The AKEY BrAKEY News

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

October, 2023 Volume #15 – Issue # 3 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

THE RICHLAND CENTER WOMAN'S CLUB AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE

By Jerry Bower

{I used extensively Margaret Scott, ***Richland Center Wisconsin, A History*** *in writing this sketch. The page numbers included in the text are from this book.}*

During the Nineteenth Century, an era without movie theaters or television, many clubs, lodges, and study groups were organized to bring people together for intellectual stimulation and entertainment. Some of the clubs had a political agenda that they pushed through their club activities. This sketch describes one of the clubs formed locally—the Richland Center Woman's Club and its work to promote allowing women to vote. A GAR Chapter (Grand Army of The Republic) was created just a few months before the RCWC, in 1882. The GAR was formed to help Civil War veterans, who fought for the United States, secure their pensions and health care.

In the first half of the Nineteenth Century, Women's Clubs gradually developed a platform that addressed the issues that most concerned women. The Anti-Slavery campaign topped the list. The temperance issue was not far behind, pushed by dozens of Women's Christian Temperance Union Clubs. A large percentage of the nation's churches hosted a WCTU chapter.

Women suffrage was added to the reform platform in 1848 during the famous Seneca Falls New York Convention. With the leadership of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, woman suffrage was included in the resolutions adopted by the convention. However, the slavery issue and the Civil /war (1861-1865) kept women suffrage and other reforms on the back burner for about four decades.

In September 1882, women delegates from all over Wisconsin met in Madison to organize the Wisconsin State Suffrage Association. The WSSA replaced the Woman's Suffrage Association, formed in 1867. The WSA had lost heart after defeats of a suffrage referendum in 1868 and 1881. Among the delegates at the initial WSSA meeting were fourteen women from Richland Center. They made up 40% of the thirty-five delegates at this meeting !

The major proponents of the local WC were the families of David and Norman James and of Fred Bowen. The evidence for this assertion are the facts that the organizational meeting took place in the parlor of Laura James on June 2, 1882, and that Julia Bowen was elected President. Eleven married women attended the session which adopted a constitution, by-laws, and elected officers. The officers were: Julia Bowen, President; Georgiana James and Maggie Mattesen, Vice Presidents; and Victoria Layton, Recording Secretary.

The charter members of the WC deliberately left the word *suffrage* out of the title of this new club. This was done because the words "Woman's suffrage" were fighting words for the vast majority of men. Men believed that women should remain entirely in the "domestic sphere," taking care of the home, doing laundry, preparing meals and many other domestic duties. The charter of the WC stated that its purpose was "to aid social, intellectual, and philanthropic interests. Of course, as it turned out, the ladies of the WC fooled no one about the true purpose of the club. Perhaps surprisingly, most of the husbands of the WC members supported their wives' efforts.

For example, when Norman James was in the Assembly in 1885, he successfully sponsored a bill that permitted women to vote in school elections. Julia Bowen was the first female elected to the Richland Center School Board, where she served for over twenty years, including as President of the Board. ***Continued on Page 7***

The husbands also helped by hiring housekeepers to assist in running their household. The Bowen's home even had a hidden stairway that led to the servants' quarters. Husbands also purchased updated appliances when they came on the market. This was especially true in the 1890s, when electricity gradually became available throughout the city.

However, the WC campaign faced well-financed opposition from the so-called "Liquor Lobby." It is easy to understand why brewers and drinkers were concerned about women gaining the right to vote. The WCTU had decades of experience in calling for limits, or even total prohibition, on the availability and consumption of alcoholic beverages. Congressman G. M. Woodward, who served Richland County in the House of Representatives, responded to a note from the WC about suffrage with, "I am not yet able to see in what way suffrage would benefit women." *(90)* The Liquor Lobby managed to defeat both suffrage and temperance until the turmoil of World War I, 1914-1918.

During the First World War, women ran an effective campaign to win constitutional amendments for both Prohibition (ratified in 1919) and Suffrage (ratified in 1920). Women withheld their support for the U.S. war effort until President Woodrow Wilson agreed to propose and support a suffrage amendment. Some women used a spectacular tactic to draw attention to their campaign; they chained themselves to a White House fence and later went on a hunger strike when arrested !

The tactics used by the WC were certainly less dramatic than those used in the nation's capital. The local ladies used an argument employed by the colonists in the independence struggle with Britain. They argued that "taxation without representation was unconstitutional." During the Fall of 1886 they sent a petition elaborating this argument to the legislature in Madison. The legislators did not respond to the petition. The WC operated a " rest tent" for women and children at the county fair. Naturally, they gave pro-suffrage pamphlets to all visitors and distributed the literature all over the fairgrounds. The minutes of the WC's weekly meetings were published in the *Republican and Observer.* This assured that the community remained aware of the suffrage issue. Periodically the WC invited a well-known suffrage advocate to address their meeting. An example was Susan B. Anthony's speech to an audience jam-packed in a school house in November 1886.

The WC did not limit its activities to Richland County. Shortly after its creation, the WC was identified as "the first woman's club in the state and the first formed to promote the cause of women's suffrage." (90) An example of its work beyond the local area is that the RCWC hosted the first convention of the Wisconsin State Suffrage Association in June 1884. The following year, Mrs. Emma Bascom, wife of John Bascom, President of the University of Wisconsin, wrote, "Throughout the state your little city has become famous for intelligent and progressive sentiments." *(90)*

The original members of the WC always made sure that their activities were "lady like." But the same cannot be said about the second generation of women who joined the WC. The best example is Ada James, daughter of David and Laure James. Ada quickly became disenchanted with her mother's generation's kid-gloves campaigning. Gradually the younger suffragettes adopted new techniques for getting the word out about the need for women suffrage. Examples of these modern tactics are women speaking on street corners about suffrage, using an airplane to drop leaflets on the state fair and elsewhere, and using a motorcade to draw attention to a gathering of suffragettes.

