



The AKEY BrAKEY News

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

April, 2021 Volume #13 – Issue # 2 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

NOTE that this is a series of articles which began in April 2019 and will be continued in future issues as well.

KEEGAN BROTHERS' HOMES LISTED -- 565 North CENTRAL AVENUE

By Jerry Bower

The Richland Center Historic Preservation Commission recently voted unanimously to add the Jim Keegan home, located at 565 North Central Avenue, to the Local Register of Historic Places. This Bungalow/Craftsman style home, now owned by Jim and Robin Nelson, was built in 1932. The sole major alteration has been the enclosure of a screened sleeping porch at the rear of the house to create an additional second floor bedroom. An interesting side note is that the home of Jim Keegan's brother, Leo, at 480 North Central Avenue, was listed on the Register in 2002. Jim Keegan's home is the eighteenth building to be listed on the Local Register. Both Keegan homes qualified for the Local Register due to the historical significance of Keegan Brothers in the business community.

The patriarch of the Richland County Keegans was John Keegan (1831-1894), who emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1849, during the Potato Famine. John worked in railroad construction in New York state, an occupation that gradually drew him westward. John married Margaret McGee in Rockford, Illinois, in 1855. He continued to work on the railroads until 1867, when he and Margaret and their two children moved to Bear Valley. The Keegans came to Lone Rock by train and then used horses and a wagon to complete the journey to their farm. In addition to farming, John became known as a talented blacksmith, a skill he had acquired while employed by the railroads.

William Keegan (1860-1910), the son of John and Margaret, married Delia McCarville (1867-1932) in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Keysville in 1886. The couple had eight children, five sons and three daughters. The boys included James (1890-1954) and William Leo (1892-1957), who became the owners of the Keegan Brothers Mills in Richland Center.

Jim moved from Bear Valley to Richland Center in September 1918, when he purchased a major share in a feed mill on Court Street from Edward Wiley. Jim's partner for three years was Oscar Monson. In 1921 Jim bought out Monson, who moved to Florida and subsequently lost his money when the Florida real estate bubble burst. Soon Leo joined his brother and the business became Keegan Brothers. Leo had previously operated a cheese factory in Ithaca.

In addition to helping in the feed mill, Leo began selling dairy equipment to area farmers. As a result, when International Harvester sought an agent for Richland County, it chose Leo Keegan. In 1930 Leo built Keegan Implement (currently the Grand Rental Station) directly across Court Street from the mill.

In 1947 the Keegan brothers bought the Farm Service Mill, located one block west on Court Street, to expand their operation. Just about a year later, in March 1948, a fire completely destroyed the original mill. It was quickly rebuilt and Keegan Brothers continued to serve area farmers.

Both Jim and Leo died in the 1950s. Jim died in August 1954 and Leo in April 1957. Their children and nephews took over operation of both the feed mills and the implement business. There can be no doubt that the "Keegans from Bear Valley" had made a great contribution to the development of Richland Center's business community.

[end]

A Friendly reminder to RE - NEW your Memberships to the RICHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY for the July 1, 2021 thru June 30, 2022. Please find a renewal slip in this newsletter and as Always PLEASE Pass this newsletter on to a Friend who might be interested in becoming a member.

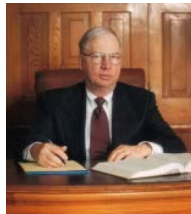
additional donations from 2020

#Derek Kalish & Jason Coy and #Leif & Marcia Carlson

A sincere THANK YOU to All those that have a LIFETIME membership.

Certainly your ongoing donations are also so very much appreciated !

In Memoriam ... The Honorable Kent C. Houck, retired Richland County Circuit Court Judge, age 85 of Richland Center, died on Friday, April 9, 2021.



Notably for the Richland County Historical Society he was chair of the Bi-Centennial Committee in Richland County which brought about the Akey School Museum.

