



# The AKEY BRAKEY News

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a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

October, 2014 Volume #6 – Issue # 2 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

## THE H. T. (Henry Thompson) BAILEY STORE & OPERA HALL

By Dr. Jerry Bower

Henry Thompson (H. T.) Bailey was born 27 January, 1838 in Connecticut. H. T. grew up on his parents' farm and gained an education in the local common school. In 1854, at age 16, H. T. went to New York City, where he found employment in a grocery and provision store. He carefully observed and absorbed how the store was operated.

Three years later, in 1857, H. T. came west and ended up in Richland Center. (Unfortunately, there is no information in the available records as to why he came west or why he settled in Richland Center.) Bailey had difficulty finding employment because he had arrived in the midst of the "Panic of 1857." "Panic" was the 19<sup>th</sup> century label for a severe recession, which usually started with bank failures and resulted in high unemployment. After a while he secured a job from Albert Neff, owner of the American House. Bailey was the hotel's hostler, who took care of the horses in the American House's stable. After a few months, with the economy slowly improving, H. T. went to "sawing wood" in the pine forests of Richland County.

This was very hard labor and, in late 1858, for an unexplained reason, Bailey resolved to return "back East." However, he traveled only as far as Milwaukee before he turned around and retraced his steps. After returning to Richland Center, Bailey gained employment as a clerk with A. B. Weigley, who operated a general store. Weigley accepted farm produce in trade for his goods, which he shipped to eastern cities or down the Mississippi to the shore towns. H. T. remained in this position for eleven years.

When the Civil War erupted in April 1861, after the Rebels fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, Richland County men eagerly answered President Lincoln's call for volunteers. But, as the war dragged on and casualties mounted, the initial enthusiasm waned and the federal government found it necessary to install a draft to replenish the ranks. The Conscription Act allowed communities to devise their own methods for filling their quota. A common provision in these procedures allowed a drafted man to pay a fee that hired a "volunteer" to serve in his place. In January 1865, H. T. Bailey availed himself of this clause in the Richland Center regulations, paying \$28.00, plus \$3.00 for the payment of the taxes of the enlistee.

In July 1862, H. T. married Hannah Medora Huntington. The couple had two sons, Henry T. and Milo H. Hannah died in September 1882, shortly after giving birth to Milo. Milo, a sickly infant, died the following February. In June 1885 Bailey married Mary Christine Felton. Mary, who outlived H. T. by forty years, offered in 1920 to sell the impressive Bailey home to the Federation of Woman's Clubs at an attractive price, if it were used for a hospital.

In 1869, H. T. and his brother, N. W. Bailey, purchased the stock of J. L. Brown and opened their own store. They did a brisk business. In 1873 the brothers made the following sales: dry goods, \$59,600; wool, \$10,500; and pork, \$7,500, for a total of \$77,600. According to the 1873 sales listed in Margaret Scott's book (p. 51), the Bailey brothers were fourth in sales among Richland Center's many merchants.

During 1873 H. T. built a very large brick home on North Park Street. The *Republican Observer* described it as "elegant." In 1920, Bailey's widow, Mary, offered to sell the house, at a bargain price, to the Federation of Woman's Clubs, if it would be used to establish a hospital. After several years of political maneuvering, the Bailey home became nurses' quarters and administrative offices for the new Richland Hospital. The home was removed in a 1962 remodeling and replaced by a fire-resistant wing of the hospital.

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In 1878, after eight years of partnership with his brother, H. T. became the sole proprietor of the business. Three years later, in April 1881, Bailey's Store was ransacked by burglars, who took the money from the cash register and left the store littered with empty boxes and dry goods. The following month authorities arrested two men in Iowa, who were the suspected culprits. One of them was "Three-fingered" Jack of Dubuque. The two suspects were brought to Richland Center by train and lodged in the county jail. One evening, as he brought food to their cell, a deputy noticed that they had used a hoop removed from a wooden water bucket to chisel half-way through the jail's stone wall. Brought to trial before County Judge Downs, the men confessed and were sentenced to two years.

In the 1880s the temperance question was the "hot issue" in each village annual election. Both the "Temperance" and "License" factions fielded a slate of candidates in each contest. The village council made the actual decision as to whether saloons would be allowed to operate within the village. Thus, the result of each election determined whether or not saloon licenses would be issued. In 1881, H. T. Bailey was among the trustees elected to the village council on the "License" ticket. At that time a saloon license cost \$150.00, a considerable sum, and a drug store license cost \$40.00. Spirits often were a major ingredient in medicines dispensed by drug stores. The pro license faction generally won the elections until the early 1900s, when better organized temperance candidates began regularly to prevail.

When Bailey, in 1883, decided to build his own store, on the corner of Court and Church Streets, he may have been influenced to include an Opera Hall on the second floor by the fact that Krouskop's Hall had burned in 1881. That disaster left Richland Center with just two halls -- Chandler's Hall and Pier's Opera House.

