



The AKEY BrAKEY News

a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

May, 2019 Volume #11 – Issue # 1 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

NOTE that this is the first in a series provided by Dr. Jerry Bower which will be continued in future issues. The October issue will have The O. J. Burnham Building article which is located in Richland Center at 159 East Court Street.

THE OLIVER J. BURNHAM HOUSE -- 361 NORTH PARK STREET

By Jerry Bower

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The 1987 Intensive Survey form describes the O. J. Burnham house as “One of the most elaborate and among the best preserved examples of the Queen Anne influence in Richland Center, . . .”

The Queen Anne style of architecture, of course, originated in England, where Queen Anne reigned from 1702 to 1714 over England and its empire, including colonies in North America. The major exterior features of the style include grand steps leading to a carved stone door-case, rows of painted sash windows set flush with the brickwork, stone quoins which emphasize the corners, and a central triangular pediment set against a hipped roof with dormers.

However, in the United States, where the Queen Anne style was popular from the 1880s into the 1920s, the builders added flourishes that created an American version of the style. This occurred, no doubt, because the fascination with the Queen Anne style coincided with the flowering of the Industrial Revolution in the United States. The Industrial Revolution created fortunes which allowed the well-to-do, like Oliver J. Burnham, to build elaborate homes.

According to the 1987 Intensive Survey form, the O. J. Burnham House exhibits many features of the Queen Anne style, including a Jerkin gable roofed projecting front bay, a three-story round tower with conical roof, chiseled stone window lintels, a two-sided spindle porch on the south and a spindle porch on the north side, joined by a spindle decorated triangular pediment, stained glass, and spindle ornamentation along the peak of the front gable.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Oliver J. Burnham (1842-1918) was an important pioneer Richland Center businessman. Oliver was born 20 October 1842 in Bristol, Addison County, Vermont. When he was thirteen, in 1855, his parents moved the family to Bear Creek, Sauk County, Wisconsin. Here Oliver continued his education and worked on the family farm.

In September 1861 Oliver, age 18, enlisted in the Civil War, in Sauk County, in the 6th Wisconsin Battery. After six months training at Camp Utley in Racine, the 6th was sent to New Madrid, Missouri, which was located on a sharp bend in the Mississippi. Here, the battery helped the Federals keep control of the river. Because the 6th was poorly equipped, the men gradually replaced their batteries with ones captured from the Confederates. This worked until early 1863, when inspectors discovered their “contraband equipment” and made them give it up. But, now the 6th received new batteries! These served the 6th well during the siege of Vicksburg, which surrendered to Grant’s troops on July 4th, 1863. Oliver was mustered out of the service in October 1864, at the end of his three-year enlistment.

Upon his return to Bear Valley, Oliver alternated between farming and teaching school until 1871, when he was appointed principal of the Lone Rock schools. After three years, Oliver moved to Richland Center, where he became the principal of the White School. Oliver was deeply involved in the planning of the first high school building in Richland Center and he was on the school board when the first high school building opened in 1884.

Meanwhile, in 1876, Oliver and his brother, William, had opened a drug store on Court Street. Five years later, William headed to North Dakota to homestead. Now, John W. Burnham (no relation) became Oliver's partner in the store, now called the "Burnham and Burnham Drug Store." In those days a drug store was a general store, stocking all kinds of merchandize besides drugs and pills. But Oliver was restless and, in 1887, he sold out to John Burnham and entered the produce business as a partner of Logan. (I haven't been able to identify Logan) Five years later, in 1892, Logan left the business and John T. Scott, who operated a competing produce business on Court Street, became Oliver's partner. They operated from a building Oliver had built in 1889 on the south side of Court Street. These energetic partners continually expanded their business. In 1899 they started a creamery in the back room of their store, where they made butter. In 1902 they greatly expanded the creamery operation when they purchased a creamery located at the north end of the city, on the Pine River, and bought five skimming stations located in Dayton, Marshall, and Richland Townships. Oliver Burnham retired in 1913, selling his interest to John Scott. Both Burnham and Scott died in 1918, but the business was operated into the early 1960s.

