



The AKEY BrAKEY News

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

October, 2020 Volume #12 – Issue # 3 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

NOTE that this is a series of articles which began in April 2019 and will be continued in future issues as well.

THE ROBINSON BUILDING

By Jerry Bower

The Robinson building, 179 East Court Street, was constructed in 1917-18 by Richard H. “Dick” Robinson. Robinson, who tore down a frame building to make space for his two-story structure of brick and tile, built this store as an investment.

Richard H. Robinson was born in Platteville in 1854. Local sources do not contain information about when he moved to Richland Center. However, scattered references indicate that Robinson was an active businessman in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in downtown Richland Center. For example, the 1895 Business Directory indicates that Robinson and John Zerwes operated a restaurant. The 1901 and 1903 Directories both list Robinson and Zerwes as operating a saloon. An interesting note is that, in the early 1900s, Richland Center’s “Drys” began to prevail in the city elections on the “no license” issue. Their victories would have compelled Robinson and Zerwes to convert their saloon to another line of business. But subsequent Directories do not contain a listing for either Robinson or Zerwes. Robinson retired in 1909 from active participation in business. Eight years later he began construction of the building which bears his name. Robinson died of a cerebral hemorrhage August 21, 1921.

Thanks to a variety of sources, we can better trace the history of the use of the Robinson building. For example, Margaret Scott, in her *Richland Center, Wisconsin, A History*, wrote that “In April 1920, Letha Martin and Ray Pratt began selling home furnishings, first in the Robinson building and in 1922 in the James Hardware property on Court Street.” Then the building housed a grocery, with a number of proprietors. In 1934 the Robinson building secured a long term tenant when Sid Simonson opened a Coast to Coast franchise. Sid’s store was the first Coast to Coast operation east of Rochester, Minnesota, and just the 87th in the nation. The Coast to Coast store remained here until 1977, when it moved across Court Street to the former Brindley Hardware building. Since then, the Robinson building has housed photographers, first Lou Coopey and then Jim Nelson.

Sources:

- Margaret Scott, *Richland Center, Wisconsin, A History*, 1972, p. 187.
- The Richland County Historical Society, *Richland County, Wisconsin*, 1986, p. 378.
- The Richland County Room, MSS 2104, Business Directories.
- The Richland Democrat*, August 24, 1921.
- The Republican Observer*, August 24, 1921.
- The Richland Observer*, March 16, 1967, section 2, p. 11.



www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI97908

A Warm WELCOME to those with NEW Memberships to the RICHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY in the summer of 2020

- Craig & Cindy Chicker
- Derek Kalish & Jason Coy
- March & Nick Schweitzer
- Greg Zimmerman
- Victor Vlasak
- Sara Guard
- Phylis Kiely
- Gary Bruckner
- Sue Sadler
- Angela Larse
- Louann Walton
- Van & Marie Nelson
- Ed Lee
- Darlo Wentz
- Nancy & James Cox
- Lucinda Crofton
- Alice Meyer
- Carl & Joan Bethke
- Ardis Callem
- JoDon Anderson
- Mari Sue Bethke *
- Michael & Robin Cosgrove
- Eunice

Hardy

- Tammy Newberry-Wheelock
- Evertt Newberry
- Kathleen Housner *
- Antoinette Chapman
- Rod & Helen Perry
- #Floyd & Barb Blackmore
- JoAnn Otto
- Chris & Deb Parduhn
- Fuzz & Nancy McCauley
- Kurt & Dianne Monson
- # Harry & Michelle Dugan
- #Patty Pulvermacher
- * a Lifetime membership # additional donation

Also a sincere THANK YOU to all those that continue to re-new their memberships and those that have their Lifetime memberships.

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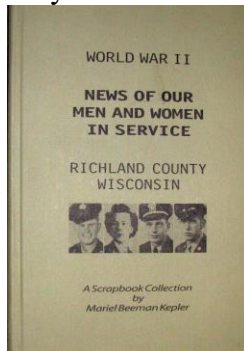
“Why We Call It That” is a developing series on Youtube by Marty Richards, Richland Center’s Tourism Director, with now more than fifty plus episodes and being added to regularly ...

