
DANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



The Dane County Historical Society Office and the Otto Schroeder Records Center are located in the lower level of the Lussier Family Heritage Building on Lake Farm Road just south of the Beltline near Lake Waubesa.

Volume 29

Fall 2010

Number 3

ASK DCHS - U.S. Grant Marker in Mt. Vernon

A new feature of the newsletter will be this occasional column in which we present interesting tidbits and stories about Dane County history.

The Dane County Historical Society often gets requests (usually by email, sometimes by letter or telephone) for answers or research on certain topics of interest regarding the history of Dane County. Quite often these requests involve genealogical research, which the Society does not do. However, when the inquiry is about an event, a place, a public person, a church, or a school that contributes to an understanding of the history or the “story” of Dane County, we try to research those questions using materials in the Otto Schroeder Record Center or in other repositories around the county.

Such are the stories that we will write up and bring to you in this column called “Ask DCHS.”

May 30, 2010

Dear DCHS,

I recently stumbled upon an apparent monument to U.S. Grant located in the municipal park at Mount Vernon in SW Dane County. ... However, I can find no mention of its existence anywhere, and due to its potential significance, and the fact that its current poor curation leaves it subject to weathering and potential theft or vandalism, I wanted to apprise you of what I found. ... Any light you can shed on this story would be appreciated. Thanks,

ANSWER

Thanks to the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society. An article titled, A Forest of Fame, by Brian Bigler was recently published in the newsletter of that society, Mt. Horeb Past Times, January 2010.

The Grant tablet in Mt Vernon's park is part of the "Forest of Fame.”

In 1915, as John S. Donald, Secretary of State of Wisconsin (father of Delma Woodburn, who was one of the founders of the Dane County

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Historical Society) was walking along the banks of the Potomac River in Virginia, the beauty of the area sparked an idea to create a park on the branch of the sugar River in his native village of Mt. Vernon, Wisconsin. The park would become the “Forest of Fame,” made up of trees from many parts of the world, planted here to honor famous persons who had dedicated their lives to the service of mankind.

On Arbor Day, May 6, 1916, a half dozen small elm trees that were secured from George Washington’s Potomac Estate were planted in the village square of Mt. Vernon. This was an appropriate first dedication for the park, as George and Joel Britt, the founders of Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin were originally from Mount Vernon, Virginia. The school children and residents of Mt. Vernon, Wis. and surrounding towns were present at the dedication of the trees. Two years later, the Lincoln elms from Hodginsville, KY, Lincoln’s birthplace, were planted and dedicated.

In 1919 five spruce trees were secured from General Pershing’s A.E.F. Headquarters in Chaumont, France. Also in 1919, the Joan of Arc willow was planted. In the following years many more “famous” trees were planted and dedicated in the Forest of Fame; including a tree honoring John Donald in 1937. Tree

species included oaks, elms, spruce, maples, catalpa, dogwood and willows. Memorial plaques were placed next to the trees, marking their origins.

The U.S. Grant tablet our user is asking about is the marker for the Grant Elm from Galena planted in the park in 1926.

Over a period of 25 years, a number of trees were planted and dedicated by the local church and other organizations. The Forest of Fame did bring a fair amount of fame to the village of Mt. Vernon as it was featured in many newspaper and magazine articles of that period.

In more recent years, a few other commemorative trees have been planted in the park. In 1984, Eleanor Erb and her family planted a maple tree in the park in memory of her husband, Carl Erb, who had farmed on Kelly Hill for over forty years. Then in 1989, a tree was planted and dedicated to the Zwingli Church

With time, Dutch Elm Disease and other damage took a toll on the park’s trees. Gone but not forgotten, the Forest of Fame concept was a tribute to the pride and patriotism of the community of Mt. Vernon.

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The Forest of Fame park can be seen in the center right side of the photo, opposite the church.

“...the park once again waits in sleepy exile from those days of celebration and tree dedication. The only visible marker is made of concrete and rests far from its original location. ... and the remaining trees, many now transplants, remain a mystery in their origins.” (Mt. Horeb Past Times)

As an aside - this park has been suggested over the years, for an historic marker from DCHS. However, as a great many of the trees have long since died, there is little left there of the original “Forest of Fame” anymore; so the site doesn't quite meet our criteria.

