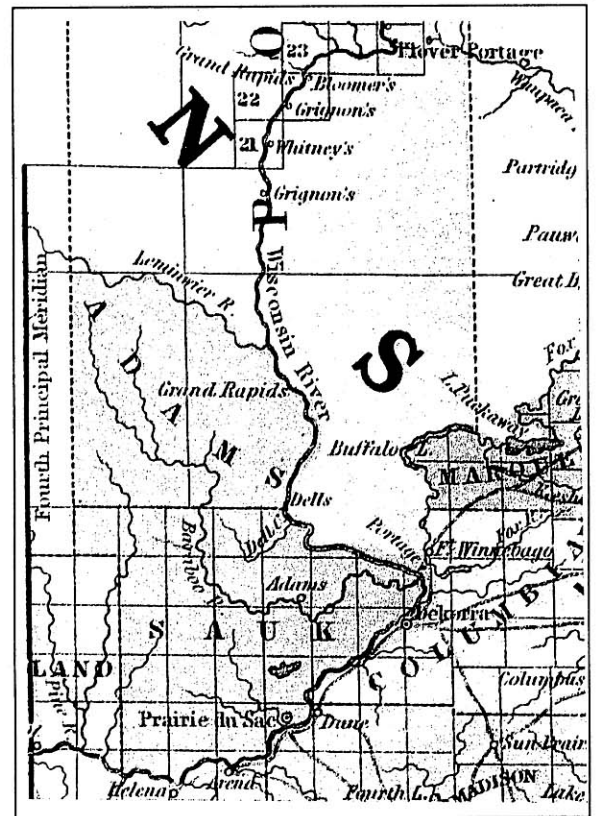


County Government

Why Adams County?

Adams County was created by the legislature of Wisconsin Territory on March 11, 1848. Reportedly named in honor of both John Adams, the second President of the United States, and John Quincy Adams, the sixth President who died in February 1848, the entire county was west of the Wisconsin and south of the Lemonweir Rivers in what is now southern and western Juneau County. The non-Indian population of this area was less than 200, far too small to justify or support a county government. So why was Adams County created? Therein lies a story.

In the 1840s, Sauk County was involved in a dispute over the site of its county seat, which the legislature had placed at Prairie du Sac in 1844. Since Prairie du Sac was located on the southern edge of the county, it was expected that county residents would someday relocate the county seat to a more centrally-located site. In fact, one limitation the legislature placed on counties selecting a site was that the county seat be located



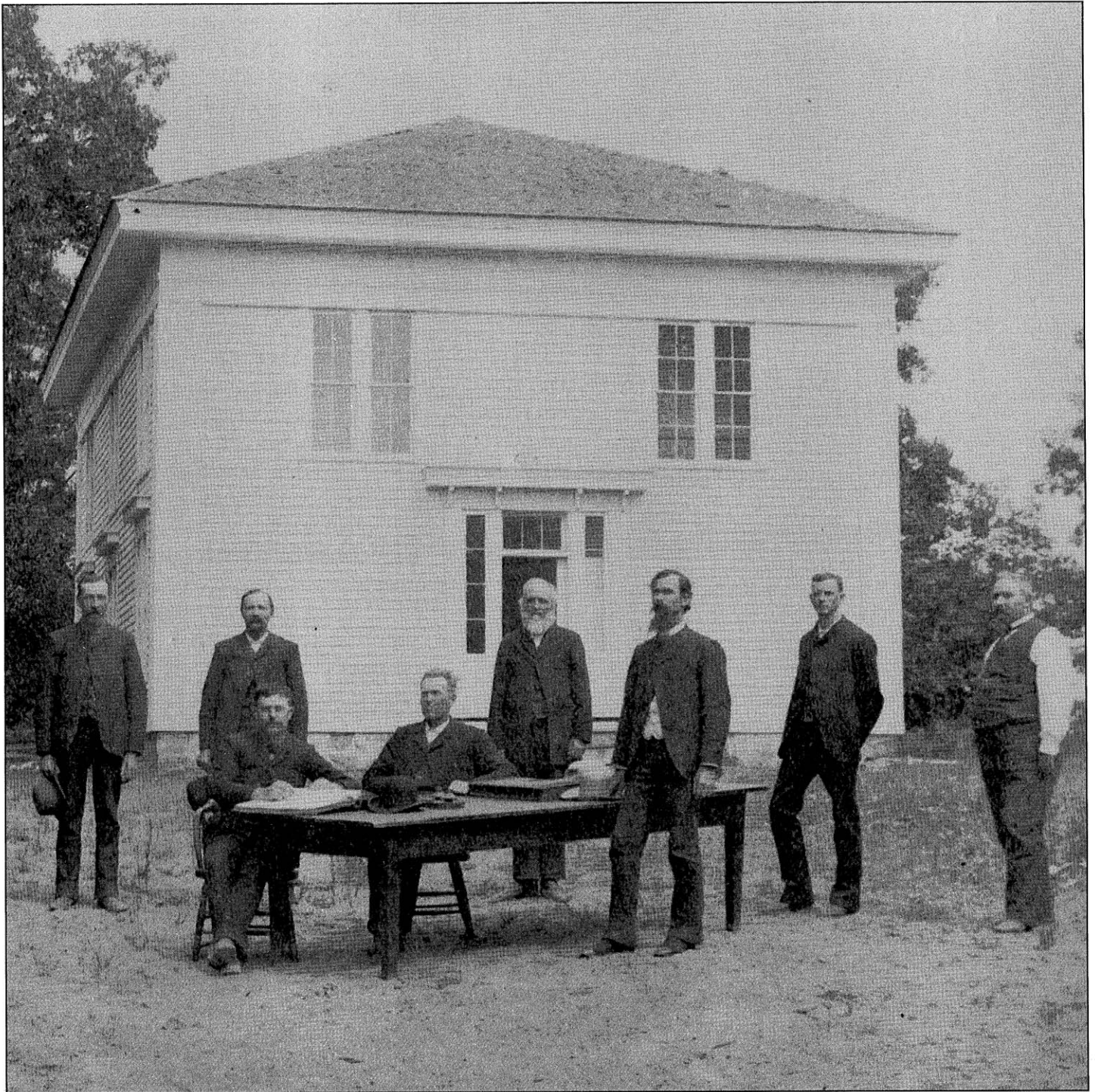
Above: An 1849 map of Wisconsin depicting the original Adams County west of the Wisconsin and south of the Lemonweir Rivers and the village of Adams in Sauk County.

reasonably near the center of the county.

As expected, settlers moved into central and northern Sauk and demanded that the county seat be moved out of Prairie du Sac. The leading contenders for the honor were two new villages on the Baraboo River, Reedsburg and "Adams." In a hotly-contested election in 1846, county voters selected "Adams" for their county seat.

Reedsburg boosters refused to accept the loss and worked to reverse it. They suffered a setback when the legislature, led by Delano Pratt of "Adams" village, created Adams County just north of Reedsburg. No connection between the naming of "Adams" village and Adams County has been found--yet. Perhaps it is only a coincidence.

When the new boundary lines were drawn, Reedsburg found itself on the northern edge of Sauk County and less eligible for the county seat. Reedsburg then countered by electing one of its own, Caleb Crosswell, to the legislature in 1850. He persuaded the legislature to change the borders and shift nearly all of the original Adams County



Friendship founder Luther Stowell organized the County Seat Building Company and promised county voters to build a court house in Friendship if the voters agreed to move the county seat there. The voters agreed and Stowell kept his promise. Completed in 1859, the court house had a central hallway with offices for county officials downstairs and a courtroom/meeting hall upstairs. Although some county offices were moved to the stone building in 1869, the 1859 court house remained in use until 1913. Depicted here are county officials in the late 1880s: (l-r standing) Sheriff W. Atcherson, George Waterman, District Attorney O. Lapham, Register of Deeds J. Gunning, Clerk of Courts A. Hamilton, Judge John Keyes; (sitting) Treasurer F. Powers and Clerk C. Simons

into Sauk County. Now Reedsburg was closer to the center of Sauk than its rival and a stronger candidate for the county seat.

Reedsburg now demanded that the Sauk county seat be moved. No action was taken and in 1853, Crosswell was replaced in the legislature by Charles Armstrong of "Adams." He persuaded the legislature to restore the old border between Adams and Sauk counties, once again placing Reedsburg on the edge of the county. In 1855, Sauk County voters rejected a final proposal put forth by Reedsburg to move the county seat. It remained in the old village of "Adams," which had, in the meantime, acquired the name it goes by today--Baraboo.

By 1853, after all the county borders had been shuffled into place, Adams County covered all of what is now Adams and Juneau counties. With settlement progressing and the federal land survey complete, it was time for the work of county government to begin.

After the election of April 1853, the first meeting of the Adams county board was held in the home of William Palmer, located in Section 7 of the Town of Quincy. Palmer's homestead was close to Henry Kingsbury's ferry which crossed the river at Table Rock, where the Castle Rock dam was later built. Five towns sent supervisors: Grand Marsh, Ralph Patrick; Jackson, George Knox; Quincy, Thomas J. Greenwood; Lemonweir, A.P. Ayers; Necedah, John Werner. With the east siders in the majority, Grand Marsh's Ralph Patrick was elected as the first chair of the county board, with the west siders agreeing to make it unanimous.

