortable. David, who was 18 in 1861 when the Civil War began, served in the conflict. When he came home, he began to court Ada Briggs and they married in late 1866. This was a brief marriage because Ada died in August 1869 of TB, shortly after giving birth to a son, Oscar.

David, needing a housekeeper and a mother for Oscar, soon began to court his sister-in-law, Laura Briggs. Laura is described as a "radical feminist." Indeed, part of the courtship consisted of David paying Laura's tuition to Oberlin, the first co-ed college in the United States, where she studied telegraphy and aimed to win equal rights for women to be employed in telegraphy. But, according to the sketch in the *Ada James Register* at the State Historical Society, "Laura finally gave in to the relative ease of marriage to David and abandoned her crusade for women's employment in telegraphy." Laura returned to Richland Center in 1872 and she and David were married in 1873.

Ada was born in 1876, the eldest of the couple's surviving children. A son, born in 1874, had died in infancy. There were two younger sisters, Beulah, born in 1878, and Vida, born in 1887. Laura continued her "pioneering" in Richland Center. In 1882 Laura hosted twelve women at her house and they founded the Woman's Club, the oldest woman's suffrage club in Wisconsin. The ladies deliberately left the word, "suffrage," out of their club's title for fear it would trigger knee-jerk opposition. Very soon, however, anyone who paid attention knew what these women wanted.

Later, in the summer of 1882, Laura and thirteen Richland Center women went to Madison to help plan and publicize the "revival convention" of the Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association [WWSA], to be held in the fall in the capital. Laura was rewarded with a vice presidency in the revived state organization. Laura had learned organizational skills and campaign tactics during her earlier work in the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In November 1886 a woman suffrage law actually passed, 43,581 to 38,988, in a state referendum. The WWSA, which had pushed for the referendum, understood the measure to provide "full suffrage" to women, but opponents argued that it only provided women a ballot in "school elections." There followed a year of nasty wrangling, which ended in a court case which ruled that women could vote in school elections but in no others. Laura James had been one of the prominent leaders of the women's rights cause during this struggle.

Naturally Ada James who, from a young age, went with her mother to club and suffrage meetings, became a suffragist too. Ada graduated from high school in 1894. She taught school for a year and dabbled in painting, poetry, and suffrage work. Shortly after leaving high school, Ada had noticed the onset of hearing loss. She sought treatment from the best doctors in Madison, but a cure, or even the prevention of further loss, was not available.

*Continued on Page 3*

# Richland County History Room

By Crystal Foley, Historian

The mission of the Richland County History Room is to record and promote the heritage of Richland County, Wisconsin by collecting and preserving items related to persons, places and events of Richland County, Wisconsin. We will oversee and maintain this collection for the use of the public now and for future generations. The History Room is located upstairs at the Brewer Public Library at 325 North Central Avenue, Richland Center, Wisconsin.

Our holdings include various artifacts, manuscripts and genealogies of Richland County families, plat maps of Richland County ranging from 1860 to present, histories of Richland County published in 1884, 1906 and 1986, a database of Richland County cemeteries maintained by David Thompson, Richland County Census indexes and records from 1850-1940, Richland Center newspapers on microfilm from 1855-2010, Richland County pictures, Richland Center High School yearbooks 1903-2011 except 1919, 1923, 1927-1946, 1949, and 1953, various township records, country school records, marriage and death indexes for the records at the courthouse and various other items.

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Jerry Bower

The Directors and I are planning a "Grand Reopening" of the Akey School Museum for Saturday, 1 June, to show off the restoration and maintenance work that has been accomplished. All of the interior displays are being refurbished as well. The Grand Reopening will run from 11 AM to 2 PM. The event will be held on the Akey School grounds. Food will be available for purchase. Digital scanners will be available for those who bring pictures or documents of the Akey or other Richland County one-room school. Copies will be made, one for the donor, one for Akey School, and one for the Richland County History Room. So, if you have memorabilia you would like copied, bring it to the open house!

The work we will be showing off includes ten new, historically authentic windows and a repainted interior. Both the windows and the paint have brightened the interior. No more pinched fingers from a falling sash! By June first, we will have completed some concrete work-a short sidewalk leading to the concrete entry pad and a level pad for the porta-potty. We also hope to have a new flagpole in place by then.