TRIVIAL -- Check out the episode on Richland County and “Why DO We Call It That” ?

[youtube.com/watch?v=h8DW0xHKfl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8DW0xHKfl)

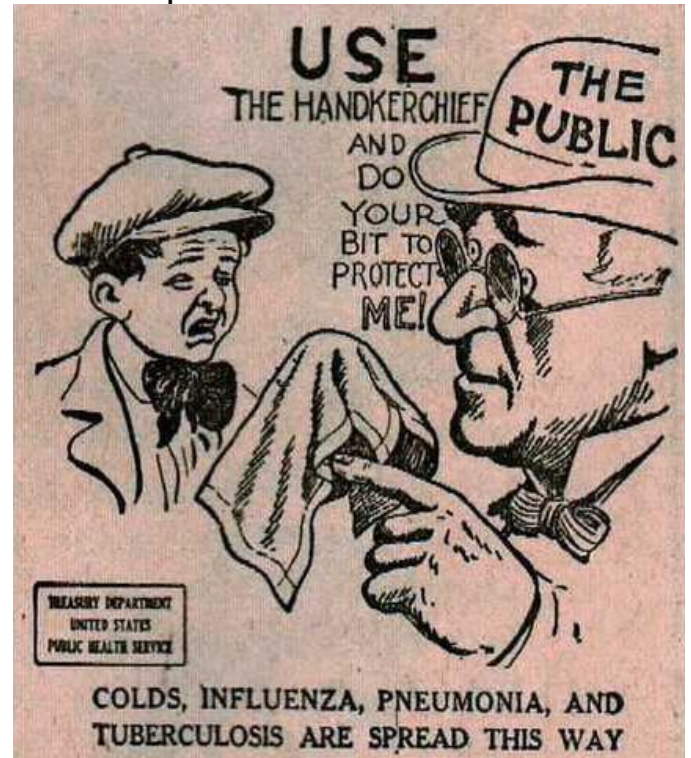
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World War II ended 75 years ago and many books have been written yet here’s a local not as familiar



<https://www.amazon.com/World-service-Richland-County-Wisconsin/dp/B0006S6MUI>

How did Richland County handle ... The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918



The Richland Democrat 12-11-2018 - This Clifford Berryman cartoon Droplet Infection Explained in Pictures (Public Health Reports 33: 46, November 15, 1918).

<https://www.swnews4u.com/local/public-safety/the-spanish-flu-pandemic-of-1918/>

Also there was an article in the Richland Observer Dec. 27, 2019 with accounts detailing the pandemic

PLEASE - Come and Visit the Akey School next SUMMER

OPEN JUNE thru SEPTEMBER

Located on Cty TB east of Richland Center between Gotham and Twin Bluffs



Check out the Jerry Apps story of his One -room school experience at the bottom of Page 6 and more material can be found at www.jerryapps.co



The lead article written by Dr. Jerry Bower in the Jan. issue of the AKEY BrAKEY News was about the Boaz Mastodon. A follow up picture, as seen below only enlarged, from what was in the April issue accompanied the promotion of more to come ...



Key clue: a photograph depicting the discovery of mastodon bones in 1898.

Here are segments of the search found in this web site:

<https://onwisconsin.uwalumni.com/features/the-mysterious-mastodon/>

In a black-and-white photograph bearing the fade of age, five men stand in a deep pit. Four of them are clad in workmen's clothes, while the fifth, standing slightly in front of the others, is dressed in a bow tie and vest. In his right hand, stretching from shoulder to knee, is a massive bone with a large chunk missing from one end. That bone, the femur of an ice-age behemoth, would become the smoking gun.

But museum staff lacked an answer; their only collection of similar bones belonged to the Boaz mastodon — perhaps Wisconsin's most famous fossil. Based on the ages of its bones, it was thought to represent one of the last mastodons standing in the Midwest after the glaciers retreated from the Great Lakes region. A feature of the museum since 1915, the ancient skeleton has helped put Boaz, Wisconsin, on the map. A historical marker erected in 1995 sits at the site where the mastodon remains were found.