He clearly had a passion for history and invited Society members to view his personal collection

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by *Ken Thiede*

The RCHS Board of Directors meet bi-annually commonly in April and October. As this newsletter is being run the first week in May we met May 1st. Several projects are in the works with updates coming in October.

We are pleased to again be open for the summer so do stop by the Akey School Museum for a visit. We continue to optimistically promote membership and as our mission to promote the history of Richland County.

This newsletter, now in our thirteenth year, is one of our main avenues along with the Akey School. We are looking for materials to continue the insert portion of the newsletter. If You have history to share we would enjoy hearing from You! Please get in contact.

Again, Thank You All for your ongoing support.

From the Richland County History Room --- a picture of the Lowery School in 1961. Ms. Elda Fry would go on to become the Elementary Coordinator for the Richland School District.



Richland County History Room, 325 N Central Ave, Richland Center, WI 53581, richlandhistory@gmail.com, (608) 647-6033

<https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/5463/>

PLEASE - Come and Visit the Akey School

this SUMMER

OPEN JUNE thru SEPTEMBER from 1 to 4 pm.



Located on Cty TB east of Richland Center between Gotham and Twin Bluffs

Directions to the AKEY SCHOOL MUSEUM -- it is located east from Richland Center off Hwy 14 about 4 miles south on County TB or from Gotham on Hwy 60 west 1 mile & north on County TB 4 miles.

Board member and our Webmaster Barb Cody was helping a group from La Crosse with their Zoom meeting recently. Their program was on the history of some of the people of color from La Crosse. A group that settled in Hillsboro (the Shivers) is a part of Vernon County history. There are some good videos [Enduring Families Project - YouTube](#) which is part of a project from the La Crosse Historical Society. For more information go to: <https://www.lchshistory.org/enduringfamiliesproject>



“A DAY TRIPPER” --- Travel in and around Richland County exploring the history of our area !

The following information was excerpted from <http://statestrunktour.com/routes/80-2/>



80 “Hub City to the Point of Beginning”

Quickie Summary: State “Trunk” Highway 80 starts (or ends, depending on how you look at it) at the “Point of Beginning”. Cosmic as that sounds, it’s really just the “zero point” from which the state of Wisconsin’s and is surveyed – although that’s pretty significant in itself. Its other terminus is just south of Marshfield, where it heads south just past the state’s geographic center in Pittsville – which it also runs through. Highway 80 cuts through numerous small towns, negotiates the Driftless Area, hits Platteville as it cruises by the World’s Largest “M”, and heads down to the aforementioned Point of Beginning along the Wisconsin-Illinois state line. We’ll follow it southward here from Marshfield to Illinois.

Wisconsin Highway 80 Road Trip {the following excerpts include from north to south of Richland County }

Hillsboro is home to [Hillsboro Brewing Company](#), (608-489-7486), which launched in 2012. Home to notable craft brews like Joe’s Beer and the Leaping Lemur Cream Ale, Hillsboro offers cans and taps at their downtown pub location right at the main corner downtown. It’s a great old building that served as a shoe store and a slew of other businesses dating back to the 19th century, the last time Hillsboro had their own (legal) brewery. Due to growing demand, Hillsboro Brewing built a new facility called the 2E Brewery on the outskirts of town in fall 2018. Their newer brewery adds capacity and event space while keeping up with their growth. In Hillsboro, Highways 82 and 33 split off to the west, while Highway 80 turns south again into Richland County.



The Amish population is significant around Hillsboro along this stretch of Highway 80.

The next twenty-five miles take you through some of Wisconsin’s most beautiful territory, along ridges and valleys, Beaver Creek and the Pine River. At Rockbridge, the Pier Natural Bridge Park features the Pine River running under a rock wall (hence, the “natural bridge” park part) and makes for a pleasant stop.

Next up is [Richland Center](#) (pop 5,114), which spans the Pine River. The pedestrian footbridge over the Pine, started in 1912 and rebuilt in 1951, is worth a walk to stretch your legs. As Wisconsin’s designed Purple Heart City, Richland Center features a nice variety of historic buildings and Flag Park, which is just like it sounds. Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center in 1867; one of his designs resides is the A.D. German Warehouse constructed in 1921, at 300 S. Church Street, two blocks east of Highway 80.

