



The AKEY BRAKEY News

a bi-annual newsletter from the Richland County Historical Society

April, 2014 Volume # 6 – Issue # 1 – promoting and supporting the History of Richland County and Southwestern Wisconsin

DELLA (JACOBSON) PAULS

By Jerry Bower

Early in 1975, Richland County appointed a Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence Committee. Circuit Judge Kent Houck chaired the Committee, which planned how to celebrate the Declaration's two hundred years. The Richland County Historical Society became a partner to the Committee and suggested the acquisition and restoration of a rural one-room school house as the keystone of Richland County's celebration. This proposal was rapidly accepted.

Subsequently, a group of Society members began travelling throughout the County, seeking a school house suitable for restoration. They discovered that many of the 110 one-room school houses that had dotted the County in the 1930s were gone, lost to old age and neglect. Some were being used for farm purposes, to house chickens or pigs, or to store farm supplies. Several had been converted to living quarters. Then Harold Pauls, who lived across County TB from the Akey School, contacted the Historical Society to learn if they would be interested in inspecting the Akey School. The visitors found the building in great shape, compared to many schools that had been rejected as too far gone to restore. The visitors also learned that Harold Pauls owned the Lemuel Akey farm; the school had been named for Akey, who donated the land for the building to the district, way back in 1851. The Akey School District was a joint effort between residents of Buena Vista and Orion Townships.

Harold and his siblings generously offered to donate the Akey School to Richland County, if their mother, Della Pauls, was recognized as the donor. A "one dollar transaction" was duly executed to transfer the building and grounds to Richland County.

THELMA COOPER

By Jerry Bower



Early in March, 2012, Jerry Bower, President, and Carletta Heide, Secretary, of the Richland County Historical Society, received a call from a lawyer in Hillsboro, Oregon. The lawyer was handling the estate of Thelma Cooper, a Richland County native, who had died one day short of her 97th birthday in Hillsboro.

Picture by Klaas Ellerbrook

Thelma, who had drafted her own will, specified that, after several specific bequests were made, "The remainder of my estate to be equally divided between Tuality Community Hospital in Hillsboro, Oregon, and the Richland County Pioneer Museum in Richland (sic), Wisconsin."

The lawyer had found Jerry and Carletta's phone numbers via the internet, on the Chamber of Commerce web page. Neither Jerry nor Carletta could recall ever hearing about a "Pioneer Museum" in Richland County. They suggested, as an alternative, that the money could be given to the Historical Society's Akey School Museum or to the Richland County History Room. The lawyer requested more information about both organizations, which was provided. After a long wait, at the end of April, news arrived that the Historical Society and the County History Room would each receive \$43,200.00 from Thelma's estate!

The County pledged to turn the Akey School site into a county park and to provide some basic services, such as lawn mowing. The Historical Society agreed to undertake the restoration, furnishing, and operation of a restored Akey School. The Akey School Museum opened its doors to visitors for the first time on Sunday, July 4th, 1976!

Della Jacobson was born at home, in Cobb, 24 March 1897. She was educated in area schools. At age seventeen, on 21 October 1914, Della married Chris Pauls, who was farming his foster parents' farm, the Lemuel Akey farm. The couple had five children—four sons, Archie, Clyde, Harold, and Robert, and one daughter, Delva.

Della's husband had an interesting life history. Christopher Halink was born 15 March 1889 on a Dayton Township farm, near Boaz. Chris's mother died while he was still very young. He was then taken into the home of Louie and Eva Pauls. When he was older, Chris changed his name to Pauls. In 1898 the family moved to the newly purchased Lemuel Akey farm. So, Chris completed his education in the Akey School, across the road.

Chris's foster father died in May, 1914, so, after they were married, Chris and Della took over operation of the farm. Tax records in the Richland County History Room indicate that the couple was quite successful at farming. These records also indicate that they were purchasing the farm from Chris's foster mother, Eva. Chris died, at age 44, on 17 June 1933.