High on the board's agenda was the verification of the

election for county officers, which was performed by justices of the peace Seth Thompson, White Creek, and William Stearns, Camp Douglas. Approximately

500 voters--all male--cast ballots in this first county election. West siders swept the legal and law enforcement departments: county judge, E.S. Minor; sheriff, W. J. Sayers; attorney, D. A. Bigelow. East siders took over the record-keeping jobs: county clerk, William H. Spain, Quincy; clerk of court, John Patrick, Grand Marsh; register of deeds, William H. Palmer, Quincy; treasurer, S. G. Holbrook, Quincy; surveyor, Caleb McArthur. In what must have been a confusing ballot, W.I. Webster, the first county coroner, defeated his opponent, W. J. Webster, by a total of twenty votes.

In its early years, the county board spent much of its time responding to the consequences of rapid settlement. As the population grew and shifted throughout the county, new towns were organized and the borders of older towns were adjusted. The short-lived towns of Big Spring (New Haven), Chester (New Chester, Easton), White Creek (Quincy, Easton), Newark Valley (Quincy, Strongs Prairie), Barton (Richfield), Verona (Big Flats) and Brownville (Big Flats) were organized on the east side, and as many or more on the west.

The supervisors also chartered the first county highway which ran from Quincy to the Marsh House, via White Creek. The state then called for the county to lay out east-west routes from the Marquette county line to the Wisconsin River in Quincy and from Wautoma to Petenwell Rock. A north-south route from Wisconsin Dells to Plainville, Friendship and Big Flats to the Wood county line was sketched out in 1858, as a replacement for the Pinery Road. While the state or the county may have chartered these roads, neither was the main source of funding. Road and bridge construction and maintenance--such as it was--would remain the responsibility of the townships for the rest of the century.

Public schools and the poor also were a town responsibility in the 1850s, although the county would assume a larger role in later decades.

One question the supervisors tackled early on was the construction of a courthouse. After no one responded to a request for bids to build a wood-frame court house and office building in Quincy, the board voted to accept the offer of space in a building constructed by Stillman Niles in Section 19 of Quincy. The two-story building had a

Town Organization Dates

Adams-	1860	New Chester-	1861
Big Flats-	1861	New Haven-	1860
Colburn-	1890	Preston-	1860
Dell Prairie-	1855	Quincy-	1853
Easton-	1860	Richfield-	1859
Jackson-	1855	Rome-	1857
Lincoln-	1861	Springville-	1855
Leola-	1857	Strongs Prairie-	1860
Monroe-	1859		

meeting room for the board and the court upstairs and space for the desks and record books of county officers downstairs. No jail was built on the premises so the accused waiting for trial and those convicted of county violations were transported by horse and wagon to the Columbia county jail in Portage. The county's rent for the Niles property, which was also used as a public meeting hall by the Quincy Masons, the Republican Party, and other groups, was \$200 per year. Firewood to heat the building cost taxpayers an additional \$25-\$30.

As early as 1854, the balance of county population had shifted to the west side of the river. Milton Maughs, founder of Mauston, was elected chair of the county board in '54 and '55. By 1856, the west siders on the board--who each represented one town--outnumbered the east siders, 13-11. The trend was obvious and led the west siders to petition the legislature to establish a new county. A referendum was held in the west side towns that resulted in the organization of Juneau County in 1857. Adams county settled accounts with its neighbor across the river and adopted the borders it has maintained ever since.

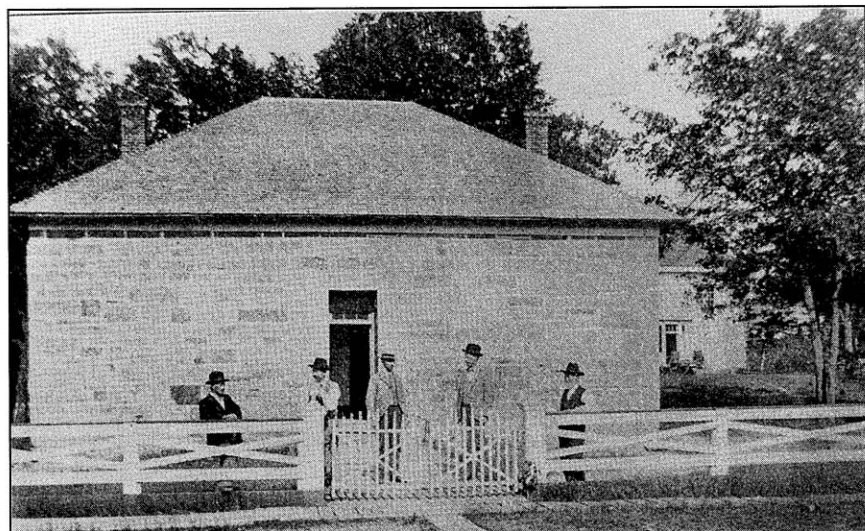
About the same time that Juneau and Adams counties were separating, Luther Stowell, William Burbank and a number of other New York immigrants were establishing the village of Friendship. They also organized the County Seat Building Company and, in January 1858, asked the county board to petition the legislature to move the county seat to their new village. In return the Company would donate land for and build a court house in Friendship. The required referendum was held in April 1858 and Friendship won by a margin of 155 votes. Construction began almost immediately on the new court house, with specifications closely resembling those of the two-story, 26 x 40 foot building that the board sought but did not find bidders for in Quincy in 1856.



The first meeting of the county board in Friendship took place in July 1859. Nineteen towns were represented: Adams, Dell Prairie, Easton, Jackson, Leola, Monroe, New Haven, Preston, Quincy, Richfield, Rome, Springville, and Strongs Prairie, plus now long gone Brownville, Barton, Chester, Grand Marsh, Newark Valley and White Creek. Lincoln and Colburn had yet to be organized. The chair of the board was J.W. Tyler of Springville.

The building that Stillman Niles rented to the county, and which was often called the "court house," remained in Quincy for a number of years. It was not moved to Friendship, as stated by some, nor did it stay in Quincy. It currently stands in Section 6 of Strongs Prairie on the south side of old County Highway J.

Above: The Adams County Board met on the second floor of this building in Quincy from 1853 to 1859. It still stands on old County J near Dellwood. Below: The stone "root house" stood on the court house lawn and was used for county offices from 1869 to 1913.



The 1860s-1900s

The 1860s began with a major reorganization of county government in Wisconsin. The township system, whereby each town sent one supervisor to the county board, was altered to a commission system. Adams County was divided into three districts, each one of which sent a "commissioner" to the county board. The first commissioners were mill owner Seth Thompson, White Creek; newspaper editor J.C. Chandler, Friendship; and farmer Andrew Jackson, White Creek. This system remained in place until 1868, when the township system was restored.

Of more lasting impact was the creation of the position of county school superintendent in 1861. Mandated by the state, the superintendent was to act as both supervisor of and advocate for the country schools, which were created, managed and funded almost entirely by local districts organized by the towns. The superintendent's job was to inspect the schools and insure that they met minimal state standards and supervise teachers who, in many cases, were only slightly more educated than their students. For example, the superintendent encouraged local school districts to purchase books and blackboards, install good stoves and supply enough firewood to keep the

scholars warm on frosty mornings. The superintendent could withhold county and state aid from local districts that failed to meet standards.

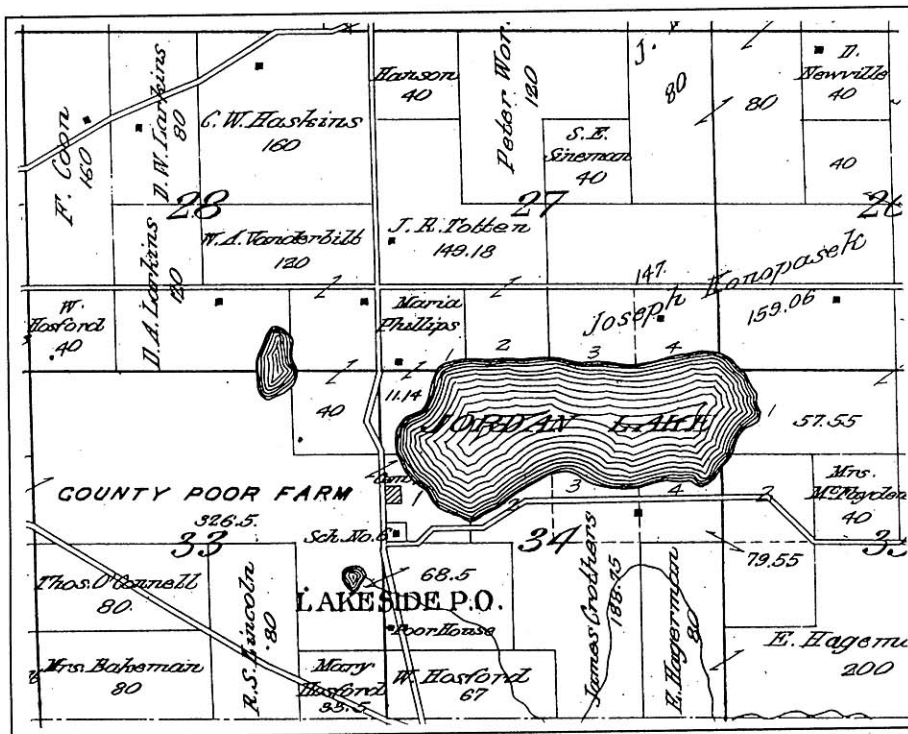
The superintendent also reported to the county board on the condition of schools, his efforts on behalf of education, and defended the use of county and state taxes for schools. The job grew with the school system. Adams County supplied \$1,067 in aid to seventeen schools in 1867 and \$18,569 to 82 schools in 1900. The first election for county superintendent took place in 1862, but the first Adams superintendent on record was J.C. Yocum, Point Bluff, elected in 1864.

