



# The AKEY BRAKEY News

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a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

October, 2015 Volume #7 - Issue # 2 - promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

## THE PEARL LEVI LINCOLN FAMILY HISTORY {part 2 of 2}

By Dr. Jerry Bower

In the April 1921 balloting, Judge Bancroft took an early lead, as reported in the Republican Observer, over Judge Smalley. However, the Observer noted that only a few votes had been tallied in Grant County, Judge Smalley's home base. In a few days, the final count gave a narrow victory to Judge Smalley. Bancroft demanded a recount which confirmed the initial outcome. Furious, Bancroft now filed lawsuits seeking damages for slander and libel and for an alleged conspiracy among the defendants "for the malicious purpose of defeating this plaintiff in a judicial election." Four defendants were named in separate lawsuits, Judge Smalley, Mr. Hutton (President of the Anti-Saloon League), Ada James, and Pearl L. Lincoln. We will concentrate on the cases brought against the latter two; each was sued for thirty thousand dollars, a tremendous amount in 1921. A month after Bancroft's suits were filed, Ada James countersued for \$10,000 for slander for remarks Bancroft allegedly made during a political rally at Muscodia.

Both James and Lincoln engaged J.M. Clancy, a Stoughton lawyer, to defend them. Evidently Pearl was following the wry advice in the old saying, "A lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client." In the half dozen letters between Clancey and Lincoln, in the Pearl Lincoln file in the Richland County Room, Clancey steadfastly held that both of his clients would eventually win. Clancey, of course, asked both James and Lincoln to gather evidence to refute the charges. In the last letter (3 September 1921) Clancey wrote that a jury will find for James and Lincoln in regard to the allegations about Bancroft in the election circular, because Miss James had provided the sources for each allegation. About Lincoln's case, Clancey said, "the charge against you of slander is more dangerous, and yet, not much damage could possibly flow from it as it was repeated to but one person, according to the allegation of the complaint."

In the fall of 1921, Pearl Lincoln's deposition was taken. Pearl explained that he had supplied only one statement to Miss James for the campaign circular, that involving Bancroft's defense of J.W. Houghton, the "notorious liquor outlaw." The County court record would verify that Bancroft had been Houghton's attorney and that Houghton had been convicted. Otherwise, Pearl had not independently verified James' allegations, for he trusted that she would not make an unsubstantiated charge. Pearl denied that any "conspiracy" had existed between himself and Miss James, he had only supplied her with one statement, had given her some money for postage to mail circulars, and had distributed circulars by mail to a few acquaintances. In her deposition, Ada James backed all of Lincoln's sworn testimony and made clear that her sole purpose had been to inform the voters about the two candidates for the Fifth Judicial Circuit. James also provided the sources to support the allegations made against Judge Bancroft in the circular, these included newspapers, the Assembly Record, Richland County Court records, and even the minutes of the executive board of the Federation of Women's Clubs. In June 1922, as the James and Lincoln cases neared trial, both of Bancroft's lawsuits and Miss James' countersuit were dropped. Thus, the raucous 1921 Fifth Judicial Circuit election and its litigious aftermath finally came to a close.

In mid 1921 Richland County Judge William S. McCorkle resigned to go into business with A.H. Krouskop. Subsequently, Governor Blaine asked knowledgeable county residents to nominate men for possible appointment to the bench. Ironically, among the three lawyers recommended to the governor were both Pearl Lincoln and Levi Bancroft. (The name of the third candidate remains a mystery.) Because Lincoln received the endorsement of nearly one hundred percent of the county board of supervisors and of the Richland County bar, Governor Blaine appointed him to the post in October 1921.