Yet words handwritten on the back of the photograph offered a clue: "Hole where mastodon bones were discovered on the farm of J.W. Anderson in the 1890ties [sic] at Anderson Mills, Wisconsin. I am not sure but that may be my Grandpa Anderson standing in the hole holding the large bone. Pictures from W Paul Dietzman grandson."

In October 1913, C.K. Leith 1897, PhD1901, chair of the geology department, wrote to E.A. Birge, then dean of natural history and the College of Arts and Sciences, asking that \$500 be allotted to mount "the mastodon remains found in Richland County which for years have been stored in Science Hall." Boaz is located in Richland County.

Eaton and Null kept digging, and they soon found a letter, dated July 29, 1898, from Birge to the regents. "The heavy rains of last week washed out portions of the skeleton of a mastodon on a ravine not far from Fennimore, Wisconsin," Birge wrote. The Anderson farm was located near Fennimore, about thirty miles southwest of Boaz. "I directed Mr. Buckley, Assistant on the Geological Survey, to go down ... and investigate the matter. He found a considerable number of bones and purchased them for \$75. ... The price which he paid was moderate, as the bones are worth, at a low estimate, three times as much as those for which the Department of Geology paid \$50 last year." The only entry recording a purchase of a mastodon — for \$50 — referred to bones from Boaz, which Eaton found in the geology department ledger dated January 1898. But the university, it seemed, paid for two different sets of mastodon bones.

The letter also noted that Charles Van Hise 1879, 1880, MS1882, PhD1892, a geology professor who later became university president, was interested in "accumulating enough" bones to "make a complete skeleton," indicating a willingness to combine mastodon bones for one display. The yellowed letters represented a pivotal moment for Eaton. They suggested that the Boaz mastodon — standing proud all those years in the museum — might actually be a composite from multiple creatures.

If the Boaz mastodon was more than one mastodon, how would Eaton be able to link the bones to where they were found? After she looked over the skeleton and noted some differences in the size, shape, and staining of some of the bones — caused by the organic elements under which the bones had lain for nearly 12,000 years — Eaton realized the femur in the photograph could be key to solving the puzzle.

Continued on Page 7

Check out our website for the past issues of the AKEY BrAKEY News → www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety.weebly.com

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In 1940 the State **Corn Husking** Contest was held on the O. W. Gutknecht and son farm 11 miles east of **Richland Center, WI**. Omer Koopman was the winner. *{the Gutknecht farm was near Bear Valley}*

https://archive.org/details/CornHusking_VHB980

Description

Amateur film documenting the 1940 state corn husking contest at the Oscar W. Gutknecht farm in Richland Center, Wisconsin. Includes scenes of the contest; shots of the cars arriving and parked on the surrounding fields; bands; children's carnival rides; and crowd scenes. Segments of each contestant husking include shots of his "bangboard" which gives his name, country, and number of pounds he husked

Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Wisconsin Historical Society, 816 State Street, Madison,

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999466171002121>

- There were five Wisconsin state corn husking contests, 1937-1941. Of the five contests held, two men won all the state championships between them: Omer Koopman (Grant County) won titles in 1937 and 1940-1941, and Dick Post (Rock County) won titles in 1938 and 1939. The contests lasted for a total of 80 minutes and consisted of huskers husking four rows of corn of about 75 rods in length. The corn was husked with a "hook" or a "peg" and thrown into horse drawn wagons. The winner was determined by the total gross harvested less deductions for gleanings (corn left on stalk in the field) and husks (left on ears)
- Original version (VHB 980) filmed by Richland Center, Wisconsin residents Willard Pratt and Theron Moser, 1940.

<http://dennis1950.blogspot.com/2013/07/omer-koopman-king-of-corn-huskers.html#:~:text=In%201940%20the%20State%20Corn,was%20the%20end%20of%20it.>

The concept of organized national corn husking (also called shucking or picking) contests came from Henry A. Wallace in 1922. Wallace, who was to become Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President of the United States under President Roosevelt, believed that these sorts of events would boost rural morale. The 20's and 30's were tough years for the farmer. Prices were depressed and dust storms and drought gnawed at the spirit. The Husking Competitions harked back to a simpler era, where men more than machines did the work, and your strength and determination had more to do with success than Markets and bankers.

