

History – written by Morton Cook

At one time, prior to the year 1897, Alva G. Richison operated a store in a small building which stood east of the O'Connor building (later housed the First National Bank). He sold tobacco, candy, and notions. He also operated the Western Union Telegraph office, the income from which was a big item in the business. The late Robert Ziebell, then in his teens, worked for him. (That location) is where he learned telegraphy, which prepared him for a successful railroad career.

At that time, our little town had about 20 saloons. Mr. Richison, being a religious man, thought that the people, especially the young, should have some other place to go, so he started what he called a "Free Reading Room" in a part of his store. That, I believe, was Eagle River's first library.

In a very short time the little building became too crowded, so Mr. Richison moved across the street into a vacant store building. In addition to Western Union, he secured the agency for the American Express Co. He also put in a stock of hardware and paint. In the meantime, Rev. H. C. Todd, pastor of the Congregational church, took charge of the reading room.

From there on up to recent years, my memory of the library is rather sketchy. I do remember a fire (in which) the building was destroyed, but the books were saved...I am not sure of the location.

Later, about 1910, some of the townspeople formed a Library Association, took subscriptions, received cash donations from the town, and sold library cards at \$0.50 each, thereby giving the library a new lease on life.

A few years later (1915), the Woman's Club took charge and were (sic) given an assist by the Inter Se, another women's club, in the form of donated books. (This is the end of Mr. Cook's account.)