So, please put this event on your calendar, invite some friends, and come to the Grand Reopening of the Akey School Museum.

We are currently working in conjunction with Wisconsin Heritage Online and the University of Wisconsin - Richland's history department Professor Aharon Zorea, to place our entire catalog of pictures online. This is an ongoing process.

The pictures online thus far can be accessed at:

<http://content.mpl.org/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/rchr>

Our web page is located at:

<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~richlandcowi/>

Hours of Operation:

- Monday - Friday: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
- Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- Closed on Sundays
- **Richland County History Room**  
325 North Central Avenue  
Richland Center, WI 53581

Telephone: (608) 647-6033

Email: [richlandctyhistoryroom@yahoo.com](mailto:richlandctyhistoryroom@yahoo.com)

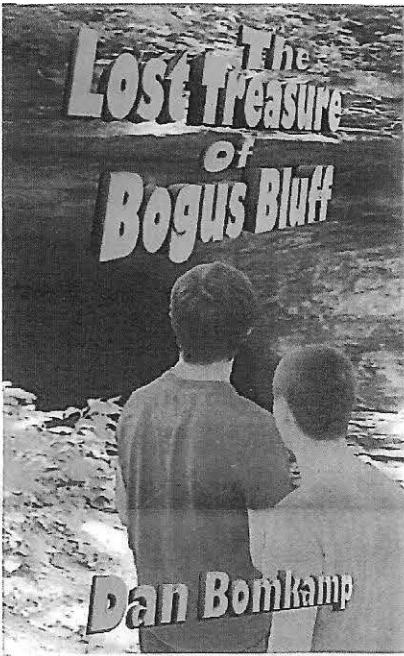
Our facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/Richland.County.History.Room>

facebook

Name:  
Richland County  
History Room





For over 200 years the stories have been handed down from generation to generation about a fortune in gold coins hidden in the caves of Bogus Bluff, high over the Wisconsin River. Learning about the legend, best friends Andy and Trevor set out to find the treasure. Will they succeed where many others have failed?

Author's note:

Bogus Bluff is a real place and the caves are much as they are described in the book. Many years ago as a teenager I crawled through them with some friends and little did I know then that our little adventure would be part of one of my books.

The caves and hill are on private property. Years ago people climbed up and searched the caves all the time but now days, lawsuits and injuries have put a halt to that. The climb up the hill is very dangerous. So please respect the owner's privacy and do not try to explore without permission.

Are you interested in *The Lost Treasure of Bogus Bluff* or any of the books written by Dan?

Check out his website: [danbomkamp.com](http://danbomkamp.com)

email at: [danbomkamp@live.com](mailto:danbomkamp@live.com)

or call him at: 608-739-3864

-- his mailing address is: 403 Catherine St., Muscoda, WI 53573



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**A book review of *The Lost Treasure of Bogus Bluff***

By Ken Thiede

Excellent for young people to seniors who want to reminisce; I've now had the pleasure of reading six of Dan's books and this one was truly adventurous. *The Lost Treasure of Bogus Bluff* has a relaxing yet intriguing story line. A common theme of the river and fishing combined with excellent reference to history both factual as well as lore compliment this book. Dan incorporates current culture with computers, the internet and even a reference to Harry Potter with a wonderful sense of rural life to growing up along the Wisconsin River in Richland Co. -- A superb weekend read which I enjoyed immensely!

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**BOGUS or REAL ?** -- A re-collection of earlier times by Charlotte R. Bindl

As I travel scenic Highway 60 west from Gotham sometimes I recall: Not a paved wide highway with railings, but a country river road, with an edge that in places dropped off into the water. This was kind of scary for a girl who had spent most of her childhood living on the 'Ridge' with no swimming holes or chance to learn to swim.

On this particular day I was with my brothers and our destination was to "Bogus Bluff."

