



# The AKEY BrAKEY News

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a tri-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

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January, 2020 Volume #12 – Issue # 1 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

## THE BOAZ MASTODON

By Jerry Bower

This account of the discovery of the Boaz Mastodon is primarily based upon information provided by Dawn Dosch Walton in September 1995 as the Dosch family prepared for the unveiling of the Boaz Mastodon historical marker, located on Highway 14, about seven miles west of Richland Center. Dawn is the great granddaughter of Harry Dosch, one of the “Dosch Boys” who discovered the bones in July 1897.

The John Dosch family lived along Highway 14, near where the marker is located. The family had moved to Richland County from Missouri just months before the discovery. The Dosch family had four boys-Chris, 17; Clyde, 15; Harry, 11; and Verne, 7.

In the spring of 1897, John put his two older sons, Chris and Clyde to work in the fields. Back then, plowing was done with horses and was very hard work. One day, according to Dosch family lore, Chris just left his horse and plow standing in the field and took off! He scooted to Missouri, where he had relatives. So, Chris was not involved in the discovery of the big bones.

The Spring of 1897 was very dry and farmers worried that their crops would fail. As is often the case, the drought was broken in early July with a series of ferocious thunderstorms. After an especially heavy downpour that flooded Elm Creek, John sent his three remaining sons-Clyde, Henry, and Verne-to check on a floodgate and on the fence. The boys discovered that the floodgate was gone and that a long section of the fence had been washed out, which could allow Dosch cattle to wander into a neighbor’s pasture. All of this the boys reported to their father.

What they didn’t report is that they had spotted a huge bone sticking out of Elm Creek’s bank in such a way that it created a waterfall. This is what had attracted their attention. Later, armed with shovels, the three boys returned to the creek and dug out the large bone. They continued to dig, uncovering bone after bone. They secretly carried the bones across the road and placed them in the damp, cool well house. How long they worked on their secret project before they were discovered is unknown.

The boys’ covert activity was eventually detected by the mailman. In those days, the mailman often drove his horse and buggy into the farm yard to deliver the mail and to pass on “news.” Some thought the news was often gossip. In any case, the Doschs’ mailman had noticed the boys hanging about the well house. His suspicions aroused, he finally confronted the boys and asked them what was going on.

They reluctantly took him to the well house and showed him their stash of bones. Now the mailman had some real news to pass on! The 15 July 1897 issue of the *Republican Observer* shared the discovery with its readers in an article, “A Rare Find-The Skeleton of a Mastodon Unearthed By The Storms.” Shortly, the *Richland Democrat* and the *Viola Intelligencer* ran articles about the Dosch boys’ discovery. The *Viola* paper made a common error when it entitled its report, “A Mammoth Skeleton.” A *Viola* reporter measured the circumference of a front knee joint at 39 inches.

The *Viola* report made a fairly common error by confusing the mammoth with the mastodon. The woolly mammoth preceded the mastodon in the evolution of these huge animals. Mammoths had sharp teeth that allowed them to graze vegetation very short, while the mastodon had blunt teeth that allowed them to browse shrubs and trees, in addition to other vegetation.

These newspaper articles were distributed by telegraph and were quickly repeated throughout the Midwest by many newspapers. Chris Dosch, the runaway son, read about his brothers in a St. Louis newspaper and came home. Unfortunately we do not know what reception Chris’s dad gave him!

Very soon, neighbors and curiosity seekers, armed with shovels and other tools, showed up to help with the excavation. Eventually they dug down eight feet, at which level they unearthed many more mastodon bones.

*Continued on Page 2*

Scientists also came to see what they could learn. They noted that storing the bones in the cool, moist well house had been the right decision for preserving the bones. The well house atmosphere mimicked the moist blue clay that had preserved the bones for thousands of years. Pieces of well-preserved wood were also found with the bones. These were later identified as a type of pine, consistent with the mastodon's preferred diet.

Over the next four years visitors streamed to the Dosch farm to view the bones and to hear the story. They tramped across Highway 14 to the bank of Elm Creek to look at the excavation. John Dosch grew increasingly annoyed at the interruption of the farm work. The well house hinges finally wore out and had to be replaced. So when, in 1901, newly inaugurated Governor Robert "Fighting Bob" LaFollette expressed an interest in purchasing the bones for the University of Wisconsin, John seized the opportunity. (In 1901 the UW was *only* in Madison.) For one hundred dollars, the Boaz Mastodon was soon on its way to Madison.