Consequently, Archie, the eldest son, quit school to help Della run the farm. As was the custom of that era, a neighbor, Henry Pauls, was named executor of Chris's estate, not Della. Henry Pauls provided Della with just \$20.00 per month, to feed and clothe her family of six. Harold recalled that they had a huge garden, whose produce Della put up in jars. Harold also remembered that his mother removed the "stickers" from berries they had picked by rubbing them over her washboard.

Since the school house was just across the road, Della often boarded the teacher, which provided a little additional income. Della turned operation of the farm over to Clyde and his wife in 1946. They ran the farm until 1960. At that time Harold, who was the teacher at the one-room Pulaski School, near Muscoda, assumed control of the Akey farm. Della passed away in the Richland Hospital, after a brief illness, in February 1973. Long before she died, Della had made her sons promise that they would not ruin the Akey School by housing chickens or pigs in it. She said, "Someday there may be a use for that school house!"

As noted at the outset, the five children of Chris and Della Pauls agreed, in 1975, to sell the Akey School to Richland County for one dollar. Ever since the Akey School Museum opened, the Historical Society has prominently displayed Della Paul's picture over the blackboard at the front of the classroom.



The President's Corner *by Jerry Bower*

During our meetings this Spring, the Board of Directors have made several decisions to further enhance the Akey School Museum. Let me describe those decisions.

A major decision was to focus more attention on two major benefactors of the Museum—Della Pauls, whose family donated the school house and grounds to Richland County, and Thelma Cooper, whose out-of-the-blue bequest has enabled us to make major improvements to the Museum. Brief biographical sketches of Della and Thelma are included in this issue of the AKEY BRAKEY News. Copies of the sketches, including the pictures, will be available at the Museum, for visitors to take along. In addition, a portrait of Thelma will be hung at the front of the school room, joining the portrait of Della that has been displayed since the Museum opened, in 1976.

The other decisions involve improvements to the school house and grounds. There is concrete work that we were unable to accomplish last summer, due to excess moisture. These include installing a new, taller flag pole, a short sidewalk leading to the entrance platform, and a slab for the porta potty. We also decided to have the bell tower repaired. The new tower will be constructed of a PVC siding that is maintenance free. Screening will be installed that we hope will keep the bees from building nests in the tower. The height of the tower and the presence of the bees have been impediments to getting the tower painted!

Please read elsewhere in this issue how you can assist in paying for the improvements to the bell tower and how you could recruit new members for the Historical Society. In any event, we hope that you will visit the "new and improved" Akey School Museum this summer.

Thelma Cooper was born in January 1915 on her parents' farm in Richland County, on English Ridge. She grew up an only child on that farm, but she had numerous cousins in the area with whom she played and visited. Thelma attended the English Ridge School, a one-room school, and, boarding in Richland Center, she attended high school, graduating in 1933.

Then Thelma attended the Richland County Normal School for one year, earning a certificate to teach in the rural schools. Thelma was unable to secure a teaching position because, as several boards of one-room schools told her, they thought she was too small to control the large boys in the upper grades. So, Thelma returned to the family farm.

Her introduction to teaching occurred in January 1935, when she was hired to complete the year of a teacher who had lost control of grades one through four in the Gillingham School. Thelma, by hard work and with much help from parents, board members, and her fellow teacher, was successful. She taught two more years at Gillingham and then enrolled at the La Crosse State Teacher's College, where she earned her elementary teaching degree in 1940.

There followed a series of one-year teaching assignments: in Viroqua, at the West Side School in Richland Center, at the Richland County Normal, in Marshfield, where she was principal in addition to teaching, and finally at the Hillcrest Boarding School for Girls in Beaver Dam. The Hillcrest School closed in June 1945, at the end of the school year.

That summer, Thelma and another Hillcrest teacher, Mary Etter, decided to travel to California to seek teaching positions. They each were offered positions, but not in the same city so that they could room together. Disappointed, Thelma and Mary decided to go by bus to Portland, Oregon, where they had friends. In a short while, both women were employed to teach at Southern Oregon College in Ashland.