In 1894 Oliver J. Burnham built a grand Queen Anne style home on Park Street. Shortly after it was completed, a *Richland Rustic* reporter toured the home and published a detailed description. (30 March 1895 issue.) The reporter described in detail the interior of the house, but barely commented on the exterior.

The headline, "The New Home of Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Burnham is a Model of Convenience and Comfort," hinted that many "modern conveniences" had been installed. In the basement was a large cistern, from which a pump pushed the water to a tank on the second floor. Pipes running from the tank distributed water throughout the house. This was a great improvement upon the hand pump that was commonly used in most Richland Center homes. The basement also contained the boiler that sent hot water to faucets and radiators throughout the home. Wood was used to fire the boiler; an elevator lifted wood to the kitchen, where it was used to heat the kitchen range. The range had a hood to remove vapors and odors that Oliver had designed. The hood was piped into the chimney, where the hot air created the draft that operated the hood. The bath room was described as a "model of convenience." The reporter commented on the three types of wood used in the interior, these were "highly polished elm, black walnut, and maple." Finally, the *Rustic* reporter noted that "Every room in the house has electric light." George Strang had recently, in May 1894, begun to supply electricity from his generator to the downtown and a few residences. Strang operated his generator from dusk until 11:00 PM, when it was "lights out!"

LIST OF SOURCES

The 1987 Intensive Survey Form: The O. J. Burnham House. Richland County History Room. G74, genealogical record of the Burnham family.
Richland County Historical Society. *Richland County, Wisconsin*. Taylor Publishing Co., 1986. Family history #943.
Scott, Margaret H. *Richland Center, Wisconsin, A History*. Richland County Publishers, 1972. Pp. 74-5, 97-8. 129, 157.
Soldiers' & Citizens' Album, Biographical Record. Chicago: Grand Army Publishing Company, 1890. O. J. Burnham entry, pp. 567-69.

IN MEMORIAM ...

Eleanor J. Poole, 98, of Richland Center, died on Sunday, April 14, 2019 at Schmitt Woodland Hills in Richland Center. She was born in Richland Center on July 1, 1920. Eleanor graduated from Richland Center High School in 1938. After graduation she attended Madison Business College and graduated in 1939 working at several location in Richland Center. Eleanor was a member of the board of directors for the Richland Historical Society.

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

→ www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

Since 1898 Mill Dam Has Produced Power For Muscoda

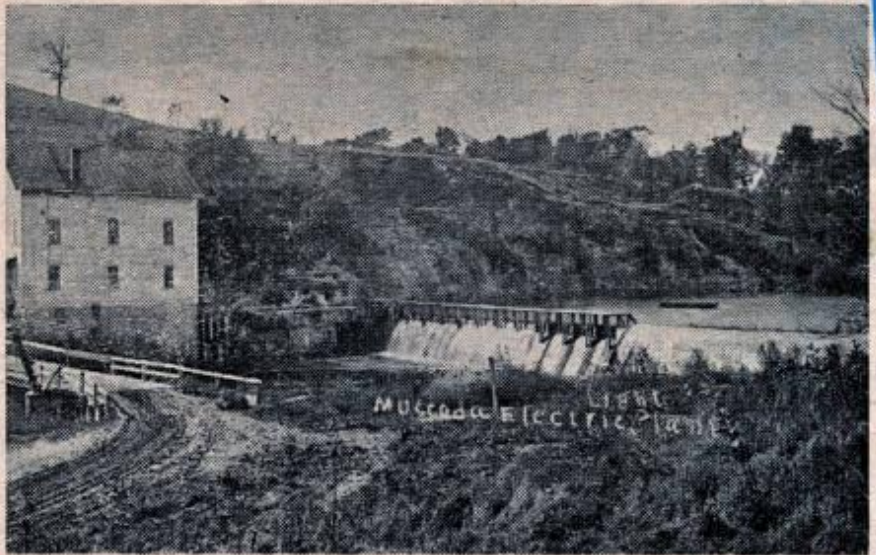
This picture, uncovered recently by S. H. Gillette who estimates that he took the shot perhaps as much as 50 years ago, shows the Mill Dam northwest of Muscoda.