In the 1890s the city women's clubs began talking about pooling their efforts and resources in a single-minded campaign, rather than having each club do its bit to advance toward the goal. As a result, in March 1898, The Richland Center Federation of Women's Clubs was launched. Primary among the organizing clubs was the WC. Other charter members were the Alpha Circle, a Bible study group; The Shakespeare Club, dedicated to the study of outstanding literature; The Relief Corps, a club that helped Civil War veterans with securing their pensions and health care; and the WCTU; still working toward prohibition. The Federation was responsible for creating and/or promoting three community institutions that are still with us—The Carnegie Library (1905), The City Auditorium (1913), and the Richland Hospital (1924).

The WC was responsible for many more civic improvements in addition to those just mentioned.
If you are interested in securing more information, I recommend a visit to the County History Room, located on the second floor of the Brewer Public Library.
Or secure a copy of Margaret Scott's book, ***Richland Center, Wisconsin, A History*** (1972) and use its excellent index.

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A Warm WELCOME to those with NEW Memberships to the RICHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY for the of 2023. ** a Lifetime membership # additional donation*

** Mark Astemborski   Linda & Ed Chitwood   *Kathleen & Louie Wilson   Rita Dilley*
** Keith & Victoria Ruetten   #Ed & Joy Leinweber   * JoAnn Otto   *Cindy Rasmussen & Dale Mortimer*

\+ +

Fall is the season and over one hundred years ago this was a common site


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

Grain Threshing Crew, Ithaca Township, Richland County, Wisconsin, ca. 1900

https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/5532/

Black and white photograph of a threshing crew of 19 with 12 horses. Shows 5 teams of horses walking in a circle to power the threshing machine. There are large stacks of grain in the back waiting as Lyle Poole, of Gotham, came to the rescue stating that the picture was taken close to the Aubrey Corner in Ithaca. The Derrickson farm home can be seen in this photo. The place was later owned by Jay Hamilton and then by his son Eugene. Mr. Poole remembers the threshing outfit and stated that some of the crew as he remembered them were John Rath, John German, John Nee and William Simpson. Part of a rail fence can be seen on the far right side of the picture.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by *Ken Thiede*

As fall comes upon us and winter is nearing the theme for this edition's insert is about Harvest – farming in the Richland County area.

So the plans to expand at the Akey School Museum are moving into the stage where details are being worked out and our draft will turn into the organization for the spring with information to follow in the January 2024 edition. Coming in 2024 …
A Richland County Agriculture Machinery Exhibit

The AKEY BrAKEY News will also be into the 16th year. What started out as a three page newsletter twice a year with a back cover to promote our membership has since transitioned into a tri-annual twelve page document. Do consider passing this newsletter along to family members and friends by gifting them with the enclosed green slip.

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Check out our website for recent changes and the upgrades with the link to WRCO Broadcasts that has MP3 excerpts from previous 'History Moments' in 2022. These will also appear in the Richland Observer this coming year. 'History Moments' 2023 are broadcasted on 100.9 FM WRCO both Thursday & Sunday with the 'News at Noon'


Richland Center, WI: Republican Observer, 8 Feb 1923.

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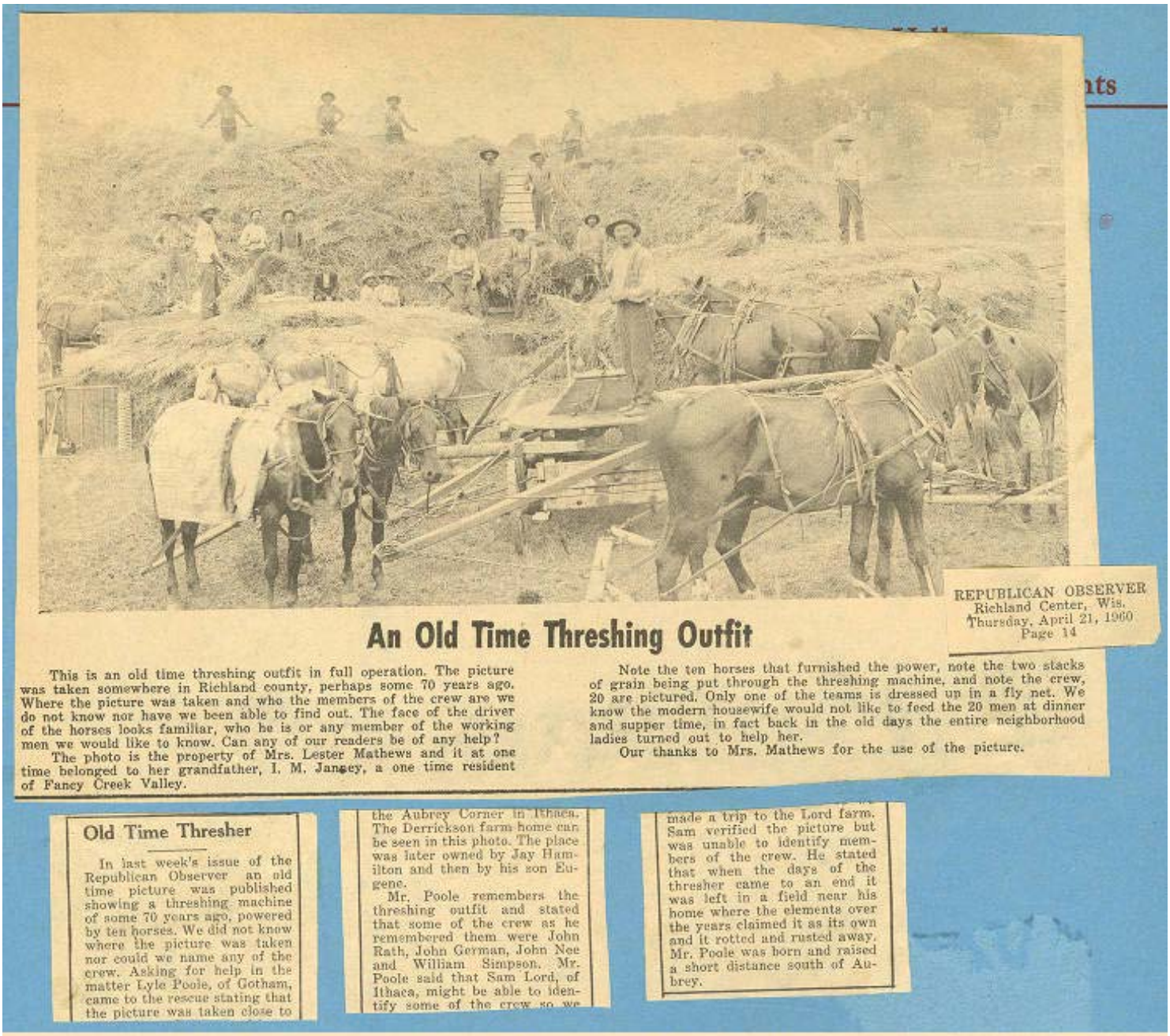

