



The AKEY BrAKEY News

now a tri - annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

October, 2021 Volume #13 – Issue # 3 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

BOWEN’S MILLS

By Emeritus Professor Jerry Bower
March 2009

The story of Bowen’s Mills begins in Vermillion County, Illinois, where William Jennings Bowen was born on July 8, 1832. His brother and future partner, Frederick Phelps Bowen, was also born there, on April 5, 1835. The Bowen family moved the next year, 1836, when the Wisconsin Territory was created, to the village of Monroe, in Green County, Wisconsin. As is often the case, we do not have any details of William’s and Frederick’s childhood and education. But, judging from their later successes, we can conjecture that they received a basic education in the Monroe common schools. It is likely that their formal education ended with the eighth grade, as this was the usual experience of boys in that era.

Because his story is exciting and has been recorded by the family, we do know that William remained with his family until 1850, when the “gold bug” bit him. That spring William set off for California, where gold had been found in January 1849, by a New Jersey mechanic, who was working on the construction of a sawmill for John Sutter. This news traveled rapidly and triggered a stampede to California, whose population swelled by 100,000 by the end of 1849. William prospected, with some success, in California for about two years. Then he traveled to Australia, where he spent another year in pursuit of the precious metal. William interrupted his return voyage to devote four months to prospecting in Peru, where the Spanish had taken out huge amounts of gold. After about three years, in mid 1854, William returned to Monroe.

Upon his return, William and his fiancée, Mary Thorpe, finalized the plan for their wedding, which took place in December 1854. A patient woman, Mary had waited for William while he made his sojourn in the far-away gold fields. The couple would have three sons—John, Frank, and Edward, who died at five months. William and Mary decided to strike out on their own, a decision that brought William to Richland County in the early fall of 1854.

William was looking for a mill site, a quest in which he probably looked at both Richland City, on the Wisconsin River, and Richland Center, on the Pine River. But both of these settlements already had mills; Ira Haseltine had built a dam in Richland Center to power his lumber and flour mills. So, William moved upstream on the Pine to Florence, which had recently lost the contest to become the county seat to Richland Center.

James M. Cass and George Pound had hired a surveyor, in April 1851, to plat a village site, which they named Florence. Their “paper town” consisted of seven full block and one partial block. The Pine River flowed almost exactly through the center of their plat. Cass, who was a Canadian and a veteran miller, constructed a stone and brush dam to create a six-foot fall of water. Just below the dam, Cass and Pound built a sawmill. The mill was equipped with a “sash saw,” an “up and down saw” that wasted a lot of wood with a half-inch kerf. In 1853 Cass had become the sole owner, when Pound sold his share to him and left to seek his fortune elsewhere. In 1854 Florence was granted a post office, which was sure to draw customers to the little settlement.

Continued on Page 6

William Bowen obviously liked what he saw at Florence, because he bought the sawmill from Cass for \$3,100.00. After William paid Cass in gold, the story about his prospecting spread rapidly. In addition, William laid claim to 500 acres, which he bought from the government for \$1.25 per acre. Over the years William added to his farm until he owned 900 acres. William's brother, Frederick, or F. P., as he was commonly known as a partner in purchasing and operating the mill.

F. P. married Margaret Turner the following year, in 1855. When Margaret died in 1866, the couple remained childless. Two years later, Fred married Julia Busby Wait. Julia's story is outstanding. Julia Busby had been born in New York state in 1840. When she was nine, her family moved to Whitewater, Wisconsin. After her father's death, Julia returned to New York, where she married, at age 20, S. A. Wait. Julia's husband was involved in the cotton trade, an occupation that required the young couple to spend a great deal of time in the South. Indeed, the couple was trapped in the South when the Civil War erupted in April 1861. After a short time, Mr. Wait managed to slip north, where he joined the Union army. He was killed in one of the early battles in the conflict.