Almost immediately Judge Lincoln had to think about his first election campaign, scheduled for April 1922, to fill the position for a three-year term. Pearl used his endorsements from the board of supervisors and the county bar in his advertisement for votes. He also received a very strong endorsement from his predecessor, William McCorkle, who said in part, "The voter should vote for the candidate he believes will perform the duties of the office promptly, carefully, conscientiously, and fearlessly. Judge Lincoln has a record of which he is justly proud. As a consequence his re-election would be no experiment and is justified, no matter how long the new term would extend his tenure of office." Michael Murphy, Lincoln's opponent, tried to score points with the electorate by claiming that it was more expensive to run the county court than to operate the much larger circuit court. Of course, Murphey's implication was that he, as the county judge, would be even more thrifty in operating the county court. The Republican Observer (13 April 1922), in reporting the election results, noted that Lincoln's huge 1,177 vote margin over Murphy proved that the voters had readily seen through Murphey's claims about the costs of operating the county court (actually \$120.00 per week) and the circuit court (over \$2,000 per week). The Observer heralded Lincoln's election with the observation that, "the election of Mr. Lincoln assures the county of a vigorous and fair-minded judge...."

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Page 2 This victory was the first of five consecutive victories for Judge Lincoln. Along the way, he received praise and recognition in the local press for some of his judicial actions. For example, the Richland Democrat (15 August 1923), stated, “Flowers for Judge Lincoln – County Judge Lincoln is a terror to moonshine makers and dispensers. He fined a seller \$500.00 and the cost of \$60.00 or six months in jail at hard labor a fortnight ago and has dispensed similar sentences in other cases.”

In November, 1929, Richland County established the first County Children’s Board in the state, as provided in Chapter 439 Laws of 1929, which Judge Lincoln had helped draft. The County Children’s Board was designed to serve as an advocate for foster children, children who were in destitute circumstances, and/or who were victims of neglect. Chapter 439 also empowered counties to create a juvenile court to hear children’s cases, rather than leaving jurisdiction with the adult county court. Richland County also promptly adopted this procedure and Pearl Lincoln became the first juvenile court judge. It is interesting to note that Judge Lincoln appointed Ada James to the Children’s Board, whose members later elected her president of the group. Among the speech notes in the Lincoln file in the Richland County Room are four sets which reveal Judge Lincoln’s deep concern about the welfare of children and how juveniles’ cases were handled when they violated the laws. His speech entitled “Juvenile Delinquency” squarely placed much of the blame for juvenile delinquents upon “delinquent parents,” who had failed to establish and operate proper homes, where children could learn moral behavior. This theme is still reiterated in the early twenty-first century! In “The Child and the State,” Lincoln explained compellingly why children needed separate courts and detention centers, so that they did not learn even worse behavior from adult criminals. The address, “Crime and Criminal Procedure,” repeated much of what has been described, regarding how courts should treat children. The final speech, “Juvenile Court,” clearly addresses youngsters’ legal issues and was evidently delivered in 1938, because Lincoln noted that in 1937 Richland County had dispensed \$15,860.00 in children’s aid through the Children’s Board and the juvenile court.

Mora Lincoln, daughter-in-law of Pearl and Grace, briefly described how difficult the childhoods and young adult years had been for both Pearl and Grace (Garrison) Lincoln. In both instances money was scarce for the family and everyone had to contribute whatever they could. Although there is no direct evidence, Pearl must have been responsible for farm chores from a young age. Pearl definitely worked his way through the University of Wisconsin and its law school. Usually he earned money by teaching in a rural school. Grace also became a one-room school teacher. Mora described Grace as an unorthodox young woman who rode a horse side-saddle to her school. Grace of course had to wear the long, full dresses of the era, which certainly must have complicated the horse riding. Consequently, both Pearl and Grace developed a deep understanding of the struggles of families and, especially, of children who lived in far from ideal circumstances. One may conjecture that Pearl’s experiences helped him better understand the juveniles who came before his court and that he worked very hard to find the best solutions for their problems. These experiences also possibly explain Pearl’s working relationship with Ada James, who was a Richland County pioneer in working to improve children’s welfare. It is most interesting to note that Passages, Richland County’s domestic abuse intervention agency, uses Pearl and Grace’s home as the shelter for abused women and their children. They both would be very pleased with this circuit of the history of children’s welfare in Richland Center and Richland County.