Oh, and ever heard of GTE? You know, the massive telecommunications company? It traces its beginning to Richland Center. It started as the Richland Center Telephone Company back in 1918, became Commonwealth Telephone in 1920 and – after an ambitious acquisition program – General Telephone Company in 1935, as it grew from just a few thousand subscribers over half a million. By 1969, it had become General Telephone & Electronics Corporation (GTE), acquired Sylvania Electric, and was the largest independent telephone company in the U.S., though it had long moved its headquarters. In 2000, it became part of Verizon where its remains remain to this day. There’s a marker about this; you’ll find it along U.S. 14 on the west side of Richland Center near W. 6th Street. More of Richland Center can be discovered at the [Richland County Visitor Center](#), located in a former 1909 train depot along U.S. 14, just a few blocks west of Highway 80. It includes information on the suffrage history of Richland Center – a legacy that includes a visit from Susan B. Anthony in 1886 and activity from local suffragist Ada James, who also has an historic marker in her name along U.S. 14 on the west side, not far from the Visitor Center. Meanwhile, Highway 80 crosses U.S. Highway 14 in Richland Center and from there it twists and turns toward [Highway 60](#) before crossing the Wisconsin River.

Over the river, ... you enter [Muscodia](#) (pop. 1,408), the “Morel Mushroom Capital of Wisconsin.” In fact, Muscodia hosts the Annual [Morel Mushroom Festival](#) in May, complete with a mushroom contest (biggest, smallest, most unique, most in cluster, things like that.) The town’s name is pronounced “MUS-co-day” and its meaning is derived from an Ojibwa term for “prairie” or “prairie flowers” – but it’s the morels that give Muscodia the most distinction. Once known as English Prairie, Muscodia is bisected by Highway 80 before the road joins [Highway 133](#) and heads east into Iowa County.



They look like sponges from the sea, but morels are tasty mushrooms that top chefs consider a prime delicacy.



The Old Keegan Brothers Mill in 1928. Mill workers left to right: Unknown, Mr. and Mrs. Grover Miller, Avolt Bethke, Oscar Craig, Jim Keegan and Fred Jones. All photos Richland County History Room unless noted otherwise.

**KEEGAN MILLS OFFER YOU
NEW HELP IN PRODUCING
MILK FOR PROFIT**

**And Now Is The Time To Think
About Dairy Feed You'll Be Needing**

Chances are that you do not need any dairy feed at this time — but you will soon, and our service is offered you.

We can mix you a dairy feed from your own grains with the proper protein and fat to balance your roughage or, if we furnish the grain, at the present time . . .

We Can Make a Dairy Feed Priced Below the \$3 Mark
Making use of Shelled Corn and Oats.

For a Top Dairy Feed Try . . .