REPUBLICAN OBSERVER
Richland Center, Wis.
Thursday, April 21, 1960
Page 14

An Old Time Threshing Outfit

This is an old time threshing outfit in full operation. The picture was taken somewhere in Richland county, perhaps some 70 years ago. Where the picture was taken and who the members of the crew are we do not know nor have we been able to find out. The face of the driver of the horses looks familiar, who he is or any member of the working men we would like to know. Can any of our readers be of any help?

The photo is the property of Mrs. Lester Mathews and it at one time belonged to her grandfather, I. M. Jansey, a one time resident of Fancy Creek Valley.

Note the ten horses that furnished the power, note the two stacks of grain being put through the threshing machine, and note the crew, 20 are pictured. Only one of the teams is dressed up in a fly net. We know the modern housewife would not like to feed the 20 men at dinner and supper time, in fact back in the old days the entire neighborhood ladies turned out to help her.

Our thanks to Mrs. Mathews for the use of the picture.

Old Time Thresher

In last week's issue of the Republican Observer an old time picture was published showing a threshing machine of some 70 years ago, powered by ten horses. We did not know where the picture was taken nor could we name any of the crew. Asking for help in the matter Lyle Poole, of Gotham, came to the rescue stating that the picture was taken close to the Aubrey Corner in Ithaca. The Derrickson farm home can be seen in this photo. The place was later owned by Jay Hamilton and then by his son Eugene.

Mr. Poole remembers the threshing outfit and stated that some of the crew as he remembered them were John Rath, John German, John Nee and William Simpson. Mr. Poole said that Sam Lord, of Ithaca, might be able to identify some of the crew so we made a trip to the Lord farm. Sam verified the picture but was unable to identify members of the crew. He stated that when the days of the thresher came to an end it was left in a field near his home where the elements over the years claimed it as its own and it rotted and rusted away. Mr. Poole was born and raised a short distance south of Aubrey.

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Richland Center's First Post Office

The building housing the first post office in Richland Center still stands at the age of over 100 years.

This building is now located on the corner of N. Park and East Third streets, just south of the high school. It was built in 1856 for L. D. Gage, who was the first postmaster of Richland Center. He was appointed by President Pierce, and came to Richland Center from Illinois to take charge of the office. He continued to handle the mail until 1861.

The building stood on Church street facing east on what is now the site of the half block long brick building known as the H. T. Bailey block. It now houses the "Dime & Dollar" store. Joseph Kelly owns the building. The post office was located a bit north of the corner of East Court and North Church streets.

The little wooden, one story structure, the small part of the house pictured above, was used by Mr. Gage as a dwelling, his drug store, as well as the post office. Mail was received and dispatched once every two weeks when the office first opened.

In 1883, H. T. Bailey bought the land and the building, moving the structure to its present location and fixed it up into a dwelling, adding a two story addition. It is now owned by Edwin Klockow and at present occupied by Mrs. Shirley Gander and her children.

L. D. Gage was not only the first postmaster of the village but was also the first druggist, first doctor, first abstract office owner and the first suicide. He continued as postmaster until 1861 at which time President Lincoln appointed W. H. Downs and Gage retired to private life remaining a resident of the village until his tragic death in July 1870.

W. H. Downs, the second postmaster, had his office at his home at the corner of South Church and East Seminary streets on the present site of Dick's Pure Oil station, a block east of the Park Hotel. The building was moved to 478 North Main street where it was remodeled and is now owned and occupied by Howard Huffman. On the original site is Dick's Oil station and a part of Ewers Pontiac Motor Co. garage at 191 East Seminary street.

Mr. Downs conducted the office until 1866 when G. L. Laws was appointed and served until 1876. Mr. Downs made Richland Center his home until his death which took place at his home on November 5th, 1877, where he died suddenly while sitting in a chair.

REPUBLICAN OBSERVER
Richland Center, Wis.
Thursday, September 8, 1960
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Richland County History Room, 325 N Central Ave, Richland Center, WI 53581, richlandhistory@gmail.com, (608) 647-6033

Aired on* WRCO *"History Moments"
Week of October 12th & 15th, 2023

Board member Keith Ruetten contributed this article in his 25 May, 2023 post on the History Room FACEBOOK Page

The Pine River School District Number 1 was established in 1868, with S. C. Davis as the chairman, J. B. Brown the clerk, and A. M. Crumbecker the treasurer. The first school building was located where today stands the Westby Co-op Union, on the southwest corner of Hwy 14 & Cty O. This building suffered a fire in 1888, but was repaired and then insured for $150.00. The building had a second fire in 1894, which resulted in a new brick school house (the present building) being constructed by N. O. Wadell.