Bailey selected Madison architect David Jones to design his building. Jones used Italianate Commercial Architecture in his design. The Italianate Style, popular in the United States from the late 1840s into the 1890s, was based upon the design of 16<sup>th</sup> Century Italian villas. The majority of Italianate structures were private homes but some architects, like Jones, used some Italianate elements in their commercial designs. The elements Jones employed included a flat roof, wide projecting eaves supported by paired brackets, pediment windows, and an imposing cornice structure. Bailey's building has a conspicuous keystone cornice in the center of the building, with "1883" inscribed.

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

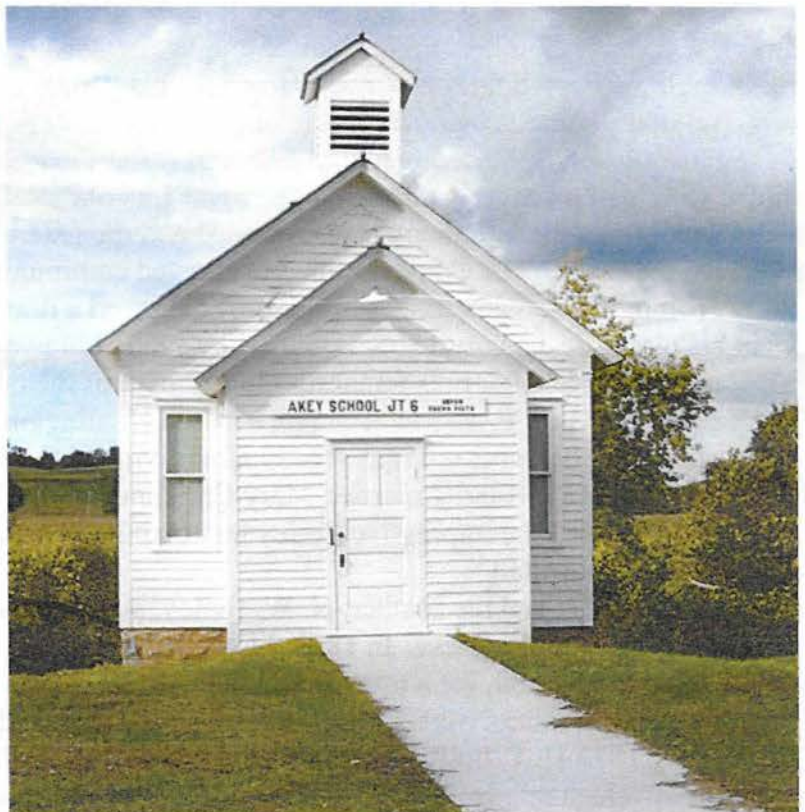
We had another successful season of operating the Akey School Museum. There were no reports of snakes in the building! So far this Fall, the Asian lady beetles have not been numerous. This is no doubt due to our contract with Bobby Duell, who sprays monthly to keep out all sorts of critters.

We had a sidewalk installed from County TB to the front door. It has eliminated the two steps one previously had to navigate to enter the building, making access much more convenient. We also had a concrete pad poured to hold the portable toilet.

We hosted 155 visitors during the summer. This includes 30 Ithaca second graders, who visited on October 10<sup>th</sup>, along with their teachers. I wished I could have bottled some of their energy! Analysis of the guest register revealed that 49 visitors lived outside of Richland County and included visitors from nine states, besides Wisconsin.

Thank you for supporting the Akey School Museum!!

*Jerry Bower*



The new look entrance to the Akey School

*Photo by Riki Bishop*

The construction cost \$15,000. The main floor was designed as a retail store while, on the second floor, Bailey had a small apartment and an opera house built. Bailey's Opera House was the second such facility operating in Richland Center. D. D. Chandler's 24' X 100' opera house had been built in 1866. Bailey's Opera House was much larger, 32' X 126'. It had a large stage, with convenient rooms on each side for the performers. The space was used regularly by the Club Women for their meetings and for occasional speakers they scheduled. For example, Susan B. Anthony spoke from the stage in November 1886 on woman suffrage. From Richland Center, Miss Anthony traveled to Viroqua, where she also addressed a suffrage rally. The Masons also used the facility for their meetings until 1920, when they built their temple on Central Avenue, across the street from the City Auditorium. In the 1880s, County Judge Clementson rented the opera house for his court sessions because they attracted a much larger crowd than the court room in the County Courthouse could accommodate. In addition, various plays and concerts, by both local talent and traveling troupes, were staged in Bailey's Opera House. The opening of the City Auditorium in 1912 diverted much traffic from the private halls. Pier's Opera House, for example, soon closed

H. T. Bailey's store remained profitable until the mid 1890's, when economic changes occurred that gradually pulled Bailey deeper and deeper into debt. He declared bankruptcy in 1899. The economic changes that ruined H. T. had been developing gradually ever since the Civil War ended in 1865. In short, there was a movement from a semi barter system to a purely cash set of transactions.

