

Hinkley, Ahira  
People-

## Neighbors In The News



# Palestine School remains as legacy to Hinkley

TOWN OF EAGLE — It was in 1835 that Mable Hinkley (Pardee) Thomas' great grandfather Ahira Hinkley started west.

As a member of one of the oldest families in the area, she is helping the historical society establish information on Eagle's foundation.

He was born on the Lebanon, N.H., family farm where he and his brother Henry later worked. In 1835, the Blackhawk War and other events were opening up the west. That was the place 25-year-old Ahira wanted to be.

The two brothers got as far as Michigan when they stopped to find employment in a saw mill before traveling further. They were looking for a place to settle, to farm.

Starting out again they were joined by Andrew Scofield, whom they had met in Michigan. Eventually the men got to Wisconsin and it was at a place called "The Prairie" with its spring that Ahira laid claim to 640 acres (a section) of land.

In those early days, a claim was accomplished by placing a stake and later registering the property with the government office. On a part of this land,



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the Hinkleys put up a log cabin.

The land was located down the trail, which is now Sprague Road. The Hinkley brothers built a 12 by 12 foot cabin, a quarter mile south from the spring.

In 1836, one month after the Hinkleys came to Wisconsin, Ebenezer Thomas, in horsedrawn wagon and stock following, made his way down the same trail (Sprague Road) to claim land east and south of Hinkley and build a log cabin.

After putting up his cabin, Ahira returned to N.H. and his sweetheart, leaving his brother to look after the land. It was over a year before Hinkley returned.

His intended, Mary Cutler Daniels, was from a well-to-do eastern family. Wisconsin, with tales of its Indians, log homes and rough living conditions was thought no place to take a

wife. It took Hinkley over 12 months to state the case for himself and the territory. It was 1838 before he made the return with his wife.

For four years, the Thomases and Hinkleys were the only settlers in what came to be named Palestine. It was here the newlyweds made their home.

By 1848, a substantial cobblestone house had been built by Ahira so his East Coast wife would finally move from the log cabin.

The cobblestone was constructed on the east part of the Hinkley section of land. For the building, Hinkley collected stones; burnt some of them to get lime for the plaster and passed them through a hole in a board he had made to insure uniformity in the construction.

He traveled to Pretty Lake to get its white sand for his

plaster and mortar. He also went to Waukesha quarries for lime for the lintel slabs and door steps, which still exist as part of this home.

Hinkley was active in civic, religious and political affairs. He believed in the proposed Milwaukee and Mississippi railroad to the extent he mortgaged his farm for \$2,000 to hasten construction. When the railroad arrived at Eagle, all hope for the town at

Palestine disappeared. The store there was abandoned and only the public school remained.

Today, on Highway 59 east of Eagle, Palestine school remains a legacy of this first settler who donated the land on which it stands — Ahira Hinkley.

*(Joan Holman is a Waukesha County Freeman correspondent.)*