In 1868 the first teacher at the school was Mr. Harry Howe, who received a salary of $18.00 a month. Eighty-one children attended the school during the first year, and the school year consisted of two terms with students attending for three months during the winter, and three months during the summer. In 1873, for several years the school followed a three-term year, consisting of three winter months, two spring and two fall. Often there would be a different teacher for each term.

By the late 1880s the teacher's salary had risen to $40.00 per month of instruction. Other costs and updates associated with operating the school over the years included furnishing the student with free textbooks, drilling the present well in 1911 for $85.00, new seats for the students in 1916 for $34.80, playground equipment installed, an oil burner installed, modern lighting, updated text and library books, new desks in 1952 for $425.00, and an addition for indoor plumbing in 1958.

In 1952 there were 34 children attending Pine River School and in the ensuing years all the rural school enrollments would continue to decline, resulting in their rural districts being combined with bigger school districts. In 1962 Piner River school Joint District No. 1 was integrated into the Richland School District.

The Pine River School remained in operation, however changes in its cooperation continued. The last three students to graduate from the school in 1967, after attending for all eight grades, were Eunice Crary, Sandy Kintz, and Bill Nee.

In the 1966-1967 school year the Pine River school students and Pauls School students were combined with Piner River School teaching grades first through third, and Pauls School teaching grades fourth through sixth. Betty Wastlick taught at the Pine River School for the last three years that it was in operation 1965-1967.

The school was closed in 1968.

Recently there has been activity at the Pine River Schoolhouse building, with a new metal roof, and new insulated windows being installed.

The wooden bell cupola that once adorned the top of the school house was removed years ago; after the school bell was taken.

people today, in order that the wisdom of today may prove to be a rich inheritance to the generations of the years to come.

Most sincerely yours,

James H. Miner."

An interesting event in the history of the schools of Richland Center was the observance of "Columbus Day," on October 21, 1892, in response to the proclamation of President Harrison. The high-school building was decorated in an artistic manner, the stars and stripes being given the place of honor, and portraits of Columbus were gracefully draped with Spanish flags. An excellent program was rendered in honor of the day, in the forenoon, on the high school campus. In the afternoon a line of march was formed at the schoolhouse, with the pupils of the various departments of the schools in their order, the Grand Army post, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and citizens in line. The procession moved to the court house, where seats had been erected to accommodate the people, and the afternoon program was carried out, including an oration by Prof. David Kinley. The success of the celebration was due in a large measure to the efforts of Prof. Theodore Haney, who was at that time principal of the Richland Center schools, and who, as an educator and an earnest school worker, has had no superiors.

History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Miner 1906

Aired on WRCO *"History Moments"*

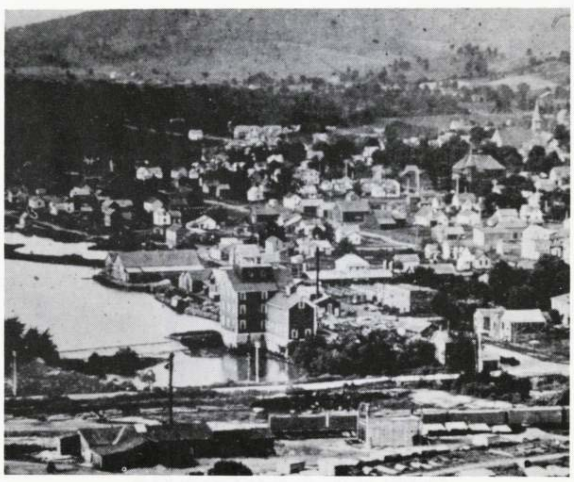
Week of October 13th & 16th , 2022

The first rural school safety patrol to be organized in the county was at the Rocky Branch school taught by Joanne Lawerence. Pictured above are the members of the patrol. First row, left to right: Arlene Walton, Neil Wilmot; second row, left to right: Betty Walton, Arlen Ewers, Loren Heckendorn, Harry Wilmot.

Richland Center, WI: Republican Observer, 27 Nov 1952

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN ?

Back to school with the fallen leaves at Richland Center High School. What time period for the vintage vehicles ?



Richland Center in the 1880s showing the Parfrey flour mill built by Parfrey and Pease in 1872. In the foreground between the two branches of the river the steam mill and wagon shop of Norman L. James.

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Aired on* WRCO *"History Moments"

Week of October 11th & 14th, 2023

https://www.cardcow.com/514410/richland-center-wisconsin-wild-ginseng-advertisement/

From the popular "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiago?" 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.

WHERE **in Richland County** is ***BALMORAL*** located?

https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/14245/rec/5 located above on the south central border
Balmoral Store, section 26, — Eagle Township, Richland County, Wisconsin, ca. 1900.

"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.

http://www.usgenweb.info/wirichland/books/1906-4.html

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

… No community in these days can be said to have reached the progressive state until that infallible index to prosperous conditions--a newspaper--makes its periodical visits to an intelligent constituency. But it was not always thus. Fifty years ago "journalists" were not so plentiful as they are today, and the appetite for printed news was not sufficiently keen to cause one to endure martyrdom in attempting to "fill a long-felt want." So, at the time of its organization, Richland county could not boast of a newspaper published within her confines. In November, 1855, however, a sheet, six-column folio in size, made its appearance in Richland Center with the expressive title, Richland County Observer, under the management of Israel Sanderson, who continued its publication with varying success until 1858, when the office and paper were sold to John Walworth. Mr. Sanderson removed to Platteville, Grant county, where he established the Grant County Witness, remained connected with that paper a year or two, and then drifted into southern Illinois. He was a man of ability, and a clear and forcible writer. John Walworth remained in charge of the paper until about 1864, when J. H. Waggoner became editor and proprietor, and the subsequent history of the publication is given in a succeeding chapter. …