Bailey's Store was just one victim of this change in the market economy. Like other merchants, Bailey for years had accepted farm produce in payment for goods purchased from his stock. When a sufficient amount had been collected, Bailey sold the produce for the best price he could find. By the 1890s, however, many farmers were selling their produce directly to a wholesaler. Then, they used the cash from this transaction to purchase supplies. But, just like today, some farmers' needs exceeded their ability to pay. Consequently, H. T. extended credit to farmers and others, many of whom had been loyal customers for years. As a result, H. T. gradually fell further and further behind in paying his suppliers. By mid 1899 Bailey recognized that he would never be able to balance his books and he closed his store.

According to a *Republican Observer* article (24 August 1899), Bailey's creditors met at the courthouse and unanimously chose David G. James as their referee, to oversee the sale of Bailey's assets and to distribute the proceeds proportionally among them. The creditors required James to secure a \$50,000.00 bond, to assure the honest execution of his duties. The same meeting authorized Bailey "to sell his stock in trade in the usual course of business." Three local creditors—A. B. Weighley, W. H. Pier, and N. L. James—were appointed appraisers, to estimate the value of Bailey's remaining stock and of the store building. Evidently, no one blamed Bailey for this unfortunate turn of events, because the article ended with ". . . we believe there has been no unkind word spoken of Mr. Bailey."

The next year, the Bailey Building and its stock was sold at a sheriff's auction. After the auction, referee James was authorized to pay each creditor 15% of what was owed. This payment brought to 40% the amount Bailey's creditors recovered through the bankruptcy. In 1900 Clark and Elliot purchased the building and operated a women's apparel business. In 1905 E. H. Edwards and Joseph Kelly bought Clark and Elliot's stock and rented the building from them. Five years later the partners purchased the building. Edwards died in 1927 and Kelly became the sole proprietor. In 1931 Kelly retired and leased the building to Marachowski. Businesses have operated in the Bailey Building to this very day, when there is a beauty shop in the front and a tanning salon in the rear.

H. T. Bailey's private life mirrored that of many local men. He was among the eleven charter members of the Order of Odd Fellows organized in January 1861. Bailey was also a member of the Masonic Lodge. In politics, he was a Democrat. Despite this, as mentioned earlier, he was elected a village trustee in 1881. One suspects his support for licensing saloons overrode his being a Democrat in staunchly Republican Richland Center. H. T. Bailey died 3rd September 1905, after an illness of several months.

#### REFERENCES:

*History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin*. 1884. Pp. 1155, 1198-99.

*Republican and Observer*. 17 May 1883, p. 1, 7 September 1905, p. 1.

Scott, Margaret Helen. *Richland Center: A History*. 1986. Passim.

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This past summer the Lower Wisconsin Riverway Board celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a reception in Spring Green. One of the books available was Lower Wisconsin River Images developed by Thomas Oates a former Dean at the U W – Richland and Dr. Jerry Bower was a contributing historian. The paperback book has Geography, Geology, History and profiles of communities along the Lower Wisconsin River as well as a wide array of photos.

## Lower Wisconsin River Images (in Paperback)

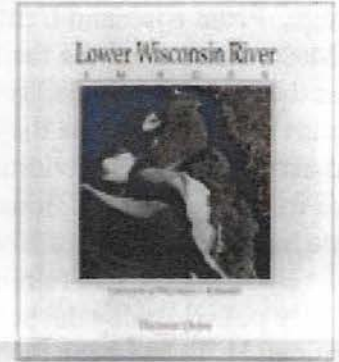
by Wisconsin University Extension Staff (Author),

Thomas Oates (Photographer)

**This book is available FREE to Richland County Historical Society members by contacting the Lower Wisconsin Riverway Office located in downtown Muscoda TELEPHONE – (608) 739-3188**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Lands/lowerwisconsin/>

## Lower Wisconsin State Riverway



Explore the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway where you can find much to do in beautiful settings close to major population centers.



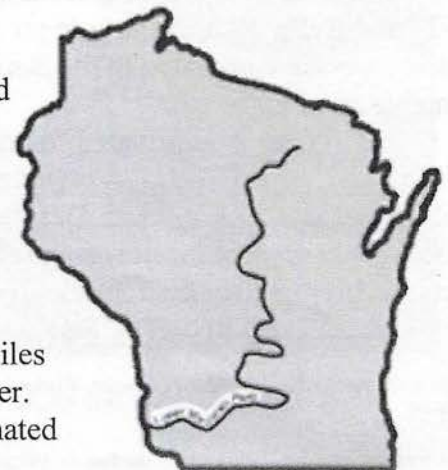
Avoca Unit, DNR Photo.

A decade of cooperative effort between citizens, environmental groups, politicians, and the DNR ended successfully with the passage of the law establishing the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway and the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board in 1989.