At the end of the academic year, Thelma's father drove to Oregon, in his new Kaiser auto, to bring both Thelma and Mary back to Richland County. Mary later traveled to her parents' home in Pennsylvania. In the fall Thelma's father drove her back to Oregon, where she was to teach in Grants Pass. As her father toured the countryside, he fell in love with Oregon. So, during the next two years, he sold his Richland County farm and bought a house in Hillsboro, where he and Thelma lived together until his death.

In 1950 Thelma began teaching in the Beaverton schools. After thirty years, in 1980, she retired. What should she do with her time? Because she had several beloved pets, both cats and dogs, over the years, she volunteered at a local pet shelter. She traveled to England and Spain with friends. Along the way Thelma answered an appeal for volunteers at the Tuality Community Hospital. After training she worked in admissions, earning recognition for having volunteered 8,000 hours! And, in 2001, Thelma published an autobiography, *Good Morning Miss Cooper*, which has provided much of this biographical information.

Both Jerry Bower, President of the Richland County Historical Society, and Crystal Foley, Historian of the Richland County History Room, are thankful that Thelma remembered her years in Richland County fondly enough to direct part of her estate to the "Pioneer Museum."

During 2013, the Historical Society Directors made several decisions to use Thelma Cooper's bequest to improve the Akey School Museum. Ten new, historically and architecturally accurate windows were installed. Two new bookcases were secured to house donated books that grown beyond the original furnishings' storage capacity. The interior of the school was painted, using the original "school house" colors, for the first time since 1976.

While the displays (documents and pictures) were down to accommodate the painters, they were taken to the Frame Corner to be refreshed, matted, and framed. All of these improvements have made the Akey School Museum an even more outstanding facility for demonstrating what the one-room rural schools looked like and how they operated.

Thank you, Thelma Cooper!

Letters . . .

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter, many years overdue, to tell the family of Anna Miller, a county supervising teacher in Richland County, how much I have appreciated her wonderful help she gave me in January 1935 when I began my teaching career of 43 years. I was hired to teach the first four grades at Gillingham because the young lady who taught that fall had a problem. Little did I know whether I could take over, but dear Anna Miller came to my rescue for three days. She helped in so many ways in finding

where the children were in each subject and how to get the first graders learning to read.

At nineteen, I suddenly had a big job. Thanks to Anna, I got along fine and have loved every year I taught. The year 1980 saw me erase my last chalk board and write my last lesson plan. I began in January and retired in January.

I believe Anna had a niece Norma, a classmate at County Normal.

Thelma Cooper
Hillsboro, Ore.

Lon Arbegust provided this letter, written by Thelma Cooper.

Exhibit at the State Historical Society in Madison

Wisconsin in Watercolor: The Farmscapes of Paul Seifert

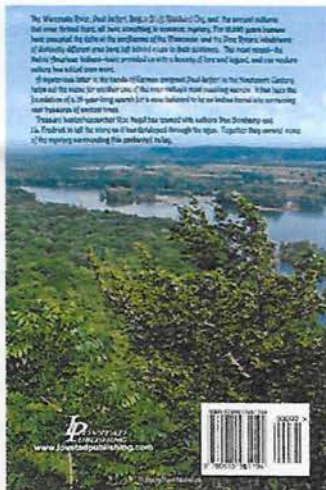
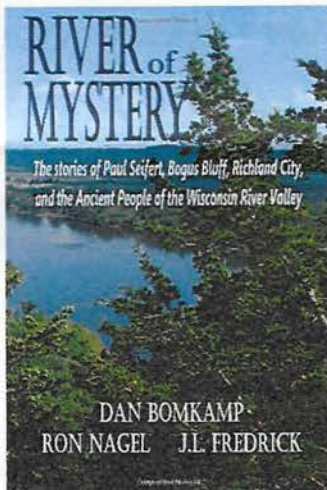
Tuesday, April 8, 2014 - Saturday, August 30, 2014
9 am-4 pm (Tuesdays-Saturdays)

German immigrant Paul Seifert came to Wisconsin and lived a varied and creative life on the edges of society but all the while deeply immersed in the Wisconsin River valley landscape of the Driftless Region he called home. He's best known for his vibrant watercolor farm pictures, which are beloved locally and highly desired by collectors nationally. This is the first major exhibition of Seifert's art.