The State Historical Society's website relates a different story about the sale of the bones to the UW. The website states that Assemblyman Frank Burnham, from Richland Center arranged to have the state buy the bones for fifty dollars. So, which story is correct? I, personally, accept the account that Governor LaFollette engineered the purchase for two reasons. A Governor outranks a mere Assemblyman and one hundred dollars is twice fifty. Actually, my most significant reason for endorsing the LaFollette story is that it came directly from Harry Dosch, in an interview when he was in his late seventies.

Regardless of which account is correct, the result is the same. The Boaz Mastodon bones became the property of the UW Geology Department. There, they have been extensively studied. In 1915 two geology professors reconstructed the skeleton to create a display that can be visited at the Geology Museum. These professors determined that the Boaz Mastodon had been 9' 6" tall, about 15' in length, and weighed at least 8 tons.

Among the artifacts found with the bones were two silver mound quartz arrowheads that, for decades, remained unstudied. In 1962, UW-Platteville Geology Professor Harris Palmer intensely examined them. Palmer concluded that the arrowheads had been manufactured by "Paleo-Indians" who were contemporaries of the mastodons in the last ice age. After interviews with the Dosches and consultation with other scientists, Palmer decided that, "the Boaz Mastodon might have been hunted and killed by Paleo-Indians."

Harry Dosch, then eighty years old, was upset by Palmer's conclusion. Harry believed that the discovery of the arrowheads among the bones was purely a coincidence. Harry related that the field along Elm Creek was full of arrowheads and that they turned up dozens whenever they plowed. Harry's skepticism received support from other scientists, who noted that there was no evidence that the Boaz Mastodon had been hunted down by Paleo-Indians. If the Indians had killed the mastodon, there should have been butcher marks on the bones. And there were none.

However, the State Historical Society website states that, "Professor Palmer presented his evidence for critical review and that his work has stood the test of time." So, we are left with a mystery about the fate of the Boaz Mastodon-did it die a natural death or was it brought down by Paleo-Indians?

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*The Richland County Historical Society Board of Directors met in Mid-October 2019 with notable changes.*

***First** adding a third yearly issue as You are receiving this in January. We hope You enjoy this and future issues. **Second** adding interested businesses to our goal of "The promotion of the study and appreciation of local history".*

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

by *Nick Studnicka*

A Happy New Year 2020 and do enjoy the first ever January edition of AKEY BrAKEY NEWS -

*Now 3 issues per year*

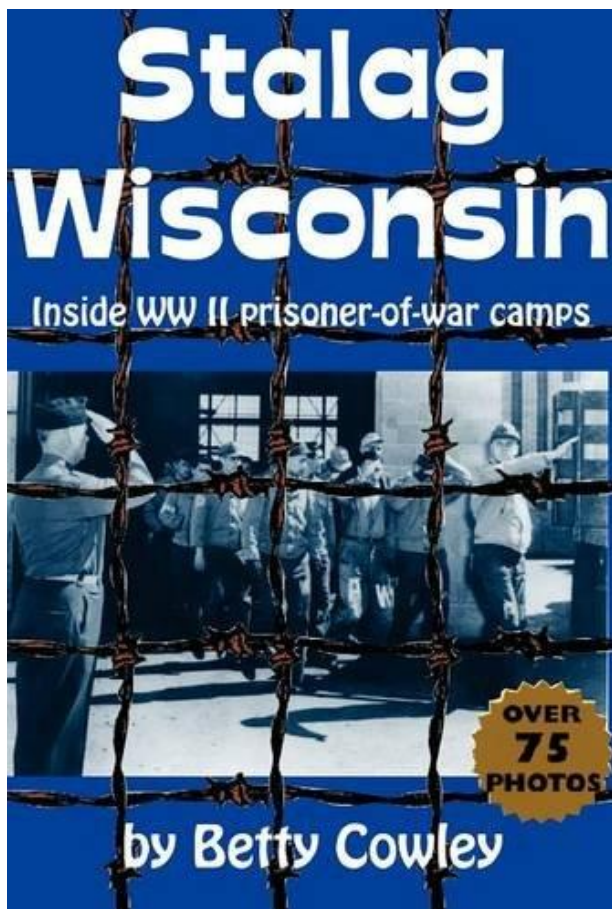
*The business memberships will be \$20 per year effective January 1st with multiple copies of each issue available upon request. Also memberships were modified effective June 1st to \$10 annually for both individual and family being the same. Lifetime Memberships remained at \$100. Your support of the Richland County Historical Society with donations is always appreciated*