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Again, a summer at the Akey School Museum has flown by. We had 152 visitors on Sunday afternoons and 59 school children, from Ithaca and Eagle Schools, who visited during the week this Fall. The school children kept me on my toes with their questions and observations about the school room and how it was operated. Several of the Sunday visitors wrote glowing comments about the Museum. All this—the school children and the remarks—make operating the Akey School Museum a rewarding experience.

See you next summer for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary!  
**Jerry Bower**

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Page 5 In October, 1921, a couple dozen Richland Center men, including Pearl Lincoln, met and organized a Kiwanis Club. A charter arrived in December 1921 and in January 1922 the local Kiwanis Club officially began to operate. The Kiwanis Club, true to its charter, immediately became involved in various community improvement projects. In particular, the Kiwanians sponsored several children's programs, such as marble tournaments, kite flying days, Halloween parades and parties, and summer playgrounds. Money was raised via an annual white elephant sale, which drew lots of community interest to see what was being discarded. The Kiwanis Club also became involved in more substantial projects. In 1928, for example, the Club pledged \$1,500 to a Richland Hospital addition which would include an elevator. Four years later, the men contributed their muscles, know-how, and money to improve the rather wild Pier's Springs area, north of Richland Center at Rockbridge, into a public picnic area by creating a parking lot, providing picnic tables, and driving a well and installing a pump. Later this became a county park, drawing attention to the natural rock bridge through which the west branch of the Pine River flows. Pearl was an active member of the Club, evidenced by his name being listed as a member of the various committees over the years. Pearl resigned from active membership in early 1938, and received at that time a certificate which recognized his sixteen years of perfect attendance. He had attended every meeting of the local Club, since its creation in January 1922!

In January, 1920, the Federation of Women's Clubs initiated another terribly important community project, the creation of a public hospital in Richland Center. Various doctors had kept one or two patients in their own homes; very seriously ill persons had to be sent to Madison on the train, a trip which sometimes ended in a death before the patient could reach a hospital. The close of World War I brought back to the community wounded and ill veterans who needed ongoing care which only a hospital could provide. All of these were factors which inspired the Federation women to campaign for a local hospital of sufficient size to serve the area and to attract medical specialists to Richland Center.

Both Pearl and Grace Lincoln were deeply involved in helping to guide the hospital project to a successful conclusion. In March, 1920, Grace explained the need for the hospital and for a positive vote on a hospital bond referendum to the members of the Federation. Grace noted that, thanks to the nineteenth amendment, women would be able to vote on the referendum. Unfortunately, due to sour post-war economic conditions, the bond referendum was defeated by over 200 votes. However, in April 1920, Grace described a new ray of hope to the Women's Club. Mrs. H.T. Bailey offered her house, which was considered suitable for conversion into a hospital, to the Federation for \$10,000.00, with an immediate down payment of \$1,000.00. One of the women present pledged the down payment on the spot. In December 1920, the Federation offered the Bailey property, which had already been purchased, to the city, if the aldermen would commit the city to open and operate the hospital. After much maneuvering and negotiating, in April 1921, the City Council withdrew entirely from the project, saying that it simply could not be afforded. Grace was greatly disappointed at this outcome, because she had been a member of the Federation Hospital Finance Committee which had raised \$10,000.00 in about six months to purchase the Bailey home. In view of this, Grace felt that the community wanted and would generously support a local hospital.

After a year-long lull, the hospital issue returned to center stage when the Federation entered into a contract with the Methodist Hospital and Home Society to get a hospital built. Another year later, in April 1923, Reverend James W. Irish came to Richland Center to conduct a \$50,000.00 fundraising campaign. The money was raised by selling stock in the hospital. To boost the sales, the June 23, 1923, Richland Democrat carried letters from P.L. Lincoln, Dr. J.M. Ferebee, Father McKeivitt and three more prominent men supporting the project. The letters reiterated the needs that a local hospital would serve and made the very important point that this hospital would not be a burden to taxpayers. By spring 1924, enough stock had been sold to let a contract for a new fifteen bed hospital and for remodeling the Bailey house into nurses' quarters and administrative offices. The Women's Federation entirely furnished the female wing by putting on suppers, bake sales, and a variety of dramas. Grace, again, was heavily involved in these activities. In November 1924, the Richland Hospital was dedicated. The hospital proved such a success that, within four years, a new fundraising campaign was undertaken by the corporation to construct an addition and to install a much needed elevator. Here Pearl's participation is documented; the Kiwanis Club pledged \$1,500.00 to this endeavor. Today, the Richland Hospital, Inc., still exists and still serves the area's health needs. Without club women, such as Grace Lincoln pushing the project, one has to wonder whether the hospital would have become a reality.