Trees planted and dedicated in the Forest of Fame:

1919 – Gen. John J. Pershing – spruce from Chaumont, France
1924 – Rutherford B. Hayes – elm from Freemont, Ohio
1925 – Robin Hood – oak from Sherwood Forest, England
1926 – Ulysses S. Grant – elm from Galena, Illinois
1926 – William McKinley – maple from Canton, Ohio
1926 – Gov. Lucius Fairchild – elm from Madison, Wisconsin
1926 – Gov. Jeremiah Rusk – maple from Viroqua, Wisconsin
1926 – Gov. William D. Hoard – elm from Ft. Atkinson, Wisconsin
1927 – Theodore Roosevelt – dogwood from Sagamore Hill, Long Island, N.Y.
1927 – Gov. Leonard J. Farwell – elm from Madison, Wisconsin
1927 – Gov. Cadwallader C. Washburn – elm from Madison, Wisconsin
1927 – Gov. William R. Taylor – maple from Cottage Grove, Wisconsin
1927 – Robert M. LaFollette – elm from Primrose township, Wisconsin
1927 – Thomas Jefferson – elm from Monticello, Virginia
1927 – Daniel Webster – maple from Salisbury, New Hampshire
1927 – Napoleon Bonaparte – willow from France
1928 – Henry Clay – ash from Lexington, Kentucky
1928 – Robert E. Lee – ash from Lexington, Virginia
1928 – Woodrow Wilson – spruce from Washington D.C.
1928 – Luther Burbank – mountain ash from experimental farm, California
1928 – J. Sterling Morton – elm from Nebraska City, Nebraska
1928 – France Willard – elm from Janesville, Wisconsin
1931 – Eben Rexford – elm from Shiocton, Wisconsin
1931 – Ethan Allen – elm from Burlington, Vermont
1932 – Stephen M. Babcock – elm from Madison, Wisconsin
1933 – Buffalo Bill Cody – from Cody, Wyoming
1933 – Paul Harris – founder of Rotary International
1933 – Charles A. Lindbergh – from Little Falls, Minnesota
1937 – John S. Donald – oak from Springdale township, Wisconsin
1940 – William Tell – elm from Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, planted by the Dane County Cheese Makers Association

Time to Renew Your Membership

In 2011 Dane County Historical Society will be celebrating our 50th anniversary as an organization!

Fifty years ago a group of dedicated county residents had a vision. They got together and decided that the county needed an historical society to document the story of the county. In 1960, J.W. (Bill) Clark, the Dane County Agriculture Agent at the time, encouraged an already interested Madison City Farmers Club to initiate the formation of the Dane County Historical Society. The charter meeting of the Society was held on February 13, 1961 at the Dane County Fairgrounds.

To celebrate 50 years of service, the Dane County Historical Society is launching our *Golden Membership Drive* for next year. Our goal is to get fifty new members for our 50th year. Please consider joining this year at the GOLDEN MEMBERSHIP level. Golden membership dues will be applied to the Society's Legacy Fund, which ensures that the work of the Society will go on.

It is rare to find a volunteer organization that can thrive for fifty years solely through donations and memberships. After all these years, the Society continues to be very enthusiastic and busy with programs and projects. We really appreciate and thank our many members who have given of their interest, their time and their money to help the Society achieve its mission. Your support really means a lot to the Society; and your membership gives us a boost for the important work we do on behalf of everyone who values the heritage of this county.

Special 2-for-1. To help commemorate our 50th year we are offering a special two-for-one opportunity for you to share your love of history with someone else. For 2011, renew your own Society membership and give a friend or family member a One-Year Gift MEMBERSHIP for FREE. Give us the name and address of someone you would like to receive a complimentary membership to Dane County Historical Society for 2011. We will send your guest a notice that you have given them this wonderful gift of history. They will enjoy full membership benefits for the anniversary year.

Please take a moment to fill out the membership form included with this newsletter and mail in your membership dues today; or use our online membership option, available through the DCHS website to renew your membership online. (<http://www.danecountyhistory.org/member/memonline.html>)

We thank you for being such a good friend of the Dane County Historical Society.

The Eagle's Nest

By Barbara Furstenberg

While cataloguing pamphlets recently for the Dane County Historical Society's Otto Schroeder Records Center, I came across a fascinating piece of county history. I was impressed by a manuscript regarding the Eagle's Nest restaurant in Verona. The manuscript was apparently submitted by Judy Oppert in 1969 to the Verona Press just before the historic restaurant was demolished. This one building seems to have encapsulated much of the history of Verona.

The building with hand hewn beams and hand rolled window glass was built, probably in the 1840s, at the intersection of two roads that crossed the state. The east-west road was a major road between Mineral Point and Madison. The other road coming out of Illinois continued northward to intersect with the Military Road going to Fort Howard in Green Bay. The first settlers came from Verona, New York, so the place was originally known as "Verona Corners." The building was built on land purchased from the U.S. government in the 1840s by Josiah H. B. Matts for \$1.25 per acre. This intersection today is known as Main Street and Verona Avenue; there is a Mobile Station at the site of the old Eagle's Nest.