**PLEASE - Come and Visit the Akey School this SUMMER**

**OPEN JUNE thru SEPTEMBER  
Located on Cty TB east of Richland Center between Gotham and Twin Bluffs**



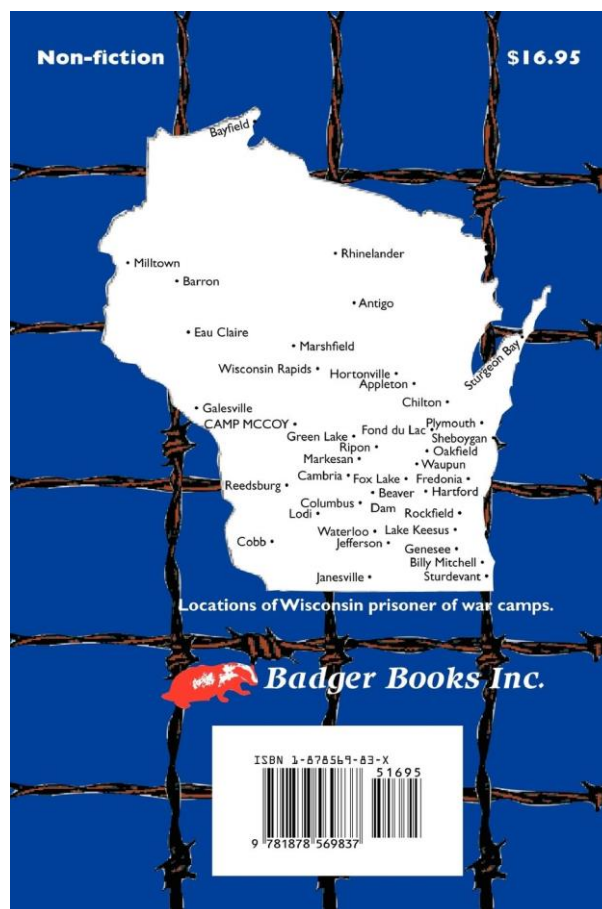
**Prison Camps in Wisconsin?** WW II it has now been 75 years ago yet one book tells these stories. In Iowa County it was known as Camp Cobb and Cobb canning factory utilized the resources available. Both Amazon and Barnes & Noble have the book; a website for an excerpt on Page 100 which details the brief history from 1945 [https://books.google.com/books?id=zD-kby0LiuEC&pg=PA85&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=zD-kby0LiuEC&pg=PA85&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false)



## Camp Cobb

**W**here is Cobb? For readers unfamiliar with this tiny community in the southwestern section of our state, Cobb is located four miles due west of Dodgeville. Or, as the crow flies, it is about fifteen miles due north of Belmont, our first state capital. Cobb is just a blink along Highway 18 today, not much larger than when the PW's came to town. Because the small community could not support a local newspaper or radio station, information about Camp Cobb is almost nonexistent.

During the war Cobb Canning Company was the largest business in the community. In cooperation with its neighboring Lancaster Canning Company and Mineral Point Cooperative Packers Company, the Cobb cannery contracted with the government for the use of PW labor. This group of canners requested 210 PW's to fill their labor shortages in the fields, at viner stations and in the canning factories.<sup>1</sup>