A few weeks later, in the wartime confusion, Julia was able to leave the South and to return to Whitewater. Eventually she came to Richland Center to care for her ill brother. Since Richland Center was a small, tight-knit community, Julia inevitably was introduced to F. P. Bowen. They began to see one another, the widower and the widowed, and they married July 12, 1868. This couple had four children-Charles, Alice, Wight, and Fred, Jr.

In 1855 the Bowen brothers removed the wasteful up and down sash saw and installed a more efficient rotary saw. Their rotary saw reportedly was the first in Richland County. Other sawmill operators, including Ira Haseltine, gradually followed the Bowens' initiative. At the same time the brothers added a corn grinding mill to their operation. The sawmill produced boards and wagon lumber. The wagon lumber was purchased by wagon shops in Lone Rock, Dodgeville, and Mineral Point, among others.

Three years later, F. P., who had begun pursuing other lines of business, sold his interest in the mill to William, who then was the sole proprietor. F. P. had opened a drug store in Richland Center, and had begun dealing in livestock. In 1863 Fred traded his drug store for Daniel Downs' tannery. It seems logical that F. P. made this deal because he was becoming more broadly involved in the livestock trade. He soon opened a meat market in Richland Center. This market was supplied with fresh meat from F. P.'s stock yard and slaughter house on the outskirts of Richland Center. Several Richland Center Business Directories list Frederick Bowen as a livestock dealer. He continued primarily in this trade until he died in October 1904. F. P. passed away quietly while taking a nap.

In 1869, the year after F. P. married Julia Busby Wait, the couple built a large brick home on the northeast corner of Church and First Streets. (Sometime after the house was built, First Street was moved one block north and the street became Union Street. Union Street was a common name in many communities following the conclusion of the Civil War.) Built in the Italianate Style of architecture, the home contained fourteen rooms, five chimneys, and four stairways. Because they wanted a modern house, none of the chimneys served a fireplace, instead a coal/wood space heater was attached to each one. One of the stairways, a steep, narrow one, led to the servants' quarters on the second floor. This stairway allowed the domestics to come and go without interfering with the family quarters. In 1900 the couple rebuilt the east wing, adding modern plumbing and built-in ice box, which meant the ice man could place ice in the box from a porch and not have to enter the kitchen. In 1908, after both F. P. and Julia had died, Grant Ross, who had married their daughter, Alice, added a two-story porch to the front of the house. Its two-story Ionic columns were reinforced with steel. The Bowen House was the first building listed on Richland Center's Local Register of Historic Places, in November 1998.

Julia Bowen was very active in community affairs. She was an active member of the Presbyterian Church, of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Woman's Club. In fact, Julia was elected the first president of the Woman's Club, which was organized at the home of Laura James (Mrs. David G. James) in June 1882. The Woman's Club, reportedly, was the first woman's suffrage club organized in Wisconsin.

The women had deliberately omitted the word, “suffrage,” from the name of their organization because they knew it would be like a lightning rod in attracting opposition. In 1898 the Woman’s Club was one of the founding members of the Richland Center Federation of Women’s Clubs.

In 1867, nine years after he had sold his interest in the sawmill to William, F. P. returned as a partner. That year the brothers built a large, 30’ X 40’, two-story flour mill. This mill was equipped with three run of stone and operated with water power, just like the sawmill. The Bowens hoped that their flour mill would attract more of the wheat and corn milling trade. Area farmers brought their grain and returned home with flour. Five years later, in 1872, Fred again sold his share to William. This transaction represents the permanent departure of F. P. from the operation of Bowen’s Mills.

In 1884 William and his son, Frank, built a cheese factory, bringing to three the total of the Bowen’s Mills. The cheese factory was built in recognition of the changing nature of agriculture. While wheat remained an important “money crop,” Farmers were finding that they could not survive on the income from wheat alone. Farmers on the Great Plains, particularly in Kansas and Nebraska, had lower costs and could outcompete the Midwestern farmers. Gradually Wisconsin farmers moved into dairying to increase their income. Because milk was quick to spoil in an era when immediate refrigeration was not available on every farm, cheese factories were built just a few miles apart to be able to process the milk before it spoiled.

