

Photo by Waukesha Freeman

HAIL, HINKLEY HOUSE

By Libbie Nolan

"Ahira, thee is quick with thy knifel!" said pioneer Andrew Schofield to Ahira Hinkley when Hinkley's knife cut the first mark in the nearest burr oak trunk.

Quaker Schofield and Yankee Hinkley, the first settlers of Eagle, had rushed to mark their claims in the lovely Eagle Prairie that late September day in 1836. Those initials claimed the 640 acres where Hinkley built his spacious cobblestone house eight years later . . . the house which this year was cited as a state historical landmark by the Wisconsin Council for Local History.

Ahira R. Hinkley, born 1810, came from New Hampshire to Wisconsin when it was still a territory. Mary Daniels Hinkley left a mansion in the East for her husband's first 12-foot by 16-foot shanty on the Wisconsin frontier. In that temporary log house beside the big spring, they put up two beds, a pine table, a rotating top stove, four stools, a large box of bedding, five barrels of flour and a barrel of pork. Their first baby son "L. D." was born there, the third child born in Eagle.

It was 1848 when the Hinkleys built their cobblestone house, which was likely patterned after those back in York State.

Building materials came from their fields and forest land, and mortar sand from the shores of Pretty Lake. Hinkley himself laid up one wall of the house although he hired somebody else to build it. Black, buff, red and tan fist-size round stones set in rows, made the walls. Limestone lintels and sills came from Waukesha.

"For years it was the only roomy house in town," said an old timer years ago. "Even as late as 1893 it was considered one of the best farm houses in the Town of Eagle," he said.

All seven of the Hinkley children grew up there: Leonard, Anna, Frank, Mary, Emmeline, Laura and Grace.

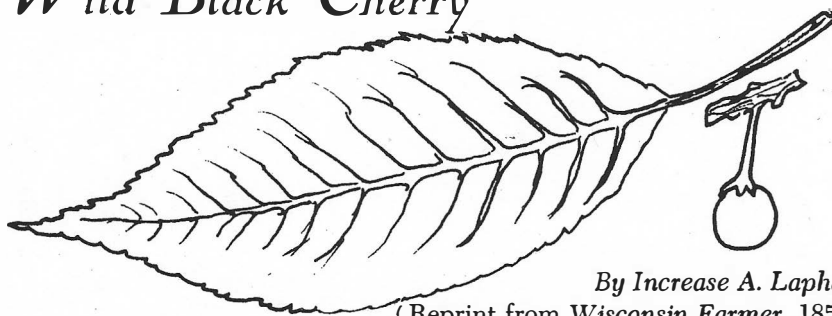
Ahira Hinkley was a prosperous man who built miles and miles of rail fence on his full section of Kettle Moraine and oak openings. His herd of fifty thoroughbred Jersey cattle was the only one of its kind in the county in 1893.

Hinkley served as Town Supervisor. He was also the director of the first Board of the Prairie du Chien branch of the St. Paul Railroad; and he was a trustee of the Eagle Methodist church for years. He held all the offices in the Masons' Lodge No. 115. Ahira Hinkley was nominated twice for the State Legislature, but folks said because "he was a temperance man and would not use liquor to lever himself into office, election was an impossibility."

There were twenty boys and girls who called Ahira and Mary Hinkley "Grandpa and Grandma". Their cobblestone house was kept in the family until 1912.

Now it is owned by Mrs. Jean Loerke, who with her husband Richard, rescued the fading and untended dwelling behind huge clumps of lilacs. Again it is a loved place with freshly painted walls, repainted woodwork, plumbing, heating and electrical wiring and furnished with furniture of the turn-of-the-century vintage. Collections of old figural bottles, and old advertising tins are displayed in the spacious rooms.

Wild Black Cherry



By Increase A. Lapham

(Reprint from *Wisconsin Farmer*, 1854)

Cerasus Serotina: This species, too well known to need description here, is found very commonly in the timbered parts of the State, where the trees are cut into logs and used for cabinet work. For this purpose the wood of the wild cherry is a great favorite.

It is almost equal to the imported mahogany, and is preferred to the black walnut, on account of its lighter and less sombre appearance. The tree is also quite ornamental in its growth and appearance, and besides has the merit of attracting to it a constant throng of singing birds. A few trees should be preserved in the vicinity of every homestead in Wisconsin, if for no other purpose, for that of attracting the feathered songsters near our premises. Besides feeding on the wild cherries, they will destroy for us immense numbers of insects, and thus prevent their depredations.

The flowers appear in May, and the fruit ripens early in the summer.