… The second newspaper venture in the county was made at Richland Center in 1859, which was the establishment of the Richland County Democrat, under the management of William P. Furey. It was a neatly printed seven-column folio, and it continued in existence for about one year, when it died for want of patronage. The material was then purchased by John Walworth and added to the office of the Observer. William P. Furey was originally from Bellefonte, Penn., and was a printer by trade. He came west in 1858 and worked for a short time in a newspaper office at Darlington, Wis. During the winter of 1858-9 he went to Warren. Ill., and worked for a few months in what is now the Sentinel office, after which he came to Richland Center and established the Richland County Democrat. After remaining a number of years in the west, he went back to Pennsylvania and engaged in the publishing business at Altoona. In 1880 his health began to fail, being attacked by that dread disease consumption. In January, 1881, accompanied by his wife, he went to San Antonio, Tex. hoping to benefit his health, but had hardly reached the place before he died. He was a man of a great deal of both natural and acquired ability, and a very able and brilliant writer and speaker. …

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1 – This is the tenth installment of an insert page for the AKEY BrAKEY newsletter with a Special Thanks for this October issue to the Rasmussen Family. Also recognizing the previous April 2023 by Keith Ruetten with an article on Vern Geishert as well as all of those having provided materials for past AKEY BrAKEY inserts.

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

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

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

* *

Historical Society members Craig & Judy Rasmussen provided the contact for the family farm located northeast of Gotham. Daughter Cindy shares her story from interviewing her Dad Richard Rasmussen about life on the farm and what it was like in those days.

Richard Rasmussen was the youngest of a large farm family in central Iowa. *His story excerpted as follows :*

At harvest time, we used a grain binder to cut the oats, and then brought them to the machine that wrapped them into bundles and kicked them out. We had to shock the oats so they'd dry out and that would take a week to ten days, as I remember. After a little while, we'd pick up the bundles and take them to the threshing machine, and that did the same thing as the combine. Most of the straw, if it wasn't blown in the stack when they threshed it, was left in a winrow, and we baled it and put it in the barn. All the siblings who farmed worked together and went from farm to farm harvesting the oats. Mom always got dinner for that whole bunch.

I would guess that whoever was on the farm before we got it hauled loose hay, and that was done a lot for a long time. There used to be a big folding door on the end of most barns, with a track that stuck out the end of the building. Some people used grapple forks (that hung from the track). Someone would drop the grapple forks down to the wagon outside below the track and stick it in the loose hay. Either a horse or a tractor would pull it into the barn (with the track and pulley), and someone would trip it (pull a rope to release the tines), and the barbs would come out of the hay and drop it. Grapple bars could also take eight bales up at a time, or something like that. There were usually six tines on a wheel, and they'd stick into the bales, and when they got up in the barn, someone would trip it.

When I got a little older, we didn't use that system. We got a baler. My job was to stack the bales on the hay racks, then we'd have to unload them and stack them in the barn. Spring was spent getting the ground ready to plant. We seldom applied fertilizer to hay fields. We also planted corn, soybeans, and oats. Two-row equipment was all we had at first. Then we got bigger tractors, four-row cultivators, and planters."

In the late 1950's, a young couple from central Iowa went to a Milwaukee Braves game with friends; they stopped in Platteville and read a brochure about farms for sale. They talked with Dale Marshall, went to several places, and ended up buying a farm → northeast of Gotham, Wisconsin.

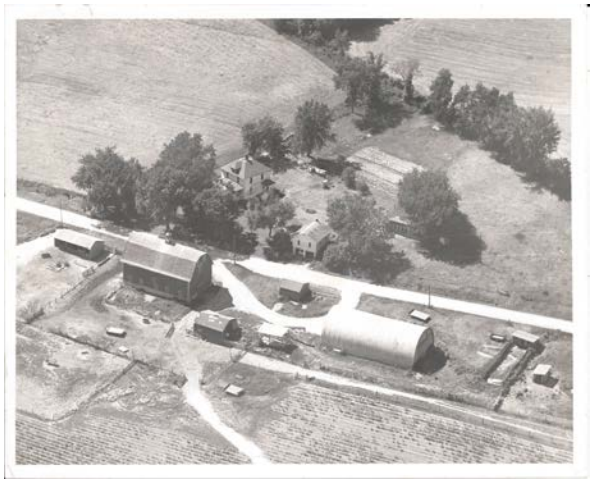
The farm was purchased from Otto Hammerly and was furnished with the dairy cattle and some farm equipment including an international tractor. Soon after I purchased an Oliver 88 tractor. We milked the dairy cattle with machines and carried the milk to the milk house in cans and placed them in a cold water bath which was picked up twice a day by the cheese factory trucks. Eventually we put in a bulk tank then added a pipeline. A year after, we added a small herd of sheep and did the shearing ourselves. In a few years we would sell the dairy cattle then raising both beef and hogs.

"In Wisconsin, I had one of the first combines around here. It was an old Allis Chalmers. As I remember, it had a six-foot head on it, which means it could get two rows. We had two or three big farmers who had their own combines, and they did custom combining. I did some of that too, but not as much until I got a self-propelled combine. Then I did quite a little bit with that Gleaner. Farms were a lot bigger in Iowa than here at that time. There were a lot of four-row planters and cultivators when we moved here, but not in Iowa. You'd think it would be the other way around. Farmers in Wisconsin were too busy milking cows; there were only small dairy farms in Iowa that provided milk for towns and such. Farming has changed quite a bit since then.

Everything's bigger. Trains used to haul grain and a lot of things, but I don't know what all they haul now. The train in Gotham used to run twice a day, if I remember right, and it ran from Madison to Minneapolis, but I could be wrong.