The first national contest was held in 1924. Attendance rose steadily. In 1930 30,000 witnessed the event. By 1936 140,000 attended the National Corn Husking Championship competition in Licking, Ohio. Wisconsin farmers came to the contest late. There had been county husking competitions in Wisconsin, but no state championship event until 1936. It wasn't until 1937 that Wisconsin counties held runoff competitions for the right to send huskers to the state competition, from which the top two place winners would qualify for the national championship.

The task in these competitions was to walk alongside a wagon with a "backboard" to stop the flying ears, and for 80 minutes pick ears off the stalks or the ground, husk them, and throw the ears against the backboard and into the wagon. The bang, bang, bang of the hard ears hitting the backboard gave fans an idea of the speed of the competitors. The average farmer could husk about 300 ears in 80 minutes, but the best of the competitors at the national contest could shuck as many as 2400 ears in 80 minutes (57 cubic feet). Some attained a pace of 50 ears a minute for periods. The four step process was to "pull, break, twist, and throw." A husking peg or hooked glove was used to assist in ripping the husks open. The husker grabbed the ear, hooked it open with astounding speed, rolled off the husk and silk, broke off the ear from the stalk, and in the same motion tossed the ear against the backboard without looking. To maximize his efficiency, the husker had to see the ears paces ahead and make the shortest and most rapid moves possible to the un-husked ears, without missing any. Deductions were made for husks found in the corn wagon and ears missed in the field.

A CIVIL WAR LETTER

We want to Thank members Craig & Cindy Chicker who have provided the following information for this October 2020 insert. As best that Craig can recall details we hope You enjoy the history.

It would be Craig's great great aunt on his mother's side that was Anna who had received this letter. His connection is the Carter Family.

The letter was found in a dresser.

The original was sent to Richmond and is at the University of Virginia.

Included in the right hand column and on the back is a scan of a copy of the three page letter as written along with the following information that has been provided in both a translation of the letter in script below each page, line by line along with the following post-script addendum

Research by Jim Tice shows that the date of Byron's Letter June 10 1864 was about one week before Byfon was shot in the face during the assault on Petersburg. It is 3 days after the Battle of Cold Harbor, which was a real bad affair for the Union Army. He was a lucky man to have survived 4 years in the Civil War.

Byron Cole is buried in a cemetery near Red Granite WI along with his 2 wives. The letter was sent to Anna Carter, Lawrence Berray's grandmother on his mother's side. His mother was Rosa Carter Berray. Anna married Franklin Carter, another Clvil War veteran instead of Byron Cole.

June 10th 1864

Bottom
Bridge June 10th 64
Camp 4th Reg. Wis. at road
near Bottom Bridge on
the Chickahominy, Chickahominy
my kind friend I will try
& write you a few lines to
let you know that I am
yet alive & I enjoying tolerable
good health my ink is so
sore I do not know as I
can write so you can
read it but I will do the
best I can we are now
on the extreme left of the
union Army doing picket
duty with the Cavalry that
is our Division some 14
miles from Richmond
the right of our line rests
at Mechanicsville 4 1/2 miles
from Richmond we are
having a temporary rest hear

Camp 7th Reg. WisAct Vol.
Near Bottom Bridge on the Chickahominy

My kind friend

I will try to write you a few lines to let you know that I am yet alive and am in tolerable good health. My pink is so sore I do not know as I can write so you can read it but I will do the best I can.