KEEGAN'S HOME DAIRY

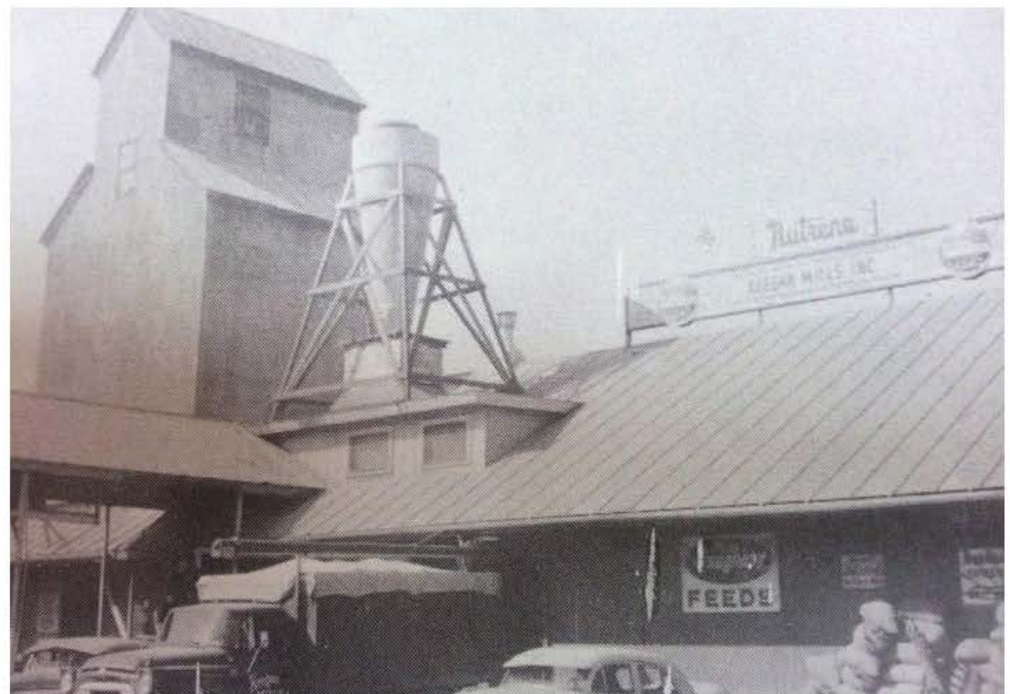
If you desire the very best results. It produces the milk and keeps your dairy herd in condition through the winter months that are ahead of us. Farm roughages play an important part in making up an economical dairy ration. Come in and let us figure the best ration for your herd.

EXTRA DISCOUNT

For Early Orders
For Pastures
2% Extra Discount
If Purchased
Before December 15, 1934

KEEGAN MILLS

The former Farm Service Mill located at 395 West Court Street purchased by Keegan Bros. in 1947. In March of 1974, a fire in the tower of the Keegan Mills elevator building on Orange Street (395 West Court) threatened the entire building and its contents until it was brought under control by the Richland Center Volunteer Fire Department. Because of the height of the tower, the fire department had a difficult time fighting the source of the flames. Jim Keegan said an elevator motor was the likely source of the fire which destroyed the elevator legs and two floors of the elevator. Damages were estimated in the \$20,000 range. This building is no longer extant.



The former Farm Service Mill located at 395 West Court Street purchased by Keegan Bros. in 1947.



Above: The rebuilt upper mill at 279 West Court Street. Below right: The Good Friday fire of March 25, 1948.

The Keegan Mills building at 279 West Court Street is one of just a very few remnants of original manufacturing sites located in the old Pine River/Orange Street Commercial District in R. C.



Advertising from The Richland Democrat archive.

1948 fire pictured at right with major damage →

The 1974 fire pictured below



A spectacular fire, that had the official stamp of spontaneous combustion, broke out on Good Friday March 25, 1948, and caused damages estimated at about \$115,000. Fortunately for Keegan Bros. and their many patrons, the facilities of the firm included another modern grain elevator and feed grinding operation, the Farm Service Mill, at 395 West Court Street purchased in 1947, one block west of the main building that was destroyed. James Keegan, president of the firm, stated a new mill would be built to replace the one destroyed by the fire



<https://ci.richland-center.wi.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Keegan-Mills.pdf>

<https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/5484/rec/2>

<https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/7376/rec/>



This is a picture of the crew that sorted tobacco at the Lord and McGriffin warehouse in Richland Center years ago. The photo was loaned to us by Louis Blanker, route 2 in Hookbridge township. The person in the light hat standing in the doorway is Mr. McGriffin and no doubt he is talking to Mr. Lord. The crew is not identified though the person on the left with his hands in his pockets looks like Rube Tredren and Mart Dillon is in the photo directly behind the box in front of the doorway. Note the hairdos on the ladies and the long coats and aprons they wear. The warehouse was located at 279 W. Court street, now housing the Keegan Mills Feed store and at one time was the Brimmer Woolen Mills.



