



The AKEY BrAKEY News

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

April, 2023 Volume #15 – Issue # 2 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

THE SAGA OF RICHLAND CITY

By Jerry Bower

Part 2 of 2 – concluding from the January 2023 issue of the AKEY BrAKEY News

NOTE TO READERS: My major source for this little essay has been Professor Richard Durbin, *The Wisconsin River: An Odyssey Through Time and Space, 1997.*

A second explanation alleges that the Richland City businessmen were so confident that the railroad would run through their busy village that their response to the sale of Milwaukee and Mississippi stock was tepid. It is a fact that a railroad was often built where citizens had invested heavily in the project. In Wisconsin farmers were convinced to mortgage their land to purchase railroad stock. The arithmetic suggested the dividend paid by the railroad would make the mortgage payments and even provide a small profit. This scenario never worked out! The railroads quickly sold the mortgages to eastern banks to secure the cash they needed to build the railroads. When the railroads failed to be profitable and paid no dividends, the shocked farmers found themselves hounded by the eastern banks to make their mortgage payments or face foreclosure. In the Panic of 1857 every railroad in Wisconsin went bankrupt! Many never recovered and hundreds of miles of promised tracks were never constructed. The state legislature repeatedly enacted “relief bills” to prevent foreclosures but the federal courts just as regularly declared these laws unconstitutional. The laws violated the contract clause in the Constitution.

The third and most persuasive reason for the Milwaukee and Mississippi’s decision to move to the south bank of the Wisconsin is that the river flows too close to the bluffs on the north side of the river. There would not be enough room for both a railroad and a wagon road. Anyone who has driven Highway 60 between Gotham and Muscoda knows the truth of this statement, as there is barely enough room between the river and the bluff for the roadway.

The railroad’s decision seems to have triggered other events that diminished Richland City’s chances to thrive. The arrival of the railroad at the Wisconsin River caused a decline in the steamboat and lumber raft traffic on the river. The railroad had significant advantages that drew freight, passengers and logs from the river. The train, for example, could run year around, it did not freeze up for months. The railroad offered a more reliable delivery schedule because the locomotive would not get hung up on a sandbar during low water, nor would the engineer mistakenly steer into a dead end slough. What is more, the railroad did not have to navigate the many falls and rapids in the river, which annually destroyed some of the lumber rafts coming downstream. Consequently, Richland City’s river trade declined sharply in the 1860s.

Richland Center’s merchants also felt abandoned by the railroad. So, in 1875, they incorporated the magnificently named Pine River Valley and Stevens Point RailRoad Company. The first leg of their projected railroad was a narrow gauge sixteen mile line to Lone Rock, where it would intersect with the main line, now known as the Milwaukee Road. The tracks were laid starting in Richland Center and were made of maple, except for iron switching and sidetrack sections. The wheels of the rolling stock, including the engine, were concave, to fit the three inch radius of the curved wooden rails. The use of hardwood rails was not unprecedented; they were often used for short runs where the traffic was not heavy and where the speed of operation was leisurely.

Wooden rails of course required more maintenance than iron ones, but their lower initial lower cost more than offset the replacement expense. Continued on Page 7

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

* Jill Vestuto *Lamont & Mary Ellen Boak # Karl Gutknecht * Eddie Syftestad * Pam Harness-Hanson

* John & Laraine Unbehaun * Cindy & Craig Chicker * Karel & Gordon Gulsrud # Robert & Jan Hirschy

Debbie & Tom Lord # Jean Birkett # Cheryl Stanley * Kennneth & Bonnie Moerer # Joy & Ed Leinweber

A Notable Thank You to the Family of Helen Jax for donation of history books & plat books for use with our 'History Moments' provided by the Richland County Historical Society & to display at the Akey School Museum

Also A Sincere THANK YOU to All those that continue to RE - new their memberships as well as those with their LIFETIME memberships



Panoramic view of the section of State Highway 115 in Richland County known as the Muscoda-Richland Center Road. Grading and improvement of this hilly section known as Paul's Hill is almost complete although a horse-drawn road grader can be seen in the left foreground. www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM40311 CIRCA 1916

HISTORY – In 1920, WIS 115 was established to travel roughly along WIS 80 from WIS 60 north of Muscoda to WIS 11 (now US HWY 14) in Richland Center. Then, in 1923, without any prior significant changes, the route was relocated in favor of WIS 80's northern extension.

CURRENT – State Highway 115 (often called Highway 115, STH-115 or WIS 115) was a **state highway** in the U.S. state of **Wisconsin**. It ran north–south between **Hustisford** and **Juneau**. In 2005, the road was turned over to **Dodge County**, which now maintains it as County Trunk Hwy DJ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisconsin_Highway_115

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by *Ken Thiede*

So many developments to share upcoming for this spring and summer. Some projects were put on hold pending and others moving forward. Also new news to be shared following the Board of Directors meeting at the end of April. We are so pleased to bring You up to date with these details. HOW ? **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 also**

posted & broadcast on 100.9 FM WRCO both Thursday & Sunday with the 'News at Noon'



PLEASE --
Come and Visit the Akey School this SUMMER

The Akey School Museum is open

Sundays June thru Sept. from 1 to 4 pm.