However, although this picture may be 50 years old, Muscoda has been supplied with water produced, electricity for longer than that from the plant on the Mill Creek in Eagle township.

It was in 1898 that the Rodolf brothers put in the first generator at the dam to supply the village of Muscoda with electricity using a single phase, 133 cycle generator.

A dam at the Eagle township site goes back to 1841 when Tom Parish built a dam and a saw mill on the bank of the Mill creek. The waters of the creek have been working for the betterment of this area ever since. A flour mill and then a feed mill followed the saw mill at the location. The feed mill operated on water power until 1928 when it switched to electricity.

Ownership of the dam and site went to the village of Muscoda in 1911 after the dam washed out and the Rodolf brothers no longer wanted to operate it. It was in 1912 that the village rebuilt the dam, built the present generator and wheel house and put in a new generator and wheel. The new generator put into operation



in 1912 was three phase, 60 cycle, 2,400 volt.

The 1912 generator was used until 1941 when the feed mill at the location was torn down.

A 50 kilowatt generator was installed in the plant in 1934. It is this generator which is still producing some of the power used by the village.

The present dam was constructed at the site in 1921.

Prior to that time dams were rock and wood structures. The present dam is concrete. It cost \$16,000 to build.

The last major work to be done at

the site was in 1957 when the generator and water wheel were completely overhauled.

The generator on Mill creek runs 24 hours a day and produces the cheapest electricity used by the village. However, the plant is limited to 50 kilowatt production which is about 10 per cent of the total usage of the village. The remainder of electricity used in Muscoda is purchased by the village utility from Wisconsin Power and Light company. The diesel plant here is now used only for emergency service.

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

PRESIDENT'S CORNER by *Nick Studnicka*

We are starting to look for volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday during the 2019 season. Please contact me at studnicn@hotmail.com if interested. Several dates are still available.

If you have not yet got the chance to see the documentary, "One-Room School" with Jerry Apps,

I would highly recommend seeing it due to the fact that it features the Akey School.

I have cut down most of the sumac around Akey School this past fall and we took a look at the bell and it will require a lift in order to fix it. If anyone knows some with a lift that we could use for free please let me know.

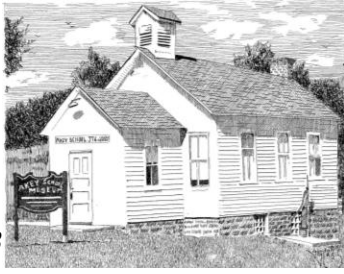
The Akey School Museum is open Sundays from June thru September from 1 to 4 pm.

Directions to the AKEY SCHOOL

MUSEUM

located east from Richland Center off Hwy 14 about 4 miles south on County TB or from Gotham--Hwy 60 west a mile & then north on County TB 4 miles.

PLEASE
Come and Visit
this SUMMER !



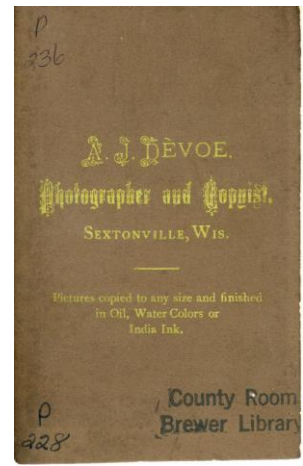
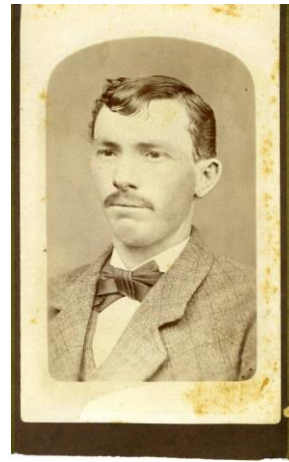
Page 3