The county was also in charge of care for the elderly, orphaned, impoverished or disabled without family or means to care for themselves. In the 1850s and '60s, and for the rest of the century for those in temporary need, the county and the towns paid those who provided care for the "poor." Merchants who supplied food and clothing, doctors and midwives who provided health care, even neighbors who provided lodging, submitted bills and were reimbursed. In 1858, for example, the county paid out \$427.70 to fourteen providers--merchants and millers--who served the "poor."

In 1871, the county took its first step to provide long-term care for the "poor" by appointing George W. Waterman, D.L.

McConick and L. W. Holmes Superintendents of the Poor and delegating them to buy land for a county farm. Located in Section 29 of Jackson, (about three miles south of Highway 82 on County Highway G) the county farm grew to a total of 556 acres. Despite the usually aged and infirm condition of its residents, the county farm was a working farm. Residents were expected to work the land as much as they were able, as was the overseer and his family. Additional work was contracted out. In 1878, the farm had sixteen residents, including two under four years of age. The farm operation produced wheat, oats, corn, buckwheat, rye, potatoes, turnips, onions, tobacco, cheese, butter, apples, pickles and one barrel of sauerkraut. Livestock numbered 22 cattle, 22 hogs, and 3 horses, plus laying hens.

A home for the elderly, the orphaned and the disabled, the county poor farm was located off County G west and south of Jordan Lake.



Expenses came to about \$2,900 for the year, partially offset by income from the farm and also from other counties with residents at the Adams farm. "We find by computation that it has cost about \$1.88 per week for the support of the inmates for the past year," reported the committee supervising the farm in 1878.

The county farm was a refuge for orphaned youngsters, the elderly, the handicapped and the disabled. As state institutions developed to care for the blind, the deaf, the mentally ill, the developmentally disabled and those with seizure disorders, fewer of them were housed at the poor farm. It became a home for the impoverished elderly who relied on the county to care for them until it closed in 1951.

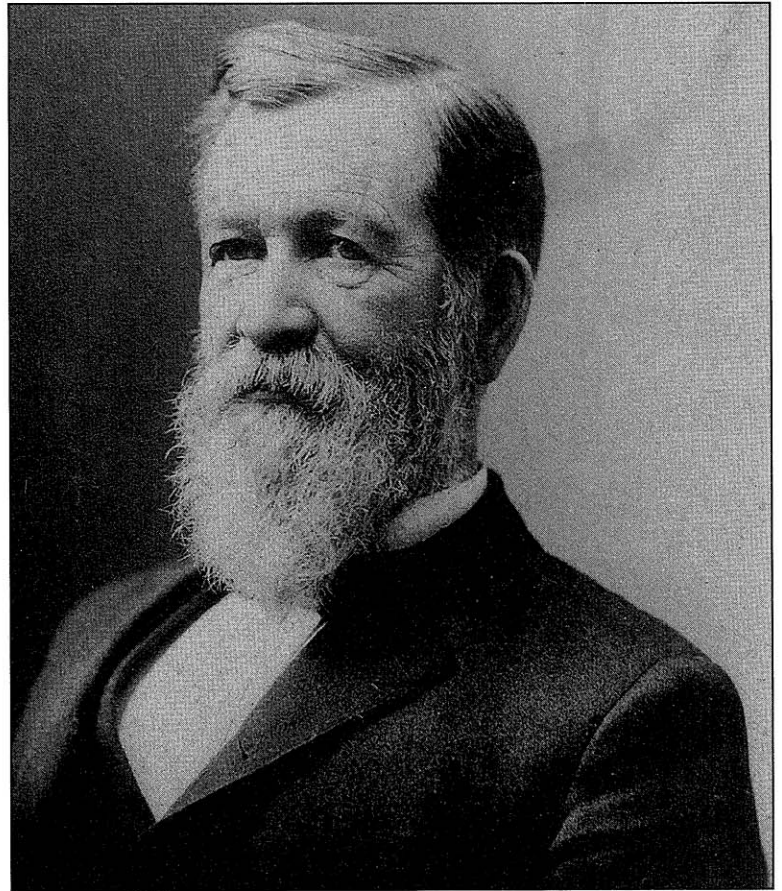
The county was also the legal and law enforcement arm of local government. The most durable figure in the county courts of the 1800s was Solon W. Pierce. Lawyer, state legislator, newspaper publisher, Civil War veteran and author, Pierce served as county judge for two years then held the position of county attorney for all but four of the thirty years between 1869 and 1899.

He used the editorial pages of his *Adams County Press* to comment on legal matters in the county and, of course, promote his own election campaigns. "There isn't in all the Northwest another county where the people are so peaceably disposed," he wrote in 1866. "At the last term of the Circuit Court here there was not a single contested case on the calendar...everybody has means to meet their obligations, and are also honest enough to do so."

The situation had not changed greatly by 1878 when Pierce reported that, "The June term of the Circuit Court for 1878 proved to be the shortest ever held in this county. There were the meager number of 12 cases only on the calendar, and but one of these was a jury case....The tax payers are to be congratulated; but this showing doesn't indicate that the county is much of a paradise for lawyers."

The county attorney was one of the lawyers for whom the county wasn't "paradise." As Pierce pointed out in 1879, his salary was a mere \$250 a year, while the county clerk pulled down a magnificent \$600 per annum.

If Pierce's salary was determined by his case



load, even \$250 might have been too much. Legal activity continued at a snail's pace into the 1880s. In 1883, 1885 and 1886, Judge Alva Stewart canceled court sessions because "there is but little if any business." Near the end of 1888, Pierce pointed out that the county "has not had a convict or any person confined in jail during the year. In 1889, he opined that, "If it wasn't for the name of it, and that we all like to see Judge Stewart at least as often as once a year, Adams county could get along without any terms of the circuit court."

The light criminal case load probably had a great deal to do with the county supervisors' reluctance to build a jail. The court house built in 1858-'59 had a court room/board room on the second floor, plus quarters for the sheriff, judge and other county offices on the ground floor, but no jail. The county board did supply the sheriff with a set of handcuffs and leg irons which he occasionally used to secure a suspect to a tree on the court house lawn, but resisted all arguments to build a jail.

In 1868, it was revealed that the county had not actually taken title to the court house. Luther

Solon Wesley Pierce--Civil War veteran, attorney-at-law, county prosecutor and judge, newspaper editor, state legislator and railroad booster--was the most prominent person in the county from the 1860s until his death in 1909.

Stowell, whose Court House Building Company still held title to the building and the grounds, announced that the Company would relinquish the title if the supervisors would build a county jail, perhaps by digging a basement beneath the court house. A hail of criticism was showered on the Building Company, whose officers were accused of looting the public purse, even though they had not charged the taxpayers a penny to build the court house or acquire the grounds around it. Suitably chastened, Stowell and his partners turned over the title to the court house and the supervisors took no further action on the jail.

They did build what looked like a jail. Completed in 1869, the renowned "stone-building" was a windowless, sandstone blockhouse squatting on the court house lawn. It was designed to provide fire and burglar proof quarters for county officers and public records. Pierce reported that his out-of-town colleagues jokingly referred to it as the "root-house" where Adams county housed its public officials like rutabagas.

Despite the jokes, the "root-house" was a down to earth solution to the real problem of protecting vital records from fire. Unlike several other counties, where early records have been lost in court house fires, Adams still has original material dating back to its first years. Not only fireproof, the root-house remained burglarproof until a 1900 break-in and only failed then because

the county board had succumbed to the register of deed's pleas for more space, fresh air and light, and built a wooden addition--with windows--onto the "root-house."

While the stone building might have prevented some crime, it still was not a jail. Prosecutor Pierce persisted and, during the economic downturn of 1879, argued that a jail "could be cheaply built by constructing it as a basement for the present court house...Two or three thousand dollars thrown into circulation now in the county, as it would be for such labor and material, would tend greatly to relieve the present stricture and distress..."