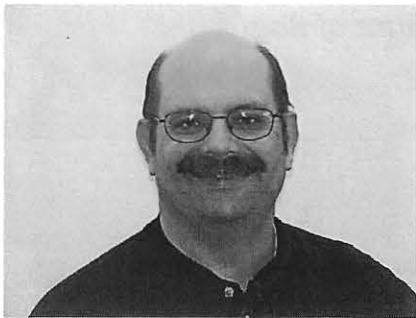
Now we had heard the stories of how in years past, counterfeiters had used the bluff for their purposes and thereby it had received its name, how residents reported seeing lights moving around at night and even that there had been an entrance to the cave from the river that they used for transporting their goods.

Armed with this information or (misinformation?) and a couple of flashlights, we climbed the bluff and located the cave opening.

Caves have always fascinated and at the same time terrified me so when you must get down and crawl into a dark place which may be inhabited by something which also crawls, my decision was to remain on the outside, wait & pray, while my braver siblings did their exploring. After what seemed an eternity to me they returned safely.

So this much I know. The bluff is real and there was a cave in it, but I don't know how many of the stories are bogus. Wouldn't it be exciting if the Old Wisconsin River could talk and tell the tales of happenings along its banks?

My younger brother, (Ralph) went back a few years later and went through the cave and even out another opening, but that is his story.



**Congratulations!** Steve Kohlstedt on your retirement. The Richland County Historical Society would like to THANK him for all his support and assistance over the years with the Akey School from his position at the Richland County Extension Office. BEST REGARDS!!

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU!**

Many THANKS to the Crow Hill, Fox Hollow, and Oxford School reunion group. When these members disbanded their group last fall, they decided to donate the balance in their treasury to the Akey School Museum.

The Richland County Historical Society greatly appreciates their thoughtfulness and generosity assuring them that their gift will be used to maintain and operate the Akey School Museum.

**“DAY TRIPPER”** this summer Consider if you will a journey to Rockbridge and enjoy Pier Park just 10 minutes north of Richland Center or you can go just a bit farther; travel to Natural Bridge State Park located east on Hwy 14 to Spring Green and take Hwy 60 about 10 minutes to County Hwy C north near Leland to view the Rockbridge arch as a part of the Baraboo Range.

# Richland Center baseball in 1932

By Lon Arbegust

Baseball has a long tradition of popularity in southwestern Wisconsin and Richland Center. The local club back in 1932 had one of those magical seasons that don't come along very often. The Richland Center team that year was affiliated with the Kickapoo League; unfortunately, the rest of the league didn't offer much competition which caused attendance to drop. The team was anchored by two ace pitchers, Nicholson and Hubrick and managed by Jim Foley. The Richland Center team enjoyed the best season it had ever had up to that year.

The R.C. nine dropped out of the Kickapoo League and began to schedule teams from outside the area including the Madison Blues, the Madison Checkered Cabs, The Piney Woods Colored All Stars, the Bingham's Colored All Stars and that "bewhiskered" team the House of David.

The Israelite House of David is a religious society co-founded by Benjamin and Mary Purcell in Benton Harbor, Mich. in 1903. Purcell was an avid baseball fan and encouraged society members to play baseball to build physical and spiritual discipline. The House became famous as a barnstorming baseball team which toured rural America, often in conjunction with the Kansas City Monarch club.

The highlight of the season was when the Kansas City Monarchs came to Richland Center. They played under the lights to a capacity crowd at the Richland County Fairgrounds. In 1930, the Monarchs became the first professional baseball team to use a portable lighting system which was transported from game to game in trucks to play games at night. The Monarchs were travelling from an engagement in St. Paul and stopped for the game in Richland Center on their way to Chicago. The locals lost by an 8-0 score, but by the account published in the Democrat, they played a competitive game before an appreciative crowd.



Early in the campaign, Ada got into a nasty dispute with Olympia Brown, the president of the Wisconsin Woman's Suffrage Association/WWSA. The two disagreed over which tactics to use—Brown favored the old-style 19<sup>th</sup> Century "dignified" campaign while James wanted to use all of the new, publicity-grabbing devices of the English suffragists, and some new ones. When Brown refused to compromise, Ada founded a new group—the Political Equity League/PEL—and was elected its president. Interestingly, Ada did not leave the WWSA, but her PEL carried on a vigorous and expensive pro-suffrage campaign. When the ballots were counted, woman suffrage had been soundly defeated, 227,000 to 136,000. Ada and the other female leaders blamed their defeat on the "immigrant vote of the ethnic males" and on the "liquor lobby," which by far had outspent the women to assert that women with the ballot would guarantee statewide prohibition!