Directions to the AKEY SCHOOL MUSEUM -- it is located east from Richland Center off Hwy 14 about

4 miles south on County TB or from Gotham on Hwy 60 west 1 mile & north on County TB 4 miles.

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“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/1906-8.htm>

THE CAVES OF SYLVAN

TOPOGRAPHY OF RICHLAND COUNTY – *While upon this subject of Rock Formations in Richland County, it were perhaps as well to give a description of some caves in the town of Sylvan, located on section 34. One of these caves has long been known as the “Bear Den”, their lair, which had been supposed to be the extent of the cavern, having been often seen. The entrance to the cave, about two hundred feet above the level of this creek (the west branch of Mill creek), and from a sink hole of about ten feet in depth, is through an opening in the solid rock; the passage of twenty feet is high and wide enough for a man, followed by a wider one for forty feet further, after which, by change of direction, the Bear Den is reached. After this a passage of ten rods brings the explorer to a small hole, just a close fit for a man's body, through which he can climb, then making his way through a difficult passage of twenty rods, which will bring him to a round room, about thirty feet in diameter, from the center of which a small stream of water is constantly dripping. Two passages lead off from this room; the one from the left is through rock, ten rods, where a pool of pure, clear water, about two feet deep, is found; passing this, the end of that cavern is reached in about four rods: the passage leading from the right of the central room also discovers a pool of good water, larger than the other. After passing the water, at the distance of ten rods, a small opening is found, but what remains beyond has not been explored. On the other side of the creek, from the caves above described, on the bluff, another, equally curious, has been visited.*

<https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/5494/rec/1> **Know Your Neighbors** – the Fred German Jr. Homestead near Aubrey Corners hosted many parties including musicals and was built large enough to house the hops pickers at harvest time when that crop boomed in Richland County after the Civil War.



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LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER FUN - Well flashback to when the Mill Pond was in existence



<https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM148669> Circa 1963 (now what is North Park)
Information from the Richland County History Room Facebook Page.

"The dam hasn't been in Richland Center since the 1990s when it was removed. That is

when the mill pond ceased to exist. The municipal pool shown in the picture was located in the area of Krouskop Park near where the current tennis courts are located. Another way to describe its location would be at the north end of Jefferson Street next to the Pine River." *Lower left a*



Bird's Eye View of Mill Pond and Krouskop Park in Richland Center, Richland County, Wisconsin This was taken by Jack Curnow in the 1950's. ***** Notice the old



swimming pool top center and Park View cabins in the center of the picture across 6th St. from the ball diamond.

Bathing Beauties at the First Municipal Swimming Pool content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/629 Richland County History Room, Circa 1930

... and how about Golfing for SUMMER FUN so picture a golf course north of Hwy 14 near the airport Page 5

OLD GOLF COURSE, SEXTONVILLE, WISCONSIN, CA. 1927

Another first for Sextonville was the establishment of the Richland County Golf Club in 1927 which probably could be considered the forerunner of the present day Richland Country Club. This was established at the location of the McCorkle-Thomas grove where early Fourth of July celebrations were held as a means of raising money in the early days of the community. (see pictures below)



REPUBLICAN OBSERVER Thursday, February 18, 1927, Richland Center, Wis. Pg 32,

..... Pictured on the left are two scenes of the old golf course which was located on the outskirts of

Sextonville. The upper photo shows three ladies whom we are unable to identify putting on one of the sand greens. The other is another photo of the course taken from a different angle. We are not sure, but the pictures which were furnished to the Republican Observer by Mr. and Mrs. George Brewer, were taken about 1927.

content.mpl.org/digital/collection/rchr/id/5397 This work from the Richland County History Room

WHERE in Richland County is West Lima in BLOOM TOWNSHIP located?

From the popular "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" there are locations in Richland County that many are not aware of and only some have heard of. This ongoing series will highlight some spots of interest while covering the History of Richland County.



West Lima is an unincorporated community in the Town of Bloom, Richland County, Wisconsin. The community is located at the intersection of County Highway A and County Highway D.

In its heyday West Lima had 700 residents, a teachers' hotel, a brick schoolhouse built in 1920, a post office, a cheese factory, blacksmiths, two milliners, a flour mill, a furniture store, and a hardware store. By the early 1990s its buildings were abandoned and fallen into disrepair. In 1991 several buildings in West Lima were acquired by Xexoxial Endarchy, Ltd., a nonprofit arts and education organization, for use as an intentional community known as [Dreamtime Village](http://www.dreamtimevillage.com). The old hotel, with eight rooms and a kitchen, became the home of several permanent residents and temporary housing for guests. West Lima remains home to many residents who are not part of Dreamtime Village.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Lima,_Wisconsin

Check out our website for WRCO History Moments & AKEY BrAKEY News archived

issues www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

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IN MEMORIAM with the passing of Charlotte (nee Newkirk) Bindl on March 22, 2023

This article is reprinted with permission of Schmitt Woodland Hills ... Charlotte is a former Richland County Historical Society Board Director

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www.schmittwoodlandhills.com



CHARLOTTE BINDL – N4051N



In the 1930's Dr. B. I. Pippen and a few others were the first residents to show an interest in flying in Richland Center. The first airport was located on what was then known as Perkins Farm.