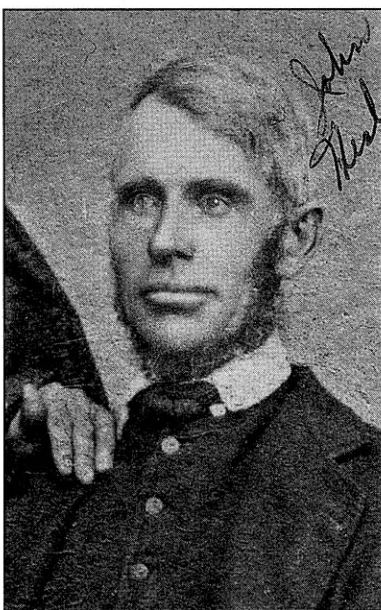
Although a worthy public works project, the jail failed to attract the necessary support. Adams County continued to pay several hundred dollars a year to transport prisoners and hold them in Portage. A jail was not built in Friendship until after the village incorporated in 1907. A small frame building was moved to the court house lawn and a steel "cage" installed in it to hold prisoners. The county did not have its own jail until the second court house was completed in 1914.

Despite the many slow sessions of the court and the reluctance of county government to levy taxes for a jail, Adams County was not crime free in the 1800s. Petty theft, larceny, drunkenness, family disputes, fistfights, child abuse, assault, arson, armed robbery, rape, murder and other crimes familiar to the late 20th Century also occurred in the 19th. A few crimes were specific to the time and place, such as timber thievery, arson in marshes and forests, stock rustling, stagecoach hold-ups and violence at hop house dances.

Here is a sampling of crime in Adams County, 1860s-1890s: two thieves were arrested in Friendship for stealing horses from some unarmed Ho-Chunk Indians; the pet sheep belonging to "young Billy Quaw" was snatched off a Friendship street and given a ride in the country before young Billy retrieved it; a "dolt" attempting to burn the old grass off his hay marsh ignited a fire that destroyed nearly every fence in Big Flats and "20 miles of fencing" in Lincoln; a New Haven father-and-son team was convicted of stealing two bushels of clover seed, 25 bushels of oats and 12 bushels of wheat; a Mr. Hosford was relieved of \$20 when a highwayman halted the Wisconsin Dells-White Creek stage and ordered all passengers to "stand and deliver"; an arsonist set fire to the barn of John Hill, Friendship, with four-year-old Verna Hill inside; at a hop-pickers dance in Strongs Prairie, John Anderson, "drunk and quarrelsome" knifed and killed Isaac Rusgard. Times change, human nature does not. Crime was a part of life in the past as in the present.

One prominent part of modern county government that did not exist in the 1800s was the highway department. Roads and bridges were the responsibility of town governments, with some aid from the county and the state. The state was

John Hesler, whose murder in 1883 prompted an extensive investigation but was not solved for another twenty years





constitutionally barred from building highways and bridges until 1908, but that did not stop Madison from chartering them, only to leave the actual construction work to private contractors or local government.

Towns customarily selected a “road day” in spring, on which taxpayers came together and selected a “Roadmaster.” He organized the landowners into work teams which set out to lay logs in “corduroy” fashion on roads crossing marshes, pour more sand into the deepest potholes and grade the highway as best they could. The quality of the work varied, with some Roadmasters and landowners working hard to create reasonably good roads while others treated “road-day” as a paid holiday with the boys. The pay came in the form of a credit on town taxes pro-rated according to the number of men, boys, work horses and wagons an individual landowner contributed.

The fifty miles of frontage on the Wisconsin River that Adams shared with Juneau county was one of the longest unbridged stretches on the river. A bridge was in place at Wisconsin Dells in the 1850s and at Nekoosa in the 1870s, but travelers in between depended on fords and ferries.

Ferries were chartered up and down the river at convenient crossing points: Plainville, Point Bluff, Fritz’s, Table Rock, Quincy village, Carman’s Rock, Petenwell, Strong’s Prairie, Barnum. The fee schedule set by the county in 1861, for William Carman’s ferry, which crossed

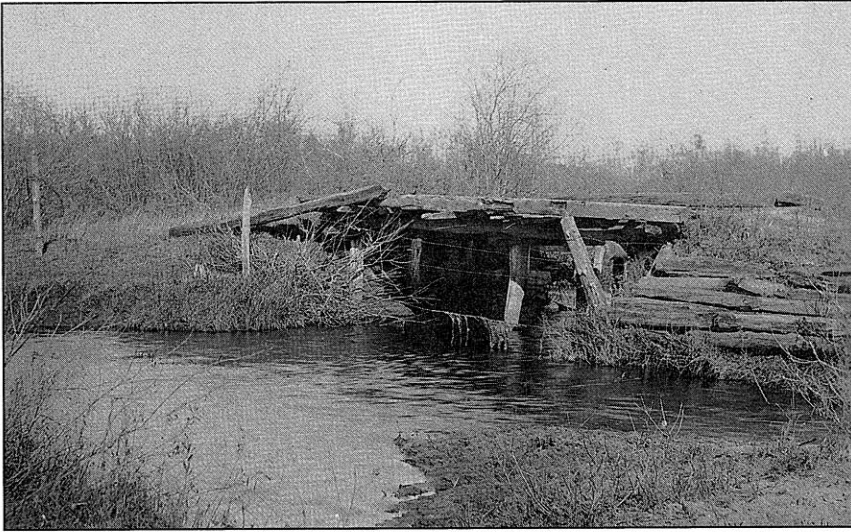
the river about where the C & NW railroad bridge was later built, stated that 40 cents was the charge for any vehicle drawn by a team of horses or a yoke of oxen. One horse and wagon was 30 cents; one man on a horse, 25 cents; hogs and sheep were 3 cents per head, and foot passengers were 10 cents each. Operators were also protected by a proviso in the charter that kept competing ferries at least two miles apart from each other.

The watercraft used to ferry people, animals and goods across the river varied. Most were wide, flat-bottomed rafts, slightly longer and wider than a horse and wagon, fastened to a stout rope stretched across the river and using the current itself to propel themselves across--but not always.

Isaac Olesen’s “Norwegian ferry” located about one mile down from Petenwell Rock in the 1870s, was a skiff in which Olesen carried people--no animals or wagons--across the river at 10 cents a head.

The ferry that “Captain” Albert Wood ran at Quincy was more imposing. It was a fifty-foot long side-paddle steamboat named the “Modocawanda” that ran from Quincy to Germantown village where the Juneau County Park is now located. In 1873, Wood took the Modocawanda to Wisconsin Dells where it made its mark in the history of tourism as the first steam-powered tour boat to navigate those waters. After a few years at the Dells, the former Quincy ferry steamed to the Fox River to end its days.

Road day in Big Flats, in the 1900s, when landowners could trade labor on the town roads for property tax relief.



Above: Town and county governments shared responsibility for bridges in the county. Below: the dedication of the modern steel bridge at Petenwell Rock, 1919.

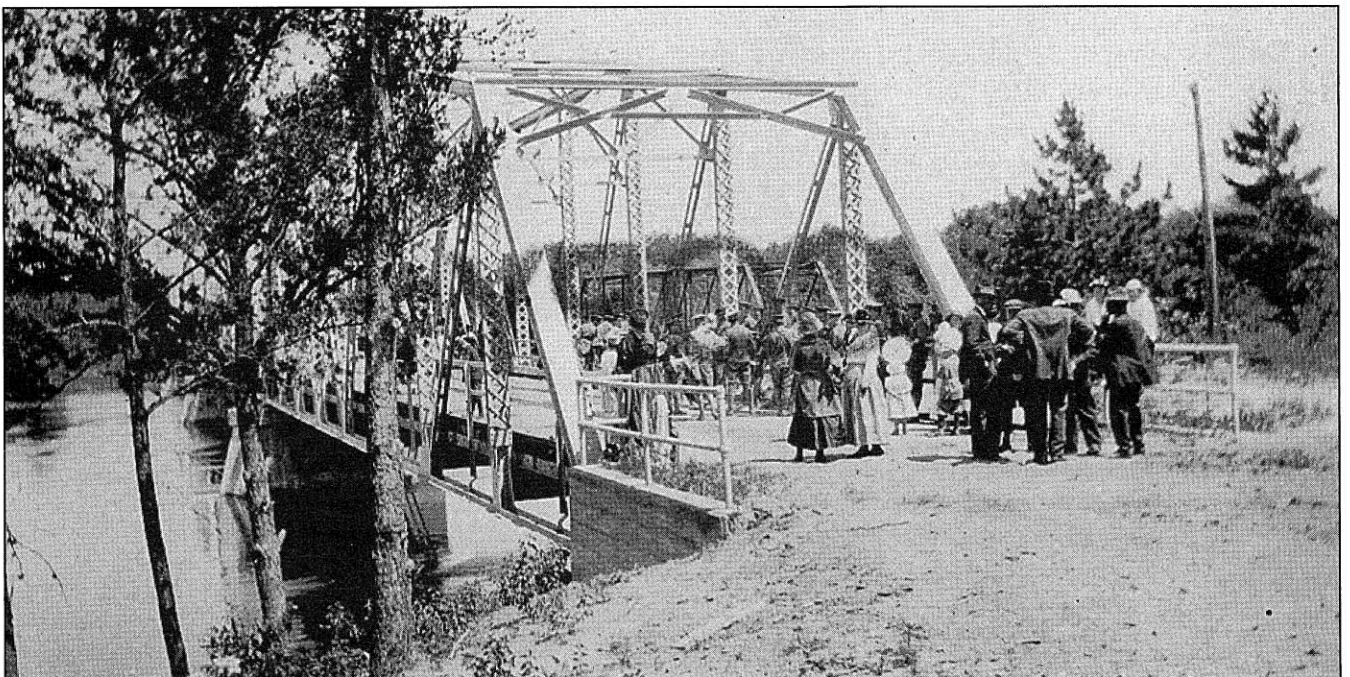
A lively ferry traffic implied a need for bridges, but spanning the Wisconsin was a financial challenge neither Juneau nor Adams County wanted to meet. The ancient Indian crossing at Petenwell Rock was the most likely place to build a bridge. The river was reasonably narrow and the bottom was rock instead of shifting sand. In addition, the village of Necedah entered its golden age as the queen city of the Yellow River pinery in the 1870s. The Necedah Lumber Company had several hundred employees and the village itself grew to 2,000 people by 1890. The Milwaukee Road and the North Western railroads both ran to Necedah and added to the bustle of the place.