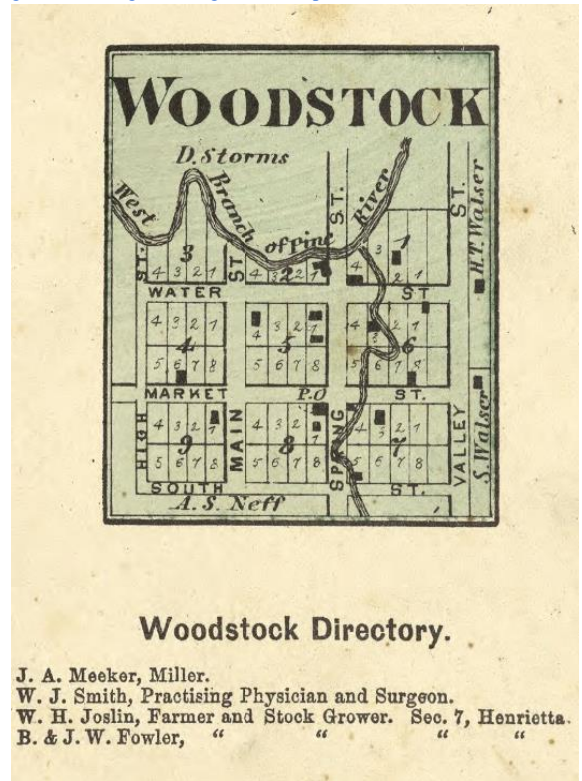


## 1945

The number of prisoners that arrived never filled the canners' request. After opening on June 23, 1945, only 75 to 176 PW's ever stayed at one time in the barracks at the rear of the Cobb Canning Company. But even with their limited numbers, by September 1, these men had already put in a total of 29,881 man hours of labor. That work earned \$35,376, much more than the cost of their keep for the U.S. government.<sup>2</sup> With ninety-three to ninety-eight PW's remaining at Cobb, their work continued through September as the prisoners put in an additional 8,354 hours of work at the Cobb Canning Co., 2,701 hours at the Mineral Point Cooperative and 1,563 hours at the Lancaster Canning Co.<sup>3</sup> With no other man power available, these prisoners saved much of the crop in the region and allowed the local canners to profit.

Check out our website for the past issues of the AKEY BraKEY News

➔ [www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com](http://www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com)



Woodstock Directory.

J. A. Meeker, Miller.  
 W. J. Smith, Practising Physician and Surgeon.  
 W. H. Joslin, Farmer and Stock Grower. Sec. 7, Henrietta.  
 B. & J. W. Fowler, " " " "

<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/488528/Cazenovia++Yuba++Hub+City++Woodstock/Richland+County+1895/Wisconsin/>

**WHERE in Richland County is WOODSTOCK located?**

*From the popular "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" there are locations in Richland County that many are not aware of and only some have heard of. This ongoing series will highlight some spots of interest while covering the History of Richland County.*

**\*\* ... the 50th festival in upstate New York did Not take place in 2019, yet we have our own location in Richland County north and west of Hub City in the SW corner of Henrietta Township - It's WOODSTOCK\*\***

**VILLAGE OF WOODSTOCK**

Source: *History of Crawford and Richmond Counties, Wisconsin, Illustrated, Chapter 25 (1881) transcribed by RuthAnne Wilke*

The village of Woodstock is located on the southwest quarter of section 31. It is pleasantly situated and is surrounded by an excellent country. The merchants are mostly young men who are enterprising, and the village bids fair to become a prominent rival for the larger portion of the trade of the northern part of Richland County. The village of Woodstock was laid out in 1855 by Quinton Nicks and Milton Satterlee. The surveyor was Joseph Irish.

The first merchant here was James Calloway, who opened a general merchandise store in 1855. Since that time a great many have been in trade here for a longer or shorter period. In 1883 there were four stores, kept by J. E. Mason, A. W. Travers, Samuel Ferguson and a joint stock company, of which A. S. Neff is president, and Ella Dickerson secretary. The first blacksmith shop in the village was started by Daniel Storms. He now runs a shop at Richland Center. There are now two blacksmith shops at Woodstock.

In 1864 L. B. Madden started a small tannery here for the purpose of tanning skins for the manufacture of gloves and mittens. In 1857 Chambers & Wilson, from Lacon, Ill., erected a wash and dry house for the purpose of drying ginseng. They brought bacon and flour from Chicago, which they traded for ginseng, getting it by the wagon loads, and for some time doing an extensive business. In the vicinity of Woodstock there is good material for making brick. H. N. Holbrook put up and burned the first kiln of brick. **Continued on Page 5**

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The post office was established at Siresville in 1854, under that name. Milton Satterlee was the first postmaster. In 1855 it was removed to the southwest quarter of section 31, and the name changed to Woodstock; Mr. Satterlee being re-appointed postmaster. At the present time Mrs. J. E. Mason is postmistress, her husband as deputy having charge of the office. Mail is received daily, the office being on the route from West Lima to Richland Center.