Ms. Oppert details the variety of uses served by the building and provides information about the proprietors. Dr. Newman Rowley used the building as an office base for a medical practice that took him by horseback to Springdale, Middleton, Black Earth, Mazomanie, Oregon and Westport between 1850 and 1864. Subsequent owners used the building as a saloon, livery stable, and hotel for travelers. In the 1870s it housed the sixty men who built the Chicago & North Western railway through Verona. William F. Pierstorff was one of the prominent owners; he served as Dane County Sheriff and President of the Village of Middleton.

In the years before Prohibition, the Hausmann Brewing Company of Madison used the building as a base for distribution of beer via horse-drawn wagons. Under other management, it acquired a reputation as a house of ill-repute and a hang-out for Chicago gangsters in pre-Prohibition days.

After Mr. and Mrs. Jake Wiedmer (aka Jack Widmer) took over the establishment, the place became a popular dining club. The Wiedmers catered to local Swiss celebrations, such as the Swinging Fests (wrestling matches) and Cheesemakers Ball. A member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Mr. Wiedmer gave their restaurant its signature name, The Eagle's Nest. Mrs. Wiedmer's



The Eagle's Nest Tavern, 1970. Image ID: WHi-37920.

cooking attracted 500 - 600 people on Saturday nights. The restaurant continued to be known for excellent food under the twenty-seven year management of Jim and Clara Scharer from Monroe and of Carol and Jerry Hunt, who were the final owners.

After the demolition, the name has persisted in Verona. There was another restaurant that took the name, but that is now called the Cozee Inn. When the people of Verona decided to build an ice arena, they named it The Eagle's Nest.

Questions and mysteries

Beyond the interesting history, the article brought several questions to mind. Why was the original Oppert article written? Why was there an association of the Swiss, who lived in New Glarus and Monroe, with a restaurant in Verona? Finally, was the present day Eagle's Nest Ice Arena named after the restaurant?

I was curious about the circumstances under which Judy Oppert wrote the article. The typescript document gave Judy's address as Champaign IL. Why would someone in Champaign write an article about a restaurant in Verona? I tracked Oppert down in Kennebunk, Maine, where she and her husband Jim have an antiques business. Although Judy had by now forgotten completely about the article, the copy that I mailed to her jogged her memory.

A 1962 graduate of the University of Wisconsin,

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The Eagle's Nest (Continued from page 4)

Judy worked for Wisconsin Power and Light (WPL) and lived in Verona. She attended WPL events at the Eagle's Nest, which always fascinated her. She did a lot of personal research on the building, talking to the owners and long-time Verona residents. Her first draft of the article was never published. By 1969, she and Jim were living in Champaign, IL. While visiting his family in Madison, she learned that the Eagle's Nest was to be demolished. She writes, "Even though this happened 40 years ago I have vague memories of getting Jim to drive to the Eagle's Nest, stopping, and plotting my strategy on the way back to Illinois. I likely rewrote the [beginning and] ending of the article and mailed it off for the last time."

Judy wrote her article originally in hopes of generating interest in the preservation of the Eagle's Nest building. However, it appears that even her revision was never published. Henry Schroeder, who was editor of the Verona Press at the time, does not recall the manuscript. Judy probably sent it to the DCHS to provide a permanent repository for the information.

I did not learn much about the Swiss connection. There was an Eagles Aerie in New Glarus, but they met regularly in a hometown restaurant. It is possible that special events were held at the Verona Eagles Nest, but I have not been able to confirm this.

It appears unlikely that the Eagle's Nest Ice Arena was named after the restaurant. Pete Johnson, Manager of the Ice Arena, points out that the youth hockey association that is based in the Arena is called the Southwest Eagles.

Did you ever attend an event at this legendary Verona establishment? Do you have any photographs of the building? Do you know anything about the Swiss events that took place there? DCHS would be interested to receive memories from those of you who enjoyed meals or festivities at The Eagle's Nest to supplement the record that Judy provided.

Dane County Board Corner

By Jerry Remy

A recent request from the County Executive has asked for our participation in the 175th Anniversary celebration of Dane County. On December 7, 1836, the Michigan Territory Legislature split off portions of Iowa and Milwaukee counties and created a new county and named it after Nathan Dane.

Plans are underway for events and activities to occur during 2011 to commemorate this anniversary year.