In 1882, Necedah's lumbermen built a wooden toll bridge at Petenwell Rock. It was replaced two years later by an iron bridge financed with aid from the Towns of Necedah and Strong's Prairie. Necedah's lumber boom went bust in the early 1890s, and the bridge was taken over by Necedah Town. The contribution of Adams County to these bridge-building endeavors totalled about \$150 allotted to Strong's Prairie to improve the roads approaching the bridge. The Petenwell bridge remained the responsibility of the towns until state law was changed in the 1900s.

Bridge-building at Petenwell stimulated interest elsewhere. In 1886 residents of Quincy petitioned the county to build a bridge in their town and the following year Springville and Mauston asked the county for a bridge at Point Bluff. The conviction that even bridges over major rivers should be locally funded prevailed and no county action was taken.

Taxes for bridges and other items were always a concern. Over the years a sampling of county tax statements, not including township taxes, and all based on the property tax, reads as follows:

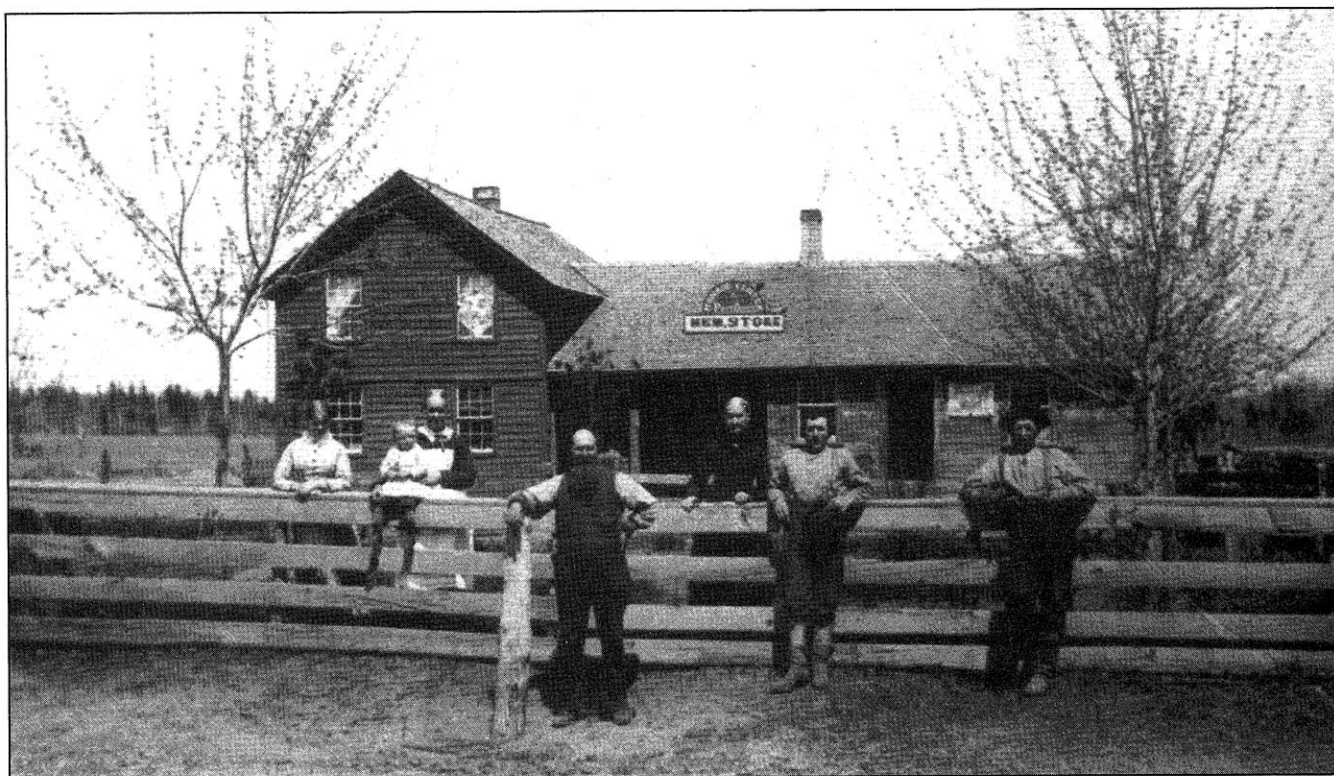
	1878	1885	1900
State taxes:	\$2504.86	\$2961.25	\$3971.81
County school aids:	\$990.60	\$986.40	\$3665.25
County taxes:	\$8565.75	\$4716.86	\$7797.65
Total	\$12,061.21	\$8664.51	15,434.71



Adams County Post Offices 1850 - 1999

Adams: July 2, 1913 -
Adams Center: June 28, 1870 - May 31, 1915
Arbutus: August 28, 1903 - June 15, 1907
Arcade (Arkdale): June 15, 1864
Barnum: December 14, 1865 - September 19, 1883
Beatrice: October 18, 1886 - November 14, 1888
Beatrice: December 11, 1901 - August 31, 1907
Big Flats: August 26, 1862 - May 31, 1924
Big Spring: December 22, 1854 - December 31, 1904
Brooks: January 15, 1922
Buckhorn: June 16, 1869 - July 7, 1880
Davis Corners: May 9, 1855 - February 15, 1888
Dellwood: May 19, 1915
Dell Prairie: October 1, 1852 - November 7, 1893
Easton: March 26, 1861 - February 28, 1920
Edna: April 25, 1856 - October 4, 1861
Fordham: March 27, 1860 - October 25, 1866
Friendship: March 9, 1855 -
Glen: March 27, 1896 - June 15, 1906
Grand Marsh: September 10, 1850
Hadlock: October 7, 1896 - August 15, 1906
Holliday Mill: August 17, 1900 - May 14, 1904
Holmsville: (Dellwood)
Jackson: May 11, 1855 - August 28, 1856
Lakeside: March 28, 1892 - December 31, 1904
Leola: June 20, 1887 - May 14, 1906
Lindenwold: March 18, 1856 - April 29, 1859

Little Lake: September 28, 1854 - April 30, 1900
Mars: March 9, 1894 - January 31, 1908
Monroe Center:
 December 30, 1887 - October 31, 1913
New Chester: January 10, 1856 - October 9, 1894
New Haven: March 13, 1865 - August 10, 1881
New Rome: September 7, 1858 - March 31, 1951
Niebull: November 9, 1888 - October 31, 1913
Oakbridge: May 12, 1903 - December 1, 1916
Olin: May 28, 1867 - June 12, 1895
One Mile Creek: May 9, 1855 - July 15, 1904
Pilot Knob: May 21, 1856 - July 15, 1904
Plainville: September 10, 1856 - October 24, 1942
Point Bluff: March 9, 1855 - May 31, 1908
Preston: (Moved to Friendship)
Quincy: March 31, 1854 - June 15, 1915
Roche a Cri: May 24, 1856 - March 15, 1905
Shiprock: May 24, 1905 - January 15, 1906
Springbluff: February 21, 1863 - October 19, 1918
Spring Creek: March 3, 1864 - May 15, 1905
Strongs Prairie: July 16, 1857 - March 15, 1952
Twin Valley: October 2, 1854 - August 14, 1866
Vinjie: (Moved to Arkdale)
Vandriessen: February 9, 1899 - June 15, 1915
White Creek: August 11, 1855 - September 30, 1945
Zerah: March 24, 1857 - June 16, 1858



The "New Store" and post office on the York farm at Monroe Center in the 1890s.

An early county highway crew making the cut through the bluff on County B in Springville.