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway contains a fantastically diverse resource with a wide variety of historical and archaeological sites, wildlife, fisheries, and scenic beauty found nowhere else. You will enjoy your visit here and likely return again and again.

Two thirds of river users can be found on the stretch of river between Prairie Du Sac and Spring Green. Those looking for a more private experience will enjoy the middle section from Spring Green to Boscobel, and for the user wishing solitude, the stretch below Boscobel is the most secluded.

The Wisconsin River flows unimpeded by any man-made structures for 92.3 miles from the dam at Prairie Du Sac downstream to its mouth at the Mississippi River. Approximately 80,000 acres of land on both sides of the river have been designated as the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway.



# TWENTY FOR FIFTEEN = 20+15 FUND DRIVE

The Richland County Historical Society is promoting an increase in membership for the upcoming year 2015 and to do so we are inviting twenty new members to join during this current calendar year by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

A yearly individual membership to the Richland County Historical Society is \$5.

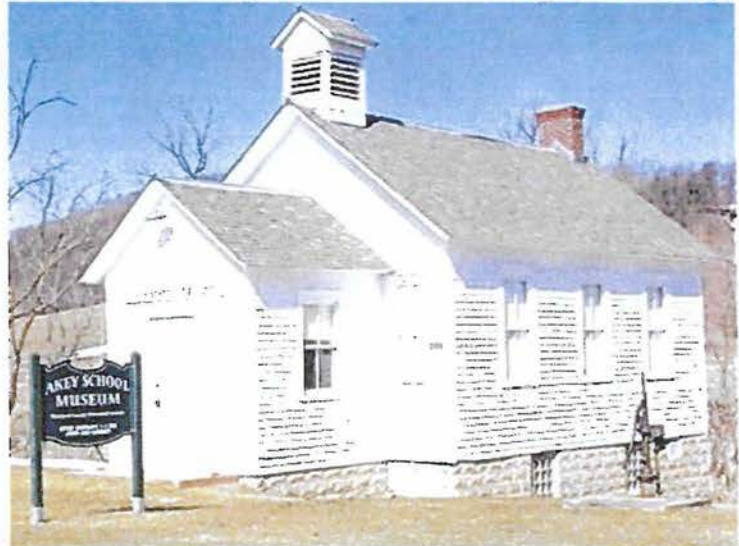
For \$15 -- with this promotion -- ALL NEW members would receive a three year membership in the RCHS and \$10 would be specifically designated for the new flag pole to be located outside the AKEY School. In addition, to all the benefits of being a Richland County Historical Society member, we would include your name as a designated donor to the AKEY Flag Pole Restoration on a framed certificate proudly displayed in the entry way to the AKEY School.

If you are already a member, with a generous \$10 donation we would have your name included with those NEW members recognized on that same framed certificate in the entry way to the AKEY School.

Certainly any donation would be accepted and greatly appreciated for this worthwhile project.

It was only a few years ago that a successful "SAVE the Bell Tower" drive took place and currently the RCHS Board is looking into a restoration project for the tower that would literally 'last for a lifetime'. We are very proud of the most recent restoration to much of the interior of the building and continue to look at improving the access outside the AKEY School as well.

Check out pictures on our website! → [www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety@weebly.com](http://www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety@weebly.com)



- \_\_\_ \$15 for a NEW 3 year membership with \$10 designated for the AKEY flagpole project
- \_\_\_ \$10 for a current member to be designated specifically for the AKEY flagpole project
- \_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_ additional donation for general improvements to the AKEY School Museum



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

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2155 Sunset Drive  
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DONATIONS are always WELCOME  
.... And are TAX DEDUCTIBLE

From our DAY TRIP feature why not consider stopping at the Empire Grill in downtown Richland Center  
EXCERPTS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION by the Editor, Dawn Kiefer of the RICHLAND OBSERVER

## EMPIRE GRILL: a feast for the eyes and palate

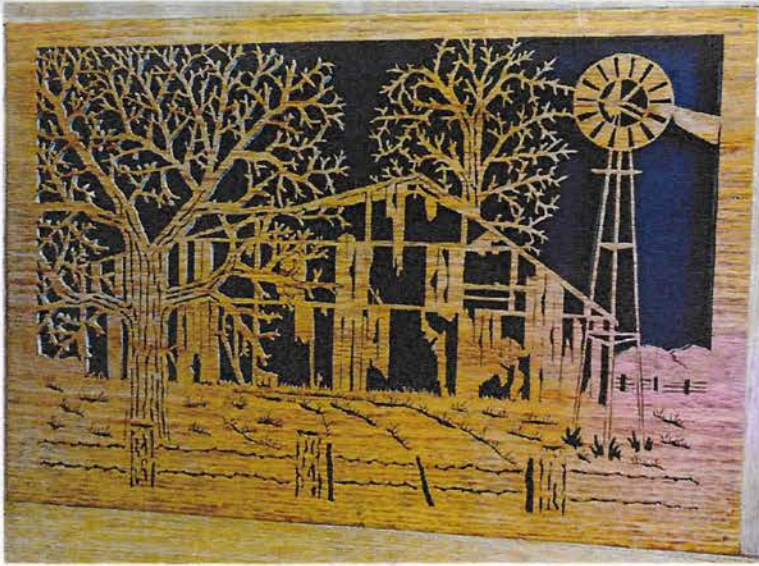
Anticipation built over a period of time for the Empire Grill to open for business. By peeking into the windows one could catch a glimpse of work in progress and it was evident that the restaurant would be a thing of beauty. Once it opened the décor surpassed expectations and patrons rave about the delicious food.

