



# The AKEY BRAKEY News

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a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

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## MISFORTUNE BROUGHT THE PEASE STORE TO RICHLAND CENTER

By Dr. Jerry Bower

The Pease Store came to Richland Center by an interesting set of misfortunes. The Pease brothers were Dexter Everett (born 1832) and David Glacier (born 1834), who was usually called “Glacier.” Both were born in Weston, Vermont, where their parents operated a profitable dairy farm. The boys received a good education in the local schools. Beginning in early 1854, Dexter worked in the retail trade in Boston for about eighteen months, during which he studied the operation of the stores where he worked. The Pease brothers came of age at a time when many New England young men were moving west to seek better opportunities.

August 28, 1855, turned out to be a fateful day for the Pease Brothers. Dexter’s father gave him \$1,000.00 “to use as he wished.” Dexter wrote in his Journal, “I found I am of too independent and ambitious nature to hang about home and depend on my parents when I have heard so much of the West and the advantages over the East for a young man with small capital to build himself up on his own efforts. So Brother Glacier and myself concluded to go West and look over the possibilities.”

The very next day the two started for Wisconsin via the railroad. After three days they arrived in Chicago. In his Journal Dexter described their trip from Chicago to Rockbridge as follows. “We arrived in Chicago and left there by boat for Milwaukee, where we stayed overnight and left for Madison on the Milwaukee and Mississippi R.R. We arrived in Madison and found it a beautiful city; from there we went by stage to Black Earth, where we stayed all night. . . . From here we took the stage to Richland Center, arriving about midnight. We got up in the morning and found the place to be a small and almost insignificant village. We were disappointed as we expected it to be quite a city. From here we went to Rockbridge on foot.”

Why did the Pease brothers make tiny Rockbridge their destination? They came to visit their aunt, Mrs. Sarah Haseltine, the mother of Ira Haseltine, the founder of Richland Center. Soon, Dexter explained that they would stay only a few days and then move on to Dubuque, Iowa, where their cousins were encouraging the brothers to join them in setting up a general store.

Their uncle, Orrin Haseltine, the founder of Rockbridge in 1849, tried to convince them to stay and set up a general store in the village. “No,” they were determined to move on to Iowa. So they built a slab wood raft, packed it with their belongings and some wares purchased from Uncle Orrin, and prepared to float to Dubuque. But a tremendous storm delayed their departure by three days.

When the brothers set out, the Pine River was swollen from the heavy rains and Uncle Orrin warned them to be careful. They made swift progress in the fast-flowing current, but that made controlling their raft difficult. As they rounded one sharp bend, the current caught the raft, pushed it against the bank, and quickly overturned it. Dexter and Glacier worked hard to save themselves and a portion of their baggage. In a couple of hours, Uncle Orrin showed up with a team and wagon to take them back to Rockbridge. During the trip Uncle Orrin renewed his arguments for them to stay in Rockbridge. This time, perhaps sobered by their close call, the Pease brothers agreed.

In early October, 1855, the brothers bought some lots in Rockbridge and arranged to have a store built. In dividing their duties, they decided that Dexter would travel East to purchase the stock for their venture, while Glacier remained in Rockbridge to supervise construction of their building. Dexter’s Journal indicates that, for his first trip east, he had to walk all the way to Madison, carrying a heavy valise, to catch the train {cont’d pg 3}

# Memories of Attending and / or Teaching in a One-Room Schoolhouse

Compiled by Delta Kappa Gamma – Lambda Chapter April 2000

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## FONDEST MEMORIES OF ATTENDING A ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE:

by Carletta Heide

*I attended Berger School. This school was located at the bottom of Bashford Hill between Richland Center and Boaz. The school was moved when State Highway 14 was widened from two to four lanes. The school building is now the Dayton Town Hall. I have special memories of Berger. One of my favorites is "playing House" on the big rocks that were part of the hillside behind the school. We brought toy dishes to play with. We made "food" from those fuzzy-leafed plants that grow close to the ground.*

*Did you ever walk with a book on your head in order to learn correct posture? It can be done because we did it. We walked in a line and if we held ourselves straight as we walked the book did not fall off. Who can forget sleigh riding down the hill on the pieces of galvanized steel? Nowadays liability issues and safety would scare us all away from that. Some kids had sleds and saucers. Remember taking a goiter pill every week? They were a dark red color and a dry large tablet.*

*My teachers were Shirley Braithwaite and Lois Anderson. Both were excellent pianists so we sang. Perhaps all schools did. We had red and blue hardcover songbooks. I was able to get a copy of each of these books but do not know if it was at an auction or antique shop. We also used these same books for posture practice. We also played musical chairs. Do you remember the red sweeping compound that we used to use? It had a smell all its own, and it did shine the floor when we swept.*

*I remember listening to the baseball World Series on the radio. Those were the days of the Milwaukee Braves. I remember it was a special treat. I remember Mr. Fred Simpson (county supervisor of rural schools) came out and listened with us. We had two outhouses at the top of the hill behind the school. They had knotholes in the back. We would stuff toilet paper in them so no one could look in. I remember the sound of the curtain squeaking on the heavy wire when we had the programs.*