William Jennings Bowen died September 22, 1903, age 78. His son, Frank, became the proprietor of Bowen’s Mills. Just the next month, a fire destroyed a skimming station that Frank owned. The loss was estimated at \$2,000.00, about half of which was covered by insurance. The skimming station, operated by S. A. Kepler and Son, skimmed the cream from the milk delivered to the Bowen Cheese Factory. The cream was then sold to creameries, which made it into butter.

Three years later, in 1906, the *Republican Observer* (15 April) reported that the Hillside Creamery was operating at Bowen’s Mills. The owners were Frank Bowen, J. C. Post, and W. H. DeVoe. In the previous nine months the creamery had processed just over a million pounds of milk, paying farmers an average of 86.5 cents per hundred weight.

In June 1943, Pearl Lincoln wrote an article, “One Grist Mill Left in Richland County Out of Twenty-four,” for the local press. The one survivor was the Bowen Mill that had been built in 1867. Frank Bowen had, by 1943, been succeeded by one of his sons, William Jennings, as the operator of the mill.

SOURCES:

History of Richland and Crawford Counties, Wisconsin, 1884. Pp. 1188-89.

Republican Observer, “Florence, Once a Village, Too, You Know as Bowen’s Mill,” 16 February, 1939.

Richland County History Room. MSS 110, 145, & 2104.

Scott, Margaret. *Richland Center, Wisconsin, A History*, 1972. Pp. 17, 28, 30, 33, 36, 37, 86, 96, & 99.

The partially collapsed ruins of the historic Bowens Mill is the last remnant of the former town of Florence. Constructed in 1867 this saw mill also provided flour to area residents. Some of the original milling equipment and machinery remains in the ruins but the majority of the building has collapsed. William J. Bowen purchased the mill with gold along the Pine River.



A Warm WELCOME to those with NEW Memberships to the RICHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY for the fall of 2021

*Sheila Troxel & family
*Wallace Cooper & Elliott Insurance
Danny Miles
Mark Schwichtenberg
Keith & Dottie Behling
Dawn Dahms - The Avoca Guest House #
Chuck Paulson - Pro Market Enterprises
*Harry & Michelle Dugan
*Craig & Judy Rasmussen
* Darlo & Barb Wentz
* March Schweitzer
Dick Pantalone
David Eagan
Linda Gentes
Marilyn Hatfield
Alice Meyer #
Shaun Murphy-Lopez
Larry & Jeanette Arneson #
Judy Barnicle #

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Bob & Jan Hirschy #
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*Jo Don Anderson #
*Renee Gabrielse
*Euince Hardy
*Dion Kempthorne
*Angela Larse #
*Nancy & Francis McCauley
*Evertt & Lori Newberry
*Russ & Barb Shannon
*Victor Vlasak
*Ahron Zorea
Van & Marie Nelson #
Joan Otto #
* a Lifetime membership # additional donation
Also a sincere THANK YOU to all those that continue to RE - new their memberships and those that have maintained their LIFETIME memberships.

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"A DAY TRIPPER"

Travel in and around Richland County exploring the history of our area !

<http://www.wisconsinmounds.com/SchaeferMound.html>



According to the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway map, Schaefer Bird Effigy is the only mound left of the Schaefer Group. The mound is in perfect condition, one of the few mounds in the state preserved the way they deserve. To find it, go west from the intersection of Highways 60 and 80 north of Muscoda less than a mile, cross Mill Creek bridge and turn left and park on Effigy Mound Lane. Follow signs to the mound.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by *Ken Thiede*

Closing out now this fall of 2021 with what was a busy summer at the Akey School Museum. We look FORWARD to the upcoming year. We have a project in the works with the support of the Richland County Parks Board to create an outdoor agricultural exhibit adjacent to the museum building. We enthusiastically continue to publish three issues a year with the newsletter and have the insert as an excellent addition to the newsletter. Painting the exterior of the museum building will take place in the spring and new signage is being planned.