Richland County History Room, 325 N Central Ave, Richland Center, WI 53581, richlandhistory@gmail.com, (608) 647-6033

Waiting to get into Keegan Brothers Farm Implements on Dairy Day, 278 West Court Street, Richland Center, Wisconsin, 1950 pictured at right and above a crew that sorted tobacco at the Lord and McGriffin Warehouse then located at 278 West Court St.

A. D. German Warehouse will be open for tours during the summer of 2021



The A.D. German Warehouse Conservancy is pleased to announce that restorations to the AD German Warehouse will continue as planned during the summer of 2021. Upcoming projects for 2021 include the complete restoration of the building's iconic concrete frieze that surrounds the building on all four sides. Additional restorations to be completed on the roof include repairs to the areas immediately above the loading dock, the portion of the entrance on Church Street, and the canopy between the Warehouse and The 1912. The ADGWC is excited for this phase of the restoration and are relieved to be saving one of the most architecturally significant components of the building for generations to experience!

The A.D. German Warehouse Conservancy is pleased to announce it will now offer Petite Weddings at its historic building known popularly as The 1912. Through several incredible partnerships with small businesses in our community, the ADGWC is proud to also note that all products and services included in the all-inclusive Petite Wedding packages are locally sourced.
Derek Kalish, President, ADGW

Go to <https://ci.richland-center.wi.us/for-visitors/historical-sites/> for information on both buildings

WHERE in Richland County is the Town of Marshall 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.

<http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/chap27.htm>

Chapter 27 - Town of Marshall.

This town embraces congressional township 11 north, range 1 west. It is bounded on the west by the town of Sylvan; on the north by Bloom; on the east by Rockbridge; and on the south by Dayton. The town is inhabited by a purely agricultural population, and has no villages of any importance. In 1880 the census gave Marshall a population of 991. It has 167 farms, all in a high state of cultivation. The surface features here are very similar to those of the balance of Richland county's towns.

Early Settlement.

The first permanent settlement within the limits now comprising the town of Marshall was made in 1852. During the spring of that year John G and Simon Marshall, natives of Jefferson Co., Ohio, came here and entered 160 acres of land on sections 3, 4, 9 and 10. In the fall of 1852 their mother, then a widow, came, accompanied by two sons, Mahlon and George. They lived together until 1855, when Simon died, and soon afterward the mother was taken sick and went to live with her daughter, Mrs. John Hart, where she died Dec. 25, 1855. John G went to the mountains and engaged in mining for a time; then returned and settled on the southwest quarter of section 6. He now lives in Tennessee. Mahlon died in 1879. George now occupies a portion of the old homestead.

...

Harvey Gillingham, a native of Ohio, came here in the spring of 1852 and entered land on sections 11 and 12. He erected a log cabin on the southwest quarter of section 12, and remained here until he died. ...

The first settlement on what is known as English Ridge, was made by James Brightman, a native of England, who came here from Walworth county in 1854, and entered land on sections 27 and 34. He settled here in the spring of 1855, but a few months later sold to John McKy and moved to section 28. ...

The first mercantile business in the town was carried on by Joseph Marshall, who sold goods for George Krouskop, and also handled ginseng. ...

In 1855 Thomas Marshall erected a saw-mill on the northwest quarter of section 14. The power was derived from the north branch of Fancy Creek, the water being carried to the mill through a race a quarter of a mile in length. An old fashioned "up and down" saw was put in. The mill could only be run during warm weather, and did but little business in the five years of its existence.

In 1857 William Saltsman erected a saw-mill on the southwest quarter of section 19, equipping it with an "up and down" saw. The power was derived from Mill creek. The water was carried through a race 130 rods in length. The mill commenced operation in November, 1858, and continued until 1870, when it was destroyed by fire. Mr. Saltsman rebuilt the mill and put in a circular saw. In 1880 he sold the property to William Kepler, who put in new machinery, built a log dam and changed the race so that it is now only sixty rods in length. ...