There were more businesses in Gotham … a saw mill, a grocery store, and a post office farther down on Hwy 60."

While farming, Richard worked for Elmer Stibbe doing road maintenance for the Buena Vista and Orion townships. As for how he learned to operate the road grader, Richard said, "Elmer just put me on it, showed me the levers to push, and this and that and the other. Of course, almost all the roads at that time were gravel roads. I spent a lot of time on that grader.



As for the moments in his life he relishes the most? "I guess it would be the meeting with Mom and the marriage after that. We met at an RYP dance. Rural Young People. Shirley was teaching school, and when we became engaged, then she had to quit teaching."

AFTER THAT, THE FAMILY GOT BIGGER, FARMING GOT BIGGER, …AND THE WORLD GOT SMALLER.

Threshing in the Valley [*last years'*] 2022 Edition Puts Old Iron to Work by Larry Scheckel

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

A 1941 Farmall H tractor pulls the 1936 McCormick-Deering grain binder.

Farmers have come a long way from the time of the flail and the threshing floor, but the goal has never changed: Separate the oats grain from its stalk. Threshing day on Labor Day, September 5, 2022, brought back a lot of memories from my youth in the 1940s and '50s on the 238-acre Scheckel farm outside of Seneca, in the heart of Crawford County, Wisconsin.

Fortunately, there is a place to relive those youthful days. It's on the Monsignor Michael Gorman farm off Highway 171 between Boaz and Rolling Ground, on the western side of **Richland County.** The 250-acre farm has been in the Gorman family since 1857, handed down through generations of Irish immigrants. It is located in the Driftless Area, among God's most beautiful creations.

The satisfaction of standing shocks

There can be no threshing day unless there are oats shocks to thresh. To that end, a bunch of us met on August 10 at the O'Kane farm near St. Philip Church at Rolling Ground to cut and shock 2 acres of oats raised by parishioner Mark Burbach. Rolling Ground puts us in Crawford County, a few miles south of Soldiers Grove.

Monsignor Gorman's 1936 McCormick-Deering grain binder is pulled by a 1941 Farmall H tractor. It's truly amazing how those mid-20th century machines have held up. Some will soon be 100 years old. I was always intrigued by the knotter on those grain binders.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

From his perch on the Allis Chalmers WD Monsignor Gorman keeps watch on the threshing operation.

As a kid, I tried to figure out the knotter, but it operated much too quickly. Frankly, it's still a mystery to me.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

The threshing of two loads of oat bundles is underway.

We can thank Cyrus McCormick for inventing the reaper and John Appleby for developing the knotter. That combo increased grain production by a factor of 30. That big bull wheel on the binder runs the whole machine: the sickle, the reel, the three canvases, the binding mechanism, the knotter and the bundle discharge.

It didn't take long for us six guys to get the shocking done. It's a satisfying sight, indeed, to view a field of standing oats shocks.

Sumptuous meal marks threshing day

There's something else you need to have on threshing day: a threshing dinner. In 2022, it was held at St. Philip Church located about 1 mile east of Rolling Ground off Highway 171.

{The church} It's a beautiful edifice, built in 1909. Monsignor Gorman's sister, Mary, and her friends prepare and serve a sumptuous potluck dinner at noon for 50-60 people. The desserts are to die for! The threshing dinner and threshing day has been an annual event for nearly 50 years. I hark back to my early childhood days on the farm when the threshing ring came around to the Scheckel farm. I do believe those farm wives tried to outdo each other in the lavish meals provided for hungry threshers.

Threshing in the valley

Once the threshers' dinner is concluded, the entourage motors east off the ridge and into the valley below, some 6 miles to the Gorman farmstead. The good Monsignor had the 1948 McCormick-Deering 28-inch-cylinder thresher leveled and belted up to a 1952 Allis Chalmers WD tractor, with all zerks greased. A half dozen men gather around the machinery while spectators view the scene on a higher shaded grassy knoll.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

The author relives his days on the Crawford County farm by making a nine-bundle shock.

The first wagon load of bundles is pulled into place. Monsignor opens the throttle of the WD with puffs of black smoke wafting skyward. The pulley is engaged and the big beast of a McCormick-Deering thresher arises from the dead, coming to life as the first bundles are tossed onto the feeder chute, the big claw teeth rhythmically gulping for oats bundles. Soon, a constant yellow plume of straw and chaff from the blower pipe is set against the azure blue Wisconsin sky. Bundle after bundle, the behemoth thresher does its job, all eight belts and five chains working together to remove the oats grain from its stalk.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

An elevator raises the threshed oat kernels to the receiver weigher bucket atop the machine.

Monsignor climbs up the steps on the side of the thresher. Threshed oats go up an elevator on the side of the big machine and are dumped in a receiver bucket or weigher. The bucket is counterbalanced by a weight. When full, the bucket opens and dumps the grain into an auger that takes it to a waiting dump box wagon.

At the same time, the dumping bucket operates a geared counter that keeps track of the number of bushels threshed. Two dumping trips of the bucket is one bushel of oats. The counter has three "windows" and operates like the counters used to monitor residential electricity use. Yes, everything is working fine, and Monsignor Gorman retraces his steps to alight on the ground.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

A maze of belts and pulleys gives witness to the thresher's complexity.

He opens the large, galvanized hinged door by the blower fan and inspects a handful of the debris, checking for any kernels that might be escaping up the blower pipe instead of going up the elevator, counted and loaded into the grain bin by an auger.

Buttoning it up for another year

Threshing complete, the machine must be "put to bed." The big straw pipe is telescoped to its shortest length. A large gear is turned so the straw pipe is atop and parallel with the thresher, then gently lowered by gearing it to its cradle. The long drive belt reaching from tractor to thresher is removed from the tractor's pulley and laid out on the ground. A crank on the thresher rolls up the belt and it is secured on the side of the thresher.