Go directly to the link on the State Historical Society website with the Landscape view of the Martin Luetscher II farmstead, Honey Creek Township, Wisconsin, c. 1875 by Paul Seifert which includes excellent pictures and a detailed article .

<http://preview.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS2715>

Featured in the October 2013 issue of the AKEY BrAKEY was a book by Dan Bomkamp about Bogus Bluff. This spring, as of February 2014, a new book as a collaboration about Paul Seifert as well as Bogus Bluff covering local history written by Dan Bomkamp, Ron Nagel and J.L. Fredrick is now available.



Excerpted from the **FACEBOOK PAGE** of the
RICHLAND LIBRARY



They are displaying Paul Seifert paintings at Wisconsin Historical Museum by the capitol in Madison through August. Paul was from Germany & lived in the Richland City/Gotham area. If you get a chance go see what they have. These are the 2 painted from memory of castles in Germany that we have on permanent display here in [Richland Center, Wisconsin](#) by Paul Seifert.

The Wisconsin River, Paul Seifert, Bogus Bluff, Richland City, and the ancient cultures that once thrived there, all have something in common: mystery. For 10,000 years humans have occupied the delta at the confluence of the Wisconsin and the Pine Rivers; inhabitants of distinctly different eras have left behind clues to their existence. The most recent—the Native American Indians—have given us a bounty of lore and legend. A mysterious letter in the hands of German emigrant Paul Seifert in the Nineteenth Century helps set the scene for another one of the river valley's most puzzling secrets. It has been the foundation of a 35-year-long search for a cave believed to be an Indian burial site containing vast treasures of ancient times. Treasure hunter/Researcher Ron Nagel has teamed with authors Dan Bomkamp and J.L. Fredrick to tell the story as it has developed through the ages. Together they unravel some of the mystery surrounding this enchanted valley.

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

→ www.richlandcountyhistoricalociety@weebly.com

TWENTY FOR FIFTEEN = 20+15 FUND DRIVE

The Richland County Historical Society is promoting an increase in membership for the upcoming year 2015 and to do so we are inviting twenty new members to join during this current calendar year by Dec. 31st, 2014.

A yearly individual membership to the Richland County Historical Society is \$5.

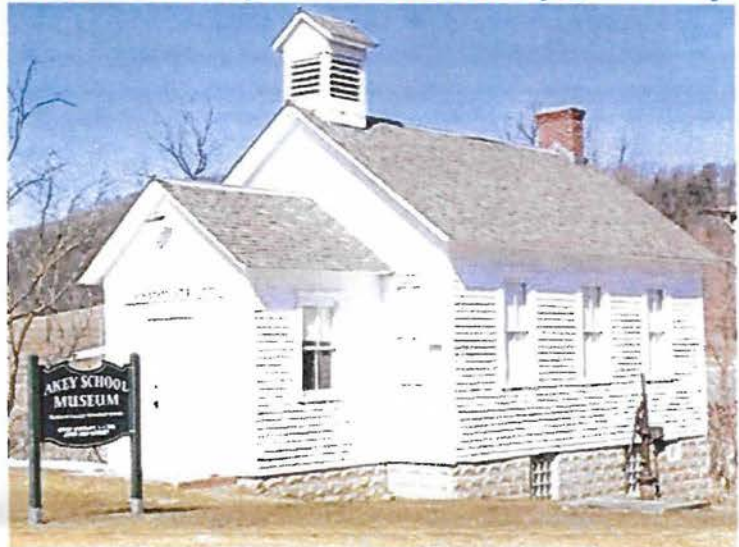
For \$15 -- with this promotion -- ALL NEW members would receive a three year membership in the RCHS and \$10 would be specifically designated for the new flag pole to be located outside the AKEY School. In addition, to all the benefits of being a Richland County Historical Society member, we would include your name as a designated donor to the AKEY Flag Pole Restoration on a framed certificate proudly displayed in the entry way to the AKEY School.