Located at 101 W. Court Street in downtown Richland Center, the business is located at the site of the historic Empire drugstore.

Business owners and life partners Randi Ewing and Sue Dvorak are both interested in antiques and art, so it's easy to see how they have incorporated their vision into the décor.



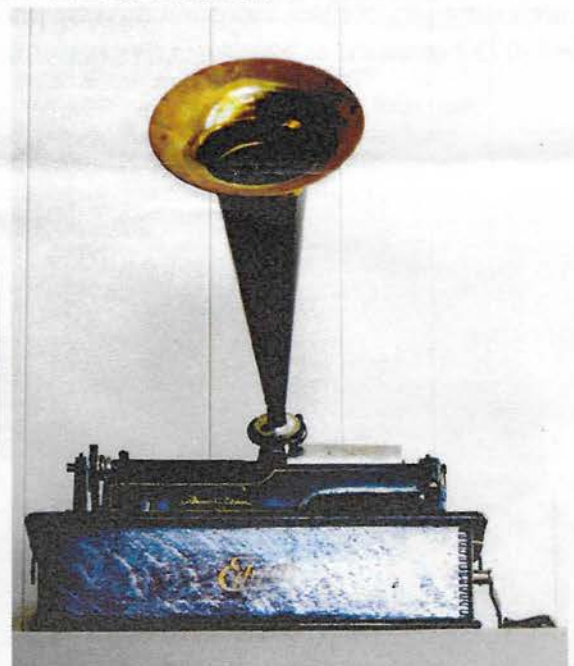
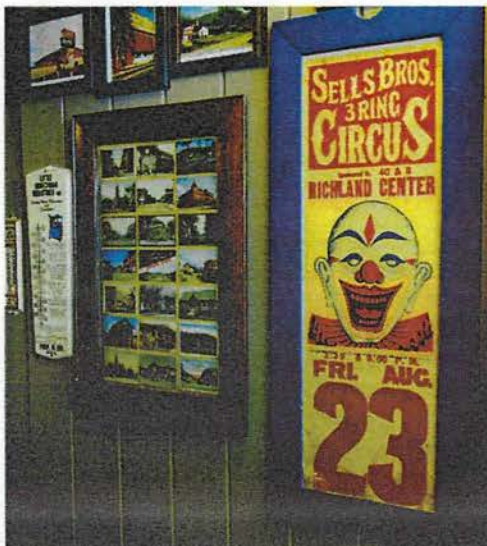
Throughout the restaurant can be seen examples of his woodworking projects, many with intricate carved designs.



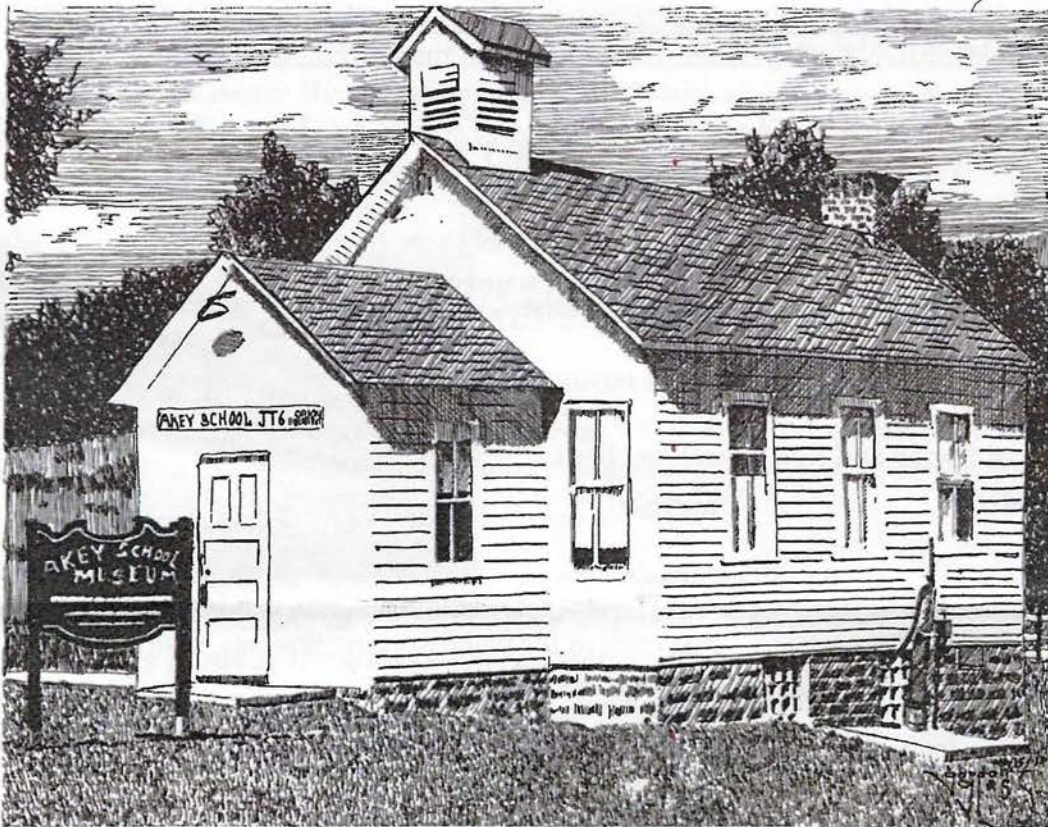
Adding spots of color to the surroundings are many vintage signs, items from Ewing's collection of record players and radios, and old toys and assorted items from Dvorak's collection.

