

Letters

From the Rhodes'

"They met with plenty (of land) on the Burlington road, and fixed on three lots, 80 acres each, sixteen miles from Southport."

"The country is beautiful pasturing for thousands of cattle. It will feed them fat in its wild state."

"The land is openings and clumps of trees, chiefly oak and hickory. You may put in the plow the first thing, and every thing seems to grow plentiful."

"We have a yoke of oxen, 3 cows, and 2 calves; a good log-house, 20 feet by 18 feet within."

"Game is very plentiful – deer, partridge, prairie hens and pigeons, in this part."

Hannah Rhodes

"... intend buying another 80 acres of land, for settlers are coming in very fast and buying up the land. There is plenty of fruit in the woods, plums, nuts, mandrakes, wild apples, grapes and strawberries, there is a kind of small rattle snakes, but we think little of them."

"There are no wild animals that will attack man."

Thomas Rhodes

Richard Bong

1920 – 1945

The Richard Bong Air Force Base was named to honor Major Richard Ira Bong, a Wisconsin native and WWII hero. An outstanding pilot and one of the few living recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, he was America's "Ace of Aces," with 40 aerial victories, 200 combat missions, and over 500 combat hours. No longer in combat, he died August 6, 1945 while testing a P-80 plane in California.



Then and now...



An Invitation

For more on the Rhodes family history, you are invited to explore the history exhibit located in the Visitor Center. Hours vary.



www.bongnaturalistassociation.org

Richard Bong State Recreation Area
26313 Burlington Road
Kansasville, WI 53139
(262) 878-5600

... A Trek Through the Past



The Land

When the Potawatomi Indians visited and hunted here the land looked similar to what you have traveled through—wetlands, prairies and woodlands of oak or hickory. As more Europeans settled in the area, this natural landscape was drained, plowed and farmed to create crop fields and livestock pastures. We are working to restore the land to pre-settlement condition.



The Air Base

Slated to be a parking area for the Richard Bong Air Force Base, this area now looks quite different from the above photograph taken in 1959. The strategic air command base was meant to house B-52 bombers. The Air Force purchased 5,500 acres from 59 families, including the Rhodes family descendants, before construction began in 1958. After a year of construction work, the base became obsolete and the project was canceled.

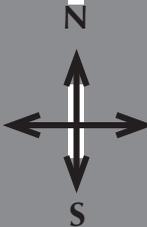
To take the self-guided tour, park in the Visitor Center lot and walk or bike out the exit road. Cross Hwy 142 safely and continue north on the paved road. Watch for the wooden posts and black numbers that match the numbers in this brochure. Round trip mileage is three miles. Enjoy!

4

3

2

1



No motor vehicles allowed.

The Champion

Not native to Wisconsin, the Bald Cypress tree located down this path has quite a history. John Rhodes brought back and planted this tree after a conciliatory visit to his daughter in Florida. Despite the frigid Wisconsin winters it has flourished.



Champion trees are scored using three measurements—height, circumference and crown spread. This Bald Cypress has a score of 198 points, making it the second largest in the state.



Family Farm

Frank, Clarence and Florence Rhodes lived on this plot of land in the house pictured above. They descended from Hannah and Thomas Rhodes, the first Europeans to settle on the land that became the recreation area. Today only foundations remain. In preparation for air base construction, the house was moved to its current location on Highway J and BB.