Early in 1937 Judge Lincoln prepared for yet another county-wide election. He had been elected so far to five terms. This election, however, had more drama than usual because Pearl's opponent was Levi Bancroft, the local lawyer who had sued Pearl in 1921. Despite two well-known candidates and the common knowledge that they long had been rivals for local political posts, the election campaign was strangely quiet. The April Fools Day 1937 issue of The Republican Observer took note of this fact, commenting "the campaign has been conspicuous for its lack of interest. No one knows what the people are thinking concerning the county judicial election." The Observer conjectured that Bancroft might have an advantage due to his numerous personal contacts throughout the county.

Evidently, Bancroft had quietly been spreading the allegation that Judge Lincoln had been too strict in his oversight of the amounts of state pensions for old age assistance, the blind and dependent children. Pearl responded to these allegations with an advertisement in The Republican Observer, which contained an extensive quotation from Catherine Recob, Secretary and Investigator for Old Age Assistance, Blind Pensions, and Aid for Dependent Children, Richland County. Recob explained that she was employed by the County Board of Supervisors to investigate each pension request and to recommend an amount to Judge Lincoln. Recob said, "In not a single instance in acting on the hundreds of these applications has there been a cut by the county judge of the amount of aid that I have recommended." Recob's statement also explained that only four appeals had been made of her and Judge Lincoln's pension awards to the state pension board. Three of the appeals had been dismissed and the other was successful in getting his pension increased.

The campaign ad closed with, in bold print, “The candidacy of P.L. Lincoln for re-election as County Judge is based upon the facts as herewith presented.” Obviously, this ad and others that Pearl sponsored did not persuade enough voters to support his re-election. When the ballots were counted, Bancroft had swept to victory, 3,368 to 2,985, a margin of 383 votes.

His defeat stunned Judge Lincoln. Mora Lincoln, in her interview, said “I think it broke his heart.” Mora also explained that people afterward told Pearl that they had not understood how much he had desired another term because he had not campaigned very vigorously. Perhaps Pearl believed that his fifteen year record as a conscientious judge spoke for itself. Several letters of condolence were sent to Judge Lincoln, including a few by fellow county judges. Some of the authors speculated that Bancroft had unfairly but effectively made the distribution of the pensions the pivotal issue in the campaign. These men believed that angry pensioners and their cohort had caused Pearl’s defeat. Unfortunately, Pearl did not leave any written record of his assessment of his defeat. In January 1938 he quietly left the office he had held for fifteen years. He never again sought a public office.

Judge Lincoln continued to practice law until his death, in August 1956, just a few days short of his eighty-sixth birthday. In addition, during these years he remained an active citizen and contributed his views fairly regularly to the Capital Times. For example, in May 1944, Judge Lincoln wrote to the Capital Times a scathing letter calling for the elimination of boxing from the high schools’ sports agenda. Lincoln’s ire had been triggered by the death of a sixteen year old lad in a high school match. Judge Lincoln observed that Wisconsin had laws prohibiting the baiting and fighting of birds and animals. It was time, he wrote, for the state to outlaw this “savage sport” of teenage boxing, a view which the Capital Times supported. Ten years later, in March 1954, Judge Lincoln castigated Wisconsin United States Senator Joseph McCarthy for numerous breaches of proper political behavior, including falsifying his World War II record, accepting gifts from corporate lobbyists and voting for their interests, and labeling General George C. Marshall disloyal. All of these, Pearl wrote, had convinced the Washington newspaper correspondents to label Senator McCarthy, “the worst senator.” In April 1955 Judge Lincoln reiterated his belief that “Parental Delinquency should be Blamed” for most juvenile delinquency. This Capital Times piece had been triggered by an earlier report that Dane County delinquents knew nothing would happen to them if they were picked up by the police. Pearl wrote that too many parents did not know where their children were and were “absolutely indifferent to their parental responsibility.” He recommended that the juvenile code be amended so that juveniles, 12 to 18, would be treated as adults by the courts.