We are now on the estream left of the union Army doing picket duty with the Cavalry that is our Division some 14 miles from Richmond. The right of our lines res at Mechanicsville miles from Richmond and we are having a temporary rest hear

now doing picketing one
Reg't. one day another the
next & so on. There is 5 Reg't
in our Brigade so you can
see we get 3 or 4 days rest
and it comes very excellent
I can tell you
the casualties of our Co. is
light since I wrote you before
some 2 or 3 wounded & some
3 or 4 returned we have 3
men returned. Exchanged
Prisoners from Richmond
those that were taken last
September at Hay Market
& the suffering they passed
through while on the Isle
was horrible to think of.
There is heavy firing just
a few miles on our right
some sharp fighting
going on so we may be in again. I can not say.

now doing picketing one regiment one day another the next & so on. There is 5 Reg't in our brigade so you can see we get 3 or 4 days rest and it comes very excellent I can tell you.

The casualties of our Co is light since I wrote you before. 2 or 3 wounded and some 3 or 4 men returned. We have 3 returned. Exchanged prisoners from Richmond and those that were taken last September at Hay Market & the suffering they passed through while on the Isle was horrible to think of. There is heavy firing just a few miles on our right. Some sharp fighting going on so we may be in again. I can not say.

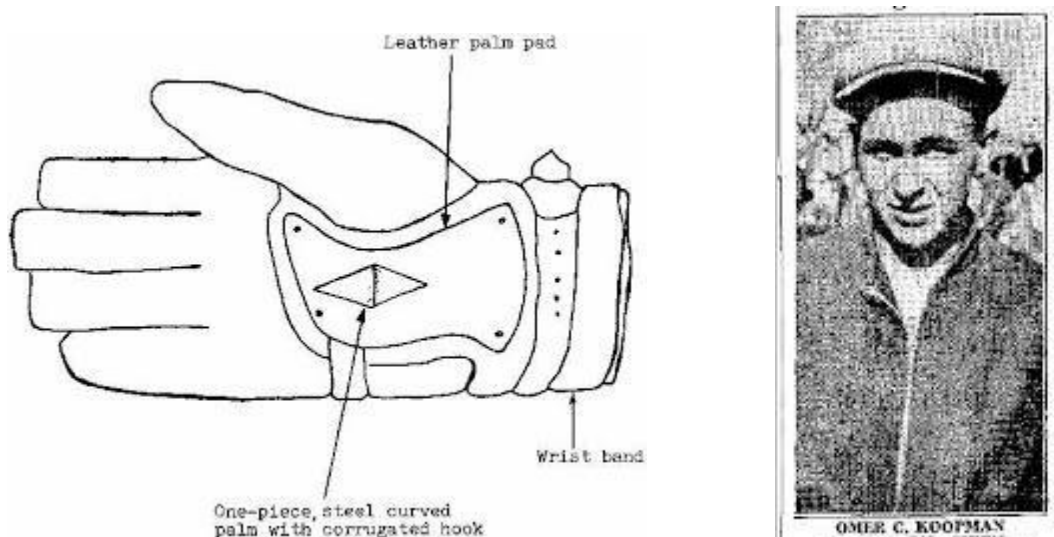
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Anna I wish you would write me often
& I will try to do the same
I should be glad to hear
from you every week
to tell the truth I have a
feeling of regards for you that
perhaps you know not of
& I do not know but I am
very foolish in expressing
myself in this manner but
let her rip it is too late now
to mend it. Anna give my
respects to all inquiring friends
excuse my poor writing & bad
spelling for I am no scholar
that you have seen had I not told
if I had not told you
good bye for this time
from a kind friend &
well wisher
Serg't B. Cole

Anna I wish you would write me often and I will try to do the same. I should be glad to hear from you every week. To tell the truth I have a feeling of regards for you that perhaps you know not of & I do not know but I am very foolish in expressing myself in this manner but let her rip it is too late now to mend it. Anna give my respects to all enquiring friends.

Excuse my poor writing & bad spelling for I am no scholar. That you have seen had I not told you. Good bye for this time from a kind friend & well wisher.

Serg't B. Cole
Cmd Co 1
Write soon.

This required a level of speed, strength, and stamina that would have tested the best athletes in any sport. The process often left the huskers hands bruised and bleeding, even though huskers hands often had calluses as large as a quarter.