If you are already a member, with a generous \$10 donation we would have your name included with those NEW members recognized on that same framed certificate in the entry way to the AKEY School.

Certainly any donation would be accepted and greatly appreciated for this worthwhile project.

It was only a few years ago that a successful "SAVE the Bell Tower" drive took place and currently the RCHS Board is looking into a restoration project for the tower that would literally 'last for a lifetime'. We are very proud of the most recent restoration to much of the interior of the building and continue to look at improving the access outside the AKEY School as well.

Check out pictures on our website! → www.richlandcountyhistoricalsociety@weebly.com



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- ___ \$15 for a NEW 3 year membership with \$10 designated for the AKEY flagpole project
 - ___ \$10 for a current member to be designated specifically for the AKEY flagpole project
 - ___ \$ ___ additional donation for general improvements to the AKEY School Museum



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

Members name[s] _____

Mailing address _____

Optional Phone # _____

e-mail contact _____

Mail registration to:

Richland County Historical Society

2155 Sunset Drive

Reedsburg, WI 53959

DONATIONS are always WELCOME

.... And are TAX DEDUCTIBLE

[Historic Preservation](#) > [Historic Buildings](#) > [Restoration](#) > Richland Center Depot

Richland Center Depot

As was true for many a Wisconsin community, the railroad was once Richland Center's connection with the state and the nation. It was a vital link from its arrival there in 1876 until passenger train service waned in the 1920s with the growing popularity of automobiles. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Passenger Depot was built in 1909, but by 1996 it had been neglected and unused for twenty years. A crumbling stone foundation and failing roof threatened the building. In addition, original features had been altered or removed, rendering the building almost unrecognizable. A canopy, which once protected waiting passengers, had been demolished, as had a bay window and a brick chimney.



Long neglected depot before restoration



Passenger canopy was rebuilt as part of the restoration

But in the nick of time the depot was rescued from ruin by dedicated Richland Center city officials and volunteers. They applied for and received federal money from a transportation enhancement program, "TEA-21," administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. This paid for 80 percent of the project cost, with the remaining amount covered by community donations. The restoration began with a new foundation, built in the original location. Historic photographs guided the reconstruction of the missing passenger canopy, bay window and chimney. Paint analysis determined the original colors, which once again enhance the building's design. The depot now looks much as it did when it was constructed in 1909.

The restored and adapted depot after restoration



The current Visitor Center will also house a museum. Starting with Memorial Day weekend, it is to be open Monday thru Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The picture of the Railroad Car located next to the building is taken from the Visitor Guide.

Consider a 'DayTripper' to the restored Blue River School House

The Blue River School House is located in Blue River, Wisconsin just off Highway 133 one block east of the Cenex Station.

It has been renovated and moved to the current location. The walls contain several of the graduating classes of Blue River High School with simple, yet authenticated desks from the time period in a classroom setting with a small library.

Open select Sundays during the summer and for the weekend of the Blue River Autumn Fest why not consider a short journey from Richland County west on Highway 60 then across the Wisconsin River on County Highway T into Northeastern Grant County.



OR consider stopping by Our AKEY SCHOOL MUSEUM with this information provided by Travel Wisconsin at

<http://www.travelwisconsin.com/architecture/akey-school-museum-194513>

Visit the Akey School Museum, a fully restored and equipped one-room rural school house.

Hours of Operation 1pm-4pm, Sundays *during the summer months of June thru September*

Directions 2.5 miles East of Twin Bluffs to get to the AKEY SCHOOL MUSEUM

From Madison take Hwy 14 to Gotham, take Hwy 60 West to County TB, north on TB to the museum.

From Richland Center, take Hwy 14 East to Twin Bluffs Road then in Twin Bluffs, to County TB, then south on TB to the museum.