Pearl’s speeches and writings contained occasional whiffs of humor. A speech entitled, Regulations, contained this anecdote:

*The government has so governed my business that I do not know who owns it. I am inspected, suspected, examined, and re-examined, commanded, so that I do not know who I am, or why I am here. All I know is that I am supposed to be an inexhaustible supply of money for every need, desire or hope of the human race. Because I will not sell, I have to go out and beg, borrow or steal money to give away. I have been cursed, discussed, boycotted, and talked to and talked about, lied to and lied about, held up, hung up, robbed and nearly ruined by government and the only reason I cling to life is to see what in hell is coming next!*

Although written over half a century ago, this little story resonates well with 21<sup>st</sup> Century complaints about government regulations.

Judge Pearl Levi Lincoln died at his home, following a brief illness, on August 23, 1956, just one week shy of his eighty-sixth birthday. His obituary in the Capital Times naturally highlighted his public career – three terms as Richland County District Attorney; two terms as Richland Center Mayor, during which the first city auditorium in the state was constructed; and seventeen years as Richland County Judge, during which time he helped establish the County Children’s Board, was a member of the committee which drafted the state’s children’s code, and served as the county’s first juvenile judge. The obituary also noted that Judge Lincoln frequently wrote letters for the Capital Times Voice of the People column. The funeral service was held at the Trinity Methodist Church. The family suggested, in lieu of flowers, that contributions be made to the Judge Lincoln Memorial Fund of the Richland County Historical Society.

Grace Garrison Lincoln survived her husband by almost fourteen years. She died at age 99 of old age May 17, 1970. Grace’s obituary in the Richland Observer naturally recited her significant involvement in community affairs, especially through the Women’s Club and the Richland Center Federation of Women’s Clubs. The list of accomplishments is impressive, including development of the old Carnegie Library (1905), the City Auditorium (1913), the Richland Hospital (1924), a city swimming pool (1920s), and promotion of Krouskop, Strickland and Westside Parks. Grace Lincoln had been a vital force in the establishment of the Richland County Historical Museum in the courthouse in the early 1930s. Grace had also been a frequent correspondent to the Richland Observer, often contributing articles about flower gardens and creating and maintaining a beautiful house yard. One of her last philanthropic acts was the donation of Garrison Park to her hometown, Lone Rock, in 1967.

### *A Postscript*

### **Garrison and Mora Lincoln**

Garrison Levi Lincoln, son of Pearl and Grace Lincoln, was born December 14, 1906. Garry, as he was known, attended the city schools, graduating from Richland Center High School in 1924. In 1921 Garrison had acquired a radiophone, an electronic device which allowed two way voice communications by radio waves. Garry’s “radiotelephone” was reputed to be the first one in Richland Center. Garry kept up this hobby for many years. Garry had also become a well accomplished flutist; no doubt inheriting this talent from his mother.

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Page 7 Garry enrolled in the University of Wisconsin to study electrical engineering, a logical choice, given his interest in radio waves and wireless communication. But, Mora Lincoln explained, he abandoned this major after a fellow student was injured in an experiment. Garry was afraid that he might hurt himself or others while working with electricity. While he was in Madison, Garry met Mora Himel, a home economics student from Park Ridge, Illinois. Mora explained that they met while she was decorating store windows to earn money. After he graduated with a Bachelors degree, Garry found the depression era job market very difficult. Consequently, he enrolled in a master's program in sociology. He received his master's degree in 1931; his thesis described the Poor Relief Program in Richland County, 1925-1931. By this time, of course, his father had been elected Richland County Judge and was supervising the dispersion of several categories of pensions. Garry found his first employment in Hayward in Sawyer County, where he worked with the relief program.

