



The Park Hotel in 1939. Richland County History Room photo.

Park Hotel, 213 South Central Avenue, 1873, 1899. Additions: 1926, 1930.

An 1873 frame building that was brick veneered in 1899, this Romanesque Revival influenced building's façade is flanked by a square tower on the north end and an octagonal tower with mansard roof on the south end. It features a projecting entrance bay with round arched windows and wooden balustrade porch. Recently renovated and rehabilitated, the Park



Hotel was a favorite meeting place for parties and dances, benefits that often included a supper and concert, as well as the Kiwanis and Federated Woman's Club. An advertisement in the Richland Rustic newspaper of January 10, 1885, claimed: "Park Hotel, Richland Center, Wisconsin – Best hotel between Madison and Prairie du Chien."

Many people associate a hotel with transient residents or patrons. This was not the case with the Park Hotel. Throughout its history, there were people who rented rooms or apartments on a long-term basis. Margaret Scott, well known Richland Center historian, noted that in 1882 her father, John T. Scott, arrived in Richland Center as a young bachelor. He lived in the Park Hotel for eleven years until his marriage to Mrs. Scott in 1893. This was the era of no running water or electricity; one must also wonder how the rooms were kept warm in the winter. Perhaps the patrons stayed in the dining room

or public room until it was time to go to bed, then made a mad dash under the covers with a hot brick or other heat-retaining object.



The Park Hotel in 1925.

The hotel was for decades known as the best eating establishment in Southwest Wisconsin. One of the secrets of this reputation was the private garden, which a couple of the landlords cultivated.

There is evidence that Senator John F. Kennedy, soon to become President Kennedy, did make a stop at the Park Hotel. This was in October of 1959. He appeared along with his wife Jackie and several members of his future presidential staff at a tea in his honor. The Republican Observer (10/1/59) had a lengthy article including some of the future presidential ideas on the economy. The following March, Kennedy's sisters, Mrs. R.S. Schriver (Eunice), Mrs. Peter Lawford (Pat), and Mrs. Steven Smith (Gene) were guests at a reception held at the hotel.