Joint district No. 1 embraces territory in the towns of Marshall, Bloom and Rockbridge. It was organized in 1866 and a log school house was erected on the southeast quarter of section 2. John Mathews taught the first term of school in this house. In 1882 a large frame building was erected on the old site in which William E Gillingham was the first teacher.

...
Gillingham Postoffice -- This post office was established in 1881. Hugh Morrow was appointed postmaster and still keeps the office at his store, on section 13. The office is on the mail route from Richland Center to Viola, mail being received tri-weekly.

...
Joseph Marshall, a prominent man of Richland county, and the pioneer of the town of Marshall, which territory bears his name, was born in Columbiana Co., Ohio, March 25, 1820. His father was a large owner of timber land, and the subject of this sketch spent considerable of his time clearing portions of the same, while his brothers were employed in farming. He was married in April, 1851, to Margaret McCannon, a native of New Brunswick. The day following they started west to seek a home, embarked on a steamboat at Wellsville and came to Muscoda, and the next day started in company with Alexander Bartley to seek a desirable location, but the land in that vicinity did not suit him. The party showing him the country inquired what kind of land he wanted, to which Mr. Marshall replied, "I want land where there is plenty of wood and water." "Well" said the man, "we will have to go back into Richland County, where you can not clear a farm in a life time." This remark, intended to deter him from going thither, did not have that effect; he had cleared two farms, and freely understood all about it. So the following day, with Mr. Bartley, started on foot for the wilds of Richland county. ... They continued to live in their improvised covering, if covering it could be called, until fall, then erected a log cabin with puncheon floor and shake roof. That same fall he went to Sextonville with George Hancock to purchase provisions, and on their way back discovered a pile of lumber on the site of the present village of Richland Center, which Ira Hazletine had left there to make good on a claim to the land. At that time a few furrows ploughed were the only evidence of improvement.

George L, son of James and Maria (Gillingham) Marshall, was born in Columbiana Co., Ohio, Oct. 28, 1839. At the age of thirteen, he came to Richland county with his mother and settled in town 11, range 1 west, now known as Marshall. Three years later, his mother died, and the home circle was broken. He continued to live in the neighborhood, and was employed in farming summers, and attending school, winters. In May, 1861, at the first call for "three years" men, he responded by enlisting in company H, of the 5th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, and with the regiment, joined the Army of the Potomac, serving until August, 1864, when he was honorably discharged. He took part in the following engagements: Williamsburg, seven days before Richmond, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Rappahannock Station, Fredricksburg, battle of the Wilderness and before Petersburg. When discharged he returned to Marshall and resumed farming. He was joined in marriage in 1865 with Elizabeth, daughter of Daniel and Margaret (Dreghorn) Noble, and settled upon the homestead on section 4. Mrs. Marshall died in 1869, leaving one child --- Allen. In 1874 he was again married to Harriet, daughter of Martin and Elizabeth Copenhefer. They have two children --- Clara and Ella.

Check out our website for the past issues of the AKEY BrAKEY News
→ www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

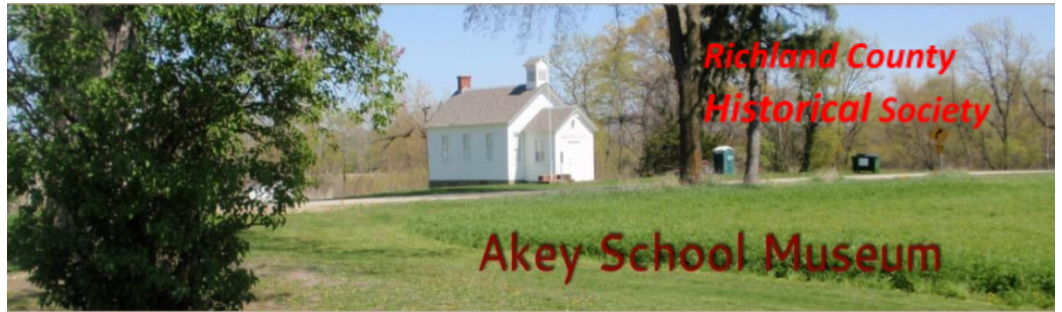




HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

IS A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING

**PROMOTE
AND
SUPPORT
RICHLAND
COUNTY
HISTORY**



www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

... Would you → → pass this newsletter on to a FRIEND?