Mora Himel and Garrison Lincoln were married in Park Ridge, Illinois, April 15, 1933. The newlyweds returned to Hayward, where Garry continued to work in the Sawyer County Welfare Department. In a few years Garry looked for a teaching position and found one in Sheboygan, where he taught a variety of social studies courses in the high school for three years, 1937-1939. Then the couple moved to Madison, where Garry tried to obtain a teaching position in a Madison high school. This quest continued for several years before success was achieved.

When the United States was dragged into World War II by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Garry's talent for operating short wave radios became very valuable. First, he was employed at Truax Field in Madison to teach radio to air force personnel. Later, he transferred to the Great Lakes Naval base near Chicago, where he continued the same line of work. Mora said that Garry really enjoyed training the navy personnel. During the war, Mora remained in Madison.

In 1947, after years of effort, Garry obtained a teaching position at Madison East High School. Officially, he was a social studies teacher, but once the administrators learned how versatile he was at teaching, he was called upon in emergencies to lead a great variety of classes. Once, Garry even taught a chemistry class. Mora did occasional teaching, too, of home economics classes for adults at the Madison Area Technical College. Garry remained at East High school until his retirement in 1972.

Having achieved occupational stability, Garry and Mora began to build their home on lots they had acquired on Lake Monona. Mora described the build-it-yourself construction process as proceeding very slowly because they sometimes had to wait while they saved money to acquire needed materials. Mora reported that she did the taping and finishing of the drywall because Garry did not enjoy that task. Mora said that she studied many books as they built, to assure that they were following the proper procedures. The evidence that they built well, if slowly, still stands today!

In 1972, after twenty-five years on the faculty of East High, Garry retired. He told Mora that the money they had been investing in the stock market should be used to provide scholarships to graduates of Richland County high school to enable them to enroll in higher education. In the 1960s, Mora had begun to manage their stock portfolio, educating herself about the market through extensive reading. After Garrison's death in 1995, the Garrison Lincoln Foundation was established to dispense the scholarship funds. This assures that generations of Richland County graduates will receive generous assistance in furthering their education.

*[NOTE: This was a two part series which originated in the April, 2015 edition of the AKEY BrAKEY News]*

Consider a **"DAY TRIPPER"** to the **Museum at 1005 Wisconsin Avenue** [The Boscobel Depot](#)



**The Boscobel Chamber of Commerce has established a tourist information center in the front office of the building.**

Since the construction of the "old depot" in 1857, the Boscobel Depot was the "heartbeat of the area". It served as the marshalling point of 2,000 plus young enlisted men of the Union Army and again in subsequent years of W.W.I and W.W.II. It also served the area with food and industrial goods, as well as travel-through station. Included among notable people entering the City were the two traveling salesmen, Samuel E. Hill and John H. Nicholson, who began the writings of the Gideon Bible, as well as John Blaine who left the City for a 3-term governorship of Wisconsin and later adversary for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Boscobel Depot has recently been restored and will again serve the community as a very functional building with the conversion of its interior into a "Turn-of-the-Century Railroad" and "Early Rural American Walk-through Museum".

OPEN on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

For more information call **608-375-2672**

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

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

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

Introduced in this edition and what will hopefully provide for ongoing articles with highlights covering various topics of interest.