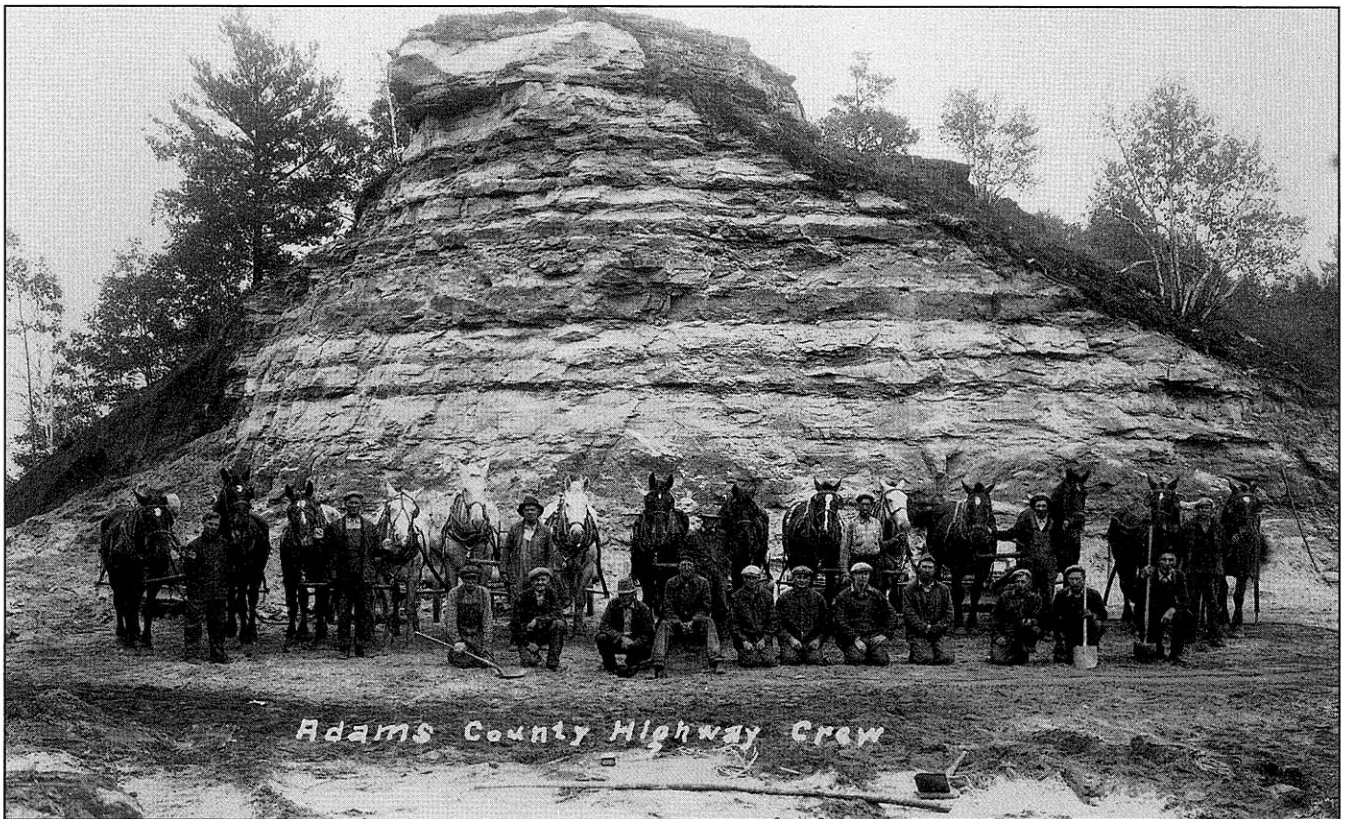
1900s-1930s

After the turn of the century, county government in Adams expanded. Traditionally the county had kept records, cared for the poor and disabled, enforced the law, maintained the courts and supported the rural schools. In the 1900s, new conditions required growth and change. The county highway department, the university extension office and the public welfare department began in these years, while the role of the county sheriff expanded.

In the 1890s vacant land in Rome was attracting enough settlers for the population of the town

Mills, Cottonville and Arkdale. Requests continued to come and, in 1906, the county created a special Bridge Committee to handle town requests for aid.

In this matter, Adams County was in step with the rest of the state. In 1907, the legislature passed an ordinance requiring counties to create highway departments and began the process of altering the constitution so the state itself could fund a highway system. In response to the state action, Adams County created a Road and Bridge Fund and, in 1908, appointed William Ward, Springville and E.A. Keach, Jackson, to lay out a county highway



to more than double in the decade. Town services lagged behind growth, particularly road improvement, which led some Romans to appeal to the county to repair their roads. The county took no action because fixing roads in one town could lead to fixing roads in all the towns, something county government was not yet prepared to do.

County road aid was allotted on an ad hoc basis and was usually restricted to bridge work. In the 1900s, the county shared the cost of bridges on the Little Roche-A-Cri in Adams, Fourteen Mile Creek in Rome and Big Roche-A-Cri at Holliday

system. Four years later, the state highway commission agreed to fund construction of state highways in the county and the first state aid check--for \$1,053--arrived.

The first state roads funded in the county evolved, after several reroutings, into Highways 13 and 21. Highway 13, for example, began as River Road out of Wisconsin Dells and stayed close to the water until the early 1950s, when a bridge was built over Crandall Creek and the road shifted east. Highway 13 was also re-routed from West Street to Belfast Street in Friendship so the

state route would run past the court house. This realignment, which also coincided with the construction of a new bridge across the Roche-A-Cri was completed in 1929. It created the curve and Y junction on the south side of Friendship and the infamous blind corner near the mill at the north end of the village. North of Friendship the new Highway 13 followed the route of the old "Grand Rapids" Road to its junction with the Pinery Road near the present Cottonville Bridge. The Pinery Road wound north and west to Nekoosa, but the new Highway 13 ran straight north to Wisconsin Rapids.

Friendship and the first graders, spreaders and mowers were acquired. By 1916, the county was spending \$11,151.93 on road construction alone. It was the largest single item in the budget, slightly ahead of the county's school allocation, and larger than the entire county budget for 1900.

The most persuasive argument for the creation and expansion of the county highway department was the development of the automobile. However, dairy farmers, who had to transport milk everyday, also needed reliable roads, so did the rural mail carriers who started serving the county in 1907. By 1917, a total of 421 "bicycles and automobiles"

First proposed in 1905, the new county court-house did not open for business until 1914. It brought the county officers and the court room together in one building and contained the first county jail in its basement.



The original Highway 21 followed the old "State Road," which was not built by the state, and which followed the route of present-day Highway J until the 1930s. Then, no longer daunted by the marshes of Richfield, the highway builders moved the state road north to its present route. Other proposed state highways that did not achieve that status became County B, E, I and V.

In 1913, the county hired its first Highway Commissioner, John McGregor. The following year property was acquired for a highway shop in

were listed on county tax rolls. Two years later the number of autos alone rose to 696.

The number of autos, trucks and other motor vehicles continued to grow and with them the county highway department. In the late 1920s, a new and enlarged highway garage and yard was built on the west side of Friendship. Although the county board passed a resolution stating it did not want to "fight nature" in 1925, it allotted \$2,000 for snow removal in 1928. The 1930s saw a general improvement of roads, since road work was a



County officials in 1936: Highway Commissioner James McGregor, Janitor Walter Atchinson, Sheriff Emil Griese, Treasurer Lloyd Morley, School Superintendent I.S. Jones, Register of Deeds Clara Smith, Agriculturist Marvin Nelson, County Agent Ira Goodell, Supervising Teacher Katherine McGowan, District Attorney Fulton Collipp, County Clerk Carl Smedbron, Judge Charles Gilman,

major component of New Deal public works and work-relief projects. By the end of the decade, it was possible to travel from Wisconsin Dells to Wisconsin Rapids entirely on a paved road. What was once a two-day trip by ox cart and a day's ride on a horse, now took less than one hour.

Automobiles and the mobility they provided required more than better roads from county government. To enforce the new traffic laws, and cope with criminals who could travel farther and faster than ever before, the county had to expand the sheriff's department. From the time the county was organized, laws were enforced by the sheriff and town constables. When special circumstances arose, as in the search for the murdered John Hesler in 1883, the sheriff could deputize as many able-bodied people as he needed. By the early 1920s, the combination of the automobile and prohibition forced the county to add an undersheriff and two deputies to the sheriff's office. Concerned about whether the undersheriff would earn his \$100 a year salary, and the deputies their \$50 each, the board placed them under the supervision of the district attorney. If he was not satisfied with their work, he could withhold their

pay, and that of the sheriff as well.

Since the people of Adams County were just as likely as any other Americans to evade the prohibition on the sale of alcohol enacted in 1919, the sheriff and deputies of the 1920s had to enforce anti-drinking laws. They made the familiar raids on illegal distilleries in isolated locations, as in 1921, when "Deputy Sheriff Andrew Welen and a posse of officers" descended on the "old Conradson farm" in Big Flats. As the cars approached, a man fled from the barn, leaving "three buckets of moonshine, 150 pounds of sugar" and "a still in the cellar." Other "stills" were discovered in Lincoln, New Haven, Preston and Strong's Prairie.

In addition to raiding places where alcohol was produced, deputies also shut down places where it was sold. The "resort" at Houghton's Rock, Ida's Restaurant, and the Charleston Cafe in Adams were all "padlocked" when officers discovered alcohol on the premises. Probably the most unusual case of prohibition law violation occurred when Dr. Alf Poppe and druggist C.C. Bennett, both of Friendship, were each fined \$200 for supplying alcohol for "medicinal" use for the

same person on the same day using two different names.