Among the events (most in early planning stage) is a media kick-off in January, including the utilization of the multi-paneled kiosk exhibit at Dane County Airport to feature the anniversary, focusing on historical background of the county and its communities. This part of the celebration will encompass input from our local historical societies. Other events being planned include: Involvement in June Dairy Day and the Dane County Fair; a website is being developed; a county-wide "passport" project; and possibly a tie-in with the Fall Studio Art Tour. Kathleen Falk would like to see something pertinent to the anniversary every month next year.

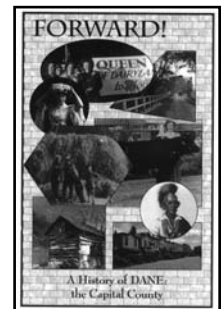
Another brief note: The text for a historical marker at the Wollersheim Winery and the early history of the site is being developed. The Wollersheim family is excited about this project and has provided our society with background information on the vineyard.

Dane County Historical Society

Presents

FORWARD! A History of Dane: the Capital County

FORWARD traces the history of Dane County through the twentieth century. As home to state government, Dane County history provides background and insight into the development of Wisconsin throughout this period. The book was researched and written by Allen Ruff and Tracy Will. Tracy Will is well known to many Wisconsinites as one of the hosts of the popular television series, *Wisconsin Stories*, developed cooperatively by Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Historical Society. The first published history of Dane County in nearly 100 years is replete with fascinating details and rich graphics. It has over 400 pages of text, hundreds of pictures, complete index, maps, photos, and graphics enliven the text.



I would like to order ____ number of copies:

Dane Historical Society Members @ \$26.95 each \$ _____

OR Non-Members @ \$29.95 each \$ _____

Shipping and Handling: Add \$3.00 per copy \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Mail to: DCHS, 3101 Lake Farm Rd., Madison, WI 53711

If you wish to pick up the book in person to save shipping and handling charge, please call DCHS (608-224-3605)

Naming Dane County



Dane County will be celebrating the 175th anniversary of its organization as a territorial county next year. This excerpt tells the story of how our county was named Dane.

Dane County is named after Nathan Dane of Massachusetts, the framers of the historic Northwest

Ordinance of 1787. Dane's ordinance mandated that Thomas Jefferson's goal – that democratic government and institutions accompany settlers as they populated the west – would be implemented in the new territory, and that territorial government would be republican in form. The Ordinance provided the authority for territories to be self-governing, while at the same time extending a commitment to the protection of personal and property rights of adult males. It also established the means for the territories to become states, equal in status to the original

members of the union.

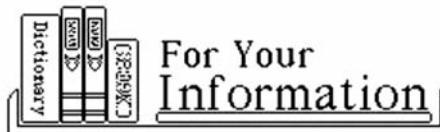
The Ordinance's Third Article described "religious freedom, morality, and knowledge" as the underpinnings of good government and stipulated that "schools and the means of education forever be encouraged." It also included a Bill of Rights for territorial citizens, four years before the federal Bill of Rights became part of the U.S. Constitution. Slavery and involuntary servitude would be forbidden.

The Northwest Ordinance restricted voter eligibility in the territory to male residents age 21 or older with three years of residence and land holdings of 200 acres or more. Prior residence in an existing state and ownership of at least 50 acres in the territory also entitled male settlers to vote. Presidentially appointed territorial governors would have extensive executive and legislative power until the population of adult males in the territory reached 5000, at which point they could elect their own territorial assembly.

Congress approved the Ordinance on July 13, 1787. Nathan Dane died February 15, 1835, before Wisconsin's territorial legislature changed the boundaries of Iowa and Milwaukee counties to create the county that bears his name. In honor of Dane's achievements, James Duane Doty suggested the name Dane for the County in 1836.

Text excerpted from: [Forward! A History of DANE: the Capital County](#), by Allen Ruff and Tracy Will. Published by Dane County Historical Society, 2000.

Dane County Bookshelf



Occasionally, the Society hears about publications related to Dane County. If anyone knows of additional publications about Dane County, its history or its people, please pass them on to us. If anyone would like to donate books, town or family histories, or other publications about Dane County to the records center, please let us know.

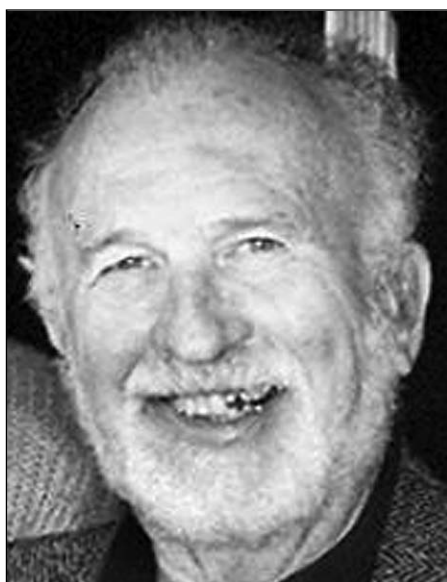
Badger Boneyards: The Eternal Rest of the Story / by Dennis McCann. Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2010. 160 pages. Newspaper columnist, McCann presents fascinating facts and photos from years spent visiting Wisconsin graveyards. Features stories about Forest Hill Cemetery in Madison and Springdale Lutheran Church graveyard, among others.