A very small dam creates a quite small ripple (rapids). And downstream about 50 yards there is another small ripple. Not worth stopping to look! The stream here is called Mill Creek, so maybe at some time in the past there was a Mill here that created a dam larger than what is currently in the creek. Just west of the town of Orion is the intersection of Routes 60 and 80... go west on 60 1.7 miles and turn right on Route 193... 0.33 miles north on Route 193 a dead end road called Dam Lane will take you to this site. <http://www.waterfallswisconsin.com/ricity.htm>

Balmoral, south of Richland Center, is located on this map from 1901, but Sextonville is not ...

www.kinquest.com/genealogy/resources/atlas/Richland.html



Man, unidentified, Sextonville, Buena Vista Township, Richland County, Wisconsin, 1860's

<https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/4379/rec/84>
Could this be a picture of Mr. E. M. Sexton ??
Check out the Richland County Digital History

Page 4

“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.

** excerpted from <http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/1906-3.htm>

This segment from *Chapter 3: Settlement and Organization* ... with the concluding portion titled -- *First County Officers*

The growth and development of the country in this section of the state had, about the year 1850, become so marked that it was deemed prudent that the new county should be organized. In this locality then, as well as now, resided men of energy, integrity, and determination, and they not only felt the necessity of a county organization, but saw the great advantage to the country of such a movement in case it could be carried out successfully. They not only discussed the project, but gave such substantial assistance as finally completed and consummated the work, and made the organization of the county of Richland not only possible, but an established fact.

As there has been no event of greater importance to the county or its people than that which gave it an organized existence, it is deemed proper that the essential portions of the enactment which created the county government should be given. The act was passed, Feb. 7, 1850, and its first section reads as follows:

"Section 1. That from and after the first day of May next, the county of Richland in this state, shall be organized for judicial purposes, and shall enjoy all the privileges and immunities of the other counties of this state. It shall form a part of the fifth judicial circuit, and the courts therein shall be held by the judge of said circuit."

The name "Richland" is said to have been chosen at the time of the formation of the county by reason of the character of the soil, and the inherent fertility of the soil was also suggested by the names of Richland town, Richland Center, Richland City, Richmond and Richwood town. Richland was the thirtieth, in point of organizations, of the counties of Wisconsin, and the original territory of the county, as defined in the act creating it, has never been changed. The legislature next made provision for the administration of the county affairs in the same act, as follows:

"Section 2. All writs, processes, appeals, recognizances, or other proceedings which shall be pending undetermined in the circuit court of Iowa county, on the said first day of May next, which originated in the courts of justice of the peace in said county of Richland, shall be removed back and determined in said county of Richland."

"Section 3. On the said first day of May, the clerk of the circuit court of the county of Iowa shall transmit all writs, process, appeals, recognizances, or other proceedings originating as aforesaid, together with a transcript of the records in each case, to the clerk of the circuit court of Richland county."

The election of officers for the county was provided for as follows:

"Section 4. That for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act, the legal voters of Richland county may hold a special election on the first Tuesday of April next, in the respective towns or precincts of said county, for the election of such county officers as are required by law to be elected at annual elections, whose term of service shall commence on the said first day of May next, and continue until said terms shall expire by law. There shall also be elected by the qualified electors of said county of Richland, at a special election to be held at the several towns or precincts of said county, on the first Tuesday of June next, a county judge, who shall hold his office until the first day of January, A. D. 1854, and until his successor is elected and qualified."

Section five provides for the holding of said elections, saying that they shall be conducted in all respects, and the votes canvassed and returned in the same manner as is now provided by law in relation to the election of county officers.

Section six of the act provides that the judge of the said fifth judicial circuit shall hold courts in the said county of Richland semiannually; one term on the last Tuesday of April, and the other on the second Tuesday of September in each year.

Section seven provides, "That at the annual election of 1854, the voters qualified, as hereinafter provided, shall deposit with the inspectors of the elections in the several towns or precincts in said county, a ballot, on which shall be printed or written, or partly printed and partly written, the name of the place voted for as the county seat of said county; and the place receiving a majority of all the votes cast at said election on that subject, shall be declared the county seat of said county: *Provided*, That if no place shall receive a majority at said election, the question shall be submitted in the same manner at each succeeding annual election, until some one place receive such majority. Every free white male inhabitant, who shall have resided in said county six months next preceding any annual election, shall be deemed a qualified voter at such election, for the purpose of permanently locating the county seat of said county"; and the act further provided, "that until the county seat of said county shall be located, as provided in the seventh section of this act, the courts for said county shall be held, and all county business shall be transacted at Richmond in said county."