\*\* excerpted from <http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/1906-4.htm>

### **THE FIRST COURT HOUSE IN RICHLAND COUNTY and DIFFICULTIES IN LOCATING THE COUNTY SEAT**

- The assembling of the board of supervisors and the installation of the various public officials were naturally the first work attending the organization of Richland County. These events occurred on the first day of May, 1850, and the first entry upon the records of the board of supervisors in and for the county, is as follows:  
*"In pursuance of an act of the state of Wisconsin, represented in Senate and Assembly, 'to organize the county of Richland,' approved February 7, 1850, an especial meeting of the board of supervisors, in and for said county, was held at the house of Alex Smith, in the town of Richmond, in the county and state aforesaid, on the first day of May, A. D. 1850, said first day of May being the day designated in said act, that from and after which the county of Richland should be organized for judicial purposes, and should enjoy all the privileges and immunities of the other counties of the state."*
- At the time of this organization the county was divided into three towns, and the first board of supervisors who were empowered to handle the reins of the new government were John H. Price of Buena Vista, E. H. Dyre of Richmond, and Adam Byrd, of Richwood. Of this board, the first named was chosen president, and John Rutan, clerk.
- It was provided by the act organizing the county that the county business should be transacted at Richmond until a permanent county seat should be located; and as the county had no courthouse, nor place wherein to transact even the moderate amount of business that then occupied the attention of its officers, the board ordered that "Marvin White be allowed the sum of \$90 for the use of a house in Richmond, for one year, for the purpose of the county officials," the same to be considered as the county courthouse until more definite arrangements could be made.
- A very important duty in connection with county affairs at about this time was that of locating the seat of justice in the newly-organized county. As is more fully explained in the chapter on "Settlement and Organization," the "session law" which defined the boundaries and authorized the organization of Richland County, provided further that at the general election held in November, 1851, the votes of the people should determine the location of the county seat. There were four voting precincts in the county--Richmond, Richland City, Richwood and Rockbridge.
- At their meeting, held July 26, 1852, they had entered upon their minutes that "It is unanimously decided by this board that Richland Center is the proper place for transacting the business of the county." The same day the following resolution was spread upon the minutes:  
*"Resolved, That the board accept of twenty village lots, and also a certain building, to be used for county purposes, of Ira S. Haseltine, in the village of Richland Center, in accordance with a bond, dated October 24, 1851, held by the county of Richland against said Haseltine. And it is also ordered that all the county business of Richland County be hereafter transacted in the said village of Richland Center, and the officers thereof shall forthwith repair thither for that purpose."*
- The seat of justice having been located at Richland Center, the first requisite in the embryo town was buildings in which to hold court and house the county officials. The want was temporarily supplied by the offer of Mr. Haseltine, he furnishing temporary buildings for the purpose; but the house in which court was held was too small for the purpose intended, owing to the rapid increase in population and the consequent swelling of the volume of business done at the county offices. Hence, new buildings were erected, but as may readily be inferred, they were simple and in keeping with their surroundings. The courthouse was built in 1856; it was a frame structure, two stories high, having a frontage of about twenty-eight feet and a depth of about thirty-six feet. The court and jury rooms were on the upper floor, while the offices for the county official's were below. It was a commodious and airy building, a model one for its size, well built and nicely finished both within and without, and it presented a very good appearance. It was erected by Ira Andrews, and was in continuous use until destroyed by fire, in April, 1860. The jail was built the same year. It was an unpretentious, though substantial wooden building, one story in height and constructed of hewed red-elm logs, thoroughly spiked with nine iron bolts through every log, and each bolt running through three logs. Although built of wood, there was never an escape from it on account of its weak construction, and it housed the county's criminals until 1868, when it was succeeded by a stone structure. Then it was torn down and the logs were used as fire-wood.
- In the spring of 1860 the courthouse building at Richland Center was destroyed by fire, and the board of supervisors entered into a contract with Ira S. Haseltine for the erection of a new brick courthouse on the site of the old structure. This was a plain but substantial structure, and it was arranged to be used only for court purposes, the county officers' apartments being in separate buildings, on land adjoining the courthouse. These buildings answered the needs of the county for many years.