The Woodstock mills were built in 1857 by Stephenson & Calloway. The power was derived from the west branch of Pine River, a log dam being constructed. The mill stood upon the south bank of the stream. A Mulley saw was put in and common lumber was manufactured. In 1857 the firm erected a **grist mill**, near the saw mill, putting up a two story building 20x50 feet in size, and equipping it with one run of stone. The mill commenced operations in 1858. In 1859 John Mecker purchased Mr. Calloway's interest in the property. In 1864 Mr. Stephenson sold his interest to James Jones, who a short time afterward sold to Moses Mecker. In 1878 John A. Mecker purchased Moses' interest. At the present time the proprietors are Moses Mecker and his son R. D. Mecker. The saw-mill continued in operation until 1878. The old log dam was replaced by a frame one, which in turn has been superseded by a stone dam. Eight feet head of water is secured at this point, and it is never failing. The mill does custom work.

In 1869 Henry T. Walser erected a **grist-mill near Woodstock** on the west branch of Pine River. The building is two stories high, 25x36 feet in size. A dam of stone was built which furnishes six feet of head water. The mill does custom work. It contains two runs of stone, and all necessary machinery for the manufacture of first class flour.

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[http://genealogytrails.com/wis/richland/history\\_towns4.ht](http://genealogytrails.com/wis/richland/history_towns4.ht)

***I DIDN'T KNOW THAT ... What is GRIST -- grain that is ground to make flour  
 What then is a GRIST MILL you ask ??***



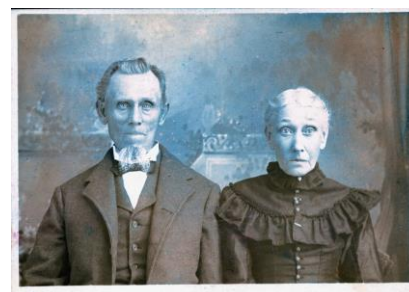
***A gristmill grinds cereal grain into flour and middlings. The term can refer to both the grinding mechanism and the building that holds it. Wikipedia***

To learn more there's a great website with information dating back to the time period of George Washington <https://www.mountvernon.org/the-estate-gardens/gristmill/> Pictured to the right is Hyde Mill near Ridgeway in SW WI [www.travelwisconsin.com/history-heritage/hydes-mill-301315](http://www.travelwisconsin.com/history-heritage/hydes-mill-301315)



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**Brewer Library - Celebrating  
 50 years in December of 2019**



<http://theusgenweb.org/wi/richland/photos/fickes.html>  
 Samuel Fickes and wife Mary M. Quick. Taken at J.M. Morrison Studio, Woodstock, Wisconsin.

Married 20 February 1870 Richland County, WI  
 Samuel died 25 March 1905. Buried in Woodstock Cemetery.  
 Son of Samuel Fickes and Esther Irwin.  
 Mary died 15 October 1902. Buried in Woodstock Cemetery.  
 Daughter of Nancy Elizabeth and John Quick.

## **“RE-SEARCHING” THE EARLY HISTORY OF RICHLAND COUNTY**

*This article concept was introduced in earlier editions to provide for ongoing information highlighting various topics of local interest.*

<http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/1906-8.htm> **Early Sawmills and Gristmills**

Following the most primitive manufactures came the production of woolen yarn and cloth, flouring and saw-mills, blacksmith shops and forges.

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The first water-power mills of the settlers were "corn crackers," supported by two large canoes anchored in some stream where the current was rapid. Between the boats was left a chute for the water in which the motor wheel hung and revolved. Primitive methods, such as have been described above, may not have been employed by the first settlers in the present limits of Richland County, but the older people will call to mind by the descriptions given the story of the hardships experienced in the earlier days of Wisconsin's history.

Water-power was, of course, chiefly depended upon for the early industries, wherever the same was obtainable, and as Richland County was well supplied in that particular, water-mills were very plentiful. The introduction of steam-power, however, added to the efficiency of the mills, and a great many of them have been run by steam.

The business of lumbering being a large one in the county, it will probably be of interest to say that the first sawmill erected in the county was built by Estes & Parish, in the fall of 1841, and was located at or near the site of the mills now known as Rodolf's, on Mill or Eagle Creek, in the town of Eagle.

The first **grist-mill** was built at Sextonville, in the years 1851-2, by Jacob Krouskop. Prior to this time the settlers had oft times to go fifty and seventy-five miles to the mill with the little grain they had to grind. John McKinney, however, before the erection of this mill, had a small mill driven by horse-power, in which he could grind a sort of corn meal. This might be called the first attempt at grinding in the county, but could hardly be termed a **grist mill**.

The first blacksmith shop in the county was started by Harden Moore, in the summer of 1841.