Consider the option of a holiday gift to family and/or friends with the green slip included in this issue. Five issues for the price of three and a 2022 membership would also enhance our efforts to increase membership.

I want to take this time to Thank the Board for their work and efforts to promote the history of Richland County which is our mission. A sincere THANKX to Nick Studnicka, Paul Wiertzema, Jay Mueller, Rob Bender, Jerry Bower and Barb Pauls.

Historical Sites in Richland County

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Richland_County,_Wisconsin

<u>Cunningham Lane Bridge</u>	July 5, 1996	Hansberry Lane, near Fancy Creek	Pratt full-slope pony truss bridge across the Pine River, built by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company in 1895. One of the earliest remaining Pratt truss bridges in the state
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Richland County Area Authors

The AKEY BrAKEY News is always looking for new books from and about the Richland County region.

<p>Recipe Collection Ginny Moore</p>	<p>Our chickens lay Moore eggs™</p> <p>Hi Friends! The Moore Eggs Recipe Collection cookbook is available ! It has been a true labor of love. Thanks to all who have been cheering me on throughout the project.</p> <p>The Cookbooks are available for \$39 at Court and Main in downtown Richland Center, and Oakwood Fruit Farms, Oakwood is hosting a book signing on Saturday September 18th, beginning at 9:00 AM. Hope to see you there!</p>	<p>Moore Eggs Recipe Collection Cookbook</p> <p>Can't get to Court and Main or Oakwood Fruit Farms? Contact me at mooreeggs@gmail.com for delivery/shipping options. I would love to share this 203 glossy page book filled with 100 recipes – each with a color photo, family stories, and lots of love!</p>
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****Check out our website for the past issues of the AKEY BrAKEY News ****

→ www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com



Highlighted in previous issues of the AKEY BrAKEY News are famous people from from Richland Center. One of those listed certainly may not be familiar to most yet certainly is famous. READ on ...

Deborah Polaski (born May 26, 1949, in [Richland Center, Wisconsin](#)) is an American [opera](#) and [concert](#) singer ([soprano](#)). She has specialized in [dramatic soprano](#) roles and also sings [mezzo-soprano](#) roles occasionally. [From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

American-born, Berlin-based soprano **Deborah Polaski** is best known for her work in operas by **Wagner** and **Richard Strauss**. Her **Wagner** is extensive: she has sung Senta (The Flying Dutchman), Ortrud (Lohengrin), Isolde, Brünnhilde (Der Ring des Nibelungen), and Kundry (Parsifal). Her roles in **Strauss** have included Elektra and Ariadne. But her repertory is hardly limited to music by just these two: she has gone as far afield as **Janáček** (**Kostelnicka Buryjovka** in Jenufa) and **Berg** (Marie in Wozzeck). She has also sung roles in **Beethoven's** Fidelio, **Berlioz's** Les Troyens, and **Wolf-Ferrari's** Sly. **Polaski** has appeared at the Bayreuth Festival on countless occasions: she has sung Brünnhilde in Die Walküre there more times than any other soprano since 1914. While **Polaski** has appeared at major operatic venues in the U.S., including the **Met** and **Chicago Lyric Opera**, she has spent most of her career on European stages: Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, Deutsche Oper Berlin, **Wiener Staatsoper**, Covent Garden, and she has appeared in concert in Rome, Paris, Zurich, Tokyo, Sydney, and other major cities. **Polaski** has appeared on numerous recordings, many of them available from Kultur Video, Opus Arte, Oehms, and Arthaus Musik.

As a child she regularly sang in the church where her Protestant minister father was pastor. She studied music at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (1972-1975) with Lucille Evans. **Polaski** had further studies at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria, with the renowned **George London** and Irma Cooper.

Polaski debuted in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1984 as Elektra, a role she would go on to sing more than 180 times in her career. Later that same year she sang her first Isolde, in Freiburg. In 1988 she sang Brünnhilde at Bayreuth, beginning her run of 20-plus complete Ring opera appearances there. In 1992 **Polaski** debuted at the Met as Kundry and made numerous subsequent appearances there, including as Elektra (2002). She made a highly successful tour with the **Met** in 2006, singing Brünnhilde (Die Walküre) in Tokyo.