Barns of Wisconsin / by Jerry App. Revised edition. Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2010. 200 pages. In this new edition of his classic book, Apps shares a unique perspective on the great barns of rural Wisconsin. Featuring more than 100 full-color photographs plus dozens of historic images; includes photos and narrative about Dane County farmsteads, and Dane County barns on the national register of historic places.

Remembering Jack Jallings

Former DCHS board member Jack Kirkland Jallings died August 16, 2010, at age 96. He had lived a colorful life engaging in social issues of his time. Overcoming a cleft palate birth defect and hearing problems, Jack pursued many interests ranging from coaching Little League, woodworking, skiing, golf, to bowling.

But his passion was the promotion of social justice. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Jack considered a business career but was moved to work in the labor movement at the encouragement of his mother-in-law Bertha Franklin. In the late 1940s Jack organized labor unions in Chicago despite resentment over his left wing ideas. In 1949 Jack and his wife Betty became active in the integration of Chicago public housing by moving into the Trumbull Park Housing Development. Jack's involvement in a teen sports league found him providing volunteer defense in the courts for project residents, while Betty ran a nursery school, the resident council, and wrote a newsletter. The Urban League, NAACP, and Beverley Unitarian Church were other organizations which they supported. This period of their life ended in 1954 when the family moved to



Jack Jallings

Madison to escape the physical dangers of riots and fires in the Development. Jack had also been blacklisted as a result of his political views.

The Jallings moved to Fitchburg with Betty's parents, her sister's family, and their children. Finding work continued to be difficult because of the blacklist, but Jack was employed at Meuer Photoarte. In 1963, Jack found an ideal position as assistant state archivist at the Wisconsin Historical Society. His interest in social issues easily coincided with the collecting policy of the Society. He was a convivial colleague.

Jack was a member of the Fitchburg Town, Dane County, and Fitchburg Library Boards as well as the Dane County Historical Society Board. He helped edit books on Fitchburg history.

Jack was born in Iowa and moved to Cornell Wisconsin at age four. Much of his childhood was spent in Chicago for medical treatment on his cleft palate. He lived with family friends in Madison during his high school years in order to work with the speech therapist Dr. Otto. He graduated from Wisconsin High School and the University of Wisconsin.

The Dane County Historical Society is grateful for his years of service and remembers him fondly.

President's Message from Mary Clark



Mary Clark

Next year promises to be a very big year for the Dane County Historical Society. The Society will be celebrating its fiftieth year in existence. We are very proud of the Society's accomplishments during the past five decades; and we hope to carry on the tradition for another 50 plus years.

At the same time, Dane County will be celebrating its own anniversary next year. The county was established 175 years ago. Our Society will be collaborating with other local historical societies and with other area groups to commemorate that anniversary as well. We have already begun plans for those events.

To celebrate these two milestones next year, we need your help. Please volunteer, renew your membership, donate, and participate! Thanks to all for your support this year as well as your continued efforts with the DCHS. We encourage all of you to stay involved or to become more active in the Society.

Watch for more information about these anniversary activities as plans unfold. They promise to be fun and informative.

"If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development" – Aristotle

Dane County Historical Society
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Next DCHS Marker Coming!



Watch for plans to commemorate this historic site in the coming year.

Just across from Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin, the Wollersheim Winery sits on a scenic hillside overlooking the Wisconsin River. This national historic site was first selected for vineyards in the 1840's by the Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy. After Haraszthy left, a German immigrant, Peter Kehl, took over the property and established the present buildings during the Civil War period. In 1972, Robert and JoAnn Wollersheim purchased the nearly abandoned property and restored it to a working family winery.

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"With the historian it is an article of faith that knowledge of the past is a key to understanding the present." – Kenneth Stampp

The Dane County Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter), by the Dane County Historical Society and printed by The Printing Place. Submissions are due 15 days prior to publication. Reader reviews, testimonials, flak and flattery, are also welcome. Send to: DCHS Newsletter, 3101 Lake Farm Rd. Madison, WI 53711. E-mail: dchs@danecountyhistory.org
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