Please renew your membership annually by July 1st—consider the following options:

- _____ \$10 for individual / family membership
- _____ \$20 for a business to support the historical society
- _____ additional DONATION to support the historical society
- _____ \$100 for a LIFETIME individual / family membership



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Donations are always WELCOME

Member Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

Mail registration to:

C/o Richland County Historical Society
213 S Central AVE Apt.#1
Richland Center WI 53581

This is the third installment of an insert page for the AKEY BrAKEY newsletter with a special Thanks to member Ed Lee who has provided these pictures along with his reflections on his youth growing up in Loyd as well as both to Craig & Cindy Chicker and Terry & Kate Moen who provided materials for our first two 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 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 along with stories which would be great and even better letters that provide a historical look into our past.

* * * * *

The following are pictures along with excerpts and interpretations provided by member Ed Lee dating back to 1961 when he was then ten years old.

As Ed has shared --

Somewhere around 1960 General Telephone came through Loyd installing party lines to the village. Prior to that time, I think, there were 3 telephones in Loyd. One in the Crary home, one in the cheese factory and the third at the Campbells. It was not uncommon for someone to call the store and leave an important message for a village resident.

The Loyd Cheese Factory was owned and operated by the Crary Family into the mid - 1960's. In 1960, John Kennedy's helicopter landed behind the cheese factory for a brief campaign visit to the residents. I can still see it flying over our barn as it was leaving town.

The Railton farm was just south of Loyd about 1/2 mile away. The Railton family owned the general store in Loyd for many years. I believe in 1960 the large block store was operated by Bill and Willa Turnipseed.

www.clipular.com/posts/6346826216898560?k=iWKJdkzZ8PsgA4ei3sCLGL4oty0



View from the hill of the cemetery with the Loyd Hotel on the distant top right

www.clipular.com/posts/6032266872225792?k=45fjBTYvQjMtsowwUb7wku5X8w



Main street looking North with the Railton Store building on the far right

www.clipular.com/posts/5772594357469184?k=R1neAozKCX8BcNVSojWODcYD8G0



A close up of the Railton Store; notice the fuel pump and Mobil Oil sign in front

Ernie and Hilda Campbell operated the Mobil Gas Station and small general store

Hank Smyth's store was long gone by 1961. However the old stone basement was still there and was very useful as a hideout or a fort.

In 1961 Loyd still had the old blacksmith shop building, ice house building and a shell of the livery stable. The livery stable was located on the east side of a lane to the Loyd School. I walked by it for 8 years, never realizing what an important part of Loyd history it was.

*** an interesting side note -- there were around 15 families in the village in 1961. Easily 80% of the women were 'housewives' or stay at home moms. I can only think of 2 women working outside the home, but that changed quickly by the next decade*

Ed provided photocopies from the Republican Observer dated Thursday, September 28, 1961 Page 14 with a featured section titled 'Know Your Neighbors' by Harry Johnson.

The article provided an early history of Loyd with interviews from some of the residents that still lived in and around the area.

http://www.clipular.com/posts/4636752406642688?k=E3Drbji8fGgY06IS_dAEodgglb0



The W. H. Smyth Store was on the north end of Loyd near the cemetery road

Ed included another page copied with an article on Alf French who was the Loyd Blacksmith and according to the story he was -- At 84 Still "On the Job" which provided a light hearted look at how things have changed. From the time of horse and buggy to now farmers bring their machinery parts to be repaired the story would include reflections back to the turn of the century with over time how, according to Mr. French, there was "little change in 60 years".



LOYD SCHOOL—1961

In closing, Ed would provide this picture of the Loyd School dated 1961. Ed with the white shirt was in the center middle row and as Ed includes: *Rev. John Sumwall to my right. John and I were last to graduate from the Loyd School*