At that time there were but seven official positions in the county, the incumbents of which were required to run the gauntlet of popular approval and have their merits passed upon at the ballot box. These elective positions were: County clerk, register of deeds, clerk of the courts, county treasurer, sheriff, county judge, and board of supervisors. The first election to fill these positions was held "on the first Tuesday of April," as ordered, and the balloting resulted in the choice of the following gentlemen, who were the first to don the official garments at the behest of *vox populi* in Richland county: County clerk, John Rutan; register of deeds, Marvin White; clerk of the courts, A. B. Slaughter; county treasurer, D. H. Byrd; sheriff, John J. Matthews; county judge, J. W. Coffinberry; supervisors, John H. Preece, E. H. Dyre, and Adam Byrd. And with the installation of these officials Richland county blossomed forth as a fully organized county.

**** Hence the significance of the first elections in April and the importance that carries even into present day elections****

WHERE in Richland County is *SEXTONVILLE* located?

Page 5

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.

In the early history of Richland County the communities of Richland City, Orion and Port Andrews were key locations along the Wisconsin River. Traveling up the Pine River Rockbridge was also a key location. What about Sextonville, located to the South and East of Richland Center, the founding pioneers played a key role in the early developments of Richland County

<http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/1906-14.htm>

The village of Sextonville is pleasantly located in the northwestern part of the town of Buena Vista, on sections 5, 6, 7 and 8, town 9, range 2 east. Being situated on Willow creek, and in close proximity to Pine river, water power sufficient to propel a vast amount of machinery can be easily obtained. The village is surrounded by some of the best and most valuable farming and stock-raising territory in the county, which is a guarantee of permanent and ever increasing trade. The Richland Center branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad passes just west of the village, Twin Bluff station being located on the northeast corner of section 12, town 9, range 1 east. The village was platted in January, 1851, by E. M. Sexton, the surveyor being Oscar Briggs, from Sauk county, and the plat as then drawn laid upon sections 5, 6, 7 and 8.

E. M. Sexton

Source: History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin, Illustrated (1881) transcribed by Mary Saggio.

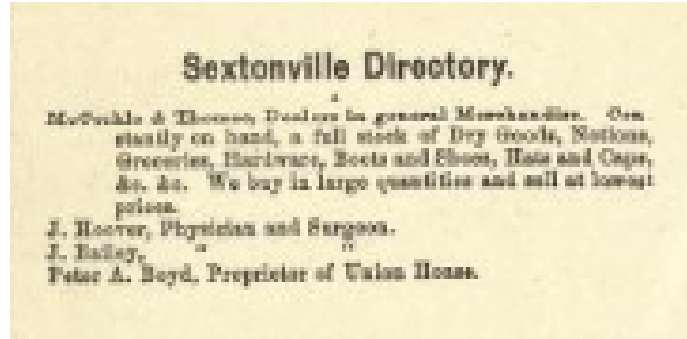
E. M. Sexton came from New York State at a very early day, and settled where Sextonville was afterward laid out. The village was platted by and named after him. He served the county and town in which he lived in various offices. He was admitted to the bar at an early day, and devoted some of his time to the practice of law, but never had more than a meagre business. In 1874 he removed to Barron Co., Wis., where his home remained until the time of his death, in 1878. He had a fine legal mind, and was one of the best counselors the county has ever had. He held the respect and esteem of all, and his death was mourned by a large circle of friends.