On display in the seating areas are enlarged and framed images from Richland Center postcards of yesteryear; the originals were found at auctions and on ebay by Dvorak.

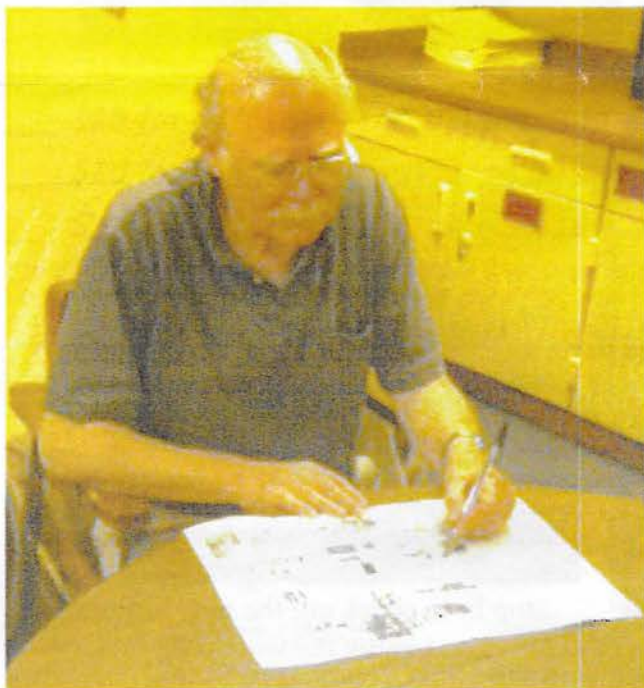
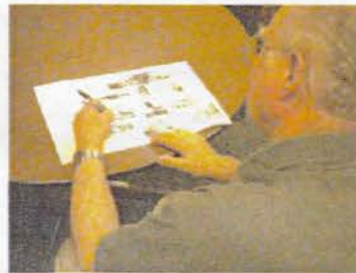
Other Prized display items include a vintage Richland Center circus poster and a "DRUGS" sign found in the basement that is covered with signatures from the 1950's and 1960's.



Stop in to check out the new business hours and enjoy the wonderful history



Local artist Gordon Glass has provided the Richland County Historical Society with a 10 x 14 pen & ink drawing of the Akey School to be displayed in the entry way. Gordon is pictured with another of his drawings, a collage of the Old Richland Center High School. He also recently has drawn a collage of the New Richland Center High School. He has prints of all these available and if interested in purchasing any contact Gordon Glass by phone 647-6732 or email at [gglass6732@charter.net](mailto:gglass6732@charter.net).