After this setback, Ada had a much lower profile on the suffrage issue. Her dispute with the WWSA continued, but at a much lower temperature. Impatient with the WWSA's mild tactics, Ada joined the "radical" Congressional Union and the new National Woman's Party. Both of these vowed to fight by all means to secure a national amendment, which would obviate the need for state-level referenda. In this venture Ada co-organized, with Alice Curtis, a "Suffrage School" in Madison to train women in the new tactics. The Suffrage School, held in June 1914, was a huge success in both training and recruiting new leaders. Also in 1914, Ada established a guide to "fifty bills every intelligent woman should know about," called *Wisconsin Legislators and the Home.* Its objective was to demonstrate that women were interested in getting the ballot to reform society, not just for the sake of voting in a presidential election. This guide made clear who, in the legislature, was a supporter of suffrage and who wasn't.

By 1917 Ada James was on the national council of both the Congressional Union and the National Woman's Party. These radical organizations were gearing up to make a final push for a national suffrage amendment. The conditions seemed to favor success because many states had approved allowing women to vote in presidential elections. In fact, 339 of 531 (64%) electoral votes came from states where women voted. The NAWSA also was ready for a final campaign and, with the United States drifting ever closer to becoming involved in World War I, ready to offer President Wilson a trade: "We will support the war effort if you support suffrage for us." We do not know how effective this blackmail threat was in convincing President Wilson to support woman's suffrage, but he did.

Even with the President's backing, the amendment process took about two years. In February 1919, the "lame duck" senators defeated a suffrage amendment by just one vote short of the two-thirds needed. The House had already initiated the amendment by a two-thirds vote. President Wilson waited until the new members of Congress were sworn into office, in March 1919, and began to negotiate with the Senate leaders about what to do. In May 1919 Wilson called the Congress into special session to consider the amendment. This time it was quickly initiated by the required two-thirds margin: House of Representatives 304 to 89, Senate 56 to 25. Now the amendment was sent to the states for ratification—three-fourths needed to ratify to add woman's suffrage to the Constitution.

The James family—Ada and her father, now a retired state senator—would have the last word in Wisconsin's ratification. Ada was in Madison when Congress voted to initiate the amendment because she was the chief lobbyist for the Congressional Union and the National Woman's Party, and because the legislature was still in session. Her father just happened to come to Madison to visit Ada the day the legislature voted to ratify the amendment and to select a "special courier" to hand carry the ratification document to Washington D. C. Ada and others suggested David James for the courier's job, he agreed to serve and was quickly elected. Because he had come to Madison for only the day, James was not prepared to travel. So, he borrowed Ada's traveling bag, bought some underwear and socks, and was on his way. He traveled by train, auto, and foot to get to the nation's capital, where Wisconsin Senator Irvine Lenroot had arranged for the ratification document to be delivered to the State Department. With this extra effort Wisconsin became the first state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment.

(Illinois had actually voted to ratify the amendment earlier than Wisconsin but, when the document was telegraphed to the State Department, errors in the language were discovered. So, the Illinois legislature had to cast a second vote for the corrected language, and this delay allowed Wisconsin to be first!) Part II of this article will be continued in the October issue

Major Sources:

- McBride, Genevieve G. *On Wisconsin Women: Working for Their Rights from Settlement to Suffrage.* The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
  - Personal Interviews with Margaret Scott (11/20/86) and Lona Johnson (12/2/86).
  - Richland County Room manuscripts, especially the Ada James, Pearl Lincoln, and Levi Bancroft files.
  - *The Ada James Papers* in the Manuscript Division of the State Historical Society.
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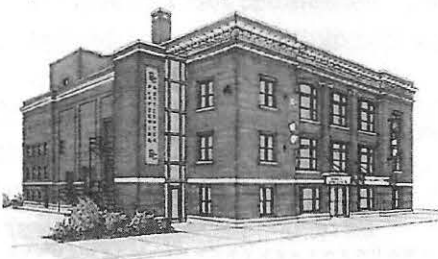
**Richland County Performing Arts to restore Historic Richland Center Auditorium**

One of our region's cultural and historical landmarks is getting ready for a major restoration. As part of its project to restore and renovate the 100-year-old Richland Center Auditorium, the Richland County Performing Arts Council (RCPAC) has recently selected Vogel Bros. Building Co. to be the Construction Manager for the Auditorium renovation.