The grain auger is removed from the grain bin, swung around and secured by a clamp. The hinged front feeder gate is unfastened and tucked under. The tractor can now back up to the thresher, which is pinned to the tractor for transport to the machine shed where it will be stored until next year.

These threshing machines are a marvel of engineering, perfected over decades of trial and error. The thresher was the largest piece of machinery on the farm and too expensive for most farmers, hence the threshing ring, which traveled from farm to farm.

Baling the straw

The threshing machine goes into the machine shed and the New Holland baler, powered by an International 544 tractor, comes out.

The crew forks the straw pile into windrows and Monsignor, tractor and baler make circles.

The power take-off is the primary method of transferring power from a tractor to any pulled machine or attached implement. The concept is nearly 100 years old. When PTOs became standard on farm machines in the 1940s and 1950s, the number of accidents increased because loose clothing was sometimes pulled onto the shaft, resulting in bone fractures and loss of limbs, and sometimes ensuring a closed casket.

Image courtesy Larry Scheckel

Monsignor Gorman's farm has been in his family for 165 years.

The Gorman 268 New Holland Hayliner baler is another example of ingenious farm machinery design. These balers were made between 1964 and 1968.

It is a marvel to watch the U-joints, the massive flywheel, the big plunger, the knotters and the belt thrower. The straw bale is squeezed between two wide belts that toss the bale into the trailing wagon. The mechanism allows the farmer to bale hay alone, without a worker on the wagon to stack the bales. With oats in the gravity wagon and bales on a flatbed wagon, the baler is returned to the machine shed. Both wagons are hooked to a pickup truck and oats and straw are returned to the farm from whence they came. Labor Day threshing is done for another year.

We give thanks to St. Isadore, the patron saint of farmers. A task which was hard work when we were growing up has now become a nostalgic pleasure.

www.farmcollector.com/tractors/old-iron-at-work-zm0z23mayzawar/

Excerpted and reprinted with permission of Larry Scheckel, Tomah WI

In the late 1950's, a young couple from central Iowa went to a Milwaukee Braves game with friends; they stopped in Platteville and read a brochure about farms for sale. They talked with Dale Marshall, went to several places, and ended up buying a farm northwest of Gotham, Wisconsin.

Richard Rasmussen was the youngest of a large farm family in central Iowa. As a freshman in high school, he played varsity baseball and JV basketball, and later ran, did the hammer throw, and did the high jump in track. At that time there was even an FFA basketball team, and of course he played on the 4-H softball ball team. His family owned a '38 Chevy that they had to share. "Vehicles were certainly different than they are today. Things are automatically done today that you had to do yourself back then, like maintenance. Back in those days, you could just look at a tire and tell if the pressure was low.

I wanted my own car so I could get off the school bus and go to and from school without depending on the bus. There was no late bus, and I had extra activities after school. Basketball, baseball and track. Also, the FFA rented some ground, and we had to work that ground and plant it and take care of it all summer. And if I had my own car, when I played basketball, my folks wouldn't have to come get me. Parents didn't usually go to games back then. Only other students and some businesspeople in town watched the games.

My first car of my own was a 1936 four door Chevrolet. Two or three of my friends would pile in the car and we'd drive over to the elementary school for our hot lunches. The high school had no cafeteria." During Richard's senior year of high school, after renting several other farms, his parents bought an eighty acre farm and rented a neighboring farm of over two hundred acres, so there was considerable time-consuming work to be done. The football coach really wanted him to play, but harvest season could not accommodate the football schedule. "At harvest time, we used a grain binder to cut the oats, and then brought them to the machine that wrapped them into bundles and kicked them out. We had to shock the oats so they'd dry out and that would take a week to ten days, as I remember. After a little while, we'd pick up the bundles and take them to the threshing machine, and that did the same thing as the combine. Most of the straw, if it wasn't blown in the stack when they threshed it, was left in a winrow, and we baled it and put it in the barn. All the siblings who farmed worked together and went from farm to farm harvesting the oats.
Mom always got dinner for that whole bunch.

I would guess that whoever was on the farm before we got it hauled loose hay, and that was done a lot for a long time. There used to be a big folding door on the end of most barns, with a track that stuck out the end of the building. Some people used grapple forks (that hung from the track). Someone would drop the grapple forks down to the wagon outside below the track and stick it in the loose hay. Either a horse or a tractor would pull it into the barn (with the track and pulley), and someone would trip it (pull a rope to release the tines), and the barbs would come out of the hay and drop it. Grapple bars could also take eight bales up at a time, or something like that. There were usually six tines on a wheel, and they'd stick into the bales, and when they got up in the barn, someone would trip it. When I got a little older, we didn't use that system. We got a baler. My job was to stack the bales on the hay racks, then we'd have to unload them and stack them in the barn.

Spring was spent getting the ground ready to plant. We seldom applied fertilizer to hay fields. We also planted corn, soybeans, and oats. Two-row equipment was all we had at first. Then we got bigger tractors, four-row cultivators, and planters." Even with all that farmwork, Richard was able to work at the local service station during his senior year. He would eat lunch, run to the station while the owner had lunch, then hurry back to class by 1:00.

During the summer of his senior year, he worked with his brother at an engineering company, surveying the Missouri River in St. Louis and other places. "I was the gopher. Sometimes I worked in the trench to make sure it was deep enough; sometimes I was the rodman, the guy with the stick. Brother would get tired and go sit in the shade, so I could go run the instrument. Working with my brother was good. He wanted me to go to Iowa State for Civil Engineering so I could work with him at his company, but by then, there was too much farming to do and I helped the folks."