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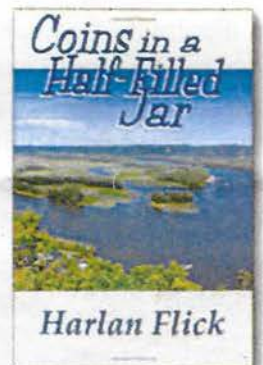
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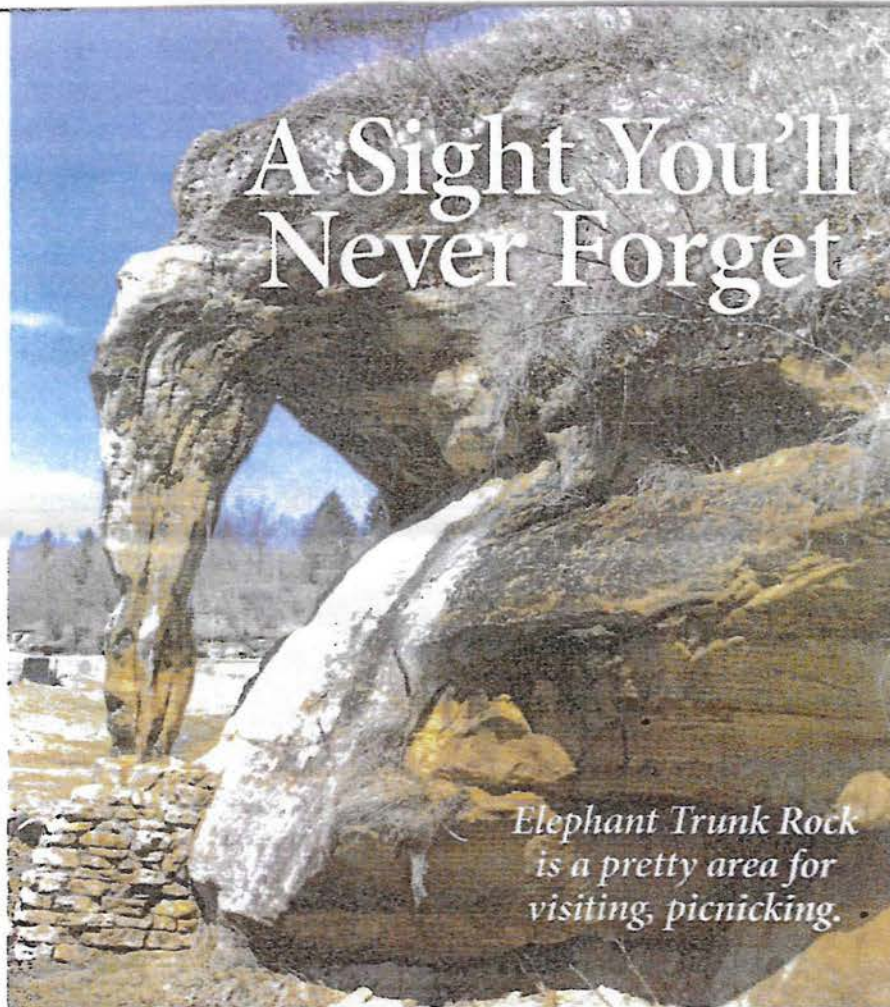
What was it like to grow up in the late 1950s and early 1960s in a large family nestled in a tiny village on the banks of the Great River? Surrounded by breath-taking natural beauty and striking poverty in one of the least populated and poorest counties in the state, a family struggles to make ends meet while creating their own entertainment through fishing, trapping, and hunting along the hills, backwaters and sloughs of the mighty Mississippi River.



Harlan Flick was born and raised in De Soto, Wisconsin. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. His life has been spent as an educator teaching in public schools in Ferrisville, Wisnakee, Prairie du Chien and Richland Center, Wisconsin. He then broadened his horizons with teaching stints at international schools in Jakarta, Indonesia for 16 years and Suzhou, China for 3 years. His overseas experience has taken him to more than 25 countries and allowed many opportunities to travel. Some

highlights he has had include: walking the beaches of Bali, trekking out of Kathmandu, Nepal, visiting the Taj Mahal in India, viewing Paris from atop the Eiffel Tower, viewing the ancient temples of Angkor Wat, Cambodia, walking on the Great Wall, visiting Shanghai, and viewing the Terra Cotta warriors of Xi'an, China. He has stood next to prehistoric Stonehenge in England, boated up the Fjords of Norway, spent time with young-age Dani tribesmen in Irian Jaya, ridden elephants in Thailand and spent a month walking the streets of the walled city of Chang Mai. All of these experiences have helped shape his view of the world and made him appreciate the beauty that is the driftless area of southwest Wisconsin. He lives in Richland Center, Wisconsin with his wife, son, and his many fly rods.

Sideline: Elephants never forget that the Republican Party was founded in Ripon in 1854.



# A Sight You'll Never Forget

*Elephant Trunk Rock is a pretty area for visiting, picnicking.*

*By Mike McNair  
Richland County Field Editor*

I'VE DRIVEN past Elephant Trunk Rock scores of times during the 40 years I've lived in Richland County.

I've noticed that each spring, a tall tepee appears in the perfectly mowed grass alongside it. Tables for picnicking, and stumps for sitting and talking complete this idyllic, one-tepee village.

This unique limestone formation located alongside Highway 58, 2 miles north of Ithaca, has welcomed travelers to this unincorporated town for generations.

Recently, I had an overwhelming feeling the rock and tepee had a story to tell, so I called and introduced myself to landowners Norm and Marie Faber. I told them of my curiosity about this unusual landmark, and Norm said they'd be delighted to share what they knew. I met them in their home a few days later.