The Auditorium was built in 1912 through the efforts of the local chapter of the Federated Women's Club. The building hosted numerous programs, plays, and concerts, along with motion pictures before the growth of movie theatres. Notable speakers at the Auditorium included William Jennings Bryant and William Howard Taft.

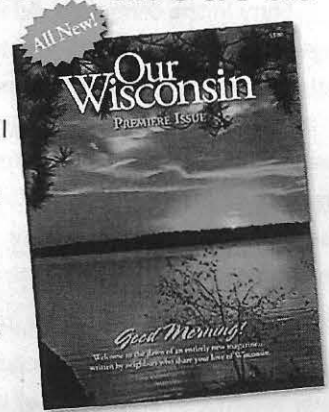
The RCPAC plans to create a self-sufficient cultural and business center in Richland Center that will strengthen the economic and artistic growth of the community.

For more information about the restoration and the RCPAC, visit <http://www.rcpac.org/home.htm>.



# Our Wisconsin Magazine is about us

*Our Wisconsin Magazine* is a brand new bimonthly publication that is about everything Wisconsin. The January 2012 premiere issue featured a two-page article with four pictures about Frank's Hill in Richland County's Eagle Township and explained its tie to the Native American culture. It also had an article about the vanishing drive-in theaters and listed the thirteen still left in the state, including Richland Center's Starlite 14 Drive-In. A husband and wife motorcycling team told of their love biking through southwestern Wisconsin, including the Richland Center area. There was even an article about the pink lady, Katy Grimm, who runs the Pink Spot Café in Muscoda.



Local author Mike McNair is the *Our Wisconsin* field editor for Richland County. Anyone with ideas that would make good articles for the magazine can call him at 608-647-6213 or e-mail him at [MikesLittleWorld@gmail.com](mailto:MikesLittleWorld@gmail.com), or they can send articles directly to the publication themselves. The editors are interested in stories that are entertaining or unusual. They want accounts about colorful characters, people with hearts of gold, or even plain people with a story to tell. They're also seeking sharp vintage photos from the past – primarily from the 1920's through the 1960's – showing life as it was in early-day Wisconsin.

**To subscribe to the magazine, call toll-free 877-902-9760 or subscribe online at: [www.OurWisconsinMag.com](http://www.OurWisconsinMag.com) and click on the "How to Subscribe" link.**

**100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of agriculture education at Richland Center High School 85th anniversary of FFA at RCHS (October 7, 2014)** By Carletta Heide

In the 1914 Pine Needles (RCHS yearbook) T.W. Gullickson, agriculture instructor, wrote: "Richland Center High School literally let down another bar, which had stood in its way to serve the community, when the course in agriculture was offered for the first time this year." Richland County is one of the oldest and most progressive agriculture sections in the state. During this first year of agriculture classes the extra - curricular organization was known as the Richland Center High School Agriculture Club. In later Pine Needles the group was known as the Bucket and Stool Club, recognizing that members were milking cows by hand. The term "Aggie" was also mentioned in the 1914 Pine Needles in the article about the RCHS Agricultural Society. The national F.F.A. (Future Farmers of America) was formed in 1928 in Kansas City, Missouri. In October of 1929 the Wisconsin Association of F.F.A. was formed. Richland Center High School was among the first chapters to be chartered on October 7, 1929. Ithaca, Hillsboro, and Kickapoo were also chartered in October, 1929. For many years men taught the agriculture classes and advised the F.F.A. They included C.W. Gullickson, Floyd Lovell, William Crow, A. Vernon Miller, William Kilkelly, Leo Keegan, Samuel Schriener, Donald Marsh, Allen Gill, David Dybdahl, Robert Bender, Francis McCauley, and now Mark Thomas. In 2001 Jill Van Schyndle joined the agriculture dept. and then in 2004 Rebecca Marshall Gehrke. Both had student taught at RCHS previous to becoming part of the teaching staff. Aggies and FFA alumni are invited to be part of the RCHS Homecoming parade, Friday, September 27, 2013. More events will be held in 2014.