http://genealogytrails.com/wis/richland/dead_pioneers.htm

Morris Sexton died in the town of Buena Vista, March 1, 1876, of paralysis, aged sixty-two years. Mr. Sexton was a native of the State of New York. He came to Wisconsin in 1849, and made a settlement at what is now known as the village of Sextonville, the place being named in honor of him as its founder. He erected and opened the first house of public entertainment on the Black River Road north of the Wisconsin River. There his native energy and enterprise found ample opportunity for development in making improvements, laying out roads and inducing emigration. Being well adapted to pioneer life, he seemed much attached to its excitements and highly enjoyed its various duties and responsibilities, and secured the confidence and

esteem, by his uniform kindness and liberality to the needy, of a large circle of friends and acquaintances. Though past the meridian of life, he still fondly cherished the remembrance of his pioneer experience and as infirmity and reverses had cast a shade over his prospects he naturally sought sympathy with nature in the hope of finding again some of the bright days of his pioneer life, and in 1873 he removed to Barron county in the northwest part of the State. About three weeks before his death Mr. Sexton came here in company with his wife to visit his old home and many friends. Here his health which had been for some time impaired, entirely failed, and, as stated, he died on the 1st of March.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4123rm.gla00128/?sp=15&r=-0.35,0.058,1.235,0.785.0>



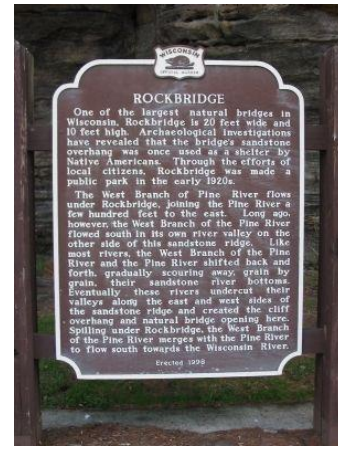
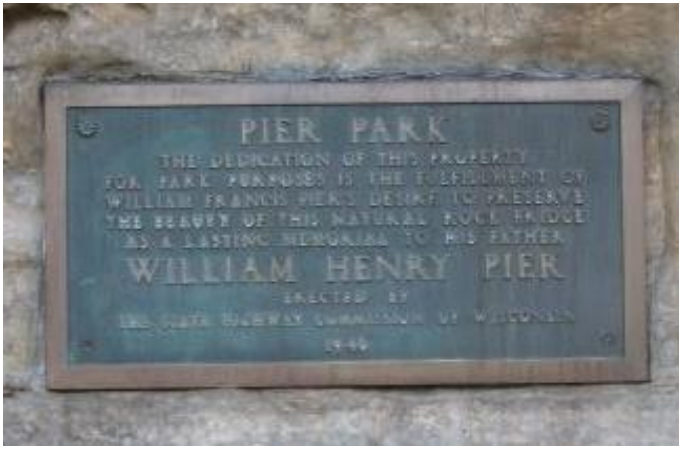
Page 6

“A DAY TRIPPER” consider in your travels in and around Richland County a stop at Pier Natural Bridge Park



<https://www.travelwisconsin.com/county-parks/pier-natural-bridge-park-220545>

Pier Natural Bridge Park is located along Hwy. 80 North, at Rockbridge in Richland County. The site has a very unusual geological feature - a half-mile long "finger" of blocked and layered sandstone rising nearly 60 feet above the floodplain of two merging valleys. This narrow finger is topped by tall pines and covered with green shrubs. The West Branch of the Pine River meets with the Main Branch underneath this rock formation, which forms a Natural Bridge. The Park has two historical markers - one indicating the unique rock formation and the other recognizing the significance of the Blackhawk wars in this area. The park has a man-made tunnel which allows visitors to walk through the rock formation to the West Branch of the Pine River. There are also stairs to walk to the top of the rock formation to view the surrounding area. This 10-acre county park has 6 campsites, two shelters, picnic tables and grills, play equipment, and pit toilets. Camping permits may be obtained for a minor fee from the Natural Bridge Store, located next to the park. All camping is on a first-come basis.



Inscription.  <https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=18750> <https://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=18744>

The dedication of this property for park purposes is the fulfillment of William Francis Pier's desire to preserve the beauty of this natural rock bridge as a lasting memorial to his father **William Henry Pier**
Erected by The State Highway Commission of Wisconsin 1946