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In 1848 William Thompson erected a saw-mill on section 2, in the town of Orion. The power was derived from Ash creek, and the mill was equipped with an old fashioned "up and down saw." Machinery for grinding corn was soon added. It was a small affair, but was a great convenience to the settlers in those days. Caleb Morris, a resident of the town of Ithaca, once came to the mill to have some corn ground, and on, on his return, he told the neighbors that it was the "smartest" mill he had ever seen. He said that "as soon as it got through one kernel, it would go right to work on another." Mr. Thompson sold out in 1858 to Jacob Krouskop, who erected a carding-mill, and in 1864, Jacob Brimer purchased the property. The first blacksmith in the village of Orion was John Nipple, who opened a shop in 1844, Thomas Matthews furnishing him with a shop and the necessary tools. A few years later Nipple died and was succeeded by Thomas Palmer, who continued in business about two years, then sold out. About 1854 William Roush started a tin-shop. He remained in business until the war broke out, when he enlisted, and later settled in Iowa.

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The first steam saw-mill in the county was put up in the town of Rockbridge by J. J. Shumaker & co., in 1856, and was located on the northwest quarter of section 29. It had a number of saws and lathes, fence-pickets and lumber being manufactured. In 1857 Israel Janney purchased this mill, and sold it in 1863 to John Walworth, who two or three years later moved it to Richland Center, where it was afterward destroyed by fire. In 1854 a **grist-mill** was built by Alden Haseltine on the west side of the river near the natural bridge, the power being derived from the west branch of the Pine River. A dam was built at the mouth of the tunnel and a head of ten feet was thus obtained. It was furnished with one set of buhrs for grinding corn and cracking wheat. The people came to this mill for many miles around and it did a flourishing business. The first blacksmith at the village of Rockbridge was Abner Aiken, and his shop was built with poles, the anvil being placed upon a stump. He was engaged at work in the saw-mill and did not do much work in the shop.

The first saw-mill erected in the town of Richland is believed to have been erected by James Cass, in 1851, the outgrowth of which was Bowen's Mills, which for years has been one of the most important of Richland County's enterprises. ... In 1855 Ira S. Haseltine, who then owned the water-power, built a saw-mill at the point where the present mill now stands, and the same fall erected a mill to grind corn and feed and some **grist**, but it was a poor affair at best. He continued as proprietor of these mills until July, 1860, when the elder Parfrey rented them from him, together with the water-power, and ran them until 1863. A. C. Parfrey and J. C. Nichols purchased the property and rebuilt the **grist-mill** and also built a new saw-mill. In 1870, Parfrey and his partner, Pease, who had bought Nichols' interest, commenced the erection of a new dam and fine merchant and **grist-mill**, which became a very flourishing institution. The first steam-mill at Richland Center was that known as the Shumaker Mill, formerly located in the town of Rockbridge.

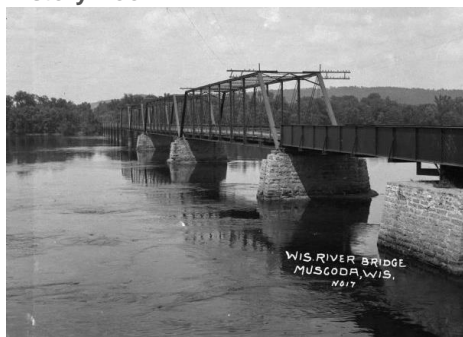
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The first wagonmaker in the village of Spring Valley, now Bloom City, was Reuben Selby, the first blacksmith was William McMillan, and the first shoemaker was W. H. Rist. The first blacksmith in the village of West Lima was H. D. Tillon, the first shoemaker was A. B. Rundecker, and the first mill was one run by steam power, which was erected by J. L. DeHart & Co. in 1878. The first **grist mill** in that section of the country was erected by James Sellers in October, 1855.

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Of the mercantile establishments of early days mention is made in the various township chapters.

The current bridge located between Richland County and Grant County crossing the Wisconsin River on Hwy 80 is the third such bridge to be located there and was built between what was the first bridge and then further west where the second bridge was located. Originally, there was a ferry crossing just east on the river on the banks from the now unincorporated village of Orion. The first bridge was a toll bridge with clearly one of the support islands still visible near the Grant County side. And the second bridge, which is pictured below, was opened in 1929 as one of the pictures indicates as a 'FREE' bridge. Pictures are from the Richland County Digital History Room



<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM93201> <https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/4699/rec/6>  
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM93200><https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/4702/rec/5>

