



Judge Daniel Downs/Speidel House, 322 North Park Street-1863.



Judge Daniel Lyman Downs - 1824-1897.

Among the number of fine examples of the Greek Revival influence preserved in the city is the red brick Judge D. L. Downs House at 322 North Park Street. Important as an example of the vernacular gabled ell house form, the Downs House built in 1863, and later known as the Speidel House, displays evidence of the Greek Revival influence through its use of cornice returns and frieze boards. Although altered when the north wing was removed and the porch and bay windows were added in 1921, the house is a well-maintained representative of the 1860s.

The Gablefront house was developed after 1825 and coincided with the popularity of the Greek Revival style, which emphasized the gable-end of the house. The Gablefront house allows the narrow part of the house to face the street, typically on a rectangular lot. The Gablefront house appears in house styles ranging from Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, to simpler vernacular style homes. The Gablefront house form remained popular into the early 20th century; there are many well preserved examples of the form in Richland Center. The house was built by D.L. Downs and until it was purchased by Dr. William Cooke in 1981 just two families had lived in it, the Downs and Speidel families.

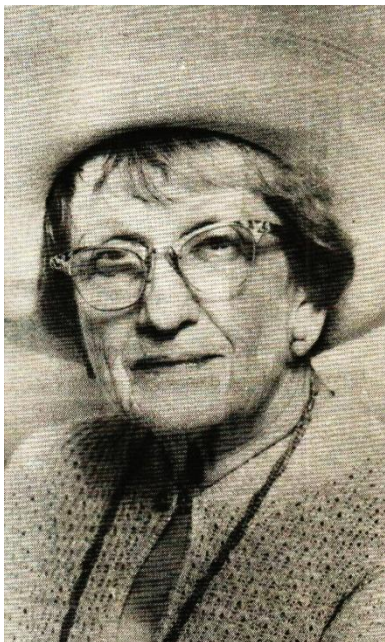
Judge Downs was one of the early pioneers of Richland County. He was born in Ohio in 1824 and moved with his family to Boone County, Illinois. While in Illinois, he studied to be a medical doctor and attended Rush Medical College in Chicago and became a M.D. in 1847. He moved to Richland County in 1847 and established a general store in the village of Orion in the southern edge of the county bordering the Wisconsin River. He was elected to the office of County Treasurer and moved to Richland Center in 1858. Judge Downs owned a drug store in partnership with F.P. Bowen and also operated a tannery. He served as the first president of the village of Richland Center, represented the district in the state assembly and served as state senator. He served in the 6th Wisconsin Regiment as an assistant surgeon during the Civil War; upon his return to the city after the war, he went back into the drug store business. He sold this business because of failing eye sight and was appointed Richland County Judge in 1880 and then was

elected to a full term in 1881. He served as county judge until his death in 1897. His funeral was the best attended up to that time.



This photograph shows the old Speidel Jewelry Store which had been a Richland Center business since 1858. Charles was an optometrist as well as a watchmaker and fit spectacles. The couple is Charles and Mary Speidel. Mary was also a watchmaker.

the family business and was running the shop by 1910. Clyde Speidel died on December 17, 1961 at the age of 75. His daughter Mary joined him in 1929 and operated the family business the remainder of her life after the death of her father. Sebastian, Charles, Clyde and Mary were four generations of Speidels



Mary Speidel.



Clyde Speidel.

The Speidel family was another pioneer family that came to Richland Center a number of years prior to statehood and the Civil War. Sebastian Speidel, after immigration from Germany in 1845 became the first jeweler to establish a business in Richland County. He opened a shop in 1845 in Richland City, with a branch store in Boaz. As the town was being eaten away by the Wisconsin River, he moved to Lone Rock, later Boscobel, and finally Richland Center.

Sebastian, an expert watchmaker, passed his skills and business on to his son Charles in 1873. The original Richland Center store burned in 1887 and a new store was built on Court Street. Charles ran the store with his wife Mary West Speidel who was also a watchmaker, an unusual occupation for a woman at that time. Their son, Clyde, who had been trained as a watchmaker, entered

who served Richland County as jewelers well over 100 years. Mary Speidel's great-grandfather was Judge Downs, on the maternal side.

Mary Speidel is described as "a snappy, fashionable lady with a purpose in her step and a jaunty hat atop her graying hair." She was a bonafide character well-known in Richland Center; everyone who knew her has a favorite Mary Speidel anecdote that they relish telling. "An old tradition perhaps carried over from England, was the proprietor of a business to meet each customer at the door, call them by name, pass the

time of day, and then proceed to accommodate them to their satisfaction. Upon completion of the transaction, customer and clerk would shake hands and the clerk would see the customer to the door. “ Mary Speidel continued this tradition for years after the practice had gone out of style. She passed away on November 19, 1999 at the age of 88.



Judge Downs/Speidel House, 322 North Park Street.

(Keep in mind the homes listed are private residences which are not open to the public. Please respect the occupants' privacy when viewing their homes from the sidewalk).

The other Civil War era houses exhibiting elements of the Greek Revival style of architecture in Richland Center include the Ira Haseltine House at 33 South Grove Street; the James Mckee House at 222 North Central Street; the G.L. Laws House at 484 North Church Street and the Daniel Rice House at 562 North Park Street.