The Richland County Historical Society Board is pleased to acknowledge that Nicolas Studnicka has accepted the position of Treasurer succeeding Bonnie Arbegust. We would like to express our appreciation to Bonnie for her years of service and look forward to her continued involvement, along with her husband Lon, with the Richland County Historical Society. THANK YOU Bonnie and Lon for all you both do to support local history in our area!



Twylah Kepler served many years on the Richland County Historical Society Board and provided a valuable link for the Historical Society with the Richland County Room. The Richland County Historical Society would extend deepest condolences to Twylah's family and an acknowledgement of our sincerest appreciation for all she did to promote local history in the Richland County area.

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Twylah L Kepler

(July 14, 1920 - March 28, 2014)

Twylah L. Kepler, 93, of Richland Center died Friday, March 28, 2014 at Pine Valley Healthcare. She was born July 14, 1920 in the village of Loyd, Willow Township the daughter of William Benjamin and Leona (Borchardt) Shaw.

She married Theron L. Kepler. They farmed in Sylvan Township near Sabin where they developed a herd of high-producing Registered "Sabinview" Holstein cattle.

After her husband's death in 1973, she earned her Associate Degree at UW-Richland. She served as Richland County Fair Secretary for six years.

Later she became historian of the Richland County History Room, Brewer Library, for 21 years.

Her hobbies were reading historical and political books, sewing, cooking and playing cards with friends.

She loved history, especially local history, and the genealogy of Richland County people. She was a member of Colonial Dames XVII Century (Edward Jackson Chapter) proving an ancestor who came to American before 1700, and a life member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (Black Hawk Chapter) proving four ancestors who served in the Revolutionary War. She was a member of the Richland Center Historic Preservation Committee, the Richland County Historical Society, the Resource Center Advisory Committee for Richland County Social Services, Woman's Relief Corps, and also served as an elder of the Town & Country Presbyterian Church.



Excerpted from obituaries provided by Pratt Funeral and Cremation Service

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<http://www.richlandchamber.com/historical-sites.html>

Historical Sites and Architecture

Take the Historical and Architectural Heritage Tour of Richland Center. There are over 20 interesting sites for you to enjoy, with 11 different architectural styles. Take a self-guided tour with a map from the Visitor Center or set an appointment for a paid guided tour.

According to Lon Arbegust, "... this tour was funded by the Richland Chamber and Alliance to promote the history and architecture of Richland Center. I believe it turned out quite nicely. Sherry Klatt arranged the literature and photos into this format. We hope you enjoy it and that we may go forward adding more to it. There are plenty more interesting structures to include".

Check the following articles for more information & pictures about other historical homes & sites located in Richland Center. [A.V. Pier House](#)  [Bowen Carriage House](#)  [Charles Craig House](#) 
[First Baptist Church](#)  [Kirkpatrick House](#)  [Krouskop Mansion](#)  [Meadows House](#) 
[O.J. Burnham House](#)  [Pratt House](#)  [Robert Burnham House](#) 

Richland Center history, the formative years The historical development of Richland Center as an agricultural support community and retail trade center is reflected in its fine architectural heritage. Buildings dating from as early as the mid-1850s and 1860s still remain in the city. The two major building boom periods were the years from 1880 through 1890 and again in 1910 through 1930.

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

___ \$5 for an individual / \$8 for a family

___ in addition to a membership consider a \$50 donation and receive Richland County History Book as well as having your name on a plaque of recognition at the Akey School Museum

___ \$ 100 for a LIFETIME individual and/or family membership



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

Members name[s] _____

Mailing address _____

Optional Phone # _____

e-mail contact _____

Mail registration to:

Richland County Historical Society

2155 Sunset Drive

Reedsburg, WI 53959

DONATIONS are always WELCOME

.... And are **TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

**PROMOTE
AND
SUPPORT
RICHLAND
COUNTY
HISTORY**

... would you → pass this newsletter on to a **FRIEND**

MADISON WI 535



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

JUN 2014 FM 4 L



Jim & Barb Cody
2155 Sunset DR
Reedsburg WI 53959

50959226355