Omer Koopman of rural Patch Grove, and Lawrence Hauk of Cassville were the best in Grant County, and among the best in the state. Koopman, referred to in the press as “one hundred and sixty pounds of greased lightning” won the Wisconsin Corn husking championship in 1937, and went to the national championship competition at Marshall Missouri with Dick Post the second place finisher. Koopman was only 19 years old.

In 1940 the State Corn Husking Contest was held on the O. W. Gutknecht and son farm 11 miles east of Richland Center, Wisconsin. Omer Koopman was the winner. In 1941 it was a third championship for Koopman, and that was the end of it. When the war started in December 1941 the national competitions were suspended for the duration of the war. When the war was over the competitions didn't start again. It wasn't until 1975 that another national championship was held, but it was in all ways a weak imitation of the massive events of the pre-war years.

Information can be found in a variety of sources with several listed below. This was even a TRIVIA question on WRCO Radio during the long running TRIVIATHON contest held annually.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/wisconsin-stories-wisconsin-stories-making-history/>

<https://www.wpr.org/thousands-spectators-once-thronged-corn-husking-contests>

<https://homemoviearchives.org/wisconsin-state-corn-husking-contest-videorecordings-1940-1997/>

<https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/405272013/> Oct.18 1940

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42PDTH6Otnq>

www.wrco.com › About Us › Special Events

WRCO AM and FM Radio in Richland Center Wisconsin ? 30) Of the five State Corn Husking Contests held in Wisconsin, two men claimed all five state championships between ... 26) The year was 1940.

It has been over a decade since she moved here and still noteworthy for history would be the death of Stalin's daughter in Richland County <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81144273/svetlana-iosifonova-alliluyeva>



Svetlana Iosifonova “Lana” Alliluyeva Alliluyeva
Born 28 Feb 1926 Moscow, Moscow Federal City, Russia Died 22 Nov 2011 Richland Center, Richland County, WI

Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's youngest child and only daughter of Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin and Nadezhda Alliluyeva, Stalin's second

wife. Svetlana's defection to the west in 1967 caused an international uproar, which the United States used as a public relations coup, during the Cold War. She entered the United States embassy in New Delhi, India and presented a written statement of her desire to defect and was offered political asylum which she accepted. Her memoirs, "Twenty Letters to a Friend", written in 1963 about her life in Russia, was published in the United States in 1980 and became a best-seller. She wrote three more books, including "Only One Year," an autobiography published in 1969. Lana was married 4 times, the last marriage was in 1970. In 1982 she moved to Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England and then returned to the Soviet Union in 1984 where she was granted citizenship. She settled in Tbilisi, Georgian Soviet Socialist Russia until 1986 and then resettled, once again, to the United States. Lana relocated to England in the 1990s and then returned to the United States, settling in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 2010 where she died from complications of colon cancer at the age of 85.

Lana Peters — who was known internationally by her previous name, Svetlana Alliluyeva — died of colon cancer Nov. 22, 2011 in Wisconsin, where she lived off and on after becoming a U.S. citizen, Richland County Coroner Mary Turner said Mon. She was 85.

Reprinted with permission of the Richland Electric Cooperative and Jerry Apps from the Oct. 2019 Wisconsin Energy Coop News
REMEMBERING THE ONE-ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOLS

With schools once more open for the fall term, it seems appropriate re-call what school was like for country kids when I was a youngster .

I remember that late August morning well. It dawned warm and hazy, like so many mornings that hot and dry summer of 1939. I waited at the end of the sandy driveway that led to our farmstead. I wore a new pair of bib-overalls, a blue denim shirt, and new brown shoes that pinched my feet. I dreaded the day that my overalls were washed, for in the washing their newness disappeared as did their specialness.

I remember my mother sitting on the porch of our faded, white, two-story farmhouse, husking sweet corn. My mother insisted that I comb my hair, which I reluctantly did before clamping on my cap. A cap was wonderful for little boys who hated combing their hair, but now I had to comb mine before I could wear my cap. Soon other children in the neighborhood appeared and I joined them in my walk to the one-room country school, which for me, was only about a mile away. Some of the kids had to walk more than two miles. No one knew about school buses. For eight years I attended the little one-room school. It made a great difference in my life for it was here that I learned how to read, how to spell, how to add and subtract, how to write and so much more.