Consequently, Ada used a hearing trumpet her entire adult life. She used the device to her advantage—such as putting it down when someone bored her or sought a favor she did not wish to grant. Ada loved to play “auction bridge in no trump” and if she won the bid, she turned off her hearing trumpet so she could concentrate on playing her cards without distraction!

Ada fell in love in the years immediately after high school. Her beau was Charles Bingham Cornwall and they set a date to be married in 1897. Lona Johnson, in an interview I conducted in 1986, said that Ada truly was in love, but bowed to parental and family pressure to call off the ceremony. The sources “suggest” that her father, David James, was the key opponent of this union and one source suggested that he threatened to disown Ada if she went ahead. Some sources suggest that David felt Cornwall wasn’t “good enough” for his daughter or that Cornwall, who was employed by the County, was involved in the mishandling of public funds.

Perhaps more important than all the factors cited above for Ada’s father’s objection to her marriage to Cornwall are the facts that he was twelve years older than Ada and that he had previously been married. His wife had died, leaving Charles a widower. David James’ objection could not have been financial—Cornwall owned “one of the best and most productive farms of the county.” The farm was 80 acres, located in the center of Eagle Township. In addition, Cornwall owned and operated the Boaz Cheese Factory, which used the milk of 300 cows to produce 2,000 pounds of cheese daily. And, of course, Cornwall was the Richland County Clerk. I have been unable to find any information about a mishandling of county funds by Cornwall. Two years after Ada’s father forbid her to marry Cornwall, he married Elsie Eaton in June 1899.

Whatever the exact reason, the wedding did not occur and Ada never again had a love interest. In her journals Ada often wrote of an “emptiness” in her life and of “being a nun in the world.” One source stressed that Ada now poured her energy into a series of causes: woman’s suffrage, temperance, pacifism, socialism, and, eventually, social work with children.

## II. Suffrage Work, 1908-1920

As we have noted, Ada was involved in suffrage work in the 1890s, but not in a terribly serious way. Ada’s “dabbling” continued alongside her mother until Laura’s death in 1905. There followed a three-year hiatus. The turning point for Ada occurred in the summer of 1908 when she and three companions made a two-month tour of Europe. During this trip the young women visited England, where the woman suffrage campaign, under the inspired leadership of Emma Pankhurst, was coming to a boil. Ada later used some of the tactics she witnessed in London.

Genevieve McBride, in her book, *On Wisconsin Women*, which focuses heavily upon the suffrage struggle in the state, describes Ada as a member of the “second generation” of suffragist leaders. The “second generation women” were willing to use new and shocking tactics, compared to those their mothers had found acceptable. The suffragists especially used print media to get the word out. They wrote the articles which sympathetic editors ran for them.

Some of the new tactics were:

- Street Meetings—the women set up a “soap box” and spoke to passersby about suffrage.
- Outdoor Noon Meetings at factories and other major places of employment.
- A Motor Tour that carried suffrage speakers throughout the state in an era when the automobile was still a novelty.
- An Airplane pilot was hired to drop suffrage pamphlets on the state fair.
- A Suffrage Steamer traveled fifty miles on the Wolf River to deliver suffrage speakers and literature to the communities along the banks.
- Buffalo Bill Cody carried a yellow suffrage banner as he led his Wild West Show into arenas in Wisconsin.
- The National American Woman’s Suffrage Association supplied a two-reel “photo play” about suffrage that was shown in theaters and at county fairs.

Ada was truly a leader in the 1911-12 referendum campaign. Her father, now State Senator James, and an Assemblyman, simultaneously introduced a suffrage referendum bill in the 1911 legislature. Ada and others testified for the measure and, according to Ada, “kept the heat on” by publishing newspaper articles noting who supported and who opposed the bill. It finally passed both chambers but Governor Francis McGovern waited weeks before he finally signed it. The vote was scheduled for November 1912, to coincide with a presidential election.

*Continued on the insert Page 7*