Shirley Morse was also from a large farm family, but she had graduated from college and was teaching second grade. She went to an RYP dance and met the handsome Rasmussen man there. They found more in common than just farming at that RYP (Rural Young People) dance and got married in 1954 and lived on a farm near his parents. That's when they took a trip to a Milwaukee Braves game. They bought the farm, machinery, and cattle from Otto Hammerly in January of 1959. Driving from Iowa was quite a sight. We had the dog in a doghouse, cats in a box, and when we drove through towns, the chickens would cackle and the dog would bark, just like the Beverly Hillbillies. Fortunately, there was little snow and it was fairly warm. We were here about two weeks and then we had snow! Poor Elmer Stibbe (the road patrolman) couldn't get through, so five or six of the neighbors shoveled so he could get through.

"We bought an International tractor from Otto, and later bought an Oliver. We didn't raise pigs or beef until after we sold the dairy cows. We did have milking machines and used milk cans to carry the milk to the bulk tank. The cheese factory trucks would come to pick up the milk twice a day.

"In Wisconsin, I had one of the first combines around here. It was an old Allis Chalmers. As I remember, it had a six-foot head on it, which means it could get two rows. We had two or three big farmers who had their own combines, and they did custom combining. I did some of that too, but not as much until I got a self-propelled combine. Then I did quite a little bit with that Gleaner.

Farms were a lot bigger in Iowa than here at that time. There were a lot of four-row planters and cultivators when we moved here, but not in Iowa. You'd think it would be the other way around. Farmers in Wisconsin were too busy milking cows; there were only small dairy farms in Iowa that provided milk for towns and such as that. Farming has changed quite a bit since then.

Everything's bigger. Trains used to haul grain and a lot of things, but I don't know what all they haul now. The train in Gotham used to run twice a day, if I remember right, and it ran from Madison to Minneapolis, but I could be wrong. There were more businesses in Gotham… a saw mill, a grocery store, and a post office farther down on Hwy 60."

While farming, Richard worked for Elmer Stibbe doing road maintenance for the Buena Vista and Orion townships. As for how he learned to operate the road grader, Richard said, "Elmer just put me on it, showed me the levers to push, and this and that and the other. Of course, almost all the roads at that time were gravel roads. I spent a lot of time on that grader.

At that time, even most county roads were gravel, so we used the grader most of the time. How much use and rain a road got determined how often we graded. We tried to get over them every two weeks or so. Eventually the county and the townships seal coated most of the roads, so we patched them every month or two. The biggest share of plowing was done with the grader until we got plows on the machinery and had to use chains on icy roads. We used lots of sand and salts. We seldom plowed at night because we didn't have enough lighting systems on the trucks to keep us safe.

Richard eventually bought the road maintenance business from Elmer Stibbe. An old statement from the City Council at the Sextonville Water District shows: "In account with Richard Rasmussen: Fill, dirt, sand, cinders, grading, roadwork, custom spraying. 2 hours loader $19.00 Oct. 3, 1972" / Aug. 24, 1972 Grader at Waterworks $29.75 Dozer $32. Labor $36.Grand total $97.75"Describing social life in those years, Richard said, "We used to go to town every Friday night. Shirley took eggs and creams to Pulvermachers' store. They candled the eggs to be sure the yolks were good and all. They held them up to a light of some sort, which was time-consuming. At first, we had those old wooden crates with cardboard fillers, then they went to cardboard crates. The crates belonged to the store, so we don't have any now. We also took turns hosting nights when we played cards with other people."

As for the moments in his life he relishes the most? "I guess it would be the meeting with Mom and the marriage after that. We met at an RYP dance. Rural Young People. Shirley was teaching school, and when we became engaged, then she had to quit teaching."

AFTER THAT, THEIR FAMILY GOT BIGGER, FARMING GOT BIGGER, AND THE WORLD GOT SMALLER.

The AKEY BrAKEY News

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

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promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

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Historical Society members Craig & Judy Rasmussen provided the contact for the family farm located northeast of Gotham. Daughter Cindy shares her story from interviewing her Dad Richard Rasmussen about life on the farm and what it was like in those days.

Richard Rasmussen was the youngest of a large farm family in central Iowa.

His story excerpted as follows :

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In the late 1950's, a young couple from central Iowa went to a Milwaukee Braves game with friends; they stopped in Platteville and read a brochure about farms for sale. They talked with Dale Marshall, went to several places, and ended up buying a farm → northeast of Gotham, Wisconsin.

The farm was purchased from Otto Hammerly and was furnished with the dairy cattle and some farm equipment including an international tractor. Soon after I purchased an Oliver 88 tractor. We milked the dairy cattle with machines and carried the milk to the milk house in cans and placed them in a cold water bath which was picked up twice a day by the cheese factory trucks. Eventually we put in a bulk tank then added a pipeline. A year after, we added a small herd of sheep and did the shearing ourselves. In a few years we would sell the dairy cattle then raising both beef and hogs.

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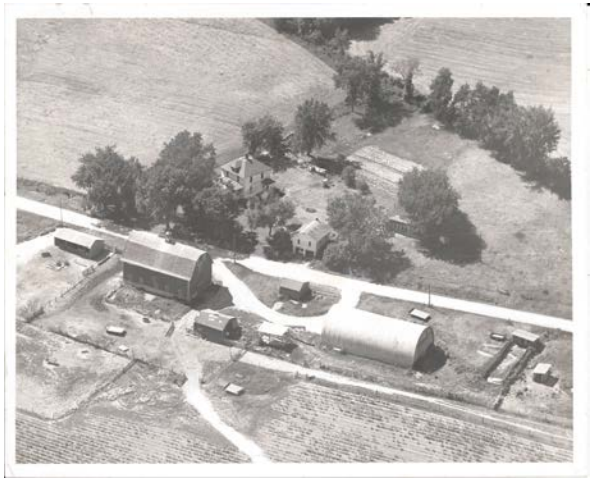

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