One of the first things settlers who arrived in Wisconsin did was to build a school, a one-room building with all eight grades in one-room with one teacher. For many years these schools, located about four miles apart, had no electricity, central heating, indoor plumbing or lunch program. The teachers, most of them women, began teaching with only one or two years of training beyond high school. Many were still in their late teens when they started teaching at a country school. Reading, writing, and arithmetic, the three R's, were heavily emphasized, but so was spelling and geography, history, and science, and yes, art and music. Students had at least four opportunities to master a subject -- when they heard the class ahead of them discuss it, when their class discussed it, when the class behind them discussed it and when they tried to help a slower student understand it. As the teacher had many students to teach in all eight grades students learned to help themselves and to help each other as well.

Not only were the one-room schools places for learning, they also served as community gathering places. Country schools also provided an identity for rural communities. People referred to where they lived by the name of their school. When those schools closed and children were bussed to nearby village schools, much more was lost than merely a school.

Continued from Page 3

Today, Eaton and museum staff have rewritten the story of the Boaz mastodon, demonstrating that the town's famous creature is, in fact, two animals found by farm children a year apart in southwestern Wisconsin. While she has not yet located an Anderson relative, the museum has heard from the Dosch family of Boaz, whose members are excited by the renewed interest in "their mastodon." And an officer of the Fennimore Railroad Historical Society Museum, which has two bones from the Anderson Mills find on display, has told Eaton that he and the bones planned to visit the museum soon.

Like Leith before her, Eaton wants to inspire Wisconsinites by teaching more about the megafauna — from giant beavers to stag moose, caribou, and mammoths — that once roamed the Badger State. Along with Geology Museum assistant director Brooke Norsted MS'03 and a team of undergraduates, Eaton spent the summer of 2015 giving library presentations throughout Dane County, and in the fall, they opened a new exhibit at the museum featuring these giant creatures.

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" A DAY TRIPPER"

Check out all of Richland County's Historical markers at: <http://www.wisconsinhistoricalmarkers.com/>

© Photographed July 23, 2013

Erected 1995 by Wisconsin Historical Society

Boaz, Richland County, Wisconsin

43° 20.585' N, 90° 30.22' W

BOAZ MASTODON

In 1897, after a severe rainstorm in Richland County, farm boys Chris, Harry, Clyde and Verne Dosch found large bones sticking out of an eroded bank on a tributary of Mill Creek near Boaz. The bones were later identified as those of the extinct American Mastodon, a large, hairy animal, nine feet tall and weighing eight tons, related to modern elephants. This was the first recorded discovery of mastodon bones in Wisconsin. Mastodons lived in North America from Florida to Alaska during cool, wet times dominated by spruce forests. They had moved into Wisconsin after the last glacial retreat about 13,000 years ago and lived here for the next 4,000 years, when they became extinct. A fluted quartzite spear point found near the bones suggests that humans also arrived in Wisconsin shortly after the glacial retreat and may have hunted these animals for food. The assembled Boaz Mastodon skeleton is on exhibit at the Geology Museum, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

The marker is located at a highway pull-off on U.S. 14, east of its intersection with County Highway Z, Richland Center, Wisconsin

www.wisconsinhistoricalmarkers.com/2013/07/marker-326-boaz-mastodon.html

Or next summer consider ...

<http://fennimore.com/community-life/museums/railroad-and-historical-society-museum/>

610 Lincoln Avenue, Fennimore, WI

The **Fennimore Railroad Historical Society Museum**, home of the "Dinky", is located in the former city power house and utility building. The building has been remodeled inside and out to resemble a turn-of-the-century depot. The replica loading platform was built with sand and brick, just the way it was originally built, using brick from the original depot.

The museum also showcases an excellent collection of antique farm tools and equipment, military uniforms and war memorabilia, and

home appliances and tools from the 1900 era. Many of the items on display were donated by families from Fennimore and the surrounding area. This is an attempt by Railroad Society members to better appreciate how our relatives lived in that time period.