The couple has been married 66 years. Norm had bypass surgery 36 years ago, when that procedure wasn't nearly as common as it is now. The doctors gave Norm 5 years to live. Today, at age 91, he's not only long outlived their prediction, he's put that extra time to good use.

Norm and Marie bought three farms over the years that total around 800 acres. Elephant Trunk Rock is part of the second farm, a 240-acre parcel purchased in the late 1960s.

### **This Trunk Was Truncated**

Two major changes to the rock formation have taken place in the Fabers' lifetime. The trunk originally extended all the way to the ground. Then, in the 1930s, a car hit it and broke off the bottom section. The trunk hung above the ground until the county placed rock beneath it for support—rock that's still there to this day.

The second change came during highway reconstruction about 20 years ago. A pullover/parking area was added to allow passersby to stop and safely view the trunk.

Norm says the area around Elephant Trunk Rock was sacred to the Potawatomi. They performed ceremonies where the tepee now stands. After the white man came, the Indians met with them here to trade.

Many Native Americans traveled through the area when Norm was a boy.

**WIGWAM WONDERING.** Marie and Norm Faber of Richland Center were able to satisfy Mike McNair's curiosity about this tepee that he had driven past on numerous occasions.

Once, when Norm was around 5, several of them stopped by his parents' farm selling medicinal herbs. Norm's father boiled the herbs, then added goose grease to the mix—his own idea—to make it cling to skin better.

The mixture was purported to grow hair. In Norm's father's case, it didn't.

The Fabers know all about tepees because every spring, Norm and a few friends set this one up. It consists of 18 poles and \$800 worth of canvas. The structure is 16 feet tall and 16 feet in diameter at the base.

Norm and Marie make sure they have it up before Memorial Day, not only to start the summer season, but because every year a kindergarten class visits. The young children love playing in and around that tepee!

### **Peaceful, Tidy and Green**

I asked why the grass always looks so perfect. Turns out Norm mows it himself every week...not bad for a man past 90.

Norm and Marie would like you to know this tidy picnic area is open to everyone, free of charge. If you're passing by sometime, the Fabers invite you to stop and see Elephant Trunk Rock.

You can even picnic here and light up a grill—if you choose to bring one. Overnight stays are not allowed, and visitors are asked to pick up after themselves.

If you happen to be at the site when Norm drives by, he'll probably pull over and offer a friendly thanks for stopping.

At the end of my visit, I asked Norm a question that had been on my mind from the start of our conversation: "Why do you do all this work year after year?"

His answer came straight from the heart...one that has lasted decades longer than doctors thought it would: "It's our gift to society."





Please renew your membership annually by July 1<sup>st</sup> --- consider the following options:

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 for an individual / \$8 for a family
- \_\_\_\_\_ in addition to a membership consider a \$50 donation and receive Richland County History Book as well as having your name on a plaque of recognition at the Akey School Museum
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 100 for a LIFETIME individual and/or family membership



# HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

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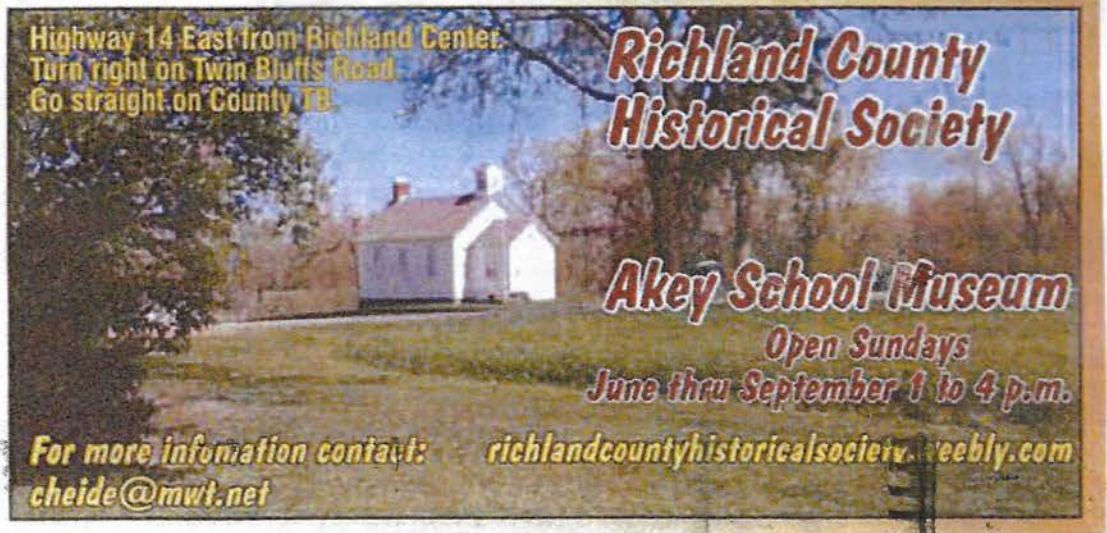
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