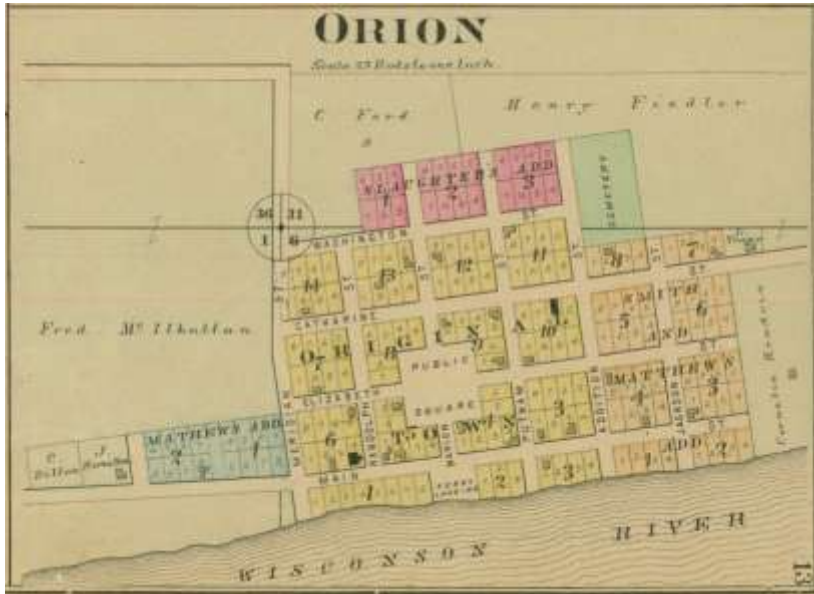
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Page 4 The following article, written by an old pioneer, was published in the Platteville Independent-American, in March, 1855, and is a very good description of Richland County, as it was at that time:

*"Richland County lies on the north side of the Wisconsin River, and includes a territory of twenty-four miles square with the addition of some small fractional townships bordering on the river. To the stranger it presents an appearance anything but inviting settlement and cultivation."*

Another excerpt identifies the following... *"Richmond is situated on the fourth principal meridian, directly north of Platteville, and on the Wisconsin river opposite the thriving village of Muscoda, at which point the great Milwaukee and Mississippi railroad is about to establish their depot, and its location being in the geographical center of the southern line of the county, it will no doubt become a town of no little importance."*

At the next meeting of the board of supervisors, held in November, 1860, a petition was presented by the citizens of the town of Richmond, praying that the name of that town be changed to that of Orion. This prayer was granted, and the town has ever since been known by that cognomen.



**Orion as it was in 1895 accessed from the Maps link of the Richland County History Room on the Brewer Library website.**

**What about the Early History of the Town of Orion in southern Richland County where the unincorporated village of Orion {originally was known as Richmond} is still located on present day Highway 60 -- two miles east of Highway 80 and eight miles west from Gotham, WI.**

## **Chapter 28 - Town of Orion.**

The town of Orion lies in the southern tier of towns the second from the east line of the county, and is bounded on the north by Richland; on the east by Buena Vista; on the south by Iowa County, from which it is separated by the Wisconsin River, and on the west by Eagle. It embraces the territory of congressional township 9 north, range 1 east, except the eastern tier of sections; and also that portion of township 8 north, range 1 east, which lies north of the Wisconsin River. The surface of the town is rather broken and inclined to be hilly; yet there are many fine farms here and an abundance of natural timber. A large part of the town is upon the rich bottom lands of the Wisconsin River, and no finer scenery, nor more fertile, fruitful land can be found. The census of 1880 gave the town a population of 733. There are 102 farms here in a good state of cultivation.

\*\* excerpted from <http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/history.htm>

### **Early Settlement.**

The first settlers within the limits now comprising the town of Orion were: John R Smith and his son-in-law, Thomas Mathews, the former a native of Kentucky, the later of Tennessee. They came from Grant county, in October, 1842, and claimed fraction No. 6, town 8, range 1 west, and fraction No. 5, town 8, range 1 east, entering the land two or three years later. After they had entered the land, they sold a half interest to Orrin E Barber, and laid out the village plat of the present village of Orion. The plat then laid upon fraction No. 5, town 8, range 1 east, and contained fourteen blocks of eight lots each. This was the initial step of founding the village. Its history is treated at length in the proper place.



**Check out the Picture link on the Brewer Library website and stop by the Visitor Center to view the display on the Richland Center High School Band**