In the 2008-2009 season **Polaski** sang Elektra in a semi-staged performance with the **New York Philharmonic Orchestra**, under Maazel, and portrayed Isolde at the **Berlin Staatsoper** and made concert appearances in Berlin and Lisbon. Among **Polaski's** later recordings is her 2009 Oehms four-CD set of **Wagner's** Die Walküre, on which she sings Brünnhilde.

<https://www.cardcow.com/551870/muscoda-wisconsin-riverview-gardens-route-60/>



FORTY YEARS AGO-1979

River's Edge, a tavern and dance hall on Highway 60 east of Muscoda, burned to the ground early Monday, New Year's Day. The place was built in 1926 and had been a landmark on the Wisconsin River for more than 50 years. The owner, Larry Meyer, said he did not know how the fire had started as there was apparently nobody on the premises at the time. He said he was notified about the blaze by a telephone call from the Muscoda Fire Dept. at 5:30 a.m. after passersby saw the flames...

In the April Issue the Keegan Mills Fire was covered and this past month the 150th Anniversary of the Peshtigo Fire in Oct. of 1871 took place. Now 42 Years ago another fire dating to New Years Eve 1979 took place at the popular Rivers Edge along Hwy 60 between Gotham and the Jct of Hwys 60 & 80. It was formerly known as the Riverview Gardens having gone through several transitions over the years.

There are TWO communities of notoriety located in the northern border extremes of Richland County. **Viola** to the northwest also extends into Vernon and **Cazenovia** to the northeast extending into Sauk.

The Village of Viola *Source: History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin Illustrated (1881) Transcribed by: Richard Ramos*

The village of Viola was laid out in the summer of 1855, by Cyrus D. Turner and his brother Hartwell. The name was suggested by H. L. Turner, in honor of Viola Buck, who had been the teacher of the Turner boys in New York State.

The Viola post office was established in 1858, with Cyrus D. Turner as postmaster. He was succeeded by G. H. Tate, and then came W. J. Waggoner, the present postmaster. There are mail routes from here to Norwalk, Richland Center, Readstown and Viroqua. Those to Richland Center and Viroqua and Readstown are weekly.

The first sermon was preached by Rev. Jacob Neher at the residence of Cyrus D. Turner in 1855.

The Methodist Episcopal Church of Viola, was organized in 1856, by Rev. James S. Lake, in the school house. Services were held in the school house until 1876, when the society erected a church building 26x36 feet in size, at a cost of \$600. The Church now has a membership of about forty. The officers of the Church in 1883 were Pastor, Rev. Wooley; trustees, Dr. R. H. DeLap, R. A. Tubbs and Joseph Goyer.

http://genealogytrails.com/wis/richland/history_towns4.htm#viola

In the spring of 1883 a cheese factory was established at Viola by Peter Young, furnished with all the necessary apparatus for producing a first class article. The enterprise has been very success-ful. The productions are marketed mostly at Viroqua and LaCrosse

A post of the Grand Army of the Republic was instituted at Viola, May 23, 1883.. The post was named in honor of one of Richland county's gallant soldiers who was killed in battle, Capt. J. J. Turner, of company H, 5th Wisconsin Infantry regiment, who fell while leading his men at the storming of Mary's Heights, at the battle of Fredericksburg, May 3, 1883.

CAZENOVIA VILLAGE *Source: History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin, Illustrated (1881); transcribed by Vicki Bryan*

The land upon which the village of Cazenovia is now located was entered in 1848 by Allen Perkins. The village was surveyed in February, 1855, by Solon Rushmore, for Mr. Perkins. The first frame house upon the site was erected by Samuel Colby, in 1854. The first log house was erected by the Lincoln brothers the same year. In this building they opened the first store in the village. They remained in trade but a few years.

