

## Dodge County Historical Society

## ACKERMAN PORTRAITS

By Sarah Fletcher

In the 1700's and into the 1900's it was customary, in the homes of the very wealthy, to find portraits of the master and mistress beautifully displayed. Often, several generations of a family were honored in this manner. Though this custom remains active, it is less common today, due primarily to the ease and convenience of modern day photography.

The Ackerman family of Beaver Dam was no exception. Beautifully displayed, somewhere in the Ackerman home (still standing 310 S. University) were the hand painted portraits of Abraham and his wife Hannah.

The portraits, painted in 1830, hung in the Ackerman home until about 1870. They were taken east when Hannah returned to Hackensack, New Jersey after Abraham's death in 1867. Abraham and five of the 12 Ackerman children are buried in Beaver Dam's Old City Cemetery.

Appraised and restored by the Vose Gallery in Boston, Mass., they have been identified as having been painted by Chester Harding (1792-1866), an itinerant painter. The painter's identification was done by Marvin Sadik, Director of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D. C.

ABRAHAM ACKERMAN was Beaver Dam's fifth settler. The son of John D. Ackerman and Catherine Voorhuse, he arrived on February 22, 1842 from New York, having spent the previous winter on the shores of Lake Emily. He was the community's first philanthropist, and, in 1846, a county probate judge.

A naturally generous man, Ackerman donated much to the community, including 20 acres of land on which Wayland Academy was built, land for the Union School site (now City Hall), and the land at Park and Vita Avenues for a Baptist Church that was never built.

Family records show he was a direct descendant of David Ackerman, born in 1615 in the Netherlands. David emigrated to America and settled in Niew Amsterdam (New York City) in the 1640's.

Abraham married Hannah Jersey, the daughter of James Jersey and Mary DeClark in 1825. She was born in Hackensack, N.J. on February 5, 1806. They had 12 children.

There exists a David Ackerman Descendants Society with members in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts. There is also a three volume Ackerman genealogy in the New York Public Library.

The portraits' donor is a great great granddaughter of Abraham Ackerman.