Phil Leyda bought a Piper J-2 in which he sold shares and started the first flying club.

In the early days of the club, farmers' fields were used to practice take offs and landings, much to the objections of the farmers. The planes always seemed to leave before the farmer's truck arrived.

Sometime near the end of the war several businessmen planned a new airport in Lone Rock.

Charlotte Newkirk was born Dec. 6, 1925. She grew up

in Wichita to pick up a new plane. Don left ahead of her and Charlotte lost sight of him and navigated her own way back to Sextonville. The plane had the call letters N4051N and Charlotte remembers them to this day. The plane was bought by Betty Schlafer's family and later by Gus Slayback who restored it. The plane is still in Sextonville.



In the 1960's, she and Robert had 2 children, Kirk and Kathy, and she continued to run the airport restaurant and work at Keegan's Drug Store. She stopped flying but continued with the restaurant. In Feb. 1963, the night Kirk was born, the restaurant burned down and she lost her log books. She had 3-4 thousand hours in the air. She was credited with some of the hours but not all. She

Unfortunately for Richland City, the short-line railroad bypassed the village by three-quarters of a mile. Nonetheless a depot and loading dock were built to serve the little community. William McNurlin, who also operated a small store, was the first depot agent. As Richland City suffered its final, and fatal, disaster, many of the residents and businesses retreated to the depot area.

The most significant factor in the demise of Richland City was the Wisconsin River, itself. In the 1870s the Army Corps of Engineers, in an attempt to deepen the channel of the Wisconsin and to prevent the formation of sandbars, built a series of wing dams along the south bank from Lone Rock to Boscobel. Some river residents doubted the practicality of the project from the outset and taxpayers along the river worried about the expense of maintaining the wing dams, which would be their responsibility!

Undaunted, the federal government appropriated the money and the Army Corps of Engineers built the wing dams. The idea was to direct the current to the north bank of the river, where it would theoretically carve a deeper channel for the steamboats and lumber rafts. The reality is that the Wisconsin did not cooperate with these plans. In fact, in some places the wing dams made navigation of the river worse, not better. We must conclude that this is a story of the absolute failure of men to tame the Wisconsin River.

Adding to Richland City’s peril were the wing dams constructed by Edward Wallace at Independence Point, a steamboat landing three miles upstream from Richland City. Wallace’s hope was to divert the Wisconsin’s current to the north bank, where it would deepen the channel and make his landing at Independence Point more profitable. Where the Army Corps of Engineers had mixed success, Wallace’s wing dams worked perfectly. The current was diverted to the north bank and stayed there for about five miles.

Richland City was built on an extremely sandy terrace. Now the Wisconsin’s current began to eat at it. When they saw what was happening, Professor Durban wrote, “The townspeople dug ditches, built wing dams and booms, threw sand bags, stumps, brush, and other contrivances into the river, all to no avail.” (181) Front and River Streets, being closest to the current were the first to disappear. The erosion proceeded at an uneven pace, sometimes it was slow and, on other occasions, huge chunks of the terrace would tumble into the river and become the raw material for sandbars downstream.

The residents reacted by moving away from the hungry river. Houses, stables, and businesses were placed on skids and dragged from danger. Many moved near the railroad depot, which seemed a safe distance. Others gave up entirely and went elsewhere to pursue their lives. In 1882 the federal government recognized the danger and moved the post office to the depot area. Its first postmaster was Captain Myron Gotham, who was also the skipper of a Great Lakes sailing vessel. By 1885 there were only 77 people remaining in “old” Richland City. The new settlement near the depot, of course, expanded as the sandy terrace washed away. Although the new community was popularly known as “Gotham”, its official name remained “Richland City” until 1904 when the federal government finally bowed to public pressure and renamed the post office, “Gotham.”

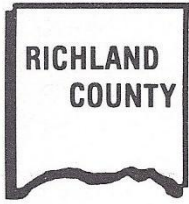
By 1904 there were just a few cottages to mark where bustling Richland City had once stood. Today, fishermen can sometimes, with their fish finders, locate foundations that tumbled into the river. And thus ends the story of the rise and fall of Richland City. **END**

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Check out our website for the past issues of the AKEY BRAKEY News and “HISTORY MOMENTS” aired on WRCO Radio

→ www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

Return Address: 213 S. Central Ave.
Apt. # 1 Richland Center, WI 53581



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

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

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



Donations are always WELCOME

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Mailing Address _____

Phone # _____

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Mail registration to:

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

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 bars 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

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

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.



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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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