Prohibition ended in 1933, but crimes related to alcohol and autos did not. While investigating a drunken row at the Oak Grove store and filling station in 1933, Sheriff Emil Griese was seriously wounded and his car peppered with pistol, rifle and shotgun fire. It was one of the first instances, if not the first, in which a county sheriff was shot in the line of duty. Afterwards the county authorized the purchase of one "steel vest," additional firearms and tear gas. A few years later the county hired its first full time "road officers." By the end of the 1930s, the automobile had made the work of law enforcement in even a small rural county more difficult and dangerous.

On a more positive note, the demands of the new century also required that Adams county take part in the expansion of the University of Wisconsin through its extension division. The work began in the country schools as part of a national movement to improve the quality of life in rural areas. In 1913, 270 school children participated in a corn-growing contest using pure-bred seed whose purpose was to illustrate modern, "scientific" farm practices. After debating the question for several years, the county board voted to hire an agricultural agent. In 1920, Ernest V. Ryall began testing soil, encouraging farmers to adopt dairy

herd improvement practices, improve their soil with lime, plant pure bred corn and try the newly-introduced crops of alfalfa and soybeans. He began working with parents and teachers to organize clubs for girls and boys that evolved into the 4-H program. A decade later the county had 24 clubs with 211 members.

American agriculture skidded into a depression in the 1920s. By the end of the decade Adams County had lost fifteen per cent of its farms to bankruptcy and the population fell from over 9,100 to about 8000. Then the bad times got worse. In the 1930s, Adams county was beset by the lowest farm prices yet recorded and by the worst drought it had seen. The North Western Railroad, pride of the city of Adams and the county's largest employer, was in bankruptcy court.

In response the county cut back. The agricultural agent's position was vacated; all remaining county employees took a ten per cent pay cut; telephones were removed from county offices, including the sheriff's; school expenses were cut, including transportation subsidies paid to parents of children who lived less than 2.5 miles from a school. Restrictions were placed on the sale of firewood the county accepted in lieu of taxes from low income people, so the county would not compete with firewood retailers. The county also bought rye and wheat from local growers, ground

Digging lime-rich marl from county marshes improved the soil and made work for the unemployed during the Great Depression.





The County Poor Farm, 1900s. The care and housing supplied by the County Farm were gradually replaced by the welfare programs instituted in the 1930s.

it in county mills and distributed it to the needy.

After the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, the county participated in New Deal relief programs ranging from tree-planting in the countryside to the construction of the first municipal water and sewage systems in Adams and Friendship. Before these programs could begin, the county had to reinstate the agricultural agent position and establish a county relief agency. The agricultural agent returned in 1935 and Ira Goodell became the administrator of all agricultural relief programs. The following year, the Adams County Pension Department was organized to administer state old age assistance programs, aid to dependent children and the handicapped. The Pension Department evolved into the public welfare department which was established in 1948.

Most depression-era welfare programs were "work-relief," which meant that in order to receive benefits, recipients had to put in time on public work projects. In order to provide the work, the federal and state governments funded an unprecedented number of public work projects.

Conservation work included fire control, which meant the construction of the fire towers on Friendship, Quincy and Elephant Mounds and a fire station in Adams. It meant tree-planting in school and 4-H forests and in windbreaks. Between 1935 and 1942, Adams County people planted the equivalent of a two-row windbreak all the way from Friendship to Wisconsin Rapids.

The county enlarged the fairgrounds and used relief workers to build a new 4-H exhibit building. The court house was repainted, with original oil

paintings commissioned for the court room and display cases exhibiting the history of the county placed in the halls. A new highway shop was built, in part to house the oiler the county purchased to reduce the dust on the improved county roads.

With property tax delinquencies at a record high, the county established a Mediation Board to work out means to collect back taxes, even going so far as to waive interest charges and penalties on unpaid bills. Landowners continued to go delinquent, thereby making more land available for tax sale to Consolidated Paper and Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Companies. They had been buying tax-delinquent land and enrolling it in the forest crop program since the mid-1920s. By the end of the 1930s, Consolidated and Nekoosa-Edwards were the largest landowners in the county.

Federal, state and university agricultural programs were well-established in the county. The highway department had become the largest county department in terms of budget and employment. The sheriff department had begun full-time, round-the-clock, patrol of the highways. Conservation programs, including fire protection, state parks and deer hunting seasons, were in place. Modern welfare programs were also operating, ranging from work programs to federal food stamps. 20th Century government was established in Adams County.



The court house decorated for the Bicentennial in 1976. The 1914 building saw many additions and remodelings as county government expanded in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

1940s-1990s

The years after World War II saw county government continue to grow. The list of new services is long and includes conservation and environmental concerns, agricultural and non-agricultural land use, recreation and tourism, public health and safety, economic development, expanded services for young people, the aging, the mentally ill and developmentally disabled.

County government has changed so much in the last fifty years as to require a book of its own. In these pages, a decade-by-decade summary must suffice.

In the 1950s, the county Welfare Department established in 1948 expanded and hired its first director, Lloyd Andrews. University Extension expanded and hired Ivan Morrow as 4-H Agent. The first county park commission was created and land acquired for Castle Rock and Petenwell Park. An ambulance service was funded, the new hospital aided, an airport acquired, a Civil Defense program enacted, a planning and zoning commission created, the marking of county roads begun and purchase made of a "traffic timer" for the sheriff to nab drivers violating the speed laws.

In the 1960s, the county hired its first economic development agent, drew up a zoning plan, inaugurated Great Society programs such as Community Action, Head Start, Youth Corps and the Council on Aging and, in 1968, required that

the sheriff and four deputies wear identical uniforms.

In the 1970s, the county enacted another zoning ordinance, laid out a system of snowmobile trails, created a public housing authority, set up the Council on Aging and the Youth Commission, established the "unified board" programs for the handicapped, helped fund a hospital addition and a historical museum at the fairgrounds, enacted a county-wide address system, erected disaster warning sirens and wired a 911 emergency communication system.

In the 1980s, the county adopted the JTPA welfare reform program, passed another zoning ordinance, drew up a solid waste management plan, purchased property for a landfill, implemented the Wisconsin Conservation Corps and authorized parks director Fred Nickel to decorate one of the court house spruce trees with enough lights to earn a listing in the Guinness Book of World Records.

In the 1990s, the county adopted an active tourism promotion plan, conducted the Clean Sweep project to dispose of hazardous substances on the farm and in the home, funded a promotional video, provided substantial aid to businesses in the industrial park, enacted the first county sales tax of .5¢ to finance construction of a new jail, board room and offices granted money to a volunteer group to celebrate the county's 150th anniversary



Decorating the tree that would place the county in the Guinness Book of World Records for the tree with largest number of Christmas lights, 1985.

and made sure it was paid back.

Growth meant building more buildings and buying more property. The government that had run the county out of one two-story court house and a highway garage in the 1940s required major additions or purchases of property in 1953 (sheriff and jail), 1967 (social services building), 1975 (sheriff, jail, board room, offices), 1978 (library, highway shop), 1986 (landfill), 1991 (social services building) and 1997, (sheriff, jail, board room, offices). The county also acquired or aided in the acquisition of property for the hospital, senior citizen housing, a senior activity center, an airport, parks, fairgrounds, and dams built by

lakeshore community developers.

Change did mean reduction in two areas. As new means to care for the elderly developed, the county sold its 500-acre "poor" farm in 1953. Also, as the country schools were consolidated into larger districts, the county removed itself from the local school system. Starting in the 1940s and ending in 1961, local school districts dissolved and students were bused to consolidated schools in Wisconsin Dells, Westfield, Plainfield, Nekoosa and Adams-Friendship.

The county board itself had to be reorganized in response to the "one-man, one-vote" decision of the United States Supreme court in 1964. Instead of representing single towns with varying populations, supervisors represented new districts of about equal population. Under the old system, for example, the 142 people who lived in Richfield in 1960 elected one supervisor; so did the 644 people who lived in Strong's Prairie. By this measure a vote in Colburn was the equivalent of more than four votes in Strong's Prairie. As a result of the court decision, districts were drawn to more accurately reflect

population thereby shifting political power to the more populated areas.

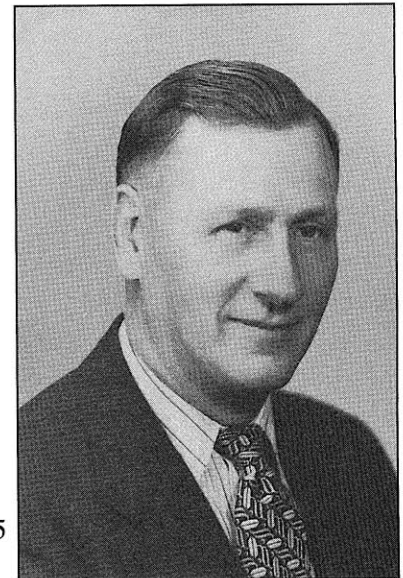
In 1899, Adams County government consisted of the elected officials and a few assistants. They could all sit down to dinner together and fill less than a dozen seats at the table. The county clerk, sheriff, attorney and other officials oversaw expenditures of a little more than \$15,000. In 1999, Adams County employed 240 people, ranging from county judge to grader operator, clerk to cop, nurse to jailer. The cost of the services they provided came to \$21.4 million. Times change and so do the bills.