The Cazenovia post office was established in 1856, with Cyrus Stowe as postmaster. He kept the office at his house. It was a special office, and the mail carrier was paid by subscription from the citizens. Mail was received once a week from Sextonville, and later from Ironton. In 1883 mail was received three times each week from Richland Center and daily from La Valle. Allen Tinker succeeded Mr. Stowe as postmaster..

Religious meetings were held at the house of N. R. Kline as early as 1856. Rev. Wood, a Wesleyan Methodist, was the first minister, but he did not organize.

The first Methodist Episcopal preacher was Rev. Augustus Hall, who, in 1857, preached at Lincoln's store. He organized a class there with twenty-six members. In 1857 a Wesleyan Methodist class was organized, at Lincoln's store, by the Rev. Mr. Wood.

Duren's Mill. In 1868 William Duren erected a saw-mill on the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of section 14, on the Little Baraboo river. The mill is equipped with an up and down saw, a circular saw for cutting off, a rib saw and a felly saw, making three circular saws and a band saw. A turning lathe was also put in. The mill manufactures stock for wagons, sleighs, harrows, etc. A dirt and stone dam was thrown across the river, giving eight feet fall of water. Upon the completion of the saw-mill, Mr. Duren put in one run of stone for grinding feed.
<http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/chap33.htm>



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This is the fourth installment of an insert page for the AKEY BrAKEY newsletter with a Special Thanks for this October issue to Rob Bender and Tammy Cannoy-Bender who have provided the story about the Pegasus as well as previously to Craig & Cindy Chicker. Terry & Kate Moen and Ed Lee who provided materials for our past insert pages.

We are seeking more materials for future inserts. If You have pictures and/or stories that You'd be willing to share Please do get in touch with RCHS President Ken Thiede or mail contact information to:

213 S. Central AVE Apt.#1
Richland Center, WI 53581
% Richland County Historical Society

We would welcome pictures and stories which would be great; even better letters or memorabilia that provide a historical look into our past.

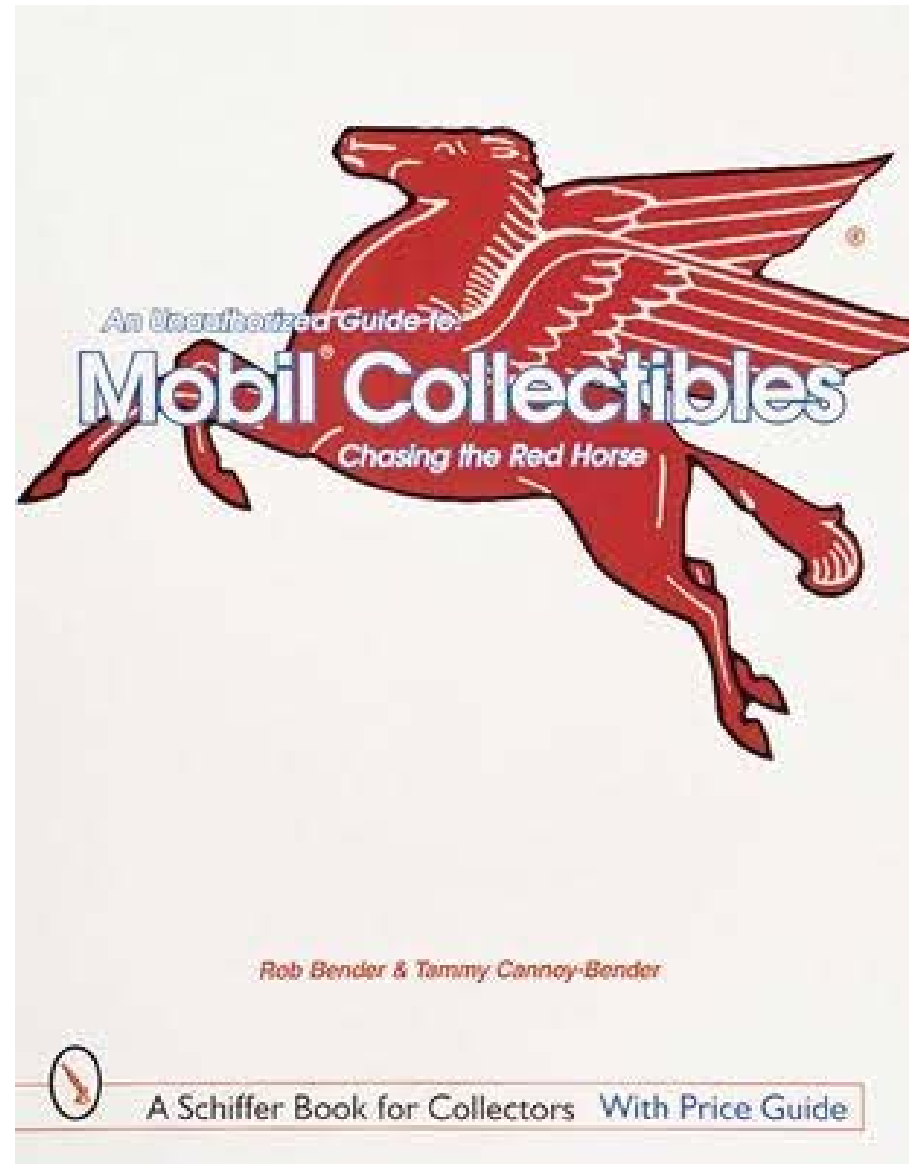
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Originally published: 1999