*Penmanship cards were always on the wall. I remember we had to do each letter in cursive (upper and lower case) until we could do it correctly. I must have made hundreds of capital D's before I got it right. And don't I make a wonderful capital D? I credit my good penmanship to this early training.*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*As you can read elsewhere in this issue of the **AKELY BrAKEY** News, the Historical Society has been able to make donations to Richland County history projects. The Society has been able to do so because, over the years, it has received bequests from several estates. In addition, the membership dues and donations to the 'The Save the Bell Tower' campaign, from our first Newsletter, added about \$900.00 to the Society's funds. In view of our fiscal picture, the Directors, in their recent meeting, voted to contribute \$5,000.00 to the RCPAC for the City Auditorium restoration project and an additional \$500.00 to the preservation of Haley Rinehart's artwork. Supporting the preservation of local history is one of the goals of the Historical Society, and I am humbled that we have been able to support three projects, so far, this year.*

**Jerry Bower**

## Richland County

### Historical Society

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## Preservation of Rinehart's work underway

excerpts from the RICHLAND OBSERVER

By Dawn Kiefer

Some people feel the need to preserve history.

The late Halsey Rinehart was one such person. He was inspired to draw and paint area subject matter that was disappearing or already had disappeared.

About half of the 50 or so known drawings and paintings created by Halsey Rinehart were bequeathed to Schmitt Woodland Hills, where he and his wife Gyneth resided until they passed away. The rest of his creations are known to exist in private collections.

The preservation project got a needed boost from the donation of \$700 from the Richland County Historical Society, but further funds are needed for new mats and frames and for the payment of fees to Opacolor of Madison, which is already in the process of professionally photographing the collection. The photos will be placed on disks for safekeeping and will be used to produce note cards, life sized prints and calendars to be sold to benefit the Schmitt Woodland Hills Benevolent Fund, for Schmitt residents who are running out of funds. It is hoped that the first reproduced artwork will be available for purchase sometime this fall.

Dr. Jerry Bower, president of the Richland County Historical Society, said its members are pleased to help preserve Halsey Rinehart's work. "The project fits perfectly with our objective of preserving and promoting local history," Bower said. He noted that Halsey and Gyneth Rinehart were active members of the Historical Society and that Halsey was on its board of directors for a long time.

Loft Houck said that the reframed artwork will be on display at Schmitt Woodland Hills on a rotating basis and the possibility is being considered of temporarily loaning some pieces for display at other area locations or as the focal point of Historical Society events. Pictured below are Marilyn Rinehart, Dr. Jerry Bower and Marilyn Loft-Houck - Schmitt Woodland Hills Development Committee.



## Richland County Historical Society donates to UW-Richland

The Richland County Historical Society on April 7 donated \$500 to support a Richland area oral history project being conducted by UW-Richland assistant professor of history Dr. Aharon Zorea and his students.

Dr. Jerry Bower, UW-Richland emeritus professor of history and president of the Richland County Historical Society, presented the check to Lorna Dilley, representing the UW-Richland Foundation and Dr. Aharon Zorea of UW-Richland.

The funds will be used to support the on-going oral history project by providing supplies and stipends to students who are transcribing the stories collected.



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{cont'd from Pg 1} However, the construction crews were hard at work extending the railroad west to the Mississippi. In May 1856 Dexter had to walk only to Lone Rock to catch a train.

The Pease Brothers General Store in Rockbridge was very successful. The Haseltine Mills—for sawing timber and milling grain—drew a steady stream of customers to the village. The brothers accepted local produce as in-kind payment for their goods because cash was in short supply on the frontier. When they had gathered a load of dried and fresh apples and animal hides, the brothers sold them in Dubuque or St. Louis, depending on the best price. In October 1857, after nearly two years of operation, the brothers balanced their books and discovered that, "if debts on account prove good," they had netted \$3,500.00. [This would have been \$73,500.00 in 2006 dollars.]

In 1858 the Pease brothers decided to move their operation to Richland Center. Evidently the community had grown sufficiently to overcome their initial negative impression. The store started out in rented quarters at the corner of Court and Center Streets. [Today Center Street is Central Avenue.] The next year they purchased lots directly west of their location, on Court Street, and had a large frame building constructed. After they moved in, Dexter and his wife, Fidelia, lived upstairs in an apartment. In the mid 1860s Glacier left the store to pursue other ventures, leaving Dexter and Fidelia in charge.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in 1899, Dexter and Delia decided to transform their store. First, they moved the frame building from Court to Mill Street and turned it into an apartment house that is still standing today, directly behind the City Auditorium. In its place they built a handsome brick store that opened to both Court and Main Streets. Today Harlan's Furniture & Appliance Store operates in this building.

When the Pease Store closed in the early 1960s, it had been in operation in Richland Center for over a Century. That's a long history built upon a rainstorm and an upset raft.