In the 1990s, the court house saw further expansion, including a refurbished court room, a new board room and county offices plus a jail larger than the entire building formerly in use.

State Legislators Elected From Adams County

Almon P. Ayers	Republican	Quincy	1858
George W. Bingham	Republican	Friendship	1911, '13, '29
Edwin W. Bloomquist	Progressive	Adams	1935, '37
Phillip Bouffleur	Republican	Springville	1885
Charles A. Cady	Republican	Dell Prairie	1873, '74, '79
Revel Keith Fay	Union/Republican	Roche-a-Cri	1865, '71
Alan Galbraith	Republican	Friendship	1917
James Giddings	Democrat	Chester	1850, '51
John W. Gunning	Republican	Friendship	1889
George H. Hall	Republican	Dell Prairie	1862
Thomas Hayes	Democrat	Richfield	1856
W.J. Kershaw	Union/Republican	Big Spring	1867, '68, '69, '70, '75
Sophonius S. Landt	Republican	Friendship	1895
Otis B. Lapham	Republican	Friendship	1861, '63, '69
Thomas B. Marsden	Union/Republican	Friendship	1866
George M. Marshall	Republican	Big Spring	1875, '76
James W. Perkins	Republican	New Chester	1885, '87
Solon W. Pierce	Republican	Friendship	1870, '77, '78, '80, '81, '82, '97
Louis C. Romell	Republican	Adams	1947, '49, '51, '53, '55, '61, '63, '65
Daniel R. Sylvester	Republican	Castle Rock	1877
Robert B. Wood	Republican	Adams	1925, '27



Louis Romell

ADAMS COUNTY OFFICIALS

COUNTY CLERK

1853-58 W. Spain
1859-62 T. Marsden
1863-64 A. Jackson
1865-78 A. Holm
1879-82 J. Dunning
1883-96 C. Simons
1897-02 R. Harrison
1903-10 G. Pease
1911-20 A. Soley
1921-26 J. L. Hopper
1927-36 C. Smedbron
1937-42 W. Kurth
1943-46 B. McBride
1947-50 D. Bayles
1951-62 M. Vogler
1963-66 M. Strand
1967-76 Rob't. Dittburner
1977-86 Rita Dittburner
1987-00 B. Ward

COUNTY TREASURER

1853-58 S. Holbrook
1859-62 S. Thompson
1863-66 W. Crosby
1867-74 N. Phillips
1875-78 F. Hamilton
1879-88 B. Powers
1889-92 S. Landt
1893-96 J. M. Graham
1897-02 G. Bingham
1903-04 O. Holm
1905-08 O. Matthews
1909-12 A. Reynolds
1913-22 F. Parks
1923-32 A. D. Fuller
1933-40 L. Morley
1941-42 H. Klein
1943-58 T. Avery
1959-62 P. Jorgensen
1963-64 J. Moshure
1965-78 V. Klein
1979-82 L. Johnson
1983-00 S. Klicko

CLERK OF COURT

1853-58 S. Holbrook
1859-60 O. Lapham
1861-64 A. Jackson
1865-66 N. J. White
1867-68 F. Wisner
1869-78 D. Schofield
1879-84 J. Keyes
1885-92 A. Hamilton
1893-98 S. Sickles
1899-02 H. Daratt
1903-04 L. Wightman
1905-12 A. Hesler
1913-34 C. Meteyard
1935-40 M. Nelson
1941-48 A. Troemner
1949-50 C. Cavanaugh
1951-60 A. Troemner
1961-66 C. Wilda
1967-78 B. Lobenstein
1979-86 S. Smedbron
1987-00 D. Helmrick

COUNTY JUDGE

1853-62 E. S. Minor
1863-64 S. Pierce
1865-74 A. Spencer
1877-84 L. Harrison
1885-16 J. Keyes
1917-54 C. Gilman
1955-70 F. Collipp
1971-90 R. Gieringer
1991-00 D. Polivka

SHERIFF

1853-58 W. J. Sayers
1859-62 E. Rich
1863-64 W. Cox
1865-66 I. Rouse
1867-68 W. Wright
1869-70 D. L. Quaw
1871-72 N. B. Smith
1873-74 J. Hawkins
1875-76 W. H. Crosby
1877-78 H. Merriman
1879-80 W. H. Crosby
1881-82 W. D. Clark
1883-84 S. Demott
1885-86 R. Chester
1887-88 W. Atcherson
1889-90 G. Bingham
1891-94 S. Atcherson
1895-96 G. Bingham
1897-98 H. Barrett
1899-00 E. Hunt
1901-02 M. Hickley
1903-94 E. Stafford
1905-06 J. Crothers
1907-08 L. Knight
1909-10 W. Greenwood
1911-14 L. Knight
1915-16 J. Hobart
1917-18 J. W. Hoard
1919-20 J. Hobart
1921-22 J. W. Hoard
1923-24 F. Parks
1925-26 J. W. Hoard
1927-28 W. McCullough
1929-32 S. Stone
1933-36 E. Griese
1937-40 F. Hollman
1941-44 S. Stone
1945-46 F. Malinosky
1947-50 S. Stone
1951-54 R. Henningson
1955-58 F. Serles
1959-60 L. Serles
1961-64 F. Serles
1965-66 L. Serles
1967-68 F. Serles
1969-74 W. Pare
1975-78 W. Holland
1981-82 E. Williams
1983-94 R. Farber
1995-00 R. Sindelar

REGISTER OF DEEDS

1853-58 W. Palmer
 1859-62 R. W. Barnes
 1863-70 G. Waterman
 1871-74 C. A. Capron
 1875-80 L.S. Perkins
 1881-88 J. Gunning
 1889-96 F. McConick
 1897-00 D. Bonnell
 1901-02 F. Higbee
 1903-08 W. Walker
 1909-16 A. Galbraith
 1917-28 E. Smith
 1929-62 C. Smith
 1963-74 M. Benkowski
 1975-78 C. Hendrickson
 1979-86 K. Tarvid
 1987-94 A. Thurber
 1995-00 J. Helgeson

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

1853-58 D. A. Bigelow
 1859-64 H. Brown
 1865-66 O. Lapham
 1867-68 S. W. Pierce
 1869-70 W. Kerlaw
 1872-84 S. W. Pierce
 1885-86 O. Lapham
 1887-96 S. W. Pierce
 1897-00 P. Collins
 1901-04 W. Sweet
 1905-06 P. Collins
 1907-16 C. Gilman
 1917-19 C. Murphy
 1919-22 C. Veeder
 1923-24 J. Lindsay
 1925-50 F. Collipp
 1951-60 D. Hollman
 1961-66 R. Gieringer
 1967-70 D. Polivka
 1971-76 C. Pollex
 1977-78 E. Worth
 1979-00 M. Thibodeau

CORONER

1853-58 W. Webster
 1859-66 W. Spain
 1867-68 J. Marsh
 1869-70
 1871-86 A. Hill
 1887-88 C. L. Hill
 1889-92 D. Schofield
 1893-94 W. Ferris
 1895-96 E. Knight
 1897-98 G. Waterman
 1899-00 N. Jones
 1901-02 F. Higbee
 1903-04 N. Jones
 1905-06 W. Atcherson
 1907-08 L. Osborn
 1909-10 F. Zika
 1911-12 M. Morley
 1913-16
 1917-22 F. Austin
 1923-24
 1925-28 F. Austin
 1929-30 L. Roseberry
 1931-56 R. Roseberry
 1957-58 J. Hurley
 1959-66 A. Weihe
 1967-82 M. Janssen
 1983-88 M. Henningsen
 1989-94 E. Barron
 1995-00 P. Bakovka

SURVEYOR

1853-58 C. McArthur
 1859-68 L. Terrey
 1869-78 Z. Wise
 1879-96 M. Lathrop
 1897-98 A. Barrett
 1899-90 M. Lathrop
 1901-02 A. Barrett
 1903-06 H. Hurley
 1907-32 M. C. Smith
 1933-36 F. Hovak
 1931-40 R. Phillips
 1943-48 J. Purves
 1949-66 R. Phillips
 1967-72 S. Mullens
 1973-80 A. Kiedrowski
 1981-00 G. Rhinehart

COUNTY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

1861 Office Created
 1862-64
 1864-65 J. C. Yocum
 1866-67 W. Risk
 1868-72 T. B. Freeman
 1872-81 J. Higbee
 1882 C. Hamilton
 1883-90 E. Morse
 1891-96 G. Reynolds
 1897-11 J. P. Lewis
 1912-13 M. Douglas
 1914-16 F. Billings
 1917-18 H. Poppe
 1919 F. Billings
 1920-21 M. Brearey
 1922-28 H. P. Reid
 1929-59 I. S. Jones
 1959-64 K. McGowan
 1965 Office
 Abolished