Authors: Rob Bender, Tammy Cannoy-Bender

Overview

Today's Mobil Oil Company is made up of several oil companies that were bought or absorbed over the years. This book shows a little history of Mobil as it evolved to include names like White Eagle, Vacuum Oil, Socony, General Petroleum, Magnolia, Lubrite, Wadhams, Gilmore and White Star. Here is a diverse assortment of Mobil products of both yesterday and today, including cans, signs, automotive care, toys, and other promotional items, all in color photography and with current price information. Collecting petroleum memorabilia is an ever-growing hobby enjoyed by many people of different lifestyles. Whether you collect Mobil or all oil brands, this book is for anyone who can't stop chasing the red horse! <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/>



Board Member Rob Bender and wife Tammy Cannoy-Bender share this from what was over two decades ago being published along with the family connections to the story of how this book came about.

ISBN 0-7643-0782-7

The book is dedicated to Clinton Borton who is Rob's step-grandfather who at the age of 16 started selling and delivering Mobil oil products. He did this, taking time out only for World War II, until he passed away in 1970. He is the reason for the obsession of Rob & Tammy with the collecting of Mobil petrolania.



On the inside cover of the book **About the Authors** in paraphrasing what is printed there -- it was in the early 1990's about 8 years before the book that they started collecting with one shelf and a few framed ads.

It was Rob's grandmother who started buying a few items to decorate Rob's father Bob Bender's Mobil gas station.

(JKS -- Junction Kwik Stop was previously located where the current Kwik Trip East station is located on Highway 14 next to Walmart and across from Dairy Queen on the east side of Richland Center).



Soon the whole family was watching for and buying Mobil.

Tammy and Rob have taken over the collection so now it has turned into a large portion of their garage

The Table of Contents includes:

- I. Cans
- II. Lube and Grease Cans
- III. Signs, Racks and Dispensers
- IV. Automotive Repairs and Care
- V. Household
- VI. Giveaways and Miscellaneous
- VII. Toys
- VIII. Paper
- IX. Collections



A Brief History is provided on Page 5 of the book. The last five sentences of that history include:

"In 1966 a new name, Mobil Oil Corporation, was approved by stockholders. The word 'Mobil' with its red 'o' now became the key symbol on the service stations' signs. The Pegasus, which had been the symbol for over 35 years, moved to the sides of the buildings. Since this change Mobil has kept growing and changing with the times. Maybe in 30 to 50 years the signs and products of today's Mobil will be as collected and valuable as the signs